



CONSUMER PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS MODERN SLAVERY

AUSTRALIAN STUDY

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This pilot study investigates how Australian consumers understand modern slavery, their role in perpetuating and preventing slavery and how they can be a key player in shifting the production of products and services away from modern slavery.

Research Study: What We Did

Six exploratory interviews were followed by 20 in-depth interviews with consumers across all Australian states including urban, regional and rural participants. We ensured maximum socio-demographic variation in terms of age, gender, education, cultural and socio-economic background.

Participants were asked to bring images and/or objects to the interviews that represented their thoughts and feelings about modern slavery. We took an open approach to the interviews and analysed the data using a hermeneutic approach.



This report is organised into three sections. For each section we combine our findings with related prior academic research.

Section 1:

Summarises key differences between these consumers and consumers from our UK research, and identifies the forms of action taken by the Australian consumers in this pilot study when they are motivated and mobilised.

Section 2:

Focuses on consumer perceptions of modern slavery and the internal/cognitive factors that impact our participants' intentions to act in response to modern slavery.

Section 3:

Addresses the external/environmental factors that either help or hinder our participants' ability to be mobilised against modern slavery.

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INTRODUCTION

There are more slaves now than at any other time in human history (International Labour Organisation and Walk Free Foundation, 2017). These modern slaves are working across many service and production industries, including domestic work, agriculture, restaurant/food services, nail bars, car washes and the sex trade (ILO, 2012). Several conditions facilitate this increase in modern slavery, including population growth, vulnerability and reduced price of a human, resulting in “disposable people” (Bales et al., 2017).

Consumer choices fuel the demand for slavery across many industries. For example, global consumer demand for seafood resulted in labour shortages in Thailand, filled by trafficked persons spending long periods at sea, away from authorities, creating an ideal environment for the use and concealment of slave workers (Gutierrez, 2017). The effects of consumer demand are also pronounced in the service sector of global cities, such as London, with criminal networks directly exploiting their multiculturalism and anonymity (e.g. Cumming, 2017).

What is Modern Slavery?

Modern slavery involves: “a relationship in which one person is controlled by another through violence, the threat of violence, or psychological coercion, and has lost free will and free movement, is exploited economically, and is paid nothing beyond subsistence” (Bales et al. 2009, p. 31).

Despite commonalities in living and working conditions with earlier forms of slavery, modern slavery is different in certain critical ways (Bales et al. 2009). There is no legal ownership of slaves, and usually, wage-based markets under conditions of violence are used to recruit people. Master-slave relationships are shorter than the earlier more long-term master-slave ties, as markets shape contemporary relations and they can be easily terminated. Moreover, slaves come cheap in the contemporary world with access to large pools of surplus labour in growing populations (Manzo 2005).

THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT



Australia is party to the human rights treaties within the International Covenant for Political and Civic Rights that include the right to freedom from slavery and forced labour. The responsibility to uphold this human right extends to forced and slave labour within Australia and abroad. Yet, the consumption of goods and services produced by slaves is significant in Australia. For example, estimates suggest that 73% of laptops, mobile phones, and computers imported into Australia are manufactured in the modern slavery hotspots of China and Malaysia, and that 70% of clothing is sourced from locations where slave labour in garment factories is rife, such as Brazil, China, and Vietnam. Focusing on local Australian supply chains, the Global Slavery Index 2018 suggests that in 2016 there were 15,000 people living in conditions of modern slavery in Australia. This is a prevalence of 0.6 modern slaves to every thousand people in Australia (<https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/2018/findings/country-studies/australia/>).

The 2018 Australian Modern Slavery Act identifies the consumer as a key stakeholder in addressing modern slavery through awareness building. However, the perceptions of Australian consumers towards modern slavery in the production of the goods and services that they consume and their own role in addressing these instances of slavery are currently not well understood. This is a problem, as consumer demand fuels production systems and the supply of goods and services. Current consumer demand for cheap, fast goods is a key factor in the perpetuation of slavery in supply chains, as to meet this demand requires cheap, disposable labour. Companies respond to consumer demand and if consumer demand does not shift away from slave-made products and services, then shifts away from slavery in modern production systems may also be limited.

Consumers have been strongly implicated in modern slavery practices and, thus, have a level of responsibility to respond and to act. This expected consumer response is not only through their consumption choices (big and small) that drive actual demand for slave-based services and products, but also as a citizen stakeholder and/or dominant figure engaged by various other stakeholders in public debates and policies relating to modern slavery.

Consumers are a key stakeholder in addressing modern slavery, as consumer demand for slave-produced goods and services drives production and supply.

SECTION 1: PREFACE

The Australian Consumers in our Study:

1. Contrasts with UK Consumers

Comparing our findings with a similar pilot study we conducted with UK-based consumers revealed significant differences between the UK and Australian studies, namely:

- Few Australian participants were motivated to act against the slavery in their consumption – and even fewer were mobilised to act.
- Very few Australian participants displayed strong emotional responses towards modern slavery, or articulated views on who was responsible for addressing instances of modern slavery locally or abroad.

Analysing the data revealed a number of factors underpinning the differences between the UK and Australian cohorts:

- Lower levels of awareness – both in general and/or of specific local instances of slavery.
- Reduced instances/opportunities for ‘moral shock’ where consumers link their own consumption to the prevalence of modern slavery in production systems.
- Reduced sense of moral intensity and moral obligation to respond to modern slavery, aligned with a lack of social norms/pressures and a view that modern slavery occurs in faraway locations.
- Relatively unclear pathways to action – even if they did want to act, they are not sure how.

2. Forms of Action

There are two forms of action taken by individuals in response to issues of moral and/or ethical importance: (1) consumer action through changes to purchasing and consumption choices (spend shift and/or boycotting); and (2) civic action, such as reporting and petitioning (Cyrus and Vogel, 2017). Both forms of action are aimed at impacting government policy, legislation and enforcement, and corporate production and supply chain practices. While relatively few instances of consumer-citizen action were observed for the Australian participants in this pilot study, the examples of actions that were taken are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Examples of Consumer Perceptions

Consumer Action: Spend Shift	Consumer Action: Boycott	Civic Action
Seeking products (e.g. mobile phones) that are child-free and fair trade.	Purchasing second-hand items – such as clothing – to avoid supporting companies with slavery in their supply chains.	Actively lobbying companies to have transparent supply chains and clear non-slave-made labelling.
Shifting to fashion items that are more expensive but labelled slavery-free.	Reassessing needs and not purchasing specific product/service categories at all if known for slavery.	Actively educating peers on modern slavery – generally and specific instances.
Avoiding products from known slavery hot-spot locations (e.g. Bangladesh).	Boycotting industries known for the use of slavery in production (e.g. sports shoes).	Signing and forwarding relevant and credible petitions.
Investing only in slavery-free organisations.		



Identified Locations and Forms of Modern Slavery

While some of our participants were yet to identify or consider modern slavery, most did acknowledge some forms of slavery do exist in modern supply chains and implicate consumption – though not necessarily their own.

A range of illegal and state-sanctioned forms of modern slavery were identified by the study participants, with slavery that occurs overseas most readily presented and discussed (see Table 2). For example, Malcolm (Regional WA) suggests that: *“I don’t think there’s really any forms of literal slavery in Australia.”*

Table 2: Common Forms and Locations of Slavery Identified by Australian Study Participants

Consumer Action: Spend Shift	Located in Australia	Located 'overseas'
Product Focussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural Work (e.g. fruit and vegetable pickers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural Work (e.g. cocoa and coffee plantations) • Sweatshop / Factory • Mining Slavery (e.g. cobalt mining) • Surrogacy (“Human incubators”) • Organ Farming
Service Focused	<p>Services for “pleasure and leisure” (Kirsten, Melbourne):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitality • Sex Slavery • Forced Marriage • Domestic Slaver • Nail Bars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex Slavery • Prison Labour • Forced Marriage • Domestic Slavery • Nail Bars

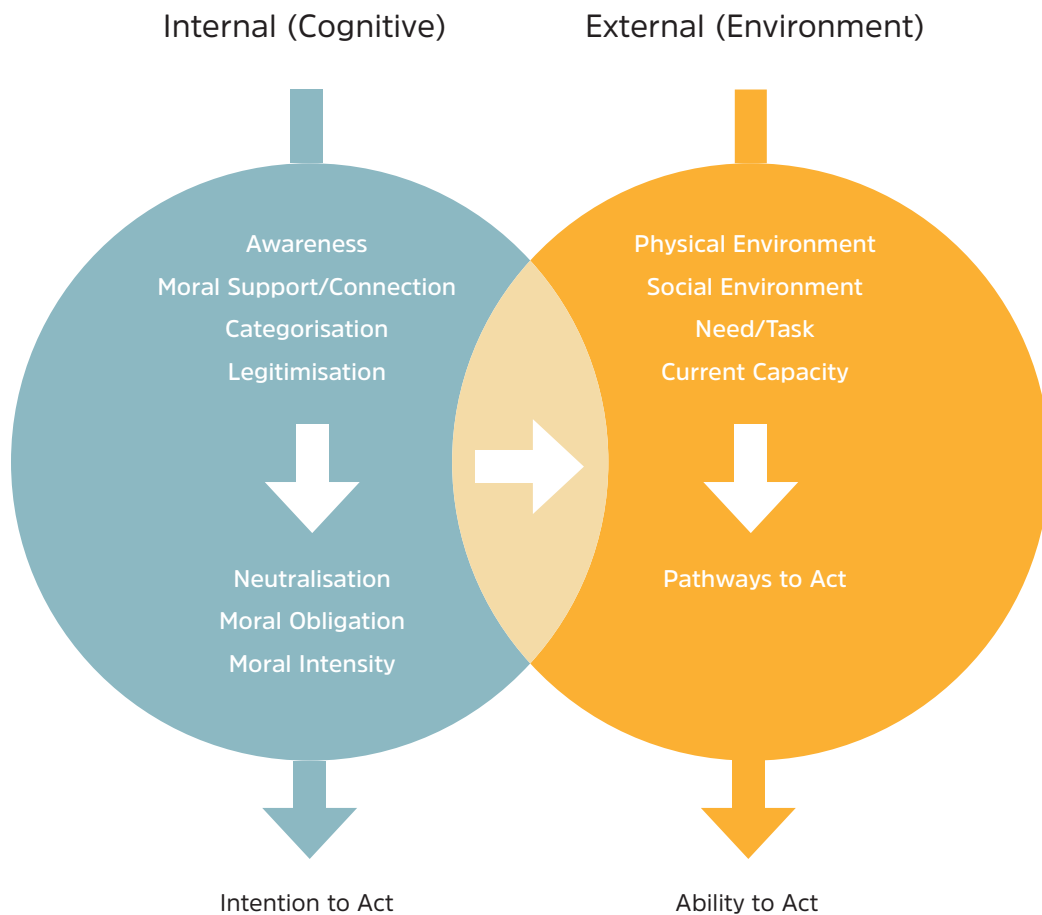
Consuming Modern Slavery

A range of internal (cognitive) and external (social, environmental) factors impacted the study participants' motivation and mobilisation to act in response to modern slavery (see Figure 1). While internal factors impacted participants' motivations and intentions to act, external factors impacted their ability to act.

It is important to understand these internal (cognitive) and external (social, environmental) factors impacting the mobilisation of Australian consumers towards modern slavery – as effective intervention strategies and tactics targeting each factor will vary.

Figure 1:

Cognitive and Environmental Factors Influencing Participant Intention and Ability to Act in Response to Modern Slavery.



SECTION 2: INTERNAL



Internal

There were four key internal factors that impacted whether our participants recognised instances of modern slavery as being 'slavery', and whether they felt a sense of obligation and responsibility to do something in response:

1. An awareness of the slavery
2. An understanding that their actions as a consumer may be implicated in this slavery
3. Categorisation of people or groups of people in extreme labour conditions as 'slaves'
4. Legitimisation of these categories of slaves as being worthy of obligation and responsibility.

1. Participants' Awareness of Modern Slavery Issues

While some study participants were acutely aware of instances of modern slavery – in particular those who had come into direct contact or had a personal connection with people who had experienced slavery first-hand, most had a very limited understanding of modern slavery issues and some participants were not aware of the prevalence of slavery in modern production systems at all.

For most participants who displayed an awareness of issues of modern slavery, this awareness was limited to 'exposés' they had seen in the media and was often limited to a single issue or form of slavery – such as child slavery in cobalt mining or sweatshop labour in fashion production systems.

A few participants were able to identify instances of slavery within Australia – such as agricultural workers and illegal sex workers experiencing conditions of slavery, most were generally unaware that slavery occurs within Australia. For most, slavery is something that happens in far, distant locations.

Awareness of the Australian Modern Slavery Act and the associated reporting responsibilities of large organisations was very low.

2. Awareness is Not Enough: Moral Shock and Categorisation

2.1.1 Direct Connection: A small group of participants had been in direct contact with a person who had (or still was) experiencing conditions of modern slavery. For example, Jolanda (Melbourne) had come into physical contact with slaves in nail bars in New York, Kirsten (Melbourne) had come in contact with child soldiers while living in Mexico, Bhanvi (Melbourne) had made a connection with her grandmother's domestic slaves in India, Tammy (Perth) had formed a relationship with a bonded slave from Indonesia. These experiences were shocking and altered their perspectives towards slavery and their own choices permanently. For example, Tammy (Perth) explains that learning of the situation for her step-father in Indonesia who was in bonded slavery marked a significant shift in her own consumption choices: *"it resonated...it was a turning point."*

2.1.2 Indirect Connection: Some participants had made the connection between their own actions and the potential to cause harm through events and media communication, such as Peter (Sydney) who became aware of modern slavery while on a faith-based youth camp, where modern slavery was first discussed and then made tangible through store visits to identify slave-made and slave-free products: *"it gave me a new perspective."*

Awareness alone is not enough to motivate and mobilise consumers to act (Carrington et. al. 2021). Mobilisation of people towards an issue of moral importance requires what is termed moral shock (Carrington et al. 2019; Jasper 1997). In addition, we observed our participants engaging in practices of categorisation to determine whether an individual or group of people were to be categorised as 'slave' or 'not slave'. These cognitive practices of moral shock and categorisation underpinned participants' willingness and motivation to act in response to modern slavery.

2.1 Moral Shock

Moral shocks are events that trigger the individual to feel a deep shock when they come to realise that their own actions – including consumption – may have contributed to ecological or social harms that they personally find morally abhorrent, such as modern slavery (Carrington et al. 2019). This seismic shock catalyses an irreversible shift in their perspective, once they make the connection between their own consumption choices and shocking harm to others, they can never go back to their previous state of unknowing (Jasper 1997).

We observed these moral shock events playing out in our data, in particular for those participants who did harbour intentions to address modern slavery through their consumption, and certainly for those who actually followed through with these intentions. Moral shocks for these participants were triggered in two ways: through direct contact with a person who has experienced slavery, and through indirect connection when the individual 'joined the dots' between modern slavery and their own consumption:

"A few years ago there was a Bangladesh fire, and it was on the news. That was when I was working in retail myself selling shoes. And I was like, "Jesus, if they're [making] shoes"...because we get them for \$20 to sell for \$80, how much are they getting paid originally? And what hours are they working? I think



2.2.1 Lack of Voice (freedom/ability to speak) and Lack of Choice: While the consumers in our study often voiced uncertainty as to the boundaries between labour exploitation and slavery, the categorisation of what determines slavery and who really is a slave was almost universally based on: (1) an inability to speak out and voice their situation; and (2) a lack of choice to control their own lives and freedom to remove themselves from the situation of slavery. This definition had significant implications for who was deemed to be a 'slave' and worthy of concern, and who was not. We see the significance of this definition playing out with the delineation between children and adults (see below).

that's why ... it kind of resonated. I think that was the [moment] where you take a step ...It was a turning point." (Tammy, Perth WA)

"I was watching a show to do with sex slaves and the women were being kept in cages, and that really resonated with me...that was a point in time where I thought, "Oh my God, this is probably what it's like for these people." (Abigail, Perth WA)

"I first became aware of modern slavery proper in regards to chocolate. A child from West Africa, bonded in slavery and will remain in slavery effectively till he dies. On average, that's till he's 16 or 17...The fact that a child like this has to live the life he's living so that we can have luxury and a treat is just, it's outrageous. And then from the chocolate, I expanded my knowledge into other areas." (Phillipa, Regional TAS)

2.2 Categorisation: Slave or Not Slave

To act against slavery in production-consumption systems, consumers must first recognise and acknowledge these forms of slavery. The consumers in our study refer to a range of criteria that they use to categorise which individuals and categories of people were modern slaves, and those that were not:

"They didn't have a choice. Basically, there was no choice. It was either you do or your die...To me, a slave doesn't have a say." (Brendan, Melbourne VIC)

"You're not free. They might take their passports, there's no choice, there's no freedom." (Tamara, Regional QLD)

"It strikes me that slavery is where you truly don't have the ability to make your own choices. So you might be stuck financially being an Uber driver, but you've still chosen to take that job..." (Helen, Adelaide SA)

2.2.2 Hierarchy of Vulnerabilities (Child versus Adult)

The consumers in our study identified a range of underlying conditions that increased individuals' vulnerability to becoming slaves and, thus, increased the consumers' propensity to categorise these people as slaves. These conditions included cultural, demographic/personal, environmental and financial factors.



Across our consumer accounts, key vulnerability conditions that worked to perpetuate modern slavery included:

- Age: child (innocence, no voice, physically weak) versus adult
- Gender: female
- Lack of education: poor literacy and numeracy
- Poverty and financial instability: particularly in situations of societal wealth disparities and individual-level relationships of dependency
- Mental incapacity
- Drug dependency
- Homelessness
- Cultural norms that facilitate vulnerability and situations of slavery
- Dehumanised and disposable people: treated as machines and mere resources in production systems.
- Lack of documentation (e.g. work permit, visa)

Most notably, the study participants expressed a heightened sense of slave vulnerability when considering children. Child slaves were viewed as highly vulnerable in every sense, and without the abilities or resources to change their situation.

In contrast, adults were often viewed as more agentic and able to control their situation and voice their concerns and, thus, tended to receive less sympathy and recognition. Indeed, adults were predominantly categorised by the consumers in this study as not slaves – rather as exploited workers with the ability to change their conditions.

2.2.3 Confirmation of Slavery

Finally, these consumers engaged in a final validation check to confirm that a person or group of people were, indeed, ‘real’ slaves. The two confirmation tactics observed in this study were: (a) creating empathy links to ‘walk in their shoes’; and (b) visual confirmation.

(a) Creating Empathy Links

A common tactic used by our consumer participants was to determine whether an individual or category of people were legitimately slaves, or not, was to empathise

Our study identified three key techniques of legitimization:

Othering: Study participants created distance and difference between themselves and the slaves. This allowed them to justify why it is acceptable for slaves to be subject to conditions of severe exploitation, but not themselves. For example, for sites where a particular form of slavery was deemed by participants to be a cultural practice, such as child slavery in some Asian and African countries, it was assessed to be of low moral imperative as the moral frameworks in this foreign culture were assumed to be different – and inferior – to the participant's own.

Dehumanising: In some instances, participants were observed stripping modern slaves of their 'humanness' as another, interrelated, tactic to diminish the moral intensity of modern slavery. These dehumanising practices worked to dilute and remove the human rights of enslaved individuals. Using this tactic of legitimization, non-human objects are not subject to human consideration, human rights, and duties of care.

Necessity: A common legitimization technique employed by participants was that of calling on an overwhelming sense that slavery is an inevitable consequence and, indeed necessity, of society and that they were, therefore, powerless to make an impact. This defence of necessity engendered a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness when reflecting on the normalised nature of slavery.

– to put themselves in the shoes of this person. This practice of empathising uniformly led to the definition of children as 'slaves' and, thus, worthy of concern and action. In contrast, putting themselves in the shoes of adults very often resulted in a determination of 'not-slave', because if placed in that situation they believed that they would speak-up and act. Thus, adults were often viewed as beneficiaries and complicit in their situation:

"Children are the weak, they are ones who are the most vulnerable, physically, to defend themselves...Women and children [are] definitely the most vulnerable or the most attacked because of the power differential that occurs." (Nick, Brisbane QLD)

"When I think of an adult woman, I see that there's a sex trade, but when I think of a child...I'm more okay with the idea of trading an adult for sex than a child for sex. That's what it comes down to." (Charles, Melbourne VIC)

"They're all forced into one big building and just that they're not really individual employees, it's more like the hive...they just have to do more and more outputs to increase efficiencies and get down those costs for those people who are outsourcing because they have to bid for the job...with these people, it's just pieces of a puzzle that go together. You just need a certain number of people to just do the job. It's not so much about who does the job, whether it's machinery or whether it's people, it's just getting it done for the cheapest cost. Just thinking about them as actual people, compared to just products themselves, you feel a sense of empathy." (Peter, Sydney NSW)

"I'm Aboriginal. My heritage is Aboriginal. It's of interest to me, indigenous people's rights...it just struck something with me to know that indigenous people [in Mexico] were in situations of slavery through loss of land." (Katie, Melbourne Regional VIC)

[Viewing a photograph]: "This is an image of a girl on some stage or some platform with shadowy looking, male figures, leering at her, and she looks quite afraid... it makes me feel a bit frightened. You can see how distressed that girl is. I think being a female, it's not that hard to imagine someone being able to overpower you." (Helen, Adelaide SA)



"I've got nieces and nephews that I'm quite close with. And since you have a child in your life like that, you get very sensitive to this kind of thing [child slavery]...I just feel quite empathetic." (Damien, Sydney NSW)

(b) Visual Confirmation

Participants in the study often sought visual confirmation to validate conditions of 'slavery'. These consumers looked for visual clues in images – such as facial expressions, clothing, body posture, and the environment surrounding the person – to confirm slavery or 'not slavery'.

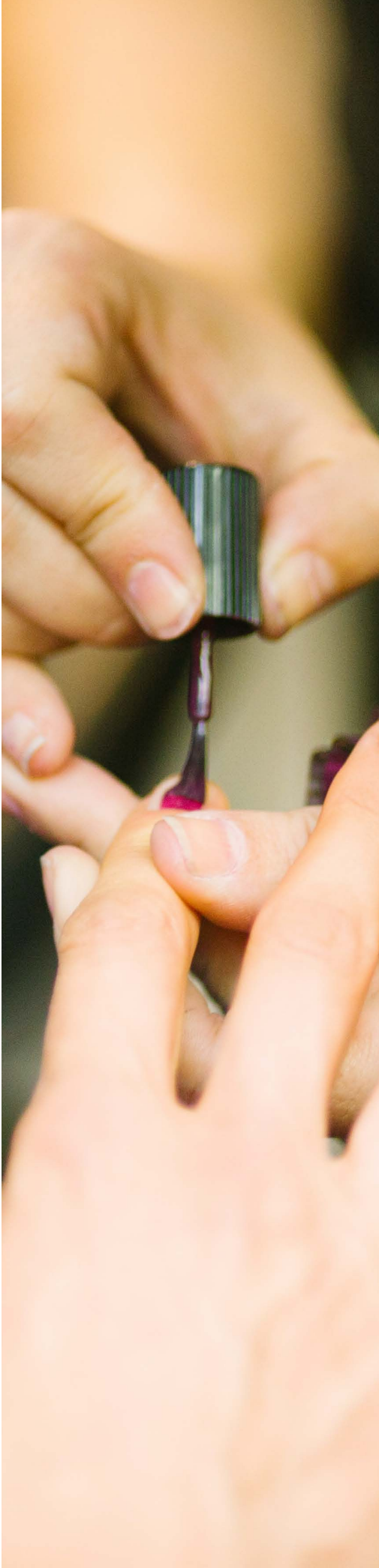
3. Legitimation Techniques

Recognising the slavery in one's consumption was not enough. A sense of moral intensity towards the enslaved person or group of people was required to move the participants towards reparative action. Moral intensity refers to the degree to which an issue is viewed as being morally significant and plays a significant role in motivating consumer mobilisation in response to issues of moral importance (Jones, 1991).

For example, participant Katie (Melbourne) displays a high level of moral intensity which she often takes through to her consumption decisions: *"I try and be as conscious as I can when I'm purchasing"*. In contrast, Hanvi (Melbourne) notes that she feels low levels of moral intensity towards situations of modern slavery: *"when I go into some of the big retailers who continue to offer things at what I would describe as ridiculously cheap prices, I then wonder, but...It's not something I've given an enormous amount of thought to."*

We found, however, some of our participants engaging in 'techniques of legitimation' (Ugelvic, 2016) to reduce their sense of moral intensity towards instances that they have categorised as 'slavery'. These techniques worked to deny or reduce the otherwise illegitimate nature of slavery in their consumption – to legitimise the slavery and mitigate their sense of moral intensity towards slavery.

These techniques of legitimation work to normalise forms of modern slavery even when recognised as illegal and morally unacceptable. The normalising



narratives expressed by our participants drew on various histories of postcolonialism (e.g. Said 1978) and uneven geographical development (e.g. Harvey and Braun, 1996) and more recent events as reported in mainstream media.

4. Neutralisation Tactics: Dissipate and Externalise Guilt, Diminish Moral Obligations and Intensity

Neutralisation tactics are the range of justifications and accounts that consumers employ to explain their behaviour both to themselves and significant others (Chatzidakis et al. 2007) – in this case to justify indifference and inertia in relation to slave-based consumption. Neutralisations may at times be viewed as excuses, but they may also reflect valid explanations that underscore the living conditions of our consumer participants:

“How would I know? I don’t know enough about it.. There must be some really powerful people involved that... I don’t know, I would have thought it would have to come from government. But I have no idea.” (Karen, Canberra ACT)

“I feel it’s not on my level to fix that problem. It’s a problem of capitalism or whatever... if I think about responsibility, I get really angry because I feel like it’s not mine because I’m just a person existing at the moment. I’m just working part-time, I’m just trying to exist.” (Eliza, Regional VIC)

“The governments are the only ones who can do anything about it.” (Anton, Regional SA)

“If it doesn’t affect you directly, then it’s very easy to just turn the TV... it’s easy to justify your ignorance. If it doesn’t affect you..., then it can kind of exist over there, but not over here. And even this kind of sex stuff, like this happens in Australia too, I’m sure. But not anywhere that I am. So, I can just get on with my life and go for my afternoon jog and get my quinoa latte or whatever... Pretend it doesn’t exist because it’s too hard to think about too much.” (Damien, Sydney NSW)

“It makes me feel sad and a bit powerless, but also removed, I suppose. I feel fortunate that I was born



where I was born and into the life that I was born in and that my path through life has been different from that.” (Helen, Adelaide SA)

“I feel like if you’re not smart enough, not clever enough, too trusting, [then] somebody can definitely end up [in slavery]. [They should be] doing the proper adequate research to see what a job entails and if it is safe for them or not.” (Melinda, Regional QLD)

“I think the slaves themselves are partly responsible.” (Jane, Melbourne VIC)

“The women [sex slaves] want a better life, they want the luxuries...the majority of human trafficking is women because they make more out of doing that than what they would selling drugs.” (Amanda, Melbourne VIC)

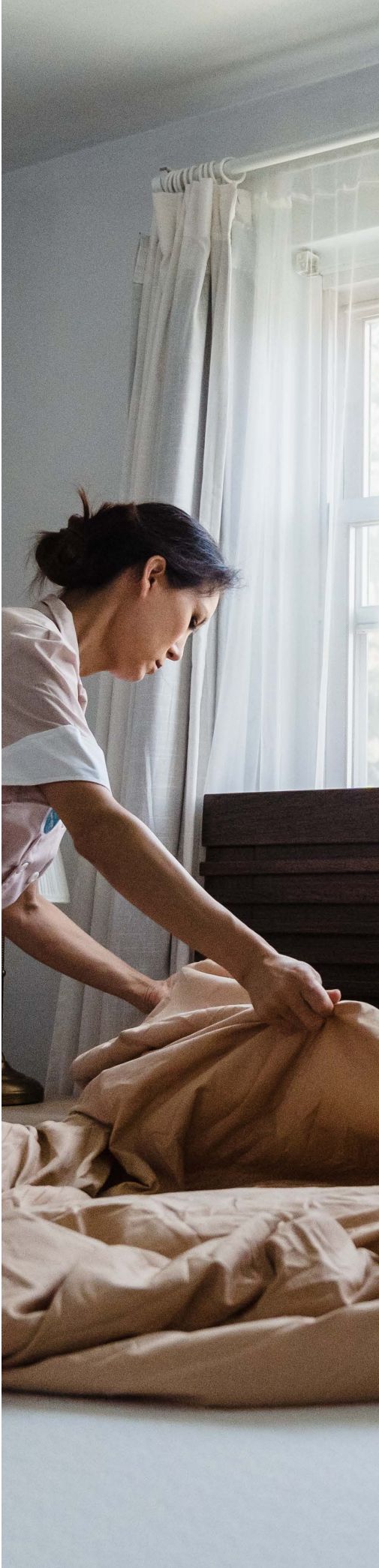
“We’re enslaved to our phones.” (Peter, Adelaide SA)

“We’re slaves to our democracy and our government system.” (Malcolm, Regional WA)

Consumer neutralisations help us to understand the different ways in which awareness of modern slavery is explained away and normalised and does not translate into action. This study revealed four key neutralisations that our participants engage to justify their consumption of products of modern slavery:

1. Denial of Responsibility: The majority of participants shifted responsibility for addressing modern slavery onto stakeholders other than themselves – in particular, government and for-profit corporations. Government was viewed as being responsible for the codification and enforcement of anti-slavery legislation, businesses were viewed as responsible for monitoring and managing their own supply chains. Some participants acknowledged that consumer-citizens do hold a level of personal responsibility to address modern slavery in the goods and services that they themselves consume. This self-responsibility was within a multi-stakeholder environment.

2. Denial of Victim: Another tactic commonly used by participants to reduce the moral claims of enslaved people was that of viewing particular groups of modern slaves as being complicit – and even cunning – in their situation and, therefore, less of a victim.



Denials of victimhood mitigate participants' own moral obligation by projecting responsibility onto the enslaved individual for their situation.

3. Denial of Injury: Participants engaged in denials of injury by trivialising the experiences of slavery. For example, participants commonly trivialised the working conditions experienced by those enslaved. We also observed participants projecting themselves as being slaves – such as relaying that they were experiencing economic hardship on-par with that of local slaves, and by suggesting that they themselves are 'enslaved' to technology or to their work.

4. Denial of Definitive Evidence: An additional technique that was widely employed among our participants was denial of definitive evidence. By threading a hint of uncertainty into their considerations of instances of slavery, participants were able to discredit both claims of slavehood and any impetus to take action. Without concrete evidence of both the slavery itself and the means to tackle it, participants were able to neutralise their sense of internalised responsibility and experiences of guilt by justifying that to act might do more harm than good for the individual or group of people.

SECTION 3: EXTERNAL

5. External Factors Impact Intention and Control to Act

While some of the participants in our study were motivated to act in response to their understandings of modern slavery and harboured intentions to change their consumption behaviours accordingly, very few managed to enact these intentions (see Table 3). Those that did tended to make alternative consumption choices based upon a single issue that specifically resonated with them.

Table 3: Psychosocial and Environmental Barriers to Consumer Mobilisation

Examples of Psychosocial Barriers	Examples of Environmental Barriers
Lack of trust in labelling and/or 'slave-free' messaging.	Price / Value: An important but complex factor. Functionally, the perception of item price may not meet the financial capacities of participants. In contrast, it may also be that lack of transparency and/or labelling leads to a lack of trust that the higher item price represents ethical working conditions
Juggling Multiple Issues: some participants harboured multiple consumption concerns, such as climate change, environmental degradation, and social issues such as modern slavery. Trade-offs were often needed when market offerings addressed specific issues but not others.	Lack of clear, visible cues to signify the slavery status of consumption items.
Social Norms and Stigma: a fear that if they call out instances of local slavery that may be faith-based (e.g. child/forced marriages) that they may be vilified socially and in social media.	Inability to conduct research: in the absence of clear and trusted labelling, participants had to conduct their own research. The skills, time and tech needed do this research, however, were not always available.
Lack of credible knowledge: a fear/concern that their actions (e.g. boycotting, petitioning) may be misplaced or may even make the situation worse for vulnerable people. Participants were seeking external validation of instances of modern slavery.	Lack of immediacy when the instances of modern slavery are at a distance and seemingly unrelated to own consumption.
Feeling overwhelmed without a clear pathway/action plan.	Lack of availability, appeal or fit: at times, slavery-free options are not available for essential items, or lack fit or appeal.



6. Importance of Pathways to Action

Consumer perceptions of modern slavery were not only impacted by a lack of awareness and clarity as to what constituted modern slavery but also by a lack of clear and readily observable pathways to action.

A clear pathway to action enables consumers to form a plan to implement/mobilise their ethical intentions. Forming this plan to act creates in consumers a sense of power, agency and purpose and assists them in prioritising social and environmental ethical issues – such as modern slavery – over other considerations. Breaking existing habits is a key barrier to shifting consumer behaviour and forming a plan from a clearly communicated pathway to action is a critical step in deconstructing old habits and developing new habits that stick. 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.

Existing research suggests that the communication and reinforcement of clear pathways to action is particularly important for high-involvement consumer decision-making, such as purchasing a holiday or a computer, that involves in-depth consideration. In contrast, the use of credible labelling is an effective rule of thumb at the point of purchase for low-involvement consumer decisions, such as a milk, laundry detergent, or a chocolate bar. Further, as with awareness building, the credibility of the source is important to consumer attention to and uptake of communicated pathways to action.

In this study, we found that participants relied on clear and credible labelling to guide their mobilisation. Similarly, lack of labelling and a general lack of awareness about how and where to purchase slave-free products were barriers to action. Further, ambiguity as to what comprised modern slavery was a barrier to action in neutralising moral concern and, thus, motivation to take action.

This is important, as calls to action imply that consumers understand their responsibilities, can correctly categorise instances of modern slavery, know what action to take and are motivated to take that action:



"I think unless it gets to my attention in some way, then I just don't think about it. I know that's my brain works is, if you don't see or don't know about it, then it's easier to forget about it than if you do know about it." (Peter, Adelaide SA)

"If you're looking for coffee or a t-shirt, you just look for one of these logos, and you don't have to do your deep dives. You don't have to think about it because there is a guarantee that there's no slavery involved and it's fair... means that you don't have to think." (Phillipa, Regional TAS)

"I look at labels for where things are made. And I think about things, where if they're from... But yeah, I don't really notice anything slave-free myself. Do they exist?" (Tammy, Perth WA)

"I try and look for the fair trade symbol and try and buy things that are obviously a lot more local - well whatever my knowledge can provide me that they're fair trade and people, like there has been fair pay involved and all of this... So apart from labels, when I'm buying I also try and look up the brand online and sort of just read a little bit more before - so I have a few - so there are only a few things that I tend to buy as like packaged stuff... I've narrowed it down to a few brands and I try and stick to them." (Aarushi, Melbourne VIC)

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5. FURTHER INFORMATION

The findings in this report represent preliminary research which is now being taken forward into the larger scale study.

If you would like any further information on this and our other research, the work going forward, to discuss the research or to request hard copies of this report (and our other reports), please do email: contact@consumingmodernslavery.com

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