

Made to Overconsume

June 2025

Survey on marketing obsolescence and the influence of commercial strategies



Who is HOP ?

HOP – Halte à l'obsolescence programmée – is a French association regulated by the 1901 French law, that fights for the sustainability of products and against planned obsolescence.

Created in 2015, it is a national environmental protection association. It aims to unite and defend citizens, engage public and private decision-makers to move towards durable and repairable products. HOP wishes to contribute to the quest of the United Nations's sustainable development goals, especially the 12th (ODD12) which is "a call for producers, consumers, communities and governments to reflect on their habits and uses in terms of consumption, waste production, and the environmental and social impact of the entire value chain of our products."

HOP's work mainly involves raising public awareness and mobilizing stakeholders, as well as legal action and advocacy in France and Europe. It has created the websites produitsdurables.fr and bonusreparation.org. The association initiated a network of voluntary companies in 2018, the Club de la durabilité. Renowned for its expertise on electrical and electronic equipment, the association has written numerous reports on everyday products: printers, televisions, washing machines, tights, vehicles, etc.

In this new report, HOP looks at marketing obsolescence and puts forward recommendations to address its impact on the environment and consumers.



Executive summary

We live in a «society of envy, orchestrated by marketing», as one participant in the citizens' agora organised by HOP in March 2025 pointed out. Marketing can serve to promote sustainability and the ecological transition. However, the sector also has its pitfalls, particularly in encouraging over-consumption. Although 90% of French people claim to be at least aware of responsible consumption¹, they are constantly being encouraged to buy. Even a product that works is not immune to being replaced by its user: 39% of vacuum cleaners, 48% of television sets and 64% of smartphones are replaced when they are still working². When the incentive to renew is particularly aggressive, unfair or manipulative, it should be considered a marketing obsolescence offence. However, marketing that encourages over-consumption is also based on an accumulation of very deep-rooted, interwoven practices that cannot be considered criminal, but still deserve to be identified in a systemic way and regulated, given their impact on consumers and the environment.

HOP is therefore proposing an inventory of these practices. Discourses promoting novelty are reinforced by the omnipresence of advertising: consumers are exposed to more than 15,000 commercial stimuli daily³, and 66% of French people say they feel overexposed to advertising⁴. Right from the product design stage, the renewal of product ranges and generations creates an artificial novelty that makes old products obsolete. Price is also a major incentive, with monetised trade-ins and sometimes misleading promotional offers, for example. Finally, retailers exploit perception bias and use «dark patterns», misleading interfaces to manipulate consumers.

The control of these practices remains inadequate. Self-regulation of advertising does not really limit incentives to over-consume, and the renewal of ranges is not regulated by law. While prices are subject to certain rules, these do not directly concern over-consumption. Dark patterns are theoretically prohibited, but the legal framework is still too vague to be effective.

Faced with the predominance of marketing that encourages over-consumption, HOP is calling on the entire sector to take up the issue of product sustainability and is asking the French Government to launch a roadmap on the subject. It is vital that good marketing practices promoting the circular economy become widespread, and marginalise incentives for renewal. A framework seems necessary to give impetus to the transformation and not let consumers shoulder the responsibility for over-consumption. Drawing on discussions with a number of experts and at the citizens' agora organised by HOP in March 2025, the association has drawn up a list of proposals to combat marketing that encourages over-consumption. Among these 30 recommendations, HOP proposes:

- the legal recognition of the offence of marketing obsolescence;
- the improved regulation of advertising, with the power to impose penalties, and the introduction of a Roadmap for sustainable marketing and responsible consumption;
- the allocation of advertising displays in public areas solely for cultural communications or communications of general interest.

Our recommendations

With this report, HOP is proposing a systemic approach to marketing and the levers of over-consumption, in order to objectify the phenomenon, raise awareness among citizens who may fall victim to it, and propose adjustments. In an interview with HOP, Dimitri Naczaj, a doctor in social psychology, warns, however, that knowing about these mechanisms does not make us immune to them, since we are socially accustomed to them. It is therefore necessary to put an end to the incentives to over-consumption to which citizens are subjected if we are to ensure a desirable ecological transition towards sustainable and sober practices.

With these proposals, HOP aims to create a forum for discussion and debate with all stakeholders. We call on all players in the sector to get involved in this issue, to work together to find the most ambitious and pragmatic solutions in order to change the paradigm.

Although civil society took up the issue at the French Citizens' Convention on Climate (2020), the proposals put forward have not found the political backing needed to implement them. HOP calls on the public authorities to urgently take up the issue.

HOP's recommendations are geared towards the adoption of ambitious policies and changes in the marketing sector, and focus on manufactured consumer products, excluding food products, pollutants and single-use products. They are based on solutions identified by HOP, the network of players committed to sustainable consumption, and enriched by the work of the 33 participants and 10 experts involved in the citizens' agora organised by HOP on 28 and 29 March 2025. The association also brought together industry professionals on June 6, 2025 at the French Senate to reflect on these proposals.

Enabling the emergence of a new framework for more responsible marketing

01. Organising the sustainable marketing and responsible consumption Roadmap

Marketing plays a decisive role in shaping the collective imagination around consumption. It can also become an essential lever for transformation, by spreading new desirable narratives based on durability, sobriety and reparability⁵.

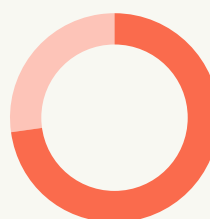
Marketers, communicators, trainers, associations and researchers can be mobilised to create a roadmap together, setting out a plan to truly transform the impact of the discipline, without limiting ourselves to cosmetic changes.

02. Creating the offence of marketing obsolescence

The most unacceptable marketing practices that encourage renewal should be considered as a marketing obsolescence offence, in order to establish a red line that must not be crossed when it comes to encouraging product renewal.

03. Ensuring a better regulation of advertising, with the power to impose penalties

HOP notes the inadequacy of the current system of self-regulation to regulate incentives to over-consume. The report Contribution et régulation de la publicité pour une consommation plus durable, co-written by three ministerial inspectorates, also highlights the shortcomings of this model⁶. HOP proposes an independent regulation of the sector, which would have effective sanctioning power in order to achieve real impact.



73%

of French people think that «advertising should be supervised by an independent authority, and be subject to control before broadcasting⁷»

According to the Occurrence - Ifop Group survey for HOP, in March 2025

04. Promoting the advertising of sustainable products and services

This could involve introducing a mandatory quota for advertising sustainable products or services, based on a legal chart of criteria. The repair bonus, a scheme to encourage consumers to repair their equipment, suffers from a lack of awareness. A national campaign should be launched to encourage widespread use of this scheme and to encourage repairers to obtain the certification.

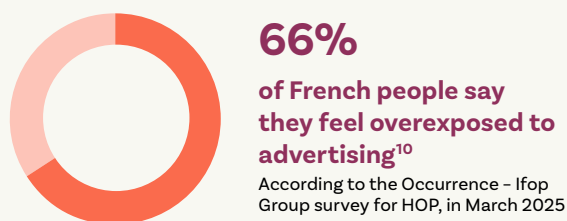
05. Produce a report on business models based on targeted advertising and data reselling

Many sectors currently rely on the revenue and visibility generated by advertising. However, there is little data available on the role the sector plays in our economic structure. The production of a report on this subject, for example by the French Agency for Ecological Transition (Ademe), would enable a detailed diagnosis of the dependence of certain sectors on advertising, and the identification of alternatives.

Transforming the impact of advertising to encourage sobriety

06. Restrict advertising in public spaces to cultural communication or communications of general interest

French local authorities have the power to restrict the display of advertising in public places, through local advertising regulations⁸. Many have created advertising-free zones⁹. These initiatives could be extended across the entire country, reserving advertising space in public places for sustainable, cultural offers or information of general interest, in line with proposal C2.2.1 of the French Citizens' Convention on Climate. Screens in stations and public transport and billboards on monuments undergoing renovation could, for example, be affected by such a restriction.



07. Introduce a tax on advertising expenditure to reduce the overall incentive to over-consume

The advertising sector being particularly unequal¹¹, taxing the biggest advertisers would help to rebalance it and to promote more virtuous products. The revenue from such measures could flow into campaigns to promote sobriety. With a view to promoting alternative modes of consumption, certain products or services could be exempted from advertising taxes, or even subsidised by the proceeds of the tax, such as organic farming, reused products, repair services or social and solidarity economy businesses.

08. Include a compulsory statement encouraging sobriety or alternatives from the circular economy in advertising for new products

This type of messages can already be found in car advertisements (messages related to active, shared mobility or public transport) or in food advertisements (*«for your health, avoid eating food that is too fat, salty or sweet»*). The same principle should be applied to purchases of new products, with, for example, the following statement: *«Before buying new, think about repairing and reusing»*.

09. Improving the transparency of advertising expenditure

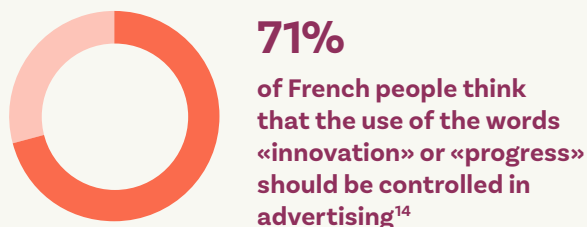
Access to data on advertising expenditure remains for now fairly limited, subject to the purchase of costly databases¹². In order to better regulate advertising and provide citizens with better information, data related to advertising expenditure, by campaign and by medium, should be made available to public authorities.

10. Strengthening climate contracts

Climate contracts could help promote the sector's transition, but their scope seems for now limited, according to the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE)¹³. The system should be improved by making it compulsory and binding, with mandatory minimum commitments.

11. Ensuring that all claims of innovation and performance are justified, similar to the regulations on greenwashing

To regulate and limit technowashing, it would be interesting to draw inspiration from the progress made in the area of greenwashing. The exact criteria for such a framework deserve to be discussed and established with a range of stakeholders. This could involve transparent communication about the functional benefits of the changes for consumers. According to Ethikis, depending on the type of product, a study of the impact of new features could be compared with the functional benefit for the user, in order to limit high impact «gadget» additions.



According to the Occurrence - Ifop Group survey for HOP, in March 2025

12. Mandatory display of repairability and durability indices in advertisements for the concerned products

Currently, the only requirement is to be «*visible or accessible to the consumer, in particular at the time of purchase*¹⁵». Repairability and durability indices should appear in all commercial communications relating to the products concerned.

13. Ban the promotion of products with a durability or repairability index score of 5/10 or lower

Advertising and promotional offers for non-sustainable products should be banned, in order to limit the incentives to buy them.

67% of French people believe that «*a product that is harmful to the environment should not be the subject of marketing*». In fact, 65% even believe that such a product «*should not be allowed to be commercialised*¹⁶».

14. Prohibit targeted advertising using geolocation tools or «smart» cameras

These practices are imposed on citizens without informing them or obtaining their consent. The CNIL considers that targeted advertising using smart cameras is incompatible with the GDPR¹⁷.

15. Generalise the use of adblockers

Internet browsers or brands of computers, smartphones or software should be encouraged to offer by default an official adblocker¹⁸, or at the very least make available to Internet users a list of official and secure blockers approved by the French Cybersecurity Agency (ANSSI)¹⁹. Along the same lines as the ban on unwelcome telephone canvassing, HOP also recommends the widespread use of the “Yes ad” («Oui pub») system²⁰ for advertising by post.

Restrict promotional offers to encourage people to take a step back when making a purchase

16. Ensuring that advertising around Black Friday-type events is banned

Article 12 of the AGEC law should be enforced in such a way as to ban advertising of Black Friday-type events, as was initially planned²¹. As sales, price reductions and batch sales are beneficial to low-income households, they should not be banned, but their advertising should be restricted to limit incentives to over-consume.

17. Include a minimum period for promotions

Promotional practices often rely on particularly tight deadlines, pushing consumers to make a quick decision. A price reduction or an exclusive offer should not last less than a certain period of time, for example two months.

18. Generalising the display of fair prices

In the interests of transparency and consumer information, marketers should display the «fair price» alongside the net price. The fair price should take into account repairability and durability indices, and the average lifespan of the product. It is similar to the total cost of ownership.

19. Include an extra step before validating an online purchase

This extra time would allow consumers to make fewer compulsive purchases and step back from the act of buying.

20. Supervising monetised smartphone trade-in programmes

Exchanging products in working condition for a discount on the price of a new one encourages the renewal of products, particularly smartphones. While they prevent old smartphones from being discarded without their parts being reused or recycled²², these programmes should not be authorised for smartphones less than two years old.

21. Redirecting the use of fractional payments to virtuous and sustainable products

Payment in instalments offers the possibility of reducing the immediate cost of a product and can therefore encourage compulsive buying. However, it is also a way for people on a tight budget to buy good quality products. This offer should be limited to the most virtuous products, based for example on a threshold score obtained on the repairability or durability index, or on product life cycle analyses.

Increase awareness of over-consumption-driving marketing

22. Broadcasting national awareness-raising campaigns about over-consumption

To reverse the trend, raising awareness of the issues surrounding over-consumption should be integrated into national communication objectives. Campaigns inspired by Ademe’s ‘dévendeurs’ (un-sellers) should be widely disseminated.

23. Create a National Responsible Communications Day

In the same spirit as the National Repair Days, this day would shed light onto the issues linked to over-consumption and its impacts, and democratise sober and responsible consumption practices. Fun tools such as *Machin Bidule's* Tech stickers could be used.

24. Include awareness of over-consumption in marketing studies and in ARPP certification for influencers

In order to change practices, the profession needs to evolve. HOP is calling for the introduction of a section dedicated to the ecological transition and the impact of the sector in marketing and communication studies. The Responsible Influence Certificate introduced by ARPP should include a mandatory part on the impact of advertising on over-consumption.

Encouraging the transformation of business models

25. Promoting spacing out new product ranges

A commercial launch of a new version of a technological product should not occur less than a year after the launch of the previous version, given that the technology was probably already acquired by the producer at the time of the previous version. Furthermore, products should remain compatible with accessories, consumables, chargers or batteries over several generations, and modularity (or upgrading) should be encouraged.



69%

of French people believe that a new generation of smartphones should not be released less than two years after the previous one²³

According to the Occurrence – Ifop Group survey for HOP, in March 2025

26. Maintain the original provisions of the bill on reducing the environmental impact of the textile industry

This bill was passed unanimously by the French National Assembly on 14 March 2024. In particular, it provided for a ban on advertising for brands exceeding a certain threshold of products available on the market, in order to encourage the reduction of product ranges. This provision must be retained in the final text.

27. Make it compulsory to highlight the most virtuous products throughout the purchasing process

On the basis of objective public criteria (durability and reparability index), virtuous products should be promoted at the point of sale, both in physical shops and on online platforms. Second-hand and reused products should be displayed on the same shelves as equivalent new products. Furthermore, in shops, the «closed aisle» layout should be regulated, as it encourages consumers to walk through each aisle, creating a purchasing path.

28. Introduce a minimum stock quota of reconditioned products or functional economy services for distributors of electrical and electronic equipment

Distributors should be required to offer reconditioned or rental products. The introduction of a minimum quota beforehand would harmonise the system across the country, along the lines of the French Climate and Resilience Law, which stipulates a minimum quota for shop floor space dedicated to bulk sales.

29. Promoting the eco-design of products, in particular through reparability and durability indexes

Encouraging eco-design makes it possible to generalise an economic system that is close to a circular economy. The European reparability index should include the price of spare parts, and particular attention should be paid to ensuring that the energy label on which it appears is legible for consumers. The French durability index should be extended to cover as much equipment as possible, by adapting the methodology used for electrical and electronic equipment.

30. Promote a charter of commitment for sustainable marketing in the context of circular economy services

Distributors offering circular economy services, such as product repair or reconditioning, should be offered the opportunity to sign a charter of commitment to sustainable marketing. In particular, the charter would contain commitments on ending incentives to consume by communicating promotional offers when subscribing to these services.

Marketing participates in product lifespan reduction

Occurrence- Groupe IFOP survey for HOP 2025

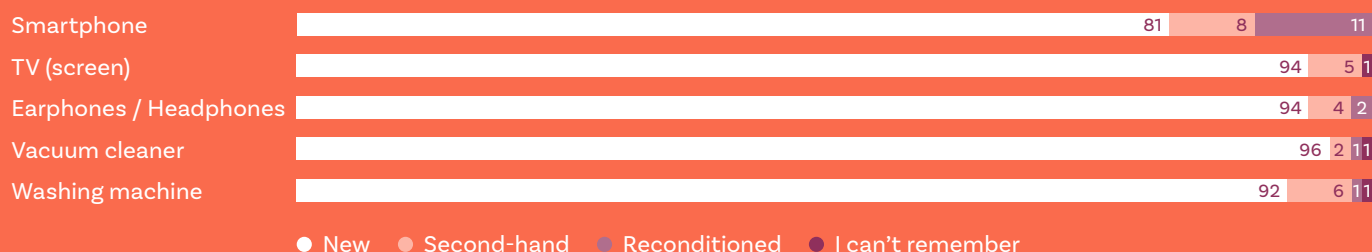
Legend

Survey carried out in March 2025 on a representative sample of the French population.

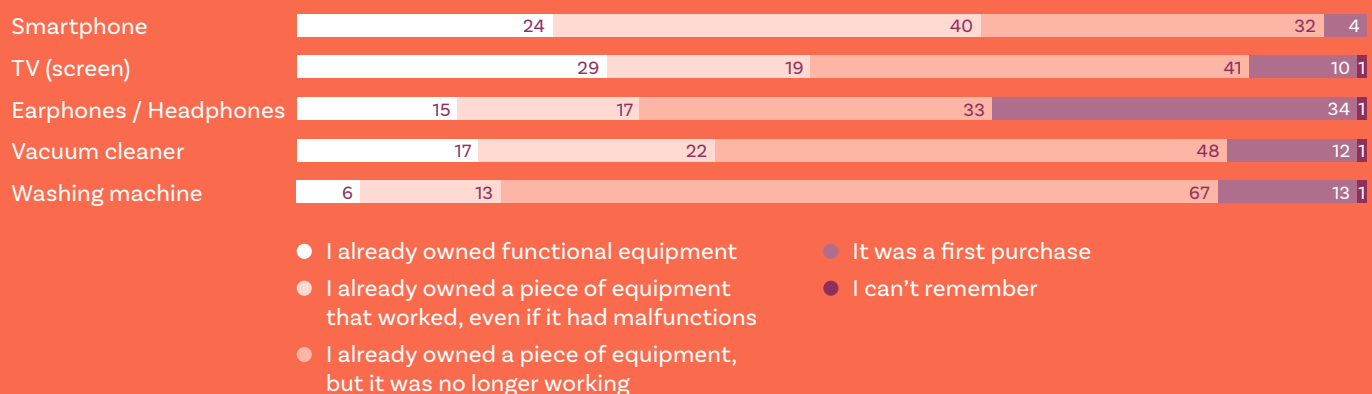
Items studied

smartphone, vacuum cleaner, washing machine, TV, headphones/earphones (wired or wireless)

The share of new vs second-hand purchases: condition of the product at the last purchase (%)



Product renewal: ownership and condition of the previous product at the time of purchase (%)



The commercial arguments that most influence citizens in replacing functional products (%)

56%

New features and/or a **technological innovation** compared with my old device (particularly for smartphones)

40%

Attractive price (excluding promotional offers)

33%

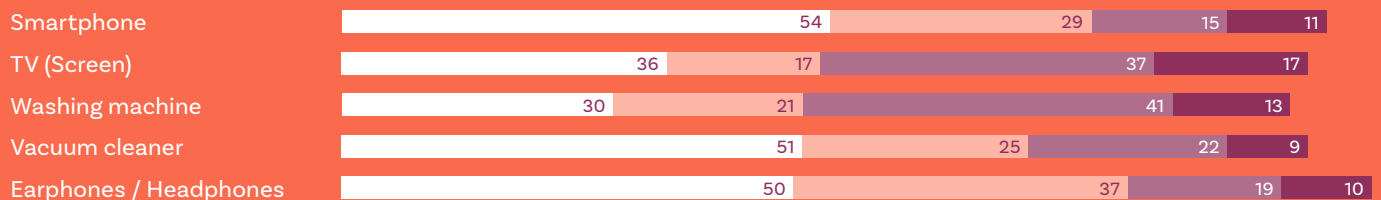
Promotional offers: sales, discount codes, etc. (particularly for TV sets)

32%

I was **attracted** to the brand (particularly for smartphones)

How did consumers who replaced a still functional product find out about the new product? (%)

Note: these results are taken from a multiple-choice question. Respondents were allowed to select more than one option. For example, 51% of French people found their new vacuum cleaner through advertising, 25% through people they know, and 22% had not heard of it before buying it.



- Via advertising, online, in the public space or in traditional media (TV, radio, etc.)
- Someone I know recommended it to me

- I had never heard of it before I bought it in a shop or online
- I can't remember

Service life and ideal lifespan of products



How French people feel about marketing

66%

of French people say they feel **overexposed to advertising**, whether online (social networks, influencers, websites, etc.), in public spaces or via traditional media (television, press, etc.).

57%

of French people say they are sometimes **suspicious of promotions** or are under the impression that they are misleading.

51%

of French people sometimes feel **manipulated by online algorithms** (social networks, cookies, etc.).

The level of support among French people for measures to regulate the sector

Measures that received public acclaim

73%

of French people believe that **advertising should be supervised by an independent authority**, and should be subject to checks before it is broadcast

71%

of French people say that the use of the words «**innovation**» or «**progress**» should be controlled in advertising

69%

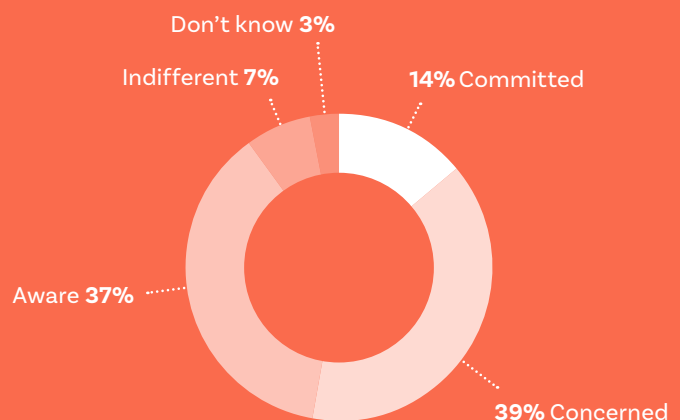
of French people believe that a **new generation of smartphone should not be released less than 2 years after its predecessor**

67%

of French people say that a **product that is harmful to the environment should not be marketed**


Level of awareness of responsible consumption

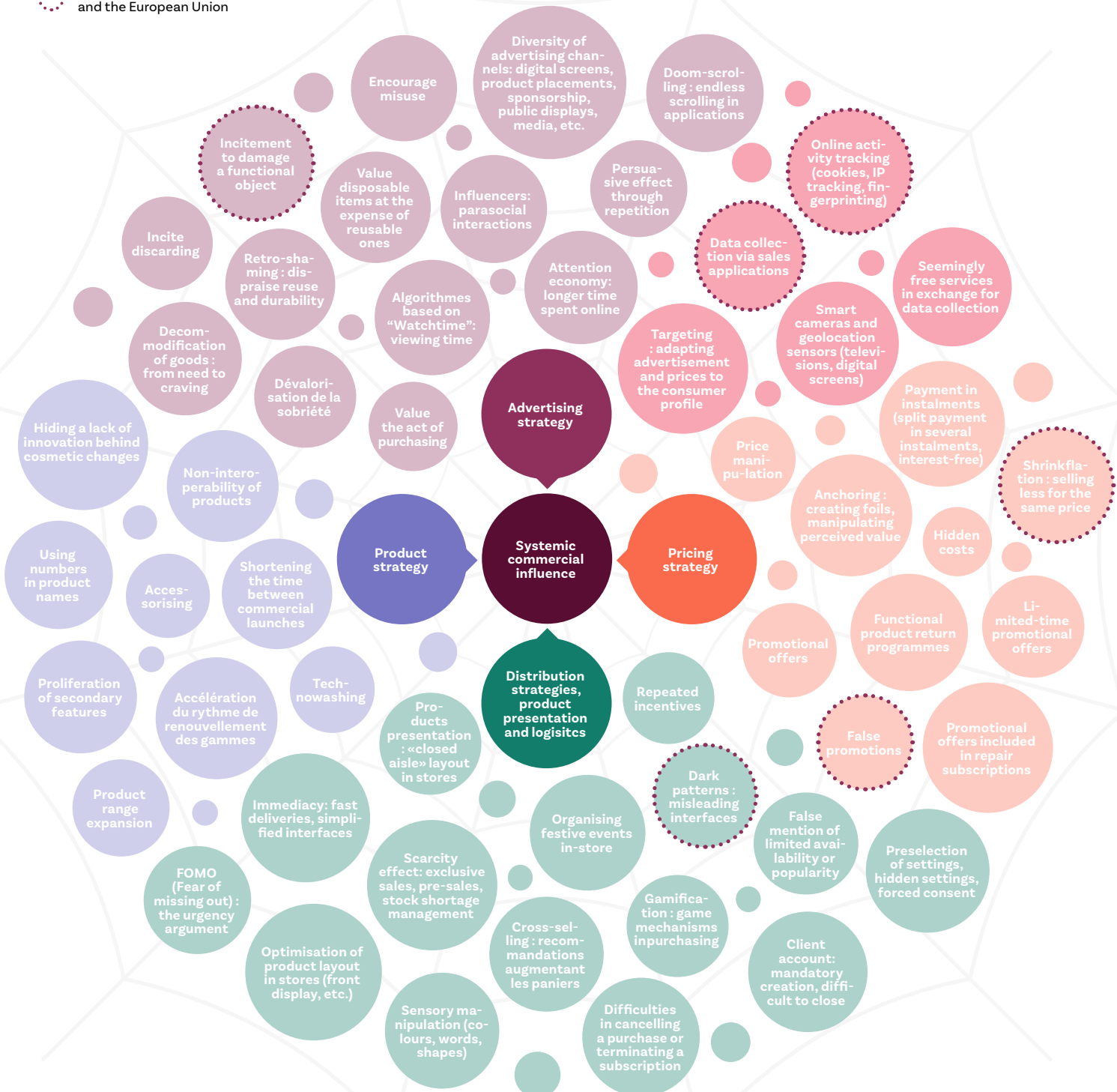
What is your position on responsible consumption?



Systemic commercial influence

How It Serves Overconsumption

 Partially regulated practices in France and the European Union



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