





# How To Create a Demand Reduction Campaign

## Summary

There are a number of steps that you should follow when designing a demand reduction campaign for illegal wildlife consumption. In summary, these steps are:

1. Identify the user groups for each of the different products or different uses
2. Find out the true motivations to use the products
3. Summarise the patterns
4. Derive potential reasons to stop using and calibrate with target group(s)
5. Identify the most effective communication channels
6. Design campaign messages and test

Below is a detailed explanation of each of these steps and some examples for a range of illegal wildlife products.

## Identify User Groups

### Primary User 1



### High Status Males

- Senior Businessmen/Finance Professionals/Government Officials.
- Group values rarity and expense rather than perceived medical properties.
- Acquiring rare produce associated with money, power and skill.
- Rhino horn gift used to demonstrate respect and competence when negotiating deals.
- Gifts used to influence and obtain preferential treatment from those in positions of power.
- Historically people have developed an interdependent self-concept vs. independent self-concept and, as a result, you can't put personal preferences before group objective – loss of face - peer group pressure

To design an effective demand reduction campaign, you need to know who the current users are who are driving the poaching and/or unethical practices. This may seem obvious, but is often harder than it seems, especially if the product is consumed exclusively by close-knit group(s) and is illegal in the country of consumption. In addition, sometimes uses are diverse and evolving quickly, often just in response to 'fashion trends'. For example, rhino horn is consumed primarily by Vietnam's wealthy elite. Even though much of the product is ground and then consumed mixed with water or wine, the actual use is largely symbolic. The supposed health benefits are not the primary reason for

consumption, gaining and maintaining status is. As rhino horn gained rapidly in value, a new use emerged – speculation (buying and stockpiling horn assuming its price will continue to go up).

Identifying the user groups requires working on the ground. For example, when researching consumption of seafood or wild meat products, most of the work of learning about the users can be done by interviewing restaurant owners and customers who are willing to participate. This means that there is rarely a need for quantitative research. To identify users and consumption patterns, often a relatively small number of semi-structured interviews is sufficient. In a recent study on luxury seafood consumption in China<sup>1</sup> the researchers identified the key users and their motivation to use from just 34 interviews of 30min – 2 hours.

In addition, it can be useful to gather some high-level information about the in-country context (economic drivers, changes to society or norms, inequality).

## Motivations to Use



You will need to immerse yourself in the user groups or those supplying the products to understand true motivations to use. To illustrate this let's come back to the study on luxury seafood consumption in China that I mentioned above. The researchers did not set out with the hypothesis that the true motivation for holding seafood banquets in expensive restaurants was lack of social trust. It's what they discovered from the interviews. Yet the issues of lack of trust in food safety and having to build trust with potential business/ government contacts are the key drivers for the decimation of certain types

of seafood like beche-de-mer, Napoleon wrasse and shark fin.

The best way of ensuring that you are not going into these interviews with the (unconscious) intention of confirming your existing beliefs is to work with researchers who are adept at parking their own values, beliefs and assumptions when conducting interviews – cultural anthropologists and sociologists. I would very much advise against using a market research agency for such work, they can only ask the questions you give them, so there is a very good chance that they will simply confirm whatever beliefs you were holding in the first place.

Sociologists and anthropologists know how to build trust, appear non-judgemental and non-threatening (which is understandably very difficult for a wildlife agency with an obvious agenda). These interviews are best driven by natural curiosity, exploring the beliefs and values of the users and how they perceive the context and choices that they have.

## Patterns & Motivations to Stop

Once you have acquired a good understanding of the user groups and their motivations and patterns of use you should calibrate your findings with some members of the target group. Feedback your observations and look for confirmation or (polite) disagreement. In some cultures, it is considered impolite to disagree, so make sure you know how to navigate such cultural obstacles.

Upon confirmation of the patterns and motivations to use you can now test potential options for motivations to stop consuming the products in question or participating in the rituals of consumption. Based on the usage patterns this may not be an individual choice (our favourite presumption in the West), but instead may only be possible through group action or even societal change. Consider that much of what you will hear in response to such questions will likely be self-serving – blaming others, the government and the like are common responses. At the same time, it will often be the users who have the best ideas on how to stop the practice of consuming.

## Primary Rhino Horn Users – Wealthy Elite Males

- Rhino Horn Customers  
Status Conscious = **ORANGE**
- Society in Viet Nam is in transition  
Confucian/Communist (**BLUE**) to  
Unregulated Capitalist (**ORANGE+RED**)
- Still different from Western **ORANGE**:
  - Male dominated
  - Peer Group oriented, not purely individualistic can't lose face by standing against group
  - **GREEN** fledgling (mainly younger generation)
  - No cultural affinity with animals
- Result:
  - Conservation messages are ignored if they are **GREEN**
  - Law Enforcement messages are ignored, regressed from **BLUE** to **RED**
  - Can't go via wives/children – ignored (wives, adult children confirmed)
  - Influencers - They follow the likes of: Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, Richard Branson Bill Clinton (No women, no Asian men). Media celebrities are for kids.



For example, when we interviewed the consumers of rhino horn in Viet Nam, it became clear that if they wanted to maintain the social status as part of the Vietnamese elite they had to continue to participate in the drinking rhino horn ritual. In order not to participate, either the host (highest status member of the group) had to change the ritual or there had to be a genuine excuse not to drink rhino horn (e.g. poisoned horn in the supply chain). Beyond those options, they did not see a way of not consuming rhino horn as they might lose status, access to government and business deals if they opted out on an individual basis.

In addition, you should seek insights from common models that apply to behaviour change:

- Theory of Reasoned Action
- Spiral Dynamics (see diagram)
- Theory of Subjective Culture and Interpersonal Relations
- Health Belief Model
- Social Cognitive Theory

## Effective Communication Channels

Western agencies are often predisposed to preference mass or social media to get to the target group(s). This may well be an effective channel for some groups, but is not always the case. Especially if user groups are small and tight-knit, this strategy is likely to be extremely wasteful. When you are looking for effective communication channels, look for those who can directly influence the target group and who have credibility with the users. This may be wives/husbands, children, higher status individuals, the church/priests/monks, celebrities, gurus or simply key local influencers if consumption is geographically restricted. For example, our research on elite male rhino horn users showed:

- It would not be useful to go through wives or (adult) children
- They felt media celebrities were for kids
- They followed and could be influenced by global business and political celebrities such as Bill Gates, Richard Branson and Bill Clinton; but only if they felt addressed by these leaders directly

If you are planning to use mass or social media, you will need to make sure that your target audience pays attention to the channels you plan to use. Quite often NGOs are offered ‘free’ advertising by some media groups to show their social responsibility, but the channels or locations or time slots offered may be completely useless in reaching your target group.

## Design Campaign Messages

For the campaign to work, the messages need to resonate with the target group. I have written extensively about this over the last couple of years in relation to rhino horn, covering the complexity of the issues and the links that need to be made in the [Breaking The Brand Blogs](#)<sup>2</sup>.

In more general terms, there are several factors to consider when designing messages:

1. Message form – visual, story, video, symbolic
2. Message content – affect, valence, intensity

Whilst most ad agencies will be familiar with designing the message form, few have the knowledge and expertise to design from a valence (positive or negative message), affect (emotion triggered) and intensity of message perspective. For example, using health fears is a proven strategy in anti-smoking ads, which work better than any other type of anti-smoking ads for adults currently smoking. In addition, such fear-based messages work most effectively if they are presented in conjunction with messages that boost self-efficacy (I know it’s hard, but I can quit) and outline

support available for quitting (e.g. phone hotline). A good overview of this is covered in a recent review paper<sup>3</sup>.

If not properly briefed, often ad agencies will default to their own emotions about the subject (e.g. empathy with the animal), even if that does not match motivations to stop in the target group. Further, they may assume that what works in their country/culture will also work in the target country and culture. More often than not such assumptions are not fully examined, and cultural context is neglected.

However, this can equally apply in reverse, when agencies in the target country assume that campaign types that haven't been tried and don't seem culturally appropriate may actually work equally well as they have in other markets (e.g. hard-hitting anti-smoking and drink driving ads have only very recently been adopted in China and Viet Nam).

1. Social trust and luxury seafood banquets in contemporary Beijing: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1683478X.2014.945689?journalCode=raan20>
2. Breaking The Brand Blogs: <https://breakingthebrand.org/category/blog/>
3. Tobacco Control and Mass Media Campaigns: [https://breakingthebrand.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/eR13\\_SD\\_Promoting-a-healthyAustralia-Tobacco-control-briefs.pdf](https://breakingthebrand.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/eR13_SD_Promoting-a-healthyAustralia-Tobacco-control-briefs.pdf)