

Exploring social influence and social marketing to reduce consumer demand for illegal wildlife

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ABSTRACT

Consumer demand for illegal wildlife is a major factor in species over-exploitation and global biodiversity loss. Governments and non-governmental organizations are just recently recognizing the significance of demand and its inherent social drivers. While greater recognition of demand is necessary, most conventional wildlife trade policy and practice do not incorporate social psychological and behavioral science to address the drivers of demand. That is, human behavior is the most significant driver of demand and understanding how behavior change can be accomplished is essential. We review social influence approaches utilized in various natural resource and conservation context. We then synthesize this literature with recent wildlife trade research and social marketing strategies to reduce consumer demand at local and regional scales. Our review illustrates social influence implemented through a social marketing framework at local and regional scales can influence behavior and reduce demand, while complementing conventional regulation, enforcement, education, and awareness approaches.

Keywords: Behavior change, conservation psychology, social norms, wildlife trade