

TRADING FACES

A SNAPSHOT OF THE ONLINE IVORY
TRADE IN INDONESIA, THAILAND AND VIET NAM IN 2016
WITH AN UPDATE IN 2019

Karlina Indraswari, Boyd T.C. Leupen, Minh D. T. Nguyen, and Maethinee Phassaraudomsak

TRAFFIC REPORT

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TRAFFIC is a leading non-governmental organisation working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BKSDA	Nature Conservation Agency or Badan Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam (Indonesia)
cc	cubic centimetre (or cm ³)
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CoP	Conference of the Parties (CITES)
DLD	Department of Livestock Development (Thailand)
DNP	Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (Thailand)
ETIS	Elephant Trade Information System
GAKKUM-LHK	Law Enforcement for Environment and Forestry
gr	Gramme
IDR	Indonesian Rupiah
IFAW	International Fund for Animal Welfare
kg	kilogramme
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MIKE	Monitoring Illegal Killing of Elephants
n	Number
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIAP	National Ivory Action Plan (CITES)
THB	Thai Baht
USD	United States Dollar
VND	Vietnamese Dong
WARPA	Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act B.E. 2525 (WARPA 1992) (Thailand)
WHU	Wild Hawk Unit (Thailand)

ONLINE IVORY TRADE INDONESIA, THAILAND



Facebook groups and
accounts monitored

June – July
2016 **69**

Facebook groups and
accounts still active

July
2019 **44**



Instagram accounts
monitored

June – July
2016 **51**

Instagram accounts
still active

July
2019 **25**

ACTIVITY IN & VIETNAM



June 2016 - July 2016

8,508
items derived from
**elephant
ivory**

offered for sale in

1,559

Facebook & Instagram posts

ITEMS AND TRADERS

INDONESIA

1,009

Total items
offered for sale

500

SMOKING PIPES

250

traders

THAILAND

2,550

Total items
offered for sale

836

PRAYER BEADS

234

traders

VIET NAM

4,949

Total items
offered for sale

1,574

RINGS

86

traders



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Both African Elephants *Loxodonta africana* and Asian Elephants *Elephas maximus* are listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and all international commercial trade in elephant ivory has been banned since 1989. The three countries of focus in this report; Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam, are parties to CITES and all have legislation that is generally believed to meet all requirements for CITES implementation. However, African Elephants are not protected under Indonesian law. In Viet Nam, despite the regulation of various aspects of the ivory trade, there remains a grey area concerning the legal status of ivory crafted before 1992 due to the absence of laws regulating the trade of products made from threatened species (which Asian Elephants were considered in Viet Nam) before that year (Decree 18/1992/HDBT). In Thailand, all commercial trade in African Elephant products is prohibited under the country's *Wild Animal Preservation and Protection Act* (WARPA) B.E. 2535 of 1992 since 2014.

Under Indonesian law, at the start of the writing of this report (2016), Asian Elephants were erroneously listed as *Elephas indicus* instead of *Elephas maximus*, potentially creating a legal loophole. However, since then Indonesia has recently revised its legislation, to list only the Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*) as protected species, other elephants are not protected. Seizures of non-Asian Elephant ivory have been recorded in Indonesia, showing not only the country's involvement in ivory from more than one species of elephant but also the crucial need for Indonesia to again revise its legislation in order to protect all elephants. In Thailand, Asian Elephant products cannot be traded without a permit, which are only granted for domesticated elephant ivory. In Viet Nam, all commercial trade in Asian Elephant products is prohibited, except when it concerns pre-1992 processed ivory.

During a 25-day online survey conducted between June and July 2016, no less than 8,508 items derived from elephant ivory were found offered for sale in 1,559 Facebook and Instagram posts across Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam. These posts were found across a total of 62 Facebook groups, seven Facebook accounts and 51 Instagram accounts, totalling 120 groups and accounts.

Vietnamese online platforms were found to have the largest quantities of ivory items offered for sale, representing 58% (n=4,949) of the total, followed by Thailand (30%, n=2,550) and Indonesia (12%, n=1,009).

The greatest number of posts was recorded in Thailand (42%, n=652), followed by Indonesia (33%, n=522) and Viet Nam (25%, n=385). Only in very few posts (2%, n=25) proof of legality for the items on offer was provided or claimed to exist.

The popularity of certain item types was found to differ between the three countries, with functional items (cigarette holders in particular) being the most popular online ivory commodity in Indonesia (50%, n=500), religious items in Thailand (44%, n=1,134), and jewellery in Viet Nam (92%, n=4,542).

At least 570 traders were identified during the 2016 survey, with the highest number operating in Indonesia (n=250), followed by Thailand (n=234) and Viet Nam (n=86). This result stands in contrast to the number of items sold in each country, and also to the number of posts per country. Patterns showed that online traders in Viet Nam sold more items with fewer sellers, while in Indonesia, there are more sellers and fewer items. In Indonesia, most traders were found to be active in Central Java. In Thailand and Viet Nam, traders were concentrated in the capital cities (Bangkok and Ha Noi, respectively).

To obtain an indication of trade developments since 2016, a five-day snapshot survey was conducted between 1-5th July 2019. Of the 120 groups and accounts found in 2016, 69 (57.5%) were found to still be active. Aggregate trade numbers were found to be higher than the average weekly numbers encountered in 2016. A total of 2,489 ivory items was found for sale in 545 posts across the three target countries, representing an aggregate 46.3% increase in items and a 74.8% increase in posts in comparison to 2016. Of the three countries, Viet Nam was the only one for which decreased trade numbers were recorded in 2019 (a 81.5% decrease in the number of items and a 81.8% decrease in the number of posts).

This study highlights a number of key findings. Firstly, with approximately one thousand ivory products recorded during the 2016 survey and 402 in just a five days period during the 2019 survey, Indonesia clearly has an active online ivory trade. Research into the country's domestic ivory trade has generally been absent and Indonesia is often left out of global ivory trade studies because of its perceived low ivory trade levels. The current study's preliminary findings, coupled with recent ivory seizure incidents implicating Indonesia, warrant further research into the extent of the country's ivory trade.

Secondly, Thailand's status in the global ivory trade has changed—from a Party of “primary concern” in 2013 to the country exiting the CITES National Ivory Action Plan (NIAP) process in July 2018. This is largely due to legal reforms and a large reduction in the open availability of ivory in its physical markets. Nevertheless, large quantities of ivory items, for which the legality could not be established, were found to be traded on the country's social media platforms. This suggests a potential (partial) shift from physical to online ivory trade in Thailand. In 2019, trade numbers were found to be higher than in 2016 (increases of 273.3% and 178.4% for items and posts respectively).

Lastly, Viet Nam is a Category A Party under the CITES NIAP, attributed to its role as an important receiving country for large-scale ivory shipments from Africa. The current study reinforces recent studies on Viet Nam's considerable domestic ivory trade, this study found that at least part of this trade is conducted through social media platforms.

The fact that online ivory trade is taking place in Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam through social media warrants further research into – and monitoring of – these platforms, not just in these three countries, but in all countries where a potential domestic ivory market is present. Research into the online marketplace should become an integral part of future ivory trade studies to understand fully trade dynamics in the market of focus.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Based on this study's findings, TRAFFIC recommends the following:

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement agencies should devise strategies to deal better deal with the rising phenomenon of online ivory trade. Due to the complexities of the online trade, such as changing trade patterns, unclarity in relation to the legality of the trade, unverified locations of users and traders and the masking of true trade activities, new best practice monitoring techniques will have to be devised and adopted.

National and international multi-agency monitoring and enforcement collaborations should be strived for. Collaborations should not be limited to enforcement agencies but should also include online trade platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as NGOs who can play useful roles in terms of dedicated ongoing monitoring.

As part of Facebook's continued efforts under the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online—a joint Coalition facilitated by TRAFFIC, WWF and IFAW - the company introduced a policy in April 2019 to ban the trade of all live animals on their platform from non-verified physical businesses, as well as all endangered species and their products across the platform. While this a positive first step in tackling this problem, closer engagement with government agencies to identify and take action against those flouting laws, particularly repeat offenders, is important. In addition Facebook has committed to taking down posts that are in violation of their standards, which to some extent serves to reduce the chances of purchasing such items. In addition to this, law enforcement agencies need to constantly keep a lookout for the dynamics that are occurring on other platforms, to prevent shifting of trade from one online platform (such as Facebook or Instagram) to another. Only with rigorous and continued monitoring, investigations and strong convictions for those found engaging in criminal activity can the scale of this trade be reduced over time.

Enforcement efforts should be directed towards identified ivory trade hot spots. These hotspots should be subjected to intensified online and physical crime investigations, which should include constant monitoring, the identification of local criminal networks and the analysis of local trade dynamics. Some important trade hot spots, as identified by this study, are Central Java and the Nusa Tenggara Provinces in Indonesia, Surin Province and the Bangkok administrative area in Thailand, and Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City and Dak Lak Province in Viet Nam.

LEGISLATION

National legislation should be amended in all three focus countries so that it sufficiently incorporates illegal online wildlife crime; this would also be in line with *CITES Decision 17.92 on Combating wildlife cybercrime*. The severity of the illegal ivory trade should be reflected in both wildlife and online trade laws and regulations. Penalties pertaining to illegal online ivory trade should be increased in order to be sufficiently deterrent. Per country, the following legislative amendments are desired:

Indonesia

Indonesia has recently issued a new list of protected species in 2018 (The ministry decree NOMOR P.106/MENLHK/SETJEN/KUM.1/12/2018) and currently lists the Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* as protected. However there still remains no listed protection for elephant species deriving from outside of the country, still leaving a loophole for trade of non-Asian Elephant species in the country. Indonesia should revise this limitation if it were to help protected elephant species globally.

Indonesia's *Law No. 11 of 2008 Concerning Electronic Information and Transactions* should be revisited so as to list specific law enforcement actions and sanctions relating to the online trade in prohibited species, including elephants, in alignment with the requirements of CITES.

Thailand

Thailand should amend the *Civil and Commercial Codes Book III*, which governs trade and civil activities in Thailand so that it better regulates online trade in wildlife products, especially protected species, criminalises illegal online ivory trade and provides clearer penalties.

Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, new laws – the *Penal Code No. 100/2015/QH13*, along with *Law No. 12/2017/QH14* – have come into force on 1st January 2018. These laws are more robust and provide more effective punitive measures in the fight against wildlife crime, with penalties for criminal offences now increased to fines of maximum of VND2 billion (USD88,438.20) and imprisonment of up to 15 years. Whilst these new laws are an improvement to previous legislation, they will need to be strictly implemented and enforced if they are to serve as an effective deterrent to wildlife crimes.



PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SOCIAL VIGILANCE

A proactive engagement of the public to report suspicious online ivory trade to the relevant authorities is highly desirable. Facebook currently offers the option to report any illegal behaviour directly to the company itself. Reporting is also possible directly to national law enforcement agencies and through TRAFFIC's specially designed global community action app: the *Wildlife Witness App*. In Thailand, individuals can also report any illegal online trade to the Wild Hawk Unit (WHU), a taskforce of the Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Division whose job it is to tackle wildlife smuggling. Incidents can be reported to WHU's Facebook page and Line account (a messenger service). In Indonesia, similar opportunities are provided by the Directorate General of Law Enforcement for Environment and Forestry (GAKKUM-LHK). Incidents are reported via the GAKKUM phone app. The public needs to be encouraged to make use of these facilities.

MONITORING AND RESEARCH

The levels of online ivory trade that were found in Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam warrant further research and monitoring of online trade platforms; not just in these three countries, but in all countries where a potential domestic ivory market is present. Research into the online marketplace should be an integral part of future ivory trade studies.



INTRODUCTION



The illegal ivory trade has been identified as one of the main causes of declines in elephant populations in both Africa and Asia (Santiapillai and Jackson, 1990; Thouless *et al.*, 2016). Under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* has been listed in Appendix I since 1975 (when the Convention came into effect); a status that precludes all commercial international trade. The African Elephant *Loxodonta africana* was first listed in CITES Appendix III for only one country in 1976, but all populations were soon transferred to Appendix II in 1977; a listing that allowed international commercial trade under CITES export permits. However, following rampant illegal trade in ivory and serious declines in African Elephant numbers, the CITES Parties agreed to transfer all populations to Appendix I in late 1989. Eight years later, the African Elephant populations of Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe were transferred back to Appendix II under a restrictive annotation and, in 2000, South Africa's population was accorded the same status. Under the Appendix II listing for these four countries, trade in raw ivory has only been permitted on two occasions and was restricted to designated importing partners for domestic consumption, Japan in 1999 and Japan and China in 2008. Otherwise, raw ivory in these four African countries was considered to be listed in Appendix I and regulated as such, meaning that from the standpoint of Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam, no raw ivory from African Elephants has been eligible for legal import for commercial purposes for nearly three decades.

Despite the CITES trade ban, the demand for ivory continues to drive poaching and remains a grave threat to the survival of wild elephants (Shepherd and Nijman, 2008; Stiles, 2009a; 2009b; Milliken, 2013; Doak, 2014; Lawson and Vines, 2014; Krishnasamy *et al.*, 2016; Milliken, 2016). An assessment of site-specific data generated by the CITES Monitoring Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) programme estimated that 100,000 elephants had been killed throughout Africa over a three-year period from 2010 to 2012 (Wittemyer *et al.*, 2014). More recent estimates indicate approximately 20,000 African Elephants are being poached annually (CITES, 2016a).

During the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP16) to CITES in 2013, the development of National Ivory Action Plans (NIAPs) was mandated for Parties identified having concerns with its trade in elephant ivory, with Thailand and Viet Nam categorised as countries most affected by the illegal ivory trade. In the latest iteration of the trend in illegal ivory trade; the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) report shows that problems remain serious, with more than 393 tonnes of ivory seized from 2008–2017 (Milliken *et al.*, 2018). Whilst NIAP implementation seems to show some positive impact in decreasing ivory trade in certain countries like Thailand, overall illegal ivory trade remains resilient at high levels.

Online markets are among the fastest growing markets in Southeast Asia. With 260 million users already online and a reported increase of 3.8 million users per month, e-commerce in Southeast Asia is currently valued at USD88 billion and is expected to grow by 32% per year (Google and Temasek, 2016). The increased popularity of online trading platforms brings with it new opportunities for illegal wildlife traders. The anonymity of the internet makes online trade platforms a the preferred alternative to physical markets which, due to heightened awareness and stricter enforcement, have become a riskier place for the illegal ivory trade. The internet's ability to reach enormous groups of potential buyers at once increases its attractiveness to wildlife criminals. The development of online wildlife crime and the challenges it may pose for law enforcement have been described a number of years back (Carrasco *et al.*, 2014). The increasing scale of the online wildlife trade has recently been recognised as a threat at the 17th CITES CoP under *Decision 15.57 and Decision 17.92 on Combating wildlife cybercrime* (<https://cites.org/eng/dec/valid17/81840>) (CITES, 2016b). It was recognised that “*the growth of the internet has facilitated communication and commerce between individuals and institutions at a global scale, and there is a need to continually scale up efforts to address wildlife crime linked to the Internet*” (CITES, 2016b).

Within the online trade, the use of social media platforms appears to be particularly popular. Contrary to conventional online trading platforms, such as commercial trade portals and online auction websites, social media platforms are generally free of charge. As of 2017, no less than 2.95 billion worldwide users are connected to social networks (<http://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>). In China, a one-month TRAFFIC study of the online ivory market in 2013 found over 115 elephant tusks, more than 276 ivory pieces, at least 77 whole rhino horns and pieces and 46 Helmeted Hornbill *Rhinoplax vigil* casques offered for sale (Xiao and Wang, 2015). A 2016 TRAFFIC study into the wildlife trade on Facebook in Peninsular Malaysia found over 300 mammals, birds and reptiles offered for sale in posts over a five-month period (Krishnasamy and Stoner, 2016). This assessment documented 14 Facebook groups with some 70,000 members advertising wildlife in their posts. A 2017 TRAFFIC study documented a total of 2,245 unique live reptile posts, representing 115 taxa and a minimum of 5,082 individuals posted by 1,046 users in 90 pre-selected Facebook groups in the Philippines. The cumulative membership (e.g. summed membership without removing people who were members of multiple groups) in the 90 Facebook groups at the beginning of the survey was 359,328, but quickly increased by 11% within three months (Sy, 2018).

The pervasive scale of online wildlife and ivory trade on social media platforms is cause for concern and warrants further research into online markets in NIAP countries, particularly in the context of assessing the potential displacement of physical ivory markets (Krishnasamy, *et al.*, 2016). The current study focuses on three countries in Southeast Asia, namely Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam. All three countries rank highly in terms of biodiversity, including the presence of Asian Elephants, and have previously been identified as important

players in the international wildlife trade. Preliminary assessment of Indonesia and Thailand's online ivory markets was previously conducted over a one-week period in 2016 and found 173 and 655 ivory items offered for sale on social media platforms in Indonesia and Thailand, respectively (TRAFFIC, 2017).

Indonesia's ivory trade has not featured prominently in recent ivory trade studies in the Asian region. As a result, little is known about Indonesia's ivory trade markets. In a recent market survey in Bali, only two pieces of ivory were found (Nijman and Nekaris, 2014). In the ETIS report to CITES CoP16, Indonesia was categorised as a country with "modest" involvement in the illegal ivory trade, playing no major role either as a transit or a destination country. However, recent seizure incidents suggest a potential higher presence of ivory trade activity in the country than previously thought. Typical ivory seizures within Indonesia involve swagger sticks, carvings, trophy tusks, jewellery and cigarette holders, with the latter being a particularly popular item among Indonesian customers (Hendry, 2015; Winarno, 2015; Putra, 2016; Rahmad, 2016). From January 2015 through September 2017, Indonesia was implicated in 22 raw or worked ivory seizures that had an estimated weight of 2,909 kg, according to ETIS records (Tom Milliken, pers. comm., 13th October 2017). The volume of seized ivory in Indonesia can be seen in **Table 1**. Indonesia was also reported to have had at least three elephant deaths due to poaching between 2015 and 2016 (Anggoro, 2015; Hutasoit, 2015; Anon., 2016a). These incidents, along with recent scandals involving the trade in – and possession of – ivory items by public figures (Jaya, 2016; Movanita, 2016), have caused Indonesian media attention on the issue of ivory trade to increase.

Table 1. ETIS seizure data for Indonesia between January 2015 and September 2017.

ETIS Seizures (SZ)	Indonesia			
	Raw Ivory		Worked Ivory	
	No. of SZ	Weight (kg)	No. of SZ	Weight (kg)
SZ made in:	8	2,097.64	1	1.65
SZ made elsewhere but going to:	3	420.08	3	260.27
SZ made elsewhere but coming from:	0	0	5	27.66
SZ made elsewhere but involving national as a suspect:	1	58.80	1	42.88
Total	12	2,577	10	332
Grand total	No. of SZ		Weight (kg)	
	22		2,909	

Until recently, Thailand was considered to be among the most important destination countries in the international ivory trade, owing to its large, unregulated domestic ivory market, with most products originating from African Elephants rather than the native species (TRAFFIC, 2015; Krishnasamy *et al.*, 2016). Thai people hold elephants and elephant products in high esteem and often associate elephants with religion (Stiles, 2009a). Consequently, many Thai nationals believe that ivory holds mystical powers and will bring them good fortune and success (TRAFFIC, 2017). Forensic examination of 160 ivory products in local markets found that the vast majority was fashioned from ivory sourced in Africa, dispelling any notion that the country's trade was based on ivory from local Asian Elephants (TRAFFIC, 2015). These results confirmed the need for the Thai Government, pursuant to its previous NIAP process under CITES, to amend its domestic ivory regulations and control illegal trade, especially with respect to non-indigenous African Elephants (Doak, 2014; Krishnasamy *et al.*, 2016; Milliken *et al.*, 2016). In line with new legislation, Thailand embarked upon a nationwide registration campaign, which resulted in more than 40,000 people registering 670,984 ivory products that collectively weighed 200,358 kg as of August 2015 (Krishnasamy *et al.*, 2016). Studies show that legal reforms were followed by a decline of ivory availability on the country's physical markets, dropping from 14,500 ivory products to fewer than 300 recorded items over an 18-month period from December 2013 (Krishnasamy *et al.*, 2016). According to ETIS records, Thailand has been implicated in some 52 raw and worked ivory seizures involving an estimated 7,887 kg of ivory between January 2015 and September 2017 (Table 2). Virtually all of these seizures were made in the country itself, demonstrating increased law enforcement action (Tom Milliken, pers. comm., 13th October 2017). The country's efforts have resulted in a change in its standing under the CITES NIAP process—from a Party of “primary concern” in 2013 (now referred to as Category A Party) to the country finally exiting the NIAP process on 1st July 2018 due to legal reforms and enforcement action taken, particularly since 2014.

Table 2. ETIS seizure data for Thailand between January 2015 and September 2017.

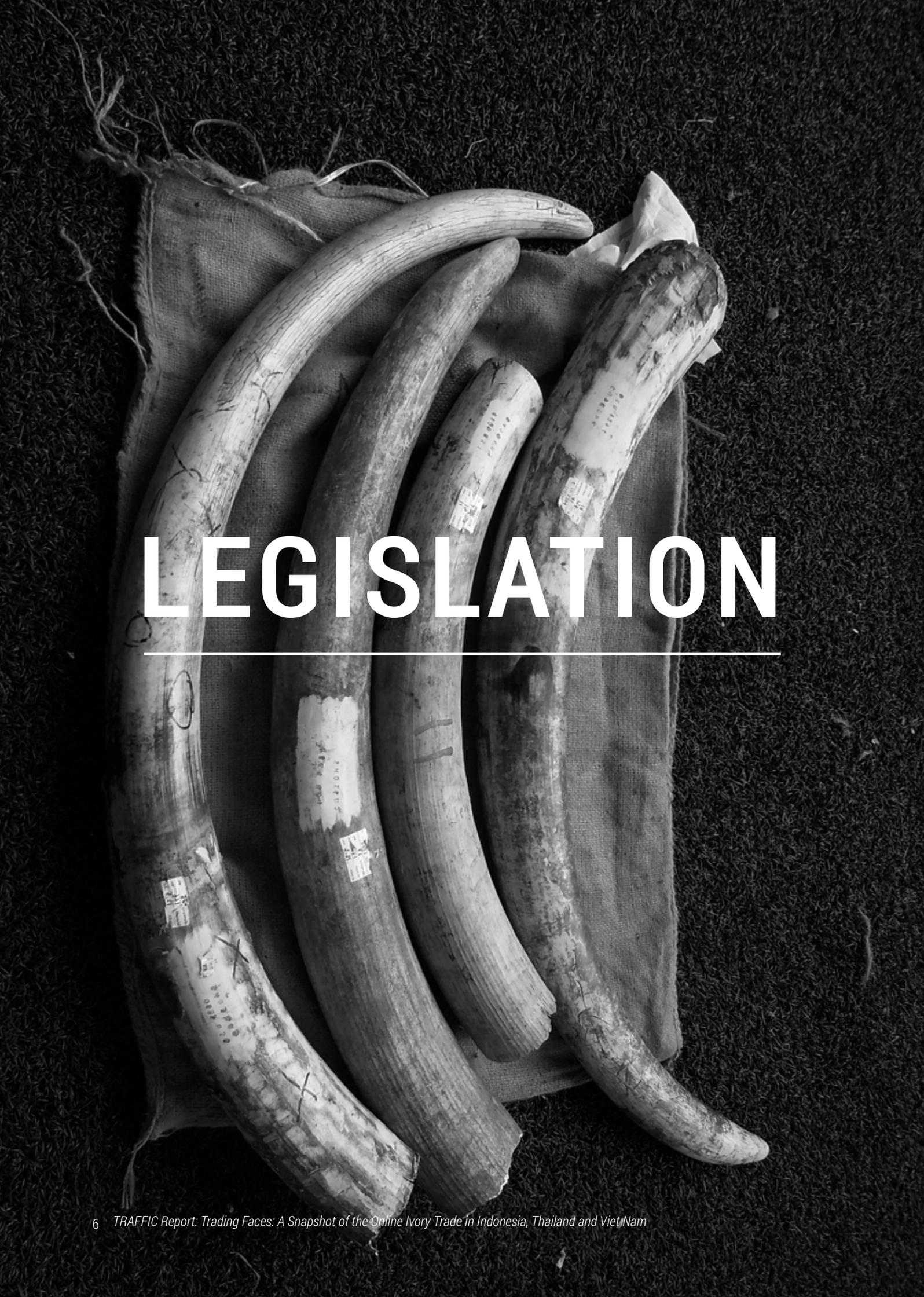
ETIS Seizures (SZ)	Thailand			
	Raw Ivory		Worked Ivory	
	No. of SZ	Weight (kg)	No. of SZ	Weight (kg)
SZ made in:	17	7,551.50	11	48.59
SZ made elsewhere but going to:	1	64.12	2	0.24
SZ made elsewhere but coming from:	1	125.3	20	97.21
SZ made elsewhere but involving national as a suspect:	0	0	0	0
Total	19	7,741	33	146
Grand total	No. of SZ		Weight (kg)	
	52		7,887	

Viet Nam has a long established ivory trade industry which has been documented on a number of occasions (Stiles, 2008; 2009a; 2009b; Nguyen and Willemsen, 2015). The country has also played a prominent role as a transit point for illegal raw ivory trade to neighbouring China (Milliken *et al.*, 2013, Milliken *et al.*, 2016). Over the years, several Vietnamese nationals have been arrested smuggling African ivory into Viet Nam or illegally exporting ivory from Africa (Milliken *et al.*, 2016). In recent years, a cross-border trade in processed ivory between Viet Nam and China has emerged and has been believed to be on the increase (Milliken *et al.*, 2016). An ivory trade survey of Viet Nam's physical markets in 2014 found a decrease in the amount of ivory compared to similar studies in 2001 and 2008 (Nguyen and Willemsen, 2015) but another survey in 2015, which was largely based on observations in different locations in the north of the country, exposed a six-fold increase in the open availability of ivory items compared to what was found in 2008 (Vigne and Martin, 2016). This trade was found to have expanded in a number of tourist places that apparently were catering to visitors from mainland China. A large increase in overall ivory availability was also noted in Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi. In total, the 2015 survey found more than 16,000 ivory products for sale in 242 outlets throughout the country (Vigne and Martin, 2016). According to ETIS records, Viet Nam was implicated in 144 raw and worked ivory seizures between January 2015 and September 2017, estimated to weigh a total of 30,772 kg (Tom Milliken, pers. comm., 13th October 2017) (**Table 3**). Since 2013, the country has held an important position in the global ivory trade—it is considered a Category A country, being most affected by the illegal trade in ivory (<https://www.cites.org/eng/niaps>).

Table 3. ETIS seizure data for Viet Nam between January 2015 and September 2017.

ETIS Seizures (SZ)	Viet Nam			
	Raw Ivory		Worked Ivory	
	No. of SZ	Weight (kg)	No. of SZ	Weight (kg)
SZ made in:	32	21,778.14	11	186.87
SZ made elsewhere but going to:	21	6,174.83	28	1,904.09
SZ made elsewhere but coming from:	2	285.65	36	28.98
SZ made elsewhere but involving national as a suspect:	6	242.22	8	71.72
Total	61	28,581	83	2,191
Grand total	No. of SZ		Weight (kg)	
	144		30,772	

This report aims to provide snapshots of the online ivory trade in Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam and in doing so, heighten the understanding of emerging avenues of ivory trade that are not otherwise being tracked in a meaningful and proactive manner.



LEGISLATION

Indonesia

Indonesia has been a signatory to CITES since 1978. The country is ranked as having Category 1 legislation under the CITES legislation process pursuant to *Resolution Conf. 8.4 (Rev. CoP15) on National Laws for Implementation of the Convention* (CITES SC66 Inf. 19, 2016). This means that Indonesia's legislation is generally believed to meet all requirements for CITES implementation. In this regard, Act No. 5 of 1990, Concerning Conservation of Living Resources and Their Ecosystems (commonly referred to as the *Conservation Act*) constitutes the country's primary wildlife law. Current sanctions under the *Conservation Act* consist of prison sentences of up to five years and fines of up to IDR100 million (USD7,620) for any deliberate trade in protected animals, and prison sentences of up to one year and fines of up to IDR50 million (USD3,810) for any trade in protected animals carried out due to negligence. Unfortunately, such sentences are rarely given out (Hernawan, 2015a; Hernawan, 2015b; Hanifah, 2016; Anon., 2017a).

However, these laws and regulations have flaws. Indonesian law currently does not accommodate any non-native species, including African Elephants, or their parts and derivatives. This effectively means that Indonesia is unable properly to enforce CITES with respect to non-indigenous species, making the country's Category 1 listing misguided. If non-native CITES-listed species enter the country, the Indonesian Government is not empowered to take any legal action against traders and owners (USAID, 2015).

Act No. 11 of 2008 on Information and Electronic Transactions provides Indonesia's legal framework for governing online activities including trade transactions. Indonesia additionally has *Act No. 7 of 2014*, which stipulates certain procedures for all forms of business and trade, including online trade. Neither of these laws explicitly prohibit the sale of ivory or any other wildlife products. However, they do state that it is prohibited to sell any items that are illegal under the Indonesian Law, despite not referencing any law in particular. Violation of the law carries a variety of sanctions, ranging from revocation of business licences to prison sentences of up to four years and fines of up to IDR12 billion (USD883,000). Sanctions given by this law are much higher than sanctions given by the *Conservation Act* of Indonesia.

Illegal online trade enforcement methods remain unclear under Indonesian law. Enforcement agencies may only arrest online wildlife criminals when they are observed physically carrying out a punishable act, which renders arrests on the basis of online crime activities virtually impossible (USAID, 2015). Act No. 11 however, does contain information on investigation procedures. Investigation of online activity can be done either by the police or by civil investigators. Additional assistance can be obtained from experts in the field of information technology and digital transaction investigations. An investigation can be carried out when an intelligence report of a crime is received. Intelligence reports may be obtained from various sources, including international research and organisations. Investigators may only carry out any arrests through the district court within a time frame of 24 hours. Such arrests must be performed by the state police.

Thailand

Thailand has been a signatory to CITES since 1983. The country is ranked as having Category 1 legislation under CITES Resolution Conf. 8.4 (Rev. CoP15) on *National laws for implementation of the Convention* (CITES SC66 Inf. 19, 2016), which means that the country's legislation is generally believed to meet all requirements for CITES implementation. This categorisation fails to consider the fact that the vast majority of non-native species listed under CITES are not protected or governed by Thai laws, therefore seriously compromising the country's ability to enforce and implement the Convention (Moore *et al.*, 2016). Thailand's primary wildlife law is the Wild Animal Preservation and Protection Act (WARPA) B.E. 2562 of 2019. Prior to 2014, the previous WARPA B.E. 2535 (1992) did not effectively ban the domestic trade in African elephant ivory. However, in line with an articulated action in the country's previous NIAP process under CITES, African Elephants were listed in WARPA in December 2014. The revised law came into effect in April 2015 after a six-month period that allowed for the registration of legally acquired ivory products. Legally registered, personally-owned ivory items are now prohibited from commercial trade in Thailand (Krishnasamy *et al.*, 2016). Any commercial trade in African Elephant ivory is now punishable by law and carries a maximum fine of THB6 million (USD171,035) and/or imprisonment of up to three years.

The *Elephant Ivory Act B.E. 2558 of 2015* was introduced on 22nd January 2015 to regulate the trade in, and possession of, ivory from Thailand's domestic Asian Elephants. Under the Act, ivory can only be traded if it has been sourced from domesticated Asian Elephants registered under the *Draught Animal Act of 1939*. In order legally to trade registered ivory, the seller must also be in possession of an ivory trading licence. Any business or individual who has acquired ivory on or after 22nd January 2015 is obligated to register their purchased goods within 30 days of the date of acquisition. Any failure to declare personally-owned ivory goods carries a maximum fine of THB3 million (USD85,518). Additionally, failure to register commercial ivory transactions may result in a maximum fine of THB6 million (approximately USD171,035) and/or imprisonment of up to three years.

Anyone intending to trade ivory on online platforms is subjected to the regulations of the *Elephant Ivory Act*. All online trade in Thailand is regulated by the country's *Civil and Commercial Codes Book III*, under which online traders are required to register with the Ministry of Commerce to receive an online trading licence. However, this law does not penalise traders who lack an online trade licence, rendering it toothless as a legal basis for effectively addressing online illegal ivory (or any other wildlife) trade. However, WARPA B.E.2562 of 2019 covers online illegal trade of wildlife which includes ivory. Under the new WARPA, conviction for violations pertaining to the hunting, possession and trade carries a maximum fine of 10 years imprisonment and THB1,000,000 (USD32,436) fine. Convictions for violations on the import and export of the species carries a higher maximum penalty of fifteen years imprisonment and/or THB1,500,000 (USD48,654) fine.

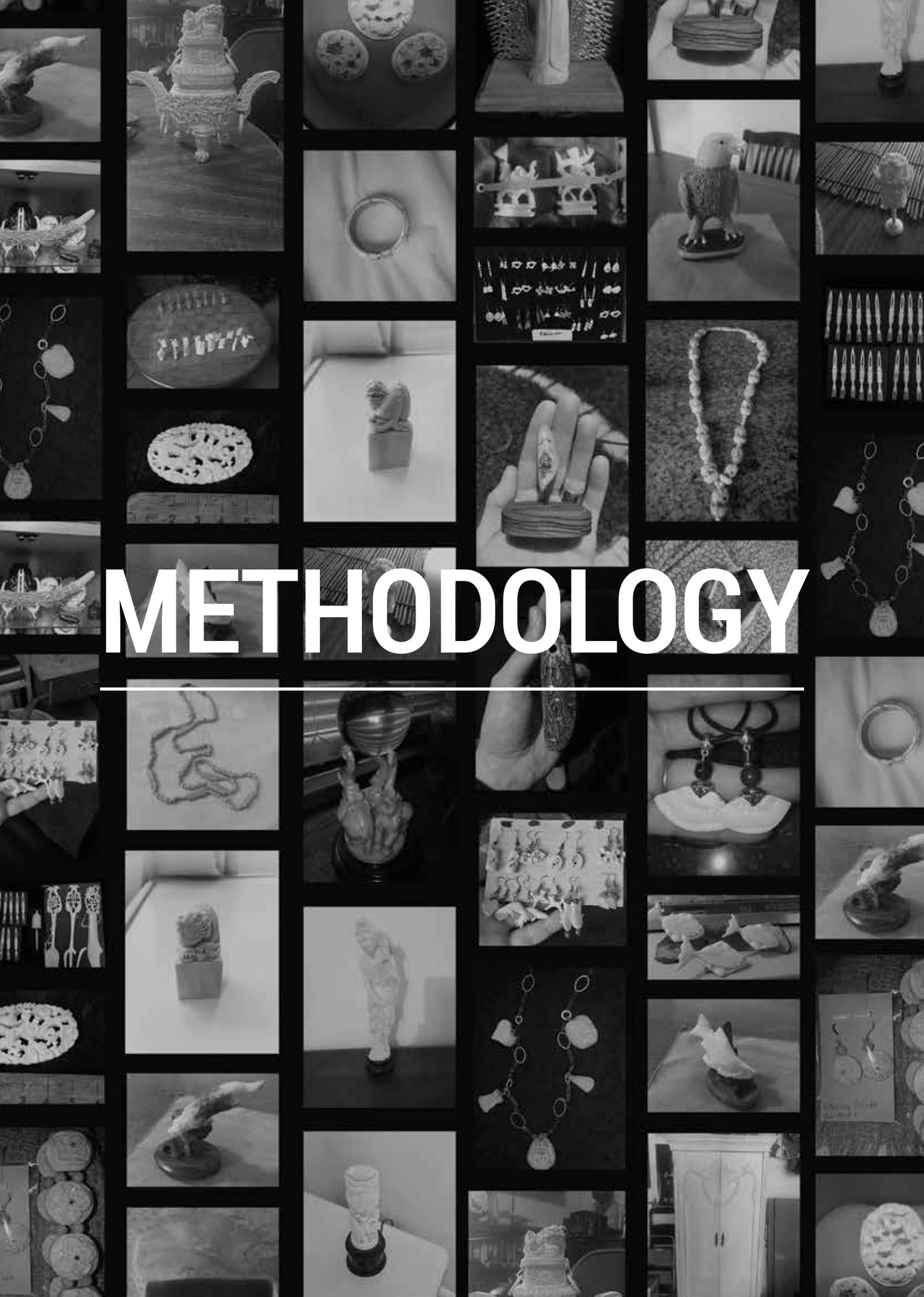
Viet Nam

Viet Nam has been a signatory to CITES since 1994. The country is ranked as having Category 1 legislation under *CITES Resolution Conf. 8.4 (Rev. CoP15) on National laws for implementation of the Convention* (CITES SC66 Inf. 19, 2016), which means that its legislation is generally believed to meet all requirements for CITES implementation. Both African Elephant and Asian Elephants are fully protected against commercial exploitation of any kind under Viet Nam's main wildlife protection law: *Decree 06/2019/ND-CP*. This Decree came into force on 10th March 2019, which is the period between the two surveys were conducted in Viet Nam for this report. However, processed ivory that was crafted before the country's 1992 ivory trade ban took effect, remains eligible for legal trade (Martin and Stiles, 2002; Stiles, 2008). No inventory of pre-1992 ivory was made, making it very hard to verify the origin of supposed pre-trade ban ivory, complicating regulation and enforcement efforts. In March 2014, the Prime Minister of Viet Nam issued *Directive 03/CT-TTG* on strengthening the direction and implementation of measures to control and protect endangered, rare and precious wild animals. This document ostensibly prioritises enforcement at all levels across all Ministries to combat poaching and trafficking of African Elephant ivory and rhino horn (Nguyen and Willemsen, 2015).

Pursuant to the *Penal Code No. 37/2009/QH12*, the hunting, killing, transporting, and trading of elephants and their products can lead to prison sentences of six months to seven years. Offenders that are convicted are also liable to fines ranging between VND50 million (USD2,210.96) to VND500 million (USD22,109.60) and a temporary ban from holding certain post rights, practicing certain occupations or carrying out certain jobs.

Pursuant to the *Penal Code No. 100/2015/QH13*, along with its amendments under *Law No. 12/2017/QH14*, which entered into force on 1st January 2018, the act of hunting, killing, raising, transporting, trading, and possessing from two to 20 kg of ivory may result in a fine of up to VND2billion (USD92,000) or a prison term of up to five years. Offences involving 20–90 kg of ivory may be subject to a prison term of five to ten years. Offences involving more than 90 kg may be subject to a prison term of 10–15 years. These laws also cover penal liability to legal entities which was not included in previous Penal Codes. Legal entities involved in the above scenarios maybe be fined up to VND15 billion (USD644,000) and be required to suspend activities for up to three years. The current Penal Code also came into force between when the two surveys for this report were conducted in Viet Nam.

Online trade in Viet Nam is regulated by *Law No. 51/2005/QH11 on Electronic Transactions and Decree 52/2013/ND-CP on E-commerce*, which prohibits the trade of prohibited goods through e-commerce (in certain instances this includes wildlife). Offenders of this law are treated with equal severity as those flouting physical trade regulations. However, identifying suspects and collecting evidence of illegal online wildlife trade remains a challenge for law enforcement. Few online wildlife crime related arrests have been made (Anon., 2016b). In 2016, a notorious online wildlife seller, Pham Huynh Anh Khoa, was convicted and sentenced to five years imprisonment and a fine. However, this only happened after he was caught red-handed with a Red-Shanked Douc *Pygathrix nemaeus* and nine Asian Small-Clawed Otters *Aonyx cinereus* (Cota-Larson, 2016). In January 2016, a trader named Minh Chinh was found to offer wildlife products such as bear bile and Tiger bone glue for sale on Facebook. When the local police raided his house, only dog bones were found. Thus, it could not be concluded whether he was trading wildlife illegally (Anon., 2016c).



METHODOLOGY

A 25-day online survey was conducted on Facebook and Instagram in Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam between 20th June and 22nd July 2016. In 2019, a second survey was conducted over a five-day period between 1st and 5th July. This survey looked exclusively at the Facebook groups and Instagram accounts that were surveyed in 2016 and was included in our study to enable trade trend comparisons and explore the preliminary effects of the new Facebook policy regarding the trade of wild animals and their products, implemented in April 2019.

Both surveys consisted of one hour of research per day, and we recorded all open/public groups that were found using the key search terms (**Table 4**). We did not monitor closed groups. The research effort captured all open/public groups found using the key search terms during the survey period. During the surveys, Facebook and Instagram in the three focus countries were searched for posts in which ivory was offered for sale. These posts were found with the help of several key search terms, which were entered into Facebook and Instagram's search functions. Screenshots of all ivory-related posts were captured. Data extracted from each post included type of ivory item for sale, quantity of items, location/base of operation of seller (if available), price of item(s), method of communication and preferred method of payment.

To minimise duplication and avoid any inflation of research numbers, only posts containing images were recorded. Care was taken to review every post and eliminate all duplicates, including those that appeared with different dates but appeared to involve the same items. It must be noted that online ivory traders may repeatedly use the same image to advertise different products (for example: the same picture of a single bangle may be used multiple times to sell several similar or identical products). Duplicate pictures were eliminated from this study, and therefore the results published in this report represent minimum numbers and may be an underestimation of actual online ivory availability. In this report, the term "seller" or "trader" does not necessarily refer to established business entities but may instead refer to both individuals and online and/or physical shops.

Seeing how it remains unclear how many of the encountered posts actually result in a purchase, it is impossible to infer aggregate trade volumes and turnover from these data. Whenever trade numbers or volumes are noted, this refers to the quantity of advertised ivory products, not the number of confirmed transactions.

Conversion rates of USD1 = IDR13,089; USD1 = THB34.95 and USD1 = VND22,065 (as on 22 July 2016 on <https://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>) were used for the 2016 survey and conversion rates of USD1 = IDR13,935; USD1 = THB30.86 and USD1 = VND23,050 (as on 17 July 2019 on <https://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>) were used for the 2019 survey.

Table 4. Key search terms used for the survey of social media platforms in Thailand, Viet Nam and Indonesia between June and July 2016.

English Translation	Search terms in local languages		
	Indonesian	Thai	Vietnamese
Ivory	Gading Gajah	งาช้าง	Ngà voi / ngà
Genuine / Authentic Ivory	Gading Gajah Asli	งาช้างแท้	Ngà voi thật / ngà thật
Sell Ivory	Jual Gading	ขายงาช้าง	Bán ngà voi / bán ngà
Buy Ivory	Beli Gading	ซื้องาช้าง	-
Sell-Buy Ivory	Jual-Beli Gading	ซื้อ-ขายงาช้าง	Mua bán ngà voi / mua bán ngà
Ivory Jewellery	Perhiasan Gading	เครื่องประดับงาช้าง	Trang sức ngà voi / trang sức ngà
Ivory Carving	Ukiran Gading	งาช้างแกะสลัก	Chạm khắc ngà voi / chạm khắc ngà
Cigarette Holder	Pipa Rokok	-	Tẩu
Ivory Cigarette Holder	Pipa rokok Gading	-	Tẩu ngà voi / tẩu ngà
Thai Ivory	-	งาช้างไทย	-
Ivory Thailand	-	งาช้างประเทศไทย	-
Ivory Ring	-	แหวนงาช้าง	-
Ivory Bracelet	-	กำไลงาช้าง	-





RESULTS

Results in 2016

Across Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam, a total of 8,508 ivory items were found to have been offered for sale in 1,559 posts within the research period. These posts were found during the assessment of 62 Facebook groups, seven individual Facebook accounts that operated like Facebook groups and were specialised in ivory trade, and 51 Instagram accounts. Facebook accounted for 92% (n=7,840) of all recorded ivory items, while Instagram accounted for 8% (n=668). A summary of the main findings is presented in **Table 5**. Of the three countries, Viet Nam was found to have the greatest proportion of ivory items offered for sale (58%, n=4,949). Thailand had the greatest number of posts (42%, n=652) and Indonesia was found to have the greatest number of sellers, making up 44% (n=250) of all identified traders.

Table 5. Summary of main online ivory trade findings in Thailand, Viet Nam and Indonesia between June and July 2016.

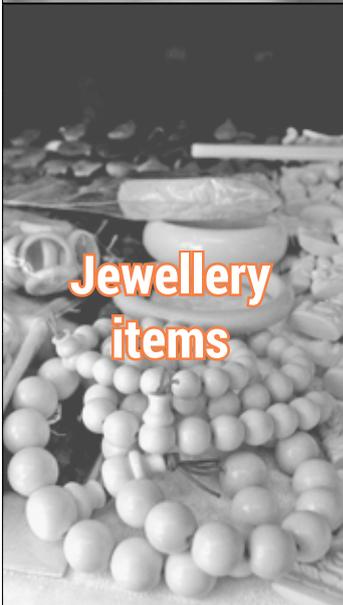
Country	No. of items	No. of posts	No. of sellers	No. of Facebook groups	Facebook accounts	No. of Instagram accounts
Indonesia 	1,009	522	250	34	0	33
Thailand 	2,550	652	234	22	7	10
Viet Nam 	4,949	385	86	6	0	8
TOTAL	8,508	1,559	570	62	7	51

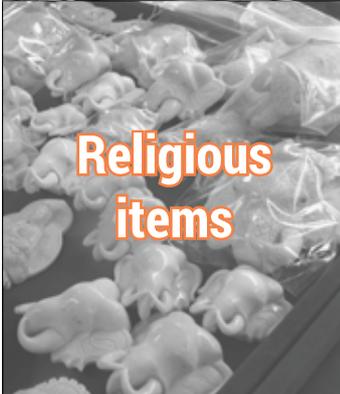
Ivory items

For analytical purposes, recorded ivory items were classified into five main categories. They were then sub-categorised to provide a more detailed account of the product types found offered for sale online (**Table 6**). Overall, jewellery was the most frequently encountered item type, with Viet Nam accounting for the highest proportion of these products (78%, n=4,542). The second most frequently encountered item type was religious items, followed by raw ivory items. Thailand was found to offer the most products in both categories, accounting for 84% (n=1,134) of all religious items and 85% (n=486) of all raw ivory items. Indonesia was found to be the leading country in the sale of functional items (mostly cigarette holders), with 88% (n= 501) of all such items found offered for sale here (**Figure 1a**). A full overview of found item types and posts is provided in **Annex 1**.

Most of the 1,559 posts concerned the offering for sale of ivory offered jewellery for sale (52%, n=814), the highest proportion of these jewellery posts was recorded in Viet Nam (42%, n=342). The category for which the second largest number of posts was found was functional items (22%, n=339). Ninety-seven percent of those posts (n=330) were placed on Indonesian pages. Religious items account for the category with the third largest number of posts (13%, n=199), with most of these posts found in Thailand (89%, n=178) (**Figure 1b**).

Viet Nam was found to have the highest average number of items offered for sale per post (13 items per post on average), showing that traders in Viet Nam, as opposed to those in Thailand (four items per post on average) and Indonesia (two items per post on average), tend to offer high numbers of ivory items in a single post. Viet Nam and Thailand accounted for the posts with the highest number of individual items offered (n=200). Viet Nam had three posts in which 200 items were offered for sale, while Thailand had one. In Indonesia, the highest number of items found in a single post was 18.

 <p>Decorative items</p>	Antique scales	Scales containing ivory that are now used for decorative purposes
	Antique plates	Plates that are now used for decorative purposes
	Carvings	Medium to large-sized non-religious carvings that are not statues
	Cylinders	Decorative cylinders
	Dagger handles	Dagger/knife handles now used for decorative purposes
	Statues	Medium to large-sized non-religious statues
	Swagger sticks	Swagger sticks containing ivory that now used for decorative purposes
 <p>Functional items</p>	Chinese chess sets	Xiangqi board game sets
	Cigarette holders	Tube-shaped cigarette holding devices
	Combs	Hair combs
	Painting tubes	Painting accessories
	Pens	Writing devices
	Stamps	Stamps and name seals
 <p>Jewellery items</p>	Bangle/Bracelets	Bangles or bracelets containing at least one ivory part
	Beads	Individually sold beads to form bracelets or necklaces with
	Brooches	Brooches containing at least one ivory part
	Earrings	Earrings containing at least one ivory part
	Hairpins	Hair accessories
	Necklaces	Necklaces containing at least one ivory part (including different sizes of pendants)
	Pendants	Different sizes of pendants (without necklace)
	Rings	Rings containing at least one ivory part
	Sets	Matching jewellery sets including rings, necklaces and/or bangles or bracelets (minimum of two pieces)

 <p>Raw items</p>	Ivory pieces	Ivory pieces of different shapes and sizes
	Ivory powder	Ivory residue and by-product of ivory carvings
	Tusks	Whole elephant tusks
	Tusk tips	Elephant tusk tips
 <p>Religious items</p>	Amulets	Religious accessories thought to bring fortune to the carrier
	Figurines	Small-sized statues depicting deities and other religious figures
	Pendants	Different sizes of pendants (without necklace) depicting deities and other religious figures
	Prayer beads	Beads used during praying rituals
	Statues	Medium to large-sized statues depicting deities and other religious figures

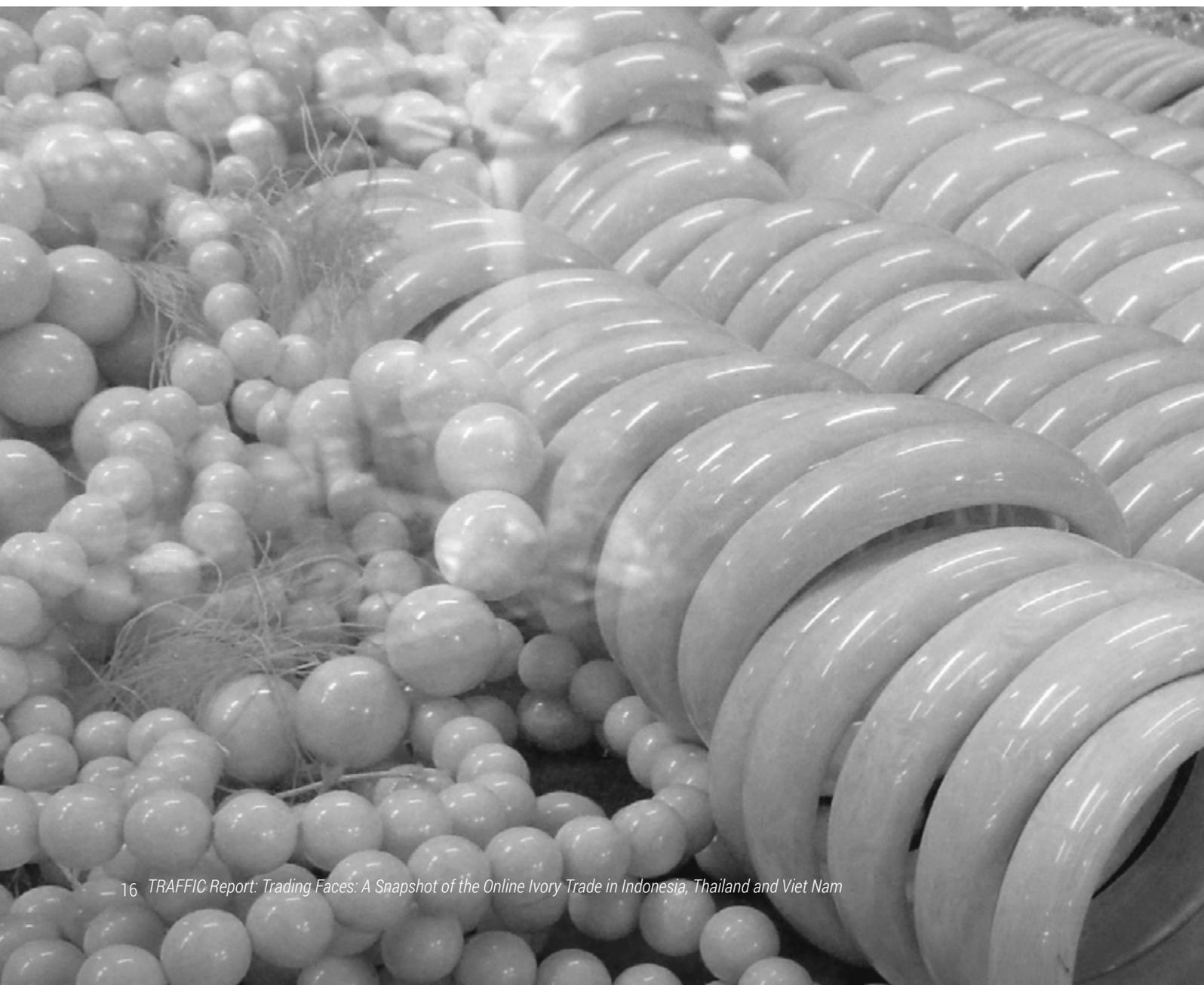
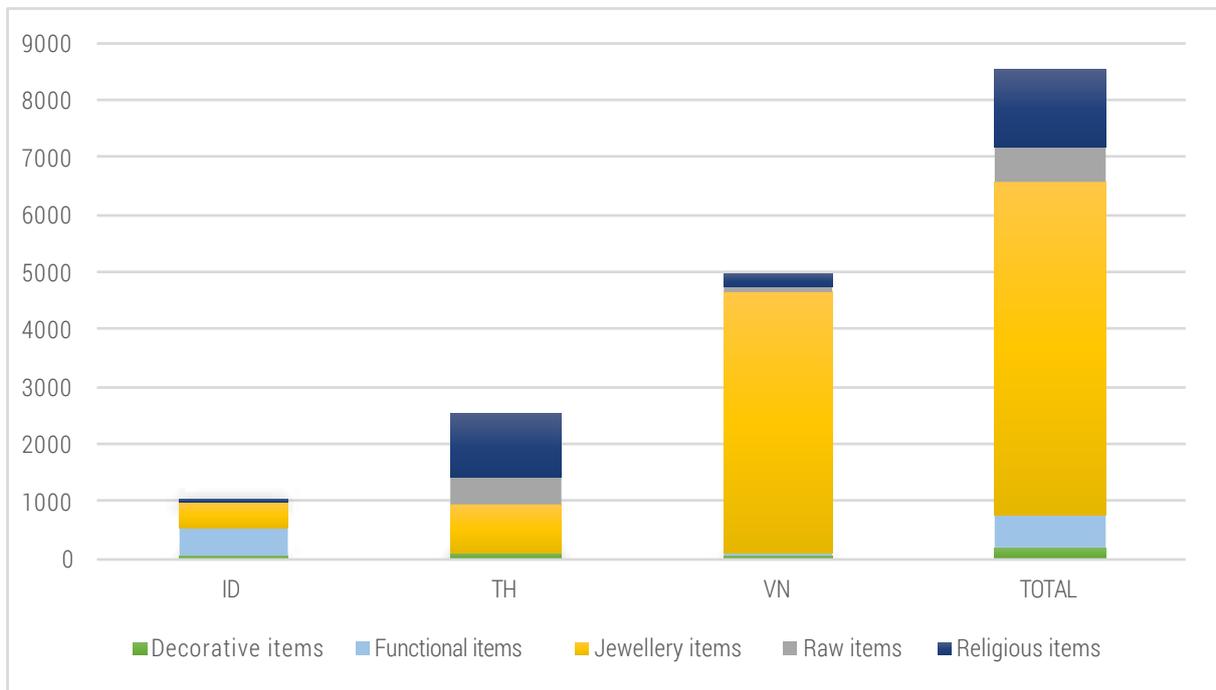
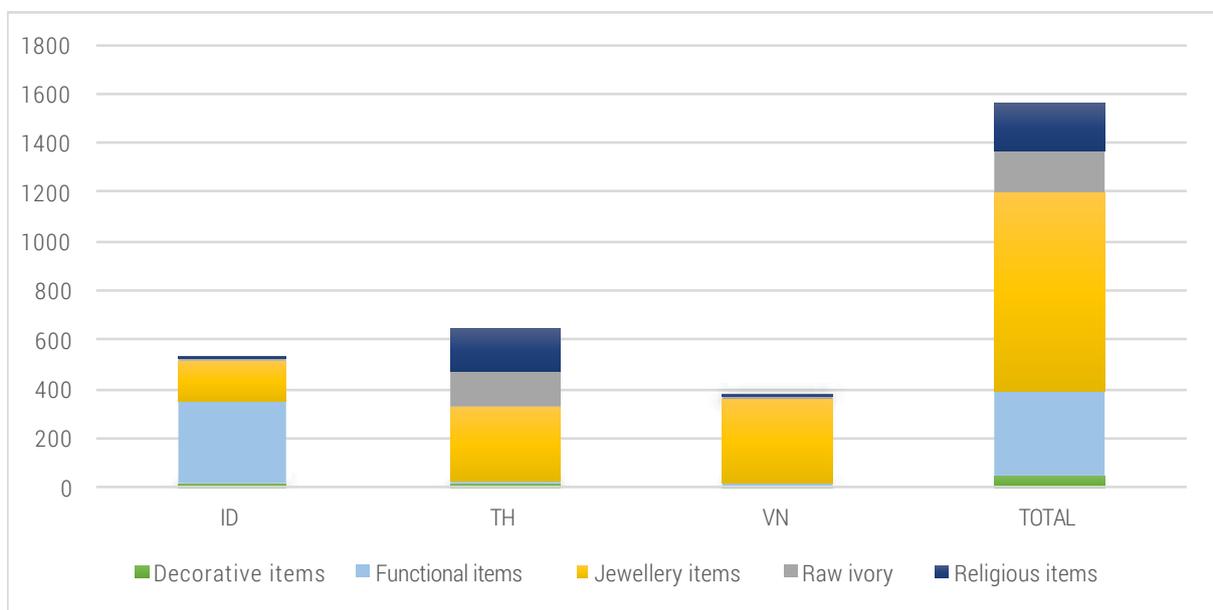


Figure 1. Total number of (a) most commonly encountered ivory items types and (b) posts by item type found on Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam's online platforms between June and July 2016.



(a)



(b)

Item Prices

Only 36% (n=555) of all posts openly mentioned prices. Unworked tusks had the highest median price (USD925.81 per tusk), followed by decorative items such as dagger handles (USD293.37). The most expensive items found offered for sale were unworked tusks, at a price of USD14,253 per tusk in Thailand. One decorative statue was priced at USD4,572, making it the second most expensive item found in this study. Details about the price ranges and median prices for each country and item type are displayed in **Table 7**.

Interested buyers were often invited to contact the seller directly. These buyers post their preferred contact methods in the comment sections below the post, along with their contact information (phone number and/or ID name for Blackberry Messenger, WhatsApp, Line or other messenger apps), and wait to be contacted by the seller. Wherever prices were mentioned, either fixed sums were given, or customers were invited to place bids based on a starting price. These bids were then posted in the comments sections. Auction-style posts were most common in Thailand, while only two such posts were recorded in Viet Nam. In Thailand, starting prices and bids ranged from tens to millions of Thai Baht (approximately USD2.50 to USD14,253) per individual item, while in Viet Nam, the two auction posts gave starting prices of VND80,000 (USD3.50) and VND800,000 (USD35.37) respectively.

Table 7. Price ranges and median prices per individual item found offered for sale in posts on Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam's online platforms between June and July 2016.

Items	No. of posts in which prices were given			Prices range (USD)			Price median (USD)			
	ID	TH	VN	ID	TH	VN	ID	TH	VN	ALL
<i>Antique plates</i>	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Antique scales</i>	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Carvings</i>	1	7	0	91.4	3.80 - 570.1	-	91.0	156.8	-	124.1
<i>Cylinders</i>	0	1	0	-	10.0	-	-	10.0	-	N.A.
<i>Dagger handles</i>	8	0	0	91.4 - 2,019.3	-	-	293.4	-	-	293.4
<i>Statues</i>	1	0	0	4,572.0	-	-	4,572.0	-	-	N.A.
<i>Swagger sticks</i>	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Chinese chess sets</i>	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Cigarette holders</i>	173	1	0	3.05 - 1,143	42.8	-	102.9	42.8	-	101.0
<i>Combs</i>	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Painting tubes</i>	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

<i>Pens</i>	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Stamps</i>	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Bangles/ bracelets</i>	19	32	7	8.80- 914.4	5.67- 1137.4	1.10- 331.6	167.61	122.6	57.5	125.4
<i>Beads</i>	0	3	0	-	0.85 - 13.7	-	-	4.9	-	4.9
<i>Brooches</i>	3	0	0	70.48 - 228.6	-	-	72.4	-	-	72.4
<i>Earrings</i>	22	1	1	11.43 - 342.9	34.2	2.6	70.5	34.2	2.6	51.4
<i>Hairpins</i>	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Necklaces</i>	2	38	2	2.29 - 228.6	6.27 - 912.2	35.37 - 451	115.4	101.2	243.2	101.2
<i>Pendants</i>	5	9	14	38.10 - 342.9	8.55 - 57	0.88 -123.8	72.4	24.2	24.3	31.9
<i>Rings</i>	15	57	7	34.29 - 342.9	9.98 - 912.2	0.66 - 121.6	228.6	57.0	1.6	62.7
<i>Sets</i>	7	0	0	73.39 - 327.66	-	-	205.7	-	-	205.7
<i>Ivory pieces</i>	0	60	0	-	0.46 - 213.79	-	-	12.1	-	12.1
<i>Ivory powder</i>	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Tusks</i>	2	5	1	990.60 - 3,810	242.30- 14,253	861.6	2,400.3	285.1	861.6	925.8
<i>Tusk tips</i>	0	33	0	-	12.83 - 198.12	-	-	48.5	-	48.5
<i>Amulets</i>	0	13	0	-	3.92 - 111.17	-	-	15.7	-	15.7
<i>Figurines</i>	0	13	0	-	9.98 - 314.56	-	-	57.0	-	57.0
<i>Pendants</i>	0	16	0	-	11.40 - 270.81	-	-	132.6	-	132.6
<i>Prayer beads</i>	0	8	0	-	3.21 - 14.61	-	-	6.1	-	6.1
<i>Statues</i>	0	6	1	-	11.40 - 142.53	53.1	-	50.6	53.1	53.

TRANSACTION METHODS

Exact payment methods in the online ivory trade remain unclear. In general, prospective buyers are invited to discuss payment details privately, via Facebook, over the phone, or via various messaging apps such as Blackberry messenger and WhatsApp. In Indonesia, requests for payments through third party accounts, often referred to as “Rekening Bersama” (RekBer), were commonly encountered.

In such cases, buyers were asked to pay the purchase price into a third-party account. The payment would then only be transferred to the seller once the buyer had received the purchased item. RekBer accounts are usually owned by private parties. To avoid fraud, sellers will recommend trusted and commonly used RekBer accounts to buyers. In Thailand, payment methods varied, but most sellers requested buyers to transfer the agreed amount of money directly to their bank account after a deal was made. It was found that some sellers even provided their national identification card (ID card) details as a means of verifying authenticity and reassuring potential buyers. On Vietnamese platforms, only two posts were found to openly mention payment methods. In both cases the preferred payment method was a direct transfer into the seller’s bank account.

COUNTRY PROFILES

Indonesia

In Indonesia, a total of 1,009 items were found offered for sale in 522 posts on 34 Facebook groups and 33 Instagram accounts. Facebook was the preferred platform, accounting for 56% (n=560) of all items found offered for sale, followed by Instagram with 44% (n=449). Functional items, particularly cigarette holders (often offered for sale as secondhand goods) (Photo 1a), were the most frequently offered item type, accounting for 50% of all items, followed by jewellery items (47%) (Figure 1a) (Photo 1b). A detailed list of all items found on Indonesia's online platforms is provided in Annex 2.

Photo 1: Ivory items offered for sale in posts on online platforms in Indonesia: (a) cigarette holder on Instagram and (b) jewellery on Facebook.



(a)

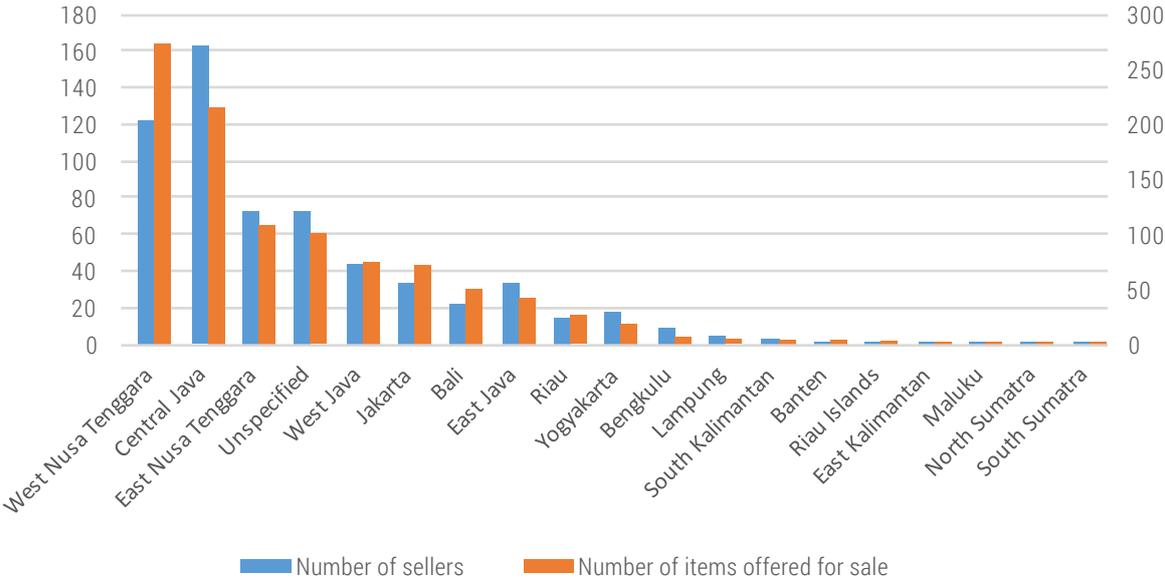


(b)

Sellers and trade hotspots

A total of 250 Indonesian sellers were recorded during the survey. Some of these traders were found to be active in multiple provinces. Particularly high levels of online trade activity were found in the province of Central Java, with 30% of all traders doing business there (Figure 2). Central Java also accounted for 21% (n=215) of all items found on Indonesian online platforms. In addition, Central Java accounted for the highest number of cigarette holders (42%, n=210) and the highest number of posts (26%, n=163). Another province with high levels of online trade activity was found to be West Nusa Tenggara. It accounted for the highest number of ivory items offered for sale in Indonesia (27%, n=272). All of these were jewellery items, making West Nusa Tenggara the most important online ivory jewellery trade hub in the country (58% of Indonesia’s ivory jewellery was offered for sale here, with neighbouring province of East Nusa Tenggara Province following with 23%). This province also had a high item-to-seller ratio, with an average of 21 items per seller. A complete list of the items found offered for sale by traders in Indonesia can be found in Annex 2.

Figure 2. Number of traders and ivory items offered for sale in posts on online platforms in Indonesia per province between June and July 2016.



Legality and origin of items

Traders occasionally provided information regarding the ivory's origin and authenticity. Statements were seldom made regarding the legality of the items. In total, 50 (9.6%) posts included information on the origin of the ivory. In 13 cases, the ivory was claimed to have been sourced from African Elephants, in 36 cases the ivory was said to have originated from Sumatran Elephants, and in one case the ivory was said to be “not of Sumatran Elephant origin”. As for legality, one seller claimed that the ivory he offered for sale was legal because it dated back to Portuguese colonial times. Such a claim is hard to verify because it is difficult to date ivory. Another seller claimed to hold the correct documents to sell Sumatran Elephant ivory. This would seem unlikely because the Sumatran Elephant is considered a protected animal in Indonesia, even though the species' protected status is not made clear in the Indonesian law.

Thailand

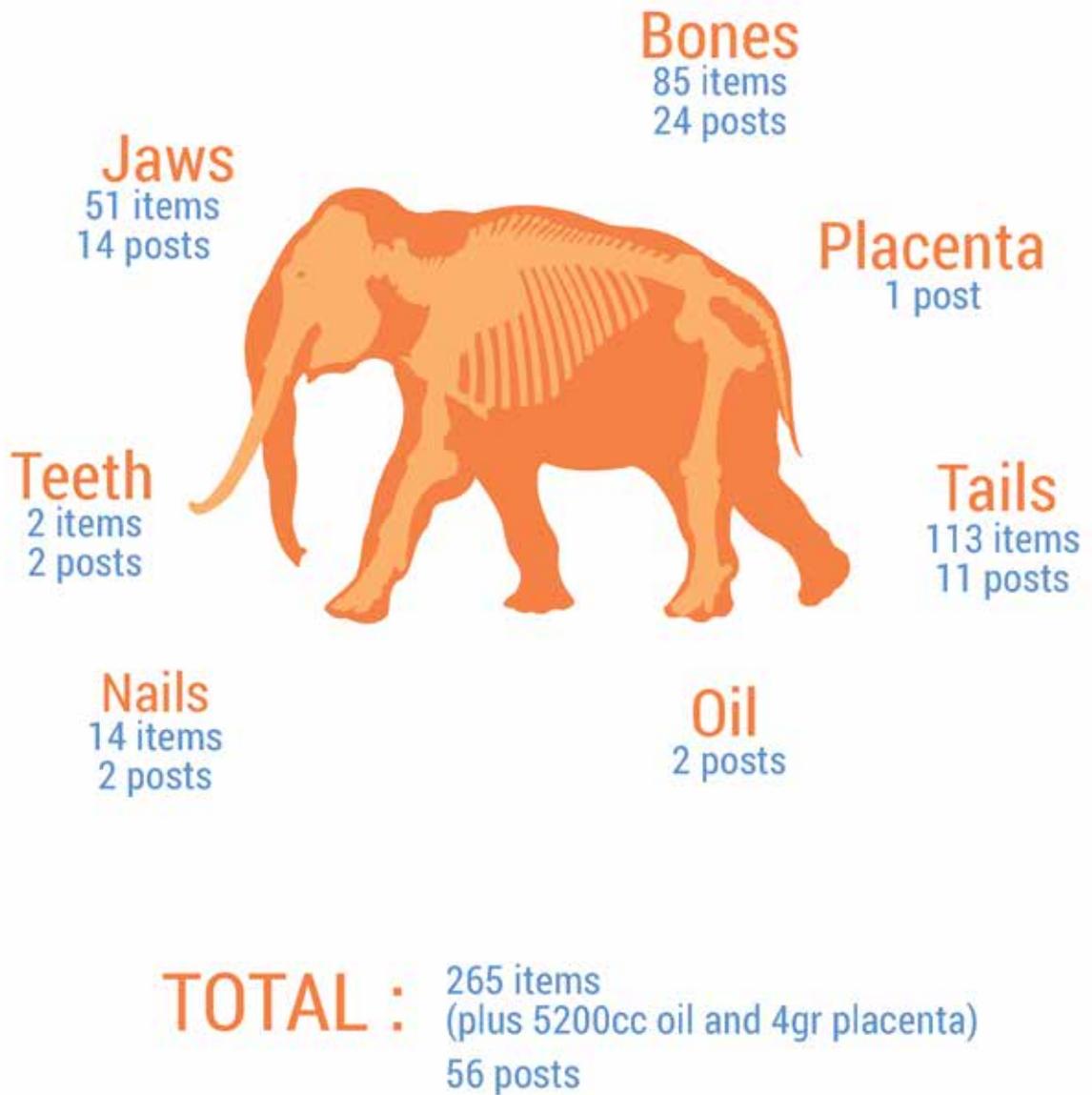
In Thailand, a total of 2,550 ivory items were found offered for sale in 652 posts on 22 Facebook groups, 10 Instagram accounts and seven individual Facebook accounts. The majority of posts was found on Facebook and accounted for 99% (n=2,531) of all ivory items offered for sale on Thailand's online platforms. Thailand was the only country in this survey in which other, non-ivory, elephant products were offered for sale as well. A total of 265 such items were found in 56 posts (because these items and posts did not concern ivory, they were left out of this study's analysis) (**Table 8**). Non-ivory products included “elephant oil”, teeth, bones, tails and dried placentas (**Photo 2**). Several products were found of which sellers claimed they were made from reconstructed ivory powder (**Photo 3**). Some of the ivory groups also occasionally offered other wildlife products for sale, such as tiger teeth and skins, Asiatic Black Bear *Ursus thibetanus* paws, pangolin scales and corals (**Photo 4**).

Table 8. Non-Ivory items or elephant products found on Thai online platforms between June and July 2016.

Non-ivory elephant items	No. of items	No. of post
Bones	85	24
Jaws	51	14
Nails	14	2
Oil	*	2
Placenta	**	1
Tails	113	11
Teeth	2	2
Total	265	56

*Oils were not counted as individual items (5200 cc of elephant oil was recorded).

**Placentas were not counted as individual items (4 g of placenta was recorded).



NON-IVORY items or elephant products found offered for sale on Thai online platforms between June and July 2016

Photo 2: (a) elephant oil (b) elephant placenta offered for sale in posts on Facebook in Thailand.



(a)



(b)

Photo 3: (a) Ivory powder and (b) Ganesha pendants, supposedly reconstructed from ivory powder, offered for sale in posts on Facebook in Thailand.



(a)



(b)

Photo 4: (a) Asiatic black bear paws and (b) pangolin scales found in Facebook groups that predominantly sold ivory.



(a)



(b)

The majority (44%, n=1,134) of ivory products found consisted of religious items. These items often involved carvings depicting religious icons such as Singha, Ganesha and Erawan (Photo 5a). The second most frequently encountered item type was jewellery (33%, n=838), followed by raw ivory (19%, n=486). A detailed list of all item types found on Thailand's online platforms is provided in Annex 4.

Photo 5: Jewellery; the second most frequently encountered ivory item type in posts on Thailand's online platforms: (a) ivory necklace with Ganesha pendant; (b) ivory necklace decorated with gold and with an elephant head pendant (the seller of which showed his ID card to identify himself to verify the authenticity of the product); (c) ivory bangles decorated with gold and gems; (d) ivory beads.



(a)



(b)

"Authentic ivory necklace with 80% gold, open at THB 17,500 with life time guarantee."



(c)



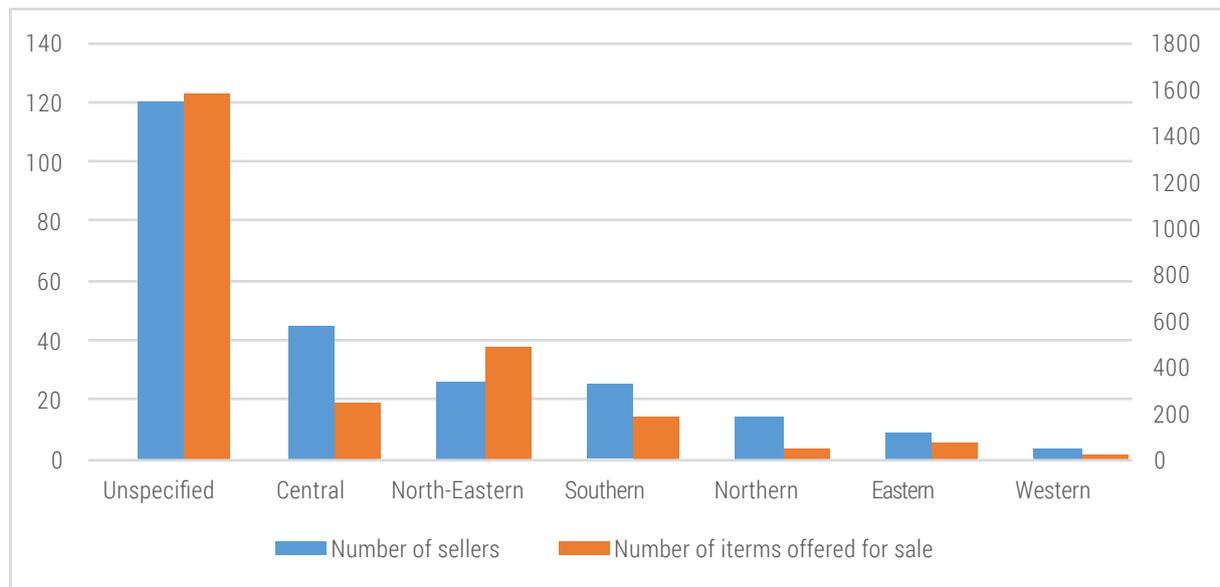
(d)

Sellers and trade hotspots

A total of 234 Thai traders were identified during the survey. Again, several traders were found to be active in multiple regions and provinces. The region of Central Thailand appeared to be hosting the highest number of traders with 45 individuals being active there, followed by North-eastern Thailand (n=26), Southern Thailand (n=25), Northern Thailand (n=14), Western Thailand (n=4) and Eastern Thailand (n=9) (Figure 3).

Online trade activity, as measured by the number of posts and number of items offered for sale, was found to be the highest in Surin Province, followed by the Bangkok administrative area. Surin has previously been identified as a province that is popular for its ivory trade (Christy, 2012). Both Surin and Bangkok had the highest number of sellers, with 26 identified sellers in Bangkok (11%) and 14 in Surin (6%). Other provinces where online trade activity appeared high were Songkhla, Pathum Thani, and Nakhon Si Thammarat. A detailed account of the provinces included in each region and the trade activity per province are provided in Annex 5 and Annex 6 respectively.

Figure 3. Number of traders, posts and ivory items offered for sale in Thailand per region between June and July 2016.



Legality and origin of items

In one post it was claimed that the offered ivory item had been registered and another 25 (3.8%) posts showed ivory trading licences. In seven cases, traders claimed to have registered with the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP), but no proof of this was provided (**Photo 6a; Photo 7a/b**). One seller, who reportedly owned an online store specialising in elephant bone jewellery, showed an animal product trading license issued by the Department of Livestock Development (DLD) in his post. A vast majority of traders did not mention documentation or permits (**Photo 6b; Photo 7c**). In most cases, the ivory was claimed to be 100% authentic. None of the posts stated whether the ivory on offer was sourced from Asian Elephants or African Elephants.

Photo 6: Raw ivory tips offered for sale on Facebook in Thailand with post (a) involving a supposedly DNP-registered ivory tip and post (b) not mentioning any kind of documentation or permit.



"Today, our shop offers beautiful ivory tips, stunningly beautiful. The pattern on the tip looks like waterfall with the beginning of the pattern on the centre of the tip. This is very rare. For more information, personal message is the quickest way."

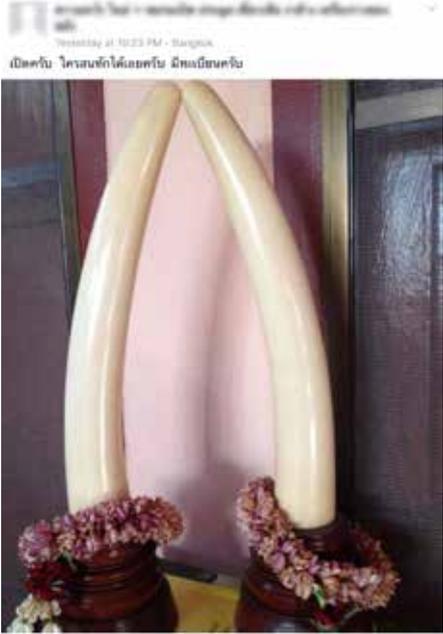
(a)



"Authentic ivory tip, weight 310 gram, if interested please contact."

(b)

Photo 7: Elephant tusks offered for sale on Facebook in Thailand, with post (a) and (b) involving supposedly registered tusks and post (c) not mentioning any kind of documentation or permit.



"For sale, anyone interested please contact. These are registered."

(a)



18 3 Comments

"Authentic ivory tusk, weigh 11.5 kilogram, these are registered. Anyone who would like these ivory for home decoration please contact [redacted]."

(b)



"15 kilogram 110 centimeter"

(c)

Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, a total of 4,949 items were found offered for sale across 385 posts on six Facebook groups and eight Instagram accounts. Ninety-six percent (n=4,749) of all items were found on Facebook. Jewellery was the most frequently encountered item type (92%, n=4,542), followed by religious items (4%, n=214). (Photo 8; Photo 9). A detailed list of all item types found on Viet Nam's online platforms is provided in Annex 7.

Photo 8: Ivory items offered for sale in posts on Facebook in Viet Nam: (a) Bangles (b) Statues (c) Chinese chess set.



(a)



(b)



(c)

*Note: Text translated from original language

Photo 9: Ivory items offered for sale in posts on Instagram in Viet Nam: (a) Pendant (b) Statue.



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Classy
attractiveness. Sophisticated and detailed
handmade phoenix carving.
#phoenix #ivory # aristocracy #ruby #gem

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(a)



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#vongtay #trengsuccaocap
#trangsucngavoi #trangsuc

♡ Add a comment... [...](#)

(b)

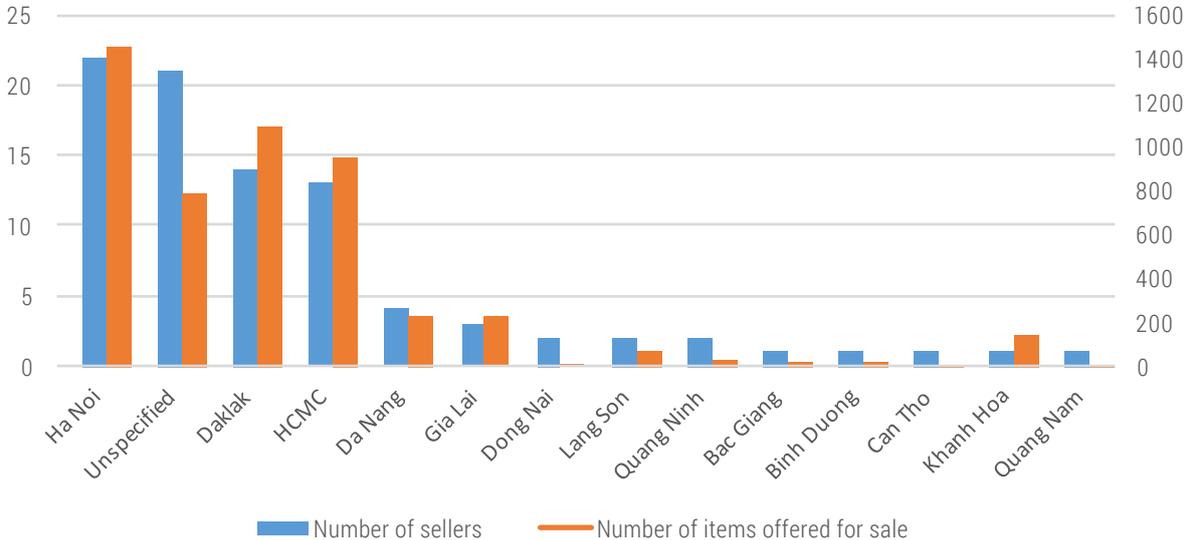
*Note: Text translated from original language

Sellers and trade hotspots

A total of 86 Vietnamese traders, including three supposed owners of physical ivory stores, were recorded during the survey. Some of these traders were found to be active in multiple provinces. Not all of these traders were based in Viet Nam. Vietnamese nationals living abroad were found posting on Vietnamese social media and selling ivory to Vietnamese customers. One of these traders was supposedly based in Nairobi, Kenya. In another case, a Vietnamese national, based in Quang Tri Province, claimed that he was selling eight pieces of raw ivory for an acquaintance operating out of Lao PDR.

Within Viet Nam, both the greatest number of sellers (25%, n=22) and highest number of items offered for sale (29%, n=1,442) were found in Ha Noi, followed by Dak Lak Province (16% of sellers (n=14) and 22% of items (n=1,073)) and Ho Chi Minh City (15% of sellers (n=13) and 19% of items (n=944)) (Figure 4). A complete list of trade activity in Viet Nam per province is provided in Annex 8.

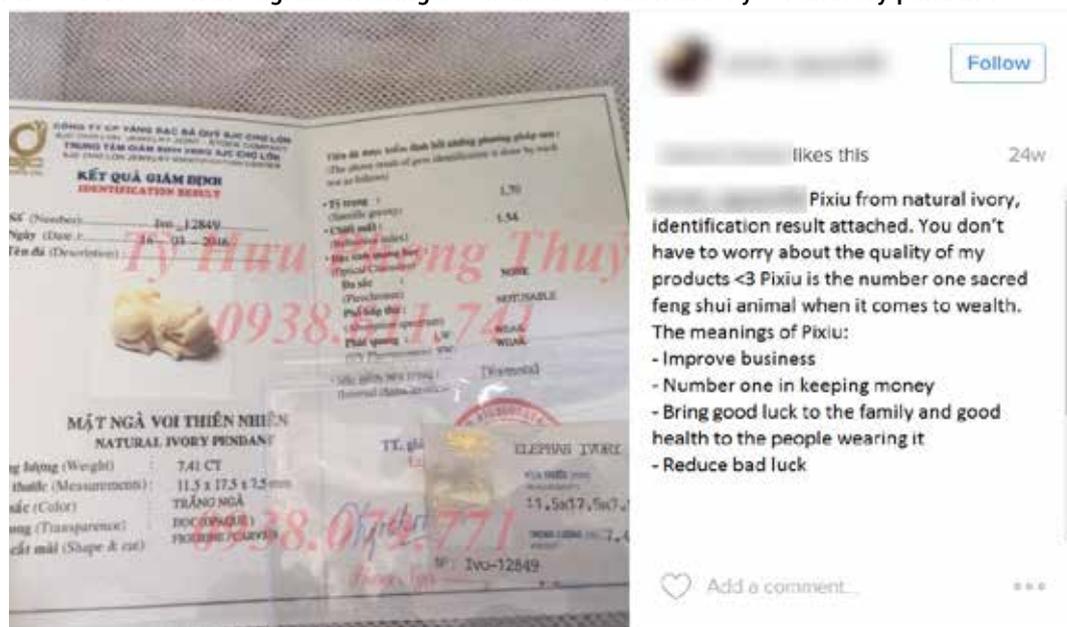
Figure 4. Number of traders and ivory items offered for sale in Viet Nam per province between June and July 2016.



Legality and origin of items

None of the posts found on Viet Nam’s online platforms offered any information regarding the origin and legality of the items offered for sale. Only one post for a pendant included a “certificate of authenticity” from a “jewellery identification centre” (Photo 10). In none of the posts was it stated whether the ivory originated from Asian Elephants or African Elephants.

Photo 10: Post on Instagram showing a “certificate of authenticity” of an ivory pendant.



*Note: Text translated from original language

Updates in 2019

In July 2019, a second snapshot survey was conducted, revisiting all 120 Facebook and Instagram groups and accounts surveyed in 2016, to ascertain more current trade patterns. Of the 120 groups and accounts, 69 were found to still be active and accessible (**Table 9**). The biggest decline in groups/accounts (59%) was found to have taken place in Thailand, followed by Viet Nam (50%) and lastly Indonesia (31.3%). It must be noted that, seeing how only those groups and accounts that existed in 2016 were included in the 2019 survey, any groups and accounts that may have been created since 2016 will have gone undetected.

Table 9. Overview of active Facebook groups (FBG), Facebook accounts (FBA) and Instagram accounts (IGA) in June-July 2016 and July 2019.

Country	2016				2019				Change %
	Facebook groups	Facebook accounts	Instagram accounts	Total	Facebook groups	Facebook accounts	Instagram accounts	Total	
Indonesia 	34	0	33	67	27	0	19	46	-31.3
Thailand 	22	7	10	39	13	3	0	16	-59.0
Viet Nam 	6	0	8	14	1	0	6	7	-50.0
	69	7	51	120	41	3	25	69	-42.5

During this five-day survey, a total of 2,489 ivory items was found for sale in 545 posts across the three target countries. On aggregate, these trade volumes were higher than the average weekly trade volumes observed in the 2016 survey ($\mu=1,702$ items and $\mu=312$ posts per week), representing a 46.3% increase in items and a 74.8% increase in posts (**Table 10**).

Table 10. Overview of trade numbers encountered during our surveys in 2016 (25 days) and 2019 (5 days).

	2016				2019		Change %	
	No.		μ per week		No.			
	Items	Posts	Items	Posts	Items	Posts	Items	Posts
Indonesia	1,009	522	201.8	104.4	402	168	93.2	60.9
Thailand	2,550	652	510	130.4	1,904	363	273.3	178.4
Viet Nam	4,949	385	989.8	77	183	14	-81.5	-81.8
Total	8,508	1,559	1,701.6	311.8	2,489	545	46.3	74.8

The observed changes in volume vary heavily between the three countries. In Indonesia, the number of items and posts found in 2019 represented a 93.2% and 60.9% increase respectively in comparison to the weekly averages observed in 2016. In Thailand, observed volumes constituted a much higher increase, at 273.3% and 178.9% for items and posts respectively. Contrarily, in Viet Nam, numbers found during the 2019 survey were found to be much lower than the average numbers found in 2016, with an approximate 82% decrease in both items and posts.

Seeing how weekly trade activity was found to fluctuate, comparisons between the 2016 and 2019 datasets remain suggestive rather than conclusive. No dates were recorded for Viet Nam observations in 2016, making it impossible to analyse weekly fluctuations in aggregate trade volumes for the 2016 research period. However, when the average weekly Viet Nam volumes are added to the weekly volumes observed in Indonesia and Thailand in 2016, these aggregate weekly trade numbers do not match or surpass those observed in 2019 even once. In Indonesia, weekly trade numbers approached those in 2019 in only two instances (327 items and 146 posts in week one and 368 items and 165 posts in week two of the survey). In Thailand none of the weekly trade numbers came close to those observed in 2019.

As in 2016, Facebook accounted for the majority of the online ivory trade found in the 2019 survey (88.3%, n=2,199 items). The 2019 trade numbers on Facebook (2199 items in 421 posts) were higher than the average weekly numbers found on Facebook during the 2016 survey ($\mu=1568$ items and $\mu=271$ posts per week), constituting an overall increase of 40.2% in items and 55.2% in posts. Seeing how Facebook trade numbers in Indonesia and Viet Nam were lower in 2019 than in 2016, the overall augmentation of Facebook trade was solely due to the large increase (of 276.1% in items and 184.9% in posts) in volumes observed in Thailand (**Table 11a**). On Instagram, aggregate 2019 trade numbers (290 items in 124 posts) were also higher than the average weekly numbers found in 2016 ($\mu=134$ items in $\mu=41$ posts), even though no Instagram trade was recorded in Thailand and Viet Nam. The aggregate increase of 117.1% in items and 205.4% in posts was thus due to a large increase (of 222.9% in items and 310.6% in posts) in the Indonesian Instagram trade (**Table 11b**).

Table 11. Trade numbers found on Facebook (a) and Instagram (b) during our 2016 (25 days) and 2019 (five days) surveys.

(a)

	2016				2019		Change %	
	No.		μ per week		No.			
	Items	Posts	Items	Posts	Items	Posts	Items	Posts
Indonesia	560	371	112	74.2	112	44	0.0	-40.7
Thailand	2531	637	506.2	127.4	1904	363	276.1	184.9
Viet Nam	4749	348	949.8	69.6	183	14	-80.7	-79.9
Total	7840	1356	1568	271.2	2199	421	40.2	55.2

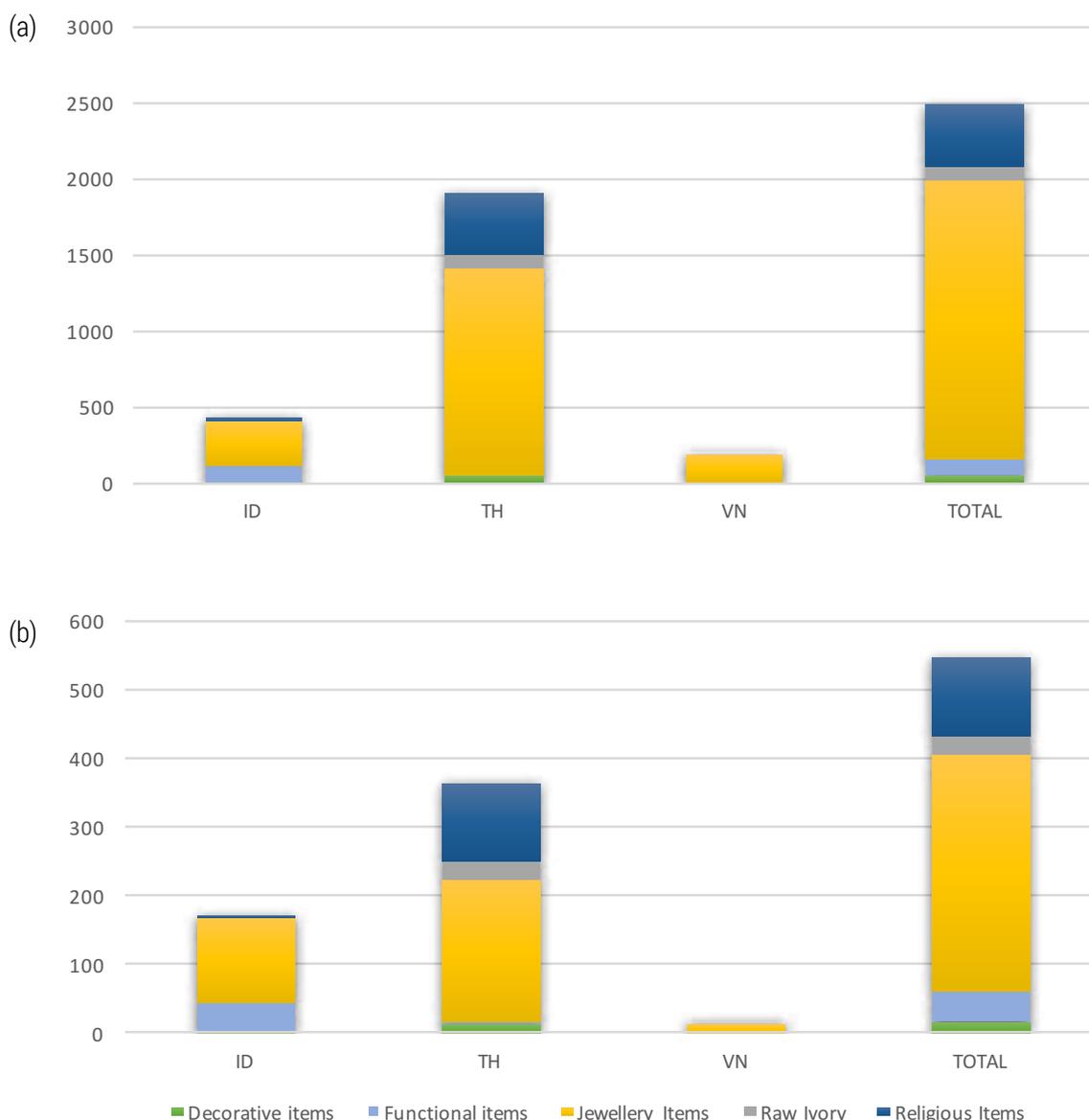
(b)

	2016				2019		Change %	
	No.		μ per week		No.			
	Items	Posts	Items	Posts	Items	Posts	Items	Posts
Indonesia	449	151	89.8	30.2	290	124	222.9	310.6
Thailand	19	15	3.8	3	0	0	-100.0	-100.0
Viet Nam	200	37	40	7.4	0	0	-100.0	-100.0
Total	668	203	133.6	40.6	290	124	117.1	205.4

Ivory items

In the 2019 survey, jewellery was found to still be the most commonly advertised item type across the three target countries, with a total of 1,825 recorded items (73.3%) (Figure 5a). As in the 2016 survey, jewellery items were followed by religious items (16.4%, n=408), but rather than raw ivory items (3.9%, n=98), functional items were now found to be the third most frequently advertised item type (4.5%, n=112). Most of the 545 encountered posts involved jewellery items (62.9%, n=343) (Figure 5b). The majority of these jewellery posts was found in Thai groups (60.1%, n=206). Religious items were found in 113 posts (20.7%), making it the second most frequently posted item type. All but one of the posts advertising religious items (99.8%) were recorded in Thailand. The third most frequently posted item type was functional items, which were found in 44 posts (8.1%), almost all of which (93.2%, n=41) were recorded in Indonesia.

Figure 5. Total number of (a) most commonly encountered ivory items types and (b) posts by item type found on Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam’s online platforms in July 2019.



Viet Nam still had the highest average number of advertised items per post ($\mu=13$) and was found to still be followed by Thailand ($\mu=5$) and Indonesia ($\mu=2$) in that respect. In seven cases more than 50 items were offered in a single post. This exclusively involved ivory beads, with the highest quantity found in a single post being 151 beads in a Thai post on Facebook.

Two items were recorded that had not been encountered in the 2016 survey. This concerned belt buckles (three items across three posts, all in Thailand) and piano keys (one item in one post in Indonesia).

Ivory prices

The percentage of posts mentioning item prices was found to be even lower in the 2019 survey (19%, $n=104$) than in the 2016 survey. The median price of all encountered ivory items was USD53. The most expensive item was found to be a USD2,868 bracelet, offered for sale in an Indonesian Instagram post. Other expensive items included two statues of USD1,792 each, two bangles of USD1,255 each and two unworked tusk tips at USD1,131 each. The items with the highest median price were found to be statues (USD1,792, $n=2$), which were also among the most expensive items in 2016, followed by belt buckles (USD347, $n=2$), carvings (USD190, $n=2$) and tusk tips (USD171, $n=10$).

Number of sellers

Along with the number of active groups and accounts, the number of sellers was found to have decreased heavily (64%) in 2019 (**Table 12**). This was particularly true for Indonesia (86.4%) and Viet Nam (97.7%). On aggregate, the average number of posts per seller had remained the same ($\mu=2.7$). This was also true for Thailand. In Indonesia, this was found to have more than doubled (from 2.1 posts per seller in 2016 to 4.9 in 2019) and in Viet Nam, this average had increased by 56.4% (from 4.5 to 7).

Table 12. Number of sellers and posts found during our 2016 and 2019 surveys.

	2016			2019			Change %		
	Sellers	Posts	μ posts per seller	Sellers	Posts	μ posts per seller	Sellers	Posts	μ posts per seller
Indonesia	250	522	2.1	34	168	4.9	-86.4	-67.8	136.6
Thailand	234	652	2.8	169	363	2.1	-27.8	-44.3	-22.9
Viet Nam	86	385	4.5	2	14	7.0	-97.7	-96.4	56.4
Total	570	1559	2.7	205	545	2.7	-64.0	-65.0	-2.8



DISCUSSION

Legality of the trade

This study's results show that significant quantities of ivory items are being offered for sale in posts on online social media platforms in Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam. Although under certain conditions, some ivory can be legitimately traded in these countries, it remains unclear how much of the ivory found was legal. Trade permits were lacking from most posts and in most cases the origin of the goods offered was not stated. In cases where no permit was provided it remained impossible to verify claims of origin. The inability clearly to distinguish between legal and illegal trade, in combination with the anonymity the Internet offers to traders, obviously complicates monitoring and enforcement efforts. In the absence of clear online wildlife trade regulations, the ivory trade on social media platforms poses a serious challenge to elephant conservation efforts.

The use of Facebook and Instagram

Facebook was found to be the most commonly used platform across this study. Only in Indonesia in 2019 were Facebook trade numbers found to be inferior to those found on Instagram. Facebook allows individual sellers to set up an online shop, a method which was found to be particularly popular in Thailand. Facebook also allows the creation of groups which can be used by members to engage in trade exchanges, including exchanges that involve potentially illegal products such as ivory. In closed groups, administrators can control the admission of group members, giving them the ability to scrutinise applicants and selectively allow potential buyers to join while refusing access to potentially unwanted individuals.

Although the number of Instagram posts was found to be significantly lower than the number of posts found on Facebook, the platform's facilitating role in the online ivory trade should not be readily dismissed. Instagram offers different features, interface, and site manoeuvring from Facebook. These unique and specific features offer users distinct ways to find products. It cannot be ruled out that Instagram has the potential to be an interesting platform for ivory sellers in the future. Trade numbers found on Instagram during the 2019 survey partly confirm this; whereas no Instagram posts were found in Thailand and Viet Nam, Instagram trade was found to have heavily increased in Indonesia, potentially representing a partial shift to this platform.



Sellers

Online ivory sellers appear to act without fear of repercussion. Most of them were found to be willing to provide personal contact information when requested by a prospective buyer. In some cases, identity cards were provided. The openness of many sellers suggests that online trade enforcement success are low.

In almost all cases sellers were found to be nationals of the country the posts were placed in. However, in some cases, sellers were found to be based outside the country where the ivory was offered. The Internet allows professional traders to run ivory trade operations from anywhere across the globe. The recorded Vietnamese traders operating out of Lao PDR and Kenya are a case in point. This poses several problems for law enforcement. Traders who are in transgression of national laws but are based outside the country are less likely to be subjected to law enforcement actions and, therefore, more likely to avoid prosecution.

Online trading hotspots

Online ivory trading hotspots were found to differ from those previously identified in physical market surveys. In Thailand, Bangkok has previously been singled out as the place where ivory trade activity was the greatest (Martin and Stiles, 2002; Stiles, 2009a; 2009b). However, in the current study, it was found that the online trade was larger in Surin Province (with Bangkok close behind). This is not all that surprising, as Surin is known for its traditional ivory carving industry (TRAFFIC, 2011) and as a live elephant trade hub (Nijman, 2014). It is also the province that has the largest population of wild elephants in Thailand (Stiles, 2008). In Viet Nam, Ha Noi was found to be the location with the greatest online ivory trade activity, which corresponds with the city's previously identified role as an important hub in the physical ivory trade. However, the second most important online hotspot was found to be Dak Lak Province, and not Ho Chi Minh City, as has been suggested by physical market research (Stiles, 2009; Nguyen and Willemsen, 2015). Dak Lak Province is known to have the highest number of wild elephants in the country, making it highly concerning that its active online trade has previously gone unnoticed. Similarly, Indonesia's Nusa Tenggara provinces, which have never been associated with the ivory trade, were found to be among the most important online ivory hotspots in the country.

These unexpected results suggest that online trade dynamics often differ significantly from those of the physical trade and warrant further long-term monitoring efforts and subsequent enforcement actions as necessary. Such monitoring efforts should aim to provide a better understanding of online trade dynamics, for example through the creation of detailed trader profiles and the mapping of online trade chains, and identify additional online ivory trade hotspots across Southeast Asia.

Pricing

Prices appear to be largely determined by private trade, therefore it is difficult to make inferences of fluctuations in trade and impacts on online prices. It is also very difficult to determine how financial transactions are executed, as they are predominantly discussed in private conversations between sellers and buyers. The possibility, and often necessity, of electronic transactions makes online ivory trade all the more anonymous and therefore attractive to private sellers and professional traders alike.

Comparing Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam's roles in the ivory trade

The conducted surveys provide a snapshot of the online ivory trade in Thailand, Viet Nam and Indonesia. According to ETIS, these three countries all play different roles in the global ivory trade. The results of these surveys partly confirm those roles, but also provide new perspectives on the ivory trade in these countries.

Indonesia

This study's research shows, to some extent, an elevation of Indonesia's role in the ivory trade. Comparatively speaking, Indonesia has generally been considered to play a minor role in the ivory trade and, in contrast to Thailand and Viet Nam, has not often been subjected to dedicated ivory trade research. However, the current study shows that there is an online ivory market in the country with traders in locations not previously known to be associated with ivory trade. The country was found to have the largest number of active accounts and groups in 2016. In 2019, this was still the case, even though 31.3% of the 67 groups and accounts surveyed in 2016 had been shut down. Accounts of wildlife-selling groups being removed after having been reported to Facebook by the Ministry of Law Enforcement, may explain this downward trend (Alamsyah, 2019). These findings certainly warrant further examination of the country's role in the global ivory trade.

In 2016, most Indonesian sellers were found to sell small quantities of ivory products, often consisting of cigarette holders and smaller ivory items. In this respect, Indonesia differs from Thailand and Viet Nam, where major sellers were often found to offer large quantities of ivory at once. In Indonesia, a large number of traders was found to offer small quantities of items for sale, showing a low-volume – but widespread – trade. Widespread, scattered individual sellers dealing in small quantities make it difficult to monitor and understand trade dynamics and to determine trade routes and the origin of the ivory being offered for sale, effectively complicating enforcement efforts. In 2019, an apparent shift was observed. The number of sellers had dropped drastically (by 86.4%) and sellers were found to have increased the number of items offered for sale in single posts (from $\mu=2.1$ to $\mu=4.9$). Further research into these developments is highly recommended.

When it comes to Indonesia's ivory jewellery market, the story is different altogether. This market is clearly dominated by traders from the Nusa Tenggara provinces. Contrary to the scattered nature of the trade in cigarette holders, the jewellery trade is concentrated, with certain Facebook groups and Instagram accounts offering more than 100 items at once. Interestingly, the Nusa Tenggara region has no previous records of involvement in the ivory trade. It is at some distance from most of Java's provincial capital cities, where the economy is most active, and is not known to have any domestic elephants. Nevertheless, a recent ivory seizure had already hinted at the region's involvement in the ivory trade. This incident involved the smuggling of ivory from Malaysia to East Nusa Tenggara, supposedly for the purpose of a wedding dowry (Anon., 2017b). Wedding dowry requirements in East Nusa Tenggara are known to be particularly high, with such dowries functioning as status symbols for the bridegroom's family (Hardoyo, 2015). Ivory items, with their high value and luxury status, could potentially serve as suitable wedding gifts in this area. In 2016, the highest number of ivory items was recorded in West Nusa Tenggara (see Figure 2). Despite this survey being able to illustrate an overview and emerging trends on the state of Indonesia's ivory trade, it may still be difficult to draw a complete description of the market on the basis of a snapshot survey. Further research into the ivory trade here is needed to assess the scale of this trade, determine the origin and destination of the items for sale and to increase our overall understanding of trade dynamics.

Thailand

According to ETIS, Thailand was one of the main consumers of ivory and one of the largest importers of raw ivory from Africa in recent years (Milliken *et al.*, 2013). This is to some extent reflected in the current survey's results. In the 2016 survey, Thailand already accounted for a large number of items (30%, n=2,550) and for most of the raw ivory (85%) traded on online platforms. In 2019, trade volumes were found to have heavily increased. This was despite the fact that 59% of the 39 groups and accounts surveyed in 2016 had been shut down. Thailand was also the country with the highest number of sellers still active in 2019 (n=169). The average number of items per post was found to have only slightly decreased (by 22.9%). Across both surveys, Thailand was found to have the greatest variety of raw ivory products available, ranging from tusk tips to ivory powder, which were not encountered on Indonesia and Viet Nam's online trading platforms. Ivory powder usually constitutes residue generated during the manufacturing process. Interestingly, raw ivory was the second most frequently encountered item type in Thailand, behind religious items. Whether processed items stay in the Thai market or are subsequently exported remains unclear. Despite the positive outcomes that have emerged from Thailand's commendable efforts in reforming and regulating its ivory trade under the previous NIAP process, did not delve into its online trading platforms. In this regard, there is concern that these platforms may be functioning as another active marketplace. Continued monitoring of both its physical and online markets are important to track this trade. Continued monitoring efforts are necessary to track future developments of Thailand's online ivory trade.

Viet Nam

According to ETIS, Viet Nam functions as both a major transit country for onward re-export to China and, more recently, as a destination country for ivory with a domestic market catering to Chinese tourists (Milliken *et al.*, 2016). In 2016, the Wildlife Justice Commission published the results of an investigation into Viet Nam's prominent domestic trade centred in Nhi Khe and other neighbouring villages in the north of the country (Anon., 2016d). Nhi Khe was also identified as an important hub in the transnational online wildlife trade. During the year-long study, parts and products from no less than 907 elephants (and 579 rhinos and 225 tigers) were found to have been traded through this location, including items traded online (predominantly through WeChat, targeting Chinese customers, and to a lesser extent on Facebook, targeting Southeast Asian clientele) (Anon., 2016e).

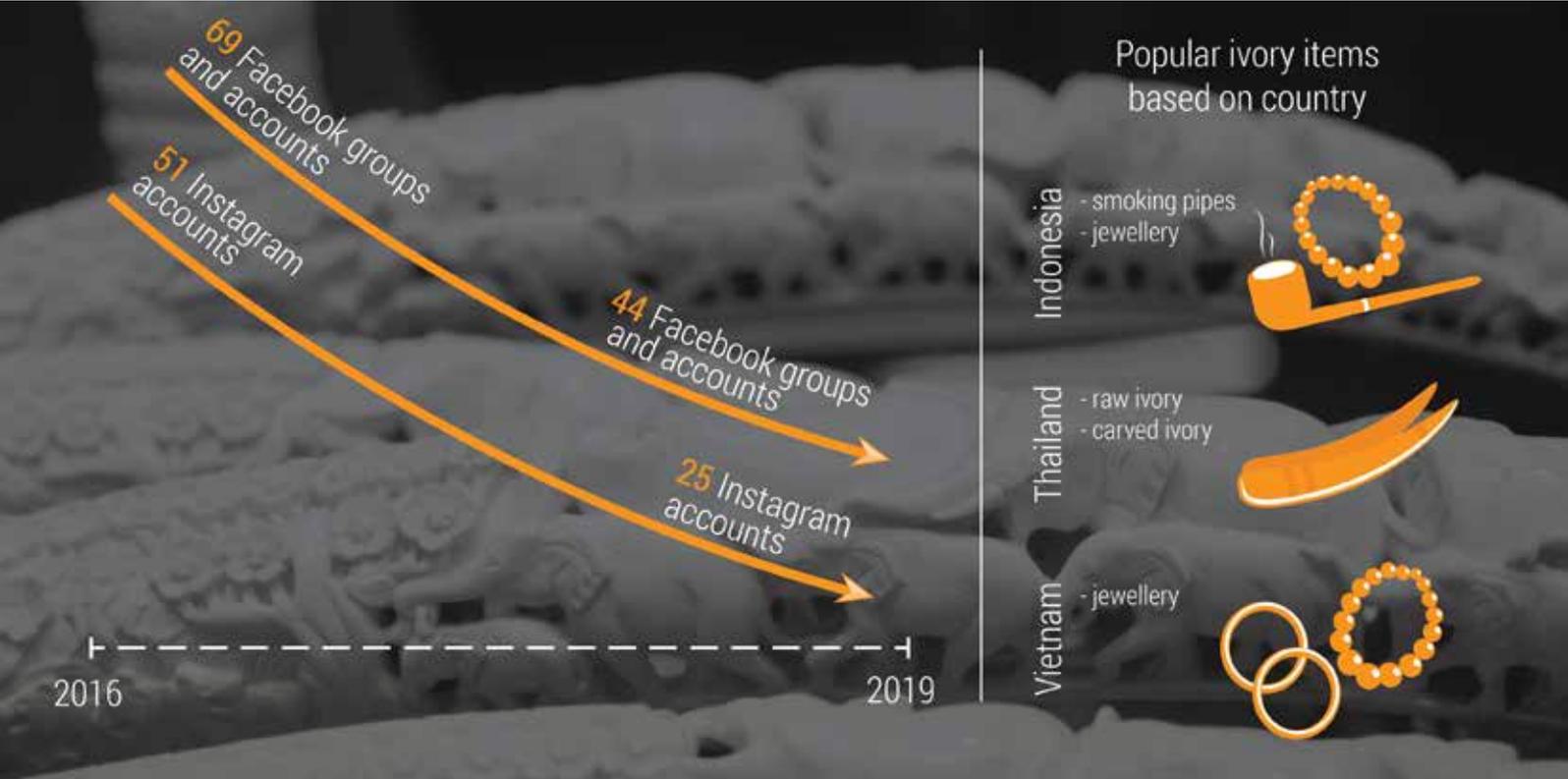
While Vietnamese seizures of international ivory shipments over the past two years further confirm the country's role as a major transit hub, the current study's survey findings confirm that a domestic market for processed ivory exists as well and indicate that at least part of the domestic trade is conducted via online platforms. Indeed, in 2016, Viet Nam's online trade accounted for the greatest number of ivory items (n=4,949). A large majority of these items were jewellery.

In 2019, half of the 14 groups and accounts surveyed in 2016 were found to have been shut down. Trade volumes in the remaining seven Facebook groups were found to have plummeted. This may hint at a decrease in online ivory trade in Viet Nam, but it cannot be ruled out that new groups were started and/or shifts to other online platforms have taken place. In both 2016 and 2019, Viet Nam was found to have the greatest items-to-post and items-to-seller ratios. In other words, single posts in Viet Nam involved more items than those in the other two countries.

A recent seizure in Europe underscores the presence of a domestic ivory market in Viet Nam. This seizure concerned an ivory processing operation in which African ivory was crafted in Europe and then exported to Viet Nam. This unique seizure shows that offshore ivory processing operations are potentially feeding Viet Nam's online ivory trade. Viet Nam's role as a potential end-use market needs to be further investigated. Viet Nam's NIAP does not include measures against the online ivory trade, increasing the chances of there being a knowledge gap concerning the country's domestic ivory trade. Continued monitoring of the online ivory market will be an essential part of understanding this trade.

Online regulations

In all three countries laws exist that regulate online trade. However, none of these laws explicitly list items that may not be traded, nor do they state whether prohibitions extend to protected wildlife species and their parts or products. For lists of prohibited goods, readers are generally referred to other pieces of legislation, without details being provided as to which. For example, Indonesia's regulation for online trade mentions that "all items that are prohibited to be sold by previous regulations (i.e. laws that list protected wildlife) cannot be sold online". One of the issues with regulating the online sale of wildlife is that sellers are operating in an informal marketplace, making it easier for them to conduct trade without any legal business licences.



CONCLUSION



This study has unequivocally shown that ivory products are being openly offered for sale in posts on social media platforms in Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam. It was found that Facebook was by far the preferred platform in the online ivory trade, with Instagram a distant second place. However, increasing enforcement efforts as a result of Facebook's renewed regulations may lead trade to shift to other online platforms. To date, many ivory trade studies in Southeast Asia have either focused on ivory seizures involving large items such as tusks and raw ivory or have revolved around physical market surveys (or have been combinations of both). Online ivory trade investigations as they have occurred in China, and increasingly Japan, have largely been absent in Southeast Asia, yet the current study has shown that social media platforms facilitate ivory trade in the researched countries. Although limited legal ivory trade is possible under certain conditions in all three of the countries of focus, the lack of trading permits, the inability to determine the source of the ivory on offer and the ability of sellers to operate largely anonymously, highly complicate monitoring and enforcement efforts. These findings are important to consider with respect to the CITES and NIAP related processes, in addition to the CITES decision to address wildlife cybercrime (CITES, 2016b). The scale of the encountered online trade suggests that research into the online marketplace should become an integral part of future ivory trade studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this study's findings, TRAFFIC recommends the following:

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement agencies should devise strategies to better deal with the rising phenomenon of online ivory trade. Due to the complexities of the online trade, such as changing trade patterns, unclarity in relation to the legality of the trade, unverified locations of users and traders and the masking of true trade activities, new best practice monitoring techniques will have to be devised and adopted.

National and international multi-agency monitoring and enforcement collaborations should be strived for. Collaborations should not be limited to enforcement agencies but should also include online trade platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as NGOs who can play useful roles in terms of dedicated ongoing monitoring.

Closer co-operation between Facebook and relevant wildlife enforcement agencies in Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam is needed to enhance monitoring efficiency, contribute to a better understanding of the online ivory trade, enable the identification of key traders and repeat-offenders and facilitate swift enforcement action.

Enforcement efforts should be directed towards identified ivory trade hot spots. These hotspots should be subjected to intensified online and physical crime investigations, which should include constant monitoring, the identification of local criminal networks and the analysis of local trade dynamics. Some important trade hot spots, as identified by this study, are Central Java and the Nusa Tenggara provinces in Indonesia, Surin Province and the Bangkok administrative area in Thailand, and Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City and Dak Lak Province in Viet Nam.

Legislation

National legislation should be amended in all three focus countries so that it sufficiently incorporates online wildlife crime; this would also be in line with CITES Decision 17.92 on Combating wildlife cybercrime. The severity of the illegal ivory trade should be reflected in both wildlife and online trade laws and regulations. Penalties pertaining to illegal online ivory trade should be increased in order to be sufficiently deterrent. Per country, the following legislative amendments are desired:

Indonesia

Indonesia should expedite the revision of Conservation Law Act No. 5 of 1990. African Elephants should be listed under this law. In addition, the current listing of Asian Elephants should be amended so as to incorporate changes to the species' scientific name (from *Elephas indicus* to *Elephas maximus*).

Indonesia's *Law No. 11 of 2008 Concerning Electronic Information and Transactions* should be revisited so as to list specific law enforcement actions and sanctions relating to the online trade in prohibited species, including elephants, in alignment with the requirements of CITES.

Thailand

Thailand should amend the *Civil and Commercial Codes Book III*, which governs trade and civil activities in Thailand so that it better regulates online trade in wildlife products, especially protected species, criminalises illegal online ivory trade and provides clearer penalties.

Viet Nam

In Viet Nam, new laws – the *Penal Code No. 100/2015/QH13*, along with *Law No. 12/2017/QH14* – have come into force on 1 January 2018. These laws are more robust and provide more effective punitive measures in the fight against wildlife crime, with penalties for criminal offences now increased to fines of a maximum of VND2 billion (USD88,438.20) and imprisonment of up to 15 years. Whilst these new laws are an improvement to previous legislation, they will need to be strictly implemented and enforced if they are to serve as an effective deterrent to wildlife crimes.



Public Awareness and Social Vigilance

A proactive engagement of the public to report suspicious online ivory trade to the relevant authorities is highly desirable. Facebook currently offers the option to report any illegal behaviour directly to the company itself. Reporting is also possible directly to national law enforcement agencies and through TRAFFIC's specially designed global community action app: the Wildlife Witness App. In Thailand, individuals can also report any illegal online trade to the Wild Hawk Unit (WHU), a taskforce of the Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Division whose job it is to tackle illegal wildlife smuggling. Incidents can be reported to WHU's Facebook page and Line account (a messenger service). In Indonesia, similar opportunities are provided by the Directorate General of Law Enforcement for Environment and Forestry (GAKKUM-LHK). Incidents are reported via the GAKKUM phone app. The public needs to be encouraged to make use of these facilities.

Monitoring and Research

The levels of online ivory trade that were found in Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam warrant further research and monitoring of online trade platforms; not just in the identified platform and these three countries, but in all potential online platforms and all countries where a potential domestic ivory market is present. Research into the online marketplace should be an integral part of future ivory trade studies. Standardised online ivory trade research methods should be adopted to enable better comparisons between (and within) countries (including over time) and facilitate the tracking of trade level fluctuations.





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Annexes

Annex 1: Number of individual ivory items and posts found on Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam's online platforms between June and July 2016.

Item Type	No. of items	Percentage	No. of posts	Percentage
Decorative items	168	2%	49	3%
Functional items	568	6%	339	13%
Jewellery items	5,853	69%	814	52%
Raw ivory items	573	7%	158	10%
Religious items	1,349	16%	199	22%
Total	8,508	100%	1,559	100%

Annex 2: Number of individual ivory items per item type offered for sale and the number of posts per item type found on Indonesia's online platforms between June and July 2016.

Item type	No. of items	No. of posts*
Decorative items	34	22
Antique plates	2	2
Antique scales	1	1
Carvings	6	3
Cylinders	-	-
Dagger handles	22	13
Statues	2	2
Swagger sticks	1	1
Functional items	501	330
Chinese Chess Sets	-	-
Cigarette holders	500	329
Combs	-	-
Painting tubes	-	-
Pens	-	-
Stamps	1	1
Jewellery items	470	283*
Bangles/Bracelets	149	110
Beads	-	-

Brooches	11	7
Earrings	124	51
Hairpins	2	1
Necklaces	13	2
Pendants	48	40
Rings	111	60
Sets	12	12
Raw ivory items	3	3
Ivory pieces	-	-
Ivory powder	-	-
Ivory tips	-	-
Tusks	3	3
Religious items	1	1
Amulets	-	-
Figurines (Hanuman)	-	-
Figurines (Monk)	-	-
Figurines (Nang Kwak)	-	-
Figurines (Singha)	-	-
Prayer beads	1	1
Statues (Buddha)	-	-
Statues (Ganesha)	-	-
Statues (Lingam-Yoni)	-	-
Statues (Monk)	-	-
Statues (Non-specified)	-	-
Statues (Singha)	-	-
Total	1,009	

**One post might involve more than one item category. Therefore, the total number of posts in these two countries are not the same as the total number of the number of posts in each sub category.*

Annex 3. Number of individual ivory items and online ivory traders per province in Indonesia between June and July 2016.

Province	No. of traders	Item type					Total
		Decorative items	Functional items	Jewellery items	Raw ivory items	Religious items	
Bali	22	4	39	9	-	-	52
Banten	2	-	2	-	-	-	2
Bengkulu	8	-	8	-	-	-	8
Central Java	163	4	210	-	-	1	215
East Java	34	6	34	3	-	-	43
East Kalimantan	1	-	1	-	-	-	1
East Nusa Tenggara	72	-	-	110	-	-	110
Jakarta	33	13	26	34	-	-	73
Lampung	4	-	4	-	-	-	4
Maluku	1	-	1	-	-	-	1
North Sumatra	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
Riau	15	-	26	-	-	-	26
Riau Islands	2	-	2	-	-	-	2
South Kalimantan	3	-	2	-	-	-	3
South Sumatra	1	1	1	-	-	-	1
West Java	44	1	62	12	-	-	75
West Nusa Tenggara	122	-	-	272	-	-	272
Yogyakarta	18	4	14	1	-	-	19
Unspecified	72	-	69	29	3	-	101
Total		34	501	470	3	1	1,009

Annex 4: Number of individual ivory items per item type offered for sale and the number of posts per item type found on Thailand's online platforms between June and July 2016.

Item type	No. of items	No. of posts
Decorative items	91	22
Antique plates	-	-
Antique scales	-	-
Carvings	72	13
Cylinders	15	5
Dagger handles	3	3
Statues	1	1
Swagger sticks	-	-
Functional items	1	1
Chinese chess sets	-	-
Cigarette holders	1	1
Combs	-	-
Painting tubes	-	-
Pens	-	-
Stamps	-	-
Jewellery items	838	305
Bangles/bracelets	134	66
Beads	132	10
Brooches	-	-
Earrings	1	1
Hairpins	-	-
Necklaces	243	107
Pendants	46	16
Rings	282	105
Sets	-	-
Raw ivory items	486	146
Ivory pieces	398	85
Ivory powder	N.A	2
Ivory tips	75	51
Tusks	13	8

Religious items	1,134	179*
Amulets	85	36
Figurines (Hanuman)	5	2
Figurines (Monk)	15	5
Figurines (Nang Kwak)	2	2
Figurines (Singha)	43	23
Pendants (Erawan)	11	11
Pendants (Ganesha)	71	34
Pendants (Singha)	12	4
Prayer beads	836	40
Statues (Budha)	12	6
Statues (Ganesha)	29	12
Statues (Lingam-Yoni)	2	1
Statues (Monk)	1	1
Statues (Non-specified)	9	1
Statues (Singha)	1	162
Total	2,550	

**One post might involve more than one item category. Therefore, the total number of posts in these two countries are not the same as the total number of the number of posts in each sub category.*

Annex 5: List of regions and provinces in Thailand.

Region	List of Provinces
North-Eastern	Kalasin, Maha Sarakham, Nakhon Ratchasima, Sakon Nakhon, Surin, Ubon Ratchathani, Udon Thani
Central	Ayuttaya, Bangkok, Kamphaeng Phet, Lopburi, Nakhon Sawan, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Suphan Buri, Uthai Thani
Eastern	Chanthaburi, Chachoengsao, Chonburi, Ranong, Rayong, Sa Kaeo
Northern	Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Nan, Phayao, Phitsanulok
Southern	Phang-nga, Chumphon, Krabi, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Narathiwat, Phatthalung, Satun, Songkhla, Surat Thani, Trang
Western	Kanchanaburi, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Ratchaburi, Tak

Annex 6: Number of individual ivory items and online ivory traders per province in Thailand between June and July 2016.

Province	No. of traders	Item type					
		Decorative items	Funtional items	Jewellery items	Raw ivory items	Religious items	Total
Chanthaburi	1	-	-	-	9	-	9
Phang-nga	26	-	-	-	6	-	6
Ayuttaya	3	-	-	1	-	-	1
Bangkok	1	-	-	78	51	6	56
Chachoengsao	5	-	-	4	4	1	9
Chiang Mai	5	-	-	12	3	1	16
Chiang Rai	2	-	-	9	-	3	12
Chonburi	3	-	-	-	-	4	4
Chumphon	1	-	-	4	-	-	4
Kalasin	1	-	-	2	-	-	2
Kamphaeng Phet	1	-	-	-	16	-	16
Kanchanaburi	1	-	-	1	-	-	1
Krabi	2	-	-	4	3	-	7
Lopburi	1	-	-	1	1	-	2
Maha Sarakham	5	-	-	1	-	-	1
Nakhon Ratchasima	5	1	-	22	-	11	34
Nakhon Sawan	2	9	-	3	-	5	17
Nakhon Si Thammarat	1	-	-	41	1	-	42
Nan	1	-	1	-	-	-	1
Narathiwat	3	-	-	1	-	-	1
Nonthaburi	121	-	-	4	-	-	4
Pathum Thani	1	1	-	1	44	-	46
Phatthalung	1	-	-	2	-	-	2
Phayao	2	-	-	2	-	-	2
Phitsanulok	1	-	-	-	1	1	2
Prachuap Khiri Khan	2	-	-	1	-	-	1

Ranong	1	2	-	2	4	-	8
Ratchaburi	1	-	-	4	-	4	8
Rayong	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Sa Kaeo	1	-	-	-	27	-	27
Sakon Nakhon	1	-	-	1	4	-	5
Satun	2	1	-	10	-	-	11
Songkhla	2	2	-	9	37	14	62
Suphan Buri	7	-	-	3	-	3	6
Surat Thani	5	-	-	10	4	17	31
Surin	2	42	-	260	7	121	430
Tak	14	3	-	-	-	-	3
Trang	1	-	-	2	2	-	4
Ubon Ratchathani	4	-	-	2	-	-	2
Udon Thani	2	-	-	1	-	-	1
Uthai Thani	1	-	-	-	5	-	5
Unspecified	1	30	-	340	257	942	1,569
Total		91	1	838	486	1,134	2,550

Annex 7: Number of individual ivory items per item type offered for sale and the number of posts per item type found on Viet Nam's online platforms between June and July 2016.

Item type	No. of items	No. of posts*
Decorative items	43	6
Antique plates	-	-
Antique scales	-	-
Carvings	-	-
Cylinders	38	2
Dagger handles	-	-
Statues	5	4
Swagger sticks	-	-
Functional items	66	8
Chinese chess sets	1	1
Cigarette holders	10	2
Combs	3	1
Painting tubes	10	1

Pens	42	3
Stamps	-	-
Jewellery items	4,542	342
Bangles/bracelets	1,266	117
Beads	2	1
Brooches	-	-
Earrings	8	2
Hairpins	5	1
Necklaces	271	19
Pendants	1,416	130
Rings	1,574	72
Sets	-	-
Raw ivory items	84	9
Ivory pieces	82	8
Ivory powder	-	-
Ivory tips	-	-
Tusks	2	1
Religious items	214	20
Amulets	-	-
Figurines (Hanuman)	-	-
Figurines (Monk)	-	-
Figurines (Nang Kwak)	-	-
Figurines (Singha)	-	-
Pendants (Erawan)	-	-
Pendants (Ganesha)	-	-
Pendants (Singha)	-	-
Prayer beads	190	5
Statues (Buddha)	-	-
Statues (Ganesha)	-	-
Statues (Lingam-Yoni)	-	-
Statues (Monk)	-	-
Statues (Non-specified)	24	15
Statues (Singha)	-	-
Total		4,949

**One post might involve more than one item category. Therefore, the total number of posts in these two countries are not the same as the total number of the number of posts in each sub category.*

Annex 8: Number of individual ivory items and online ivory traders per province in Viet Nam between June and July 2016.

Province	No. of traders	Item type					Total
		Decorative items	Functional items	Jewellery items	Raw ivory items	Religious items	
Bac Giang	1	-	-	23	-	-	26
Binh Duong	1	-	-	5	-	-	5
Can Tho	1	-	-	1	-	-	1
Da Nang	4	-	-	225	10	-	235
Dak Lak	14	-	-	1,073	-	-	1,073
Dong Nai	2	-	-	2	-	-	2
Gia Lai	3	-	-	217	-	-	217
Ha Noi	22	2	11	1,329	22	78	1,442
HCMC	13	41	21	767	4	111	944
Khanh Hoa	1	-	-	126	-	-	126
Lang Son	2	-	7	50	-	-	57
Quang Nam	1	-	-	2	-	-	2
Quang Ninh	2	-	-	2	28	-	30
Unspecified	21	-	27	720	20	25	792
Total		43	66	4,542	84	214	4,949

TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, is a leading non-governmental organisation working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

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