



Internet trade of elephant ivory in Africa and Asia

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Campaigns Against the Cruelty to Animals
Animal Conservation and Welfare Foundation



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BACKGROUND OF THE INVESTIGATION

Up to few years ago, very few people had access to a computer or internet, but these days the use of the internet is more widespread, reaching everyday more people around the globe. As a consequence, the internet trade of wildlife has been increasing dramatically in the last few years, just because this kind of technology is not longer unaffordable and inaccessible making the internet trade more popular and available almost to everyone, as it can reach a wider potential market locally, nationally and also at an international level. This is the ideal market for illegal sellers of wildlife, as they can hide behind false names, addresses and anonymous e-mails.

Due to the increasing rate of e-commerce on protected wildlife, it is necessary to continuously research the internet in several countries, investigating the trade of CITES protected animal species to be able to assess the severity of this global problem, to alert the authorities of the countries involved for them to tackle the problem internally and to reduce or stop the increasing e-commerce of wildlife.

Millions of wild animals (live and derivatives) are trapped on the global online trade every single day.

Because only few investigations have been done in this area and the majority of the investigations are not done in an extensive way, since 2008 CATCA has been investigating and exposing the internet trade of CITES protected animal species in different countries and continents, bringing the results of our investigations in the form of reports to the CITES CoP's and meetings, to distribute them to the governments enforcement authorities, Interpol, the media and the internet server providers.

The goal of this report is to expose the level of the e-commerce problem on the monitored countries, urging CITES, governments, enforcement authorities and the internet server providers to take action and tackle this increasing global problem.

During the CITES CoP 2010 we delivered our *"Internet Trade of Elephant Ivory in Latin America"* and *"Internet Trade of CITES Species of Animals in Ecuador"* reports. In 2011 we sent to CITES the *"Internet Trade of Primates in Latin America"* report.

This is our 5th international formal investigation on the e-commerce of CITES species of animals.

Our last Elephant Ivory Report exposed the large amounts of Catholic ivory statues and crucifixes found in Latin America. The vast majority of those items found came from the Philippines via Spain.

The results obtained on that investigation were our inspiration to further investigate and assess in other continents the e-commerce of elephant ivory.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2007, after CITES agreed to the one time sale of 108 tons of confiscated elephant ivory in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, the poaching of elephants has increased at an alarming rate all over Africa, totally annihilating several African elephants populations.

The poachers have taken full advantage of the "one time sale" of elephant ivory in those countries to indiscriminately slaughter entire populations of African elephants, just to satisfy the huge ivory demand from Asia but especially from China.

Since the 80's, the African continent has not witness such large amounts of illegal elephant poaching.

In reality all the African elephants are at risk of been decimated as it is a very wealthy business to trade on elephant ivory that turns out on the poor local streets and also at the expensive souvenir stores in Africa and Asia, in a large variety of forms and sizes with very different purposes.

For this reason, CATCA decided to investigate the internet trade of elephant ivory in Africa and Asia to assess the problem on these continents from 2012 to 2013, to have our results ready for the CITES CoP16 in Bangkok.

CATCA has been delighted to welcome our colleagues of the Animal Conservation and Welfare Foundation joining efforts with us to expand our geographical investigation range, multiplying the number of countries investigated.

METHODOLOGY

CATCA as in the past, used the same way of researching the internet trade of wildlife and the internet trade of elephant ivory in Latin America, using the Google search engine on the native language (s) of the countries investigated. For this purpose, we assembled a skilled team of colleagues that speak and read the native languages of the countries that we researched and of course that are fluent in English.

This investigation was done in the following languages: Afrikaans, Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, English, French, Filipino, Hindi, Japanese, Portuguese, Punjabi, Spanish and Swahili.

It was a challenge as some countries use two or three of these languages. We focused only on the e-commerce of elephant ivory, but we also found some other elephant parts in the market.

Our team tried to assess the legal origin of the specimens for sale. For this purpose we contacted some of the sellers (s) requesting more information about the specimens, their origin and permits.

CATCA and the ACWF did the investigation in the following countries: Algeria, Arab Emirates, India, Japan, Morocco, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa, We chose the countries to investigate basing us on geographical location, demography, ethnicity, religion and economy.

We also did a preliminary research of other counties in Africa, but didn't find anything significant (check page 5 for more information).

In November 2012 we started to repeat the monitoring on all the websites already researched, while searching for new websites and classified advertisements on the web of all the countries chosen for this investigation in their respective languages.

Unfortunately we could not monitor China. In our team we had colleagues that speak and read in Cantonese and Mandarin, but there was an unexpected problem: most of the advertisements in China are in Simplified Chinese so our colleagues could not read them. We even posted advertisements asking for help with some colleagues in Hong Kong but time caught on us, so we had no choice but to cancel our monitoring in this country.

GENERAL RESULTS

In this investigation we found a wide array of elephant ivory items, but in each country we found a different demand of diverse ivory items according to their traditions and religion.

Our investigation reveals a high demand of elephant ivory in the form of netsuke's, hankos, Buddha's and some other complex statues and carvings in Japan, but also appears in the shape of Catholic religious saint figures, baby Christ statues and crucifixes in the Philippines, as jewellery and accessories in the form of Asian elephants in India, to mostly raw tusks in the Asian Arab countries.

Japan is the number one country for advertisements, for specimens found and for a higher total value of items for sale.

Country	# Ads	# Items	Value
Algeria	10	23	\$66,847.00
Arab Emirates	18	106	\$66,266.11
India	234	554	\$792,728.59
Japan	1187	18994	\$25,575,442.60
Morocco	6	12	\$5,802
Philippines	59	163	\$319,839.00
Saudi Arabia	11	83	\$34,929.00
South Africa	201	387	\$378,922.57
TOTAL	1758	20318	\$26,448,048.28

Totals per Country

NOTE: All the prices in this report are in USD Dollars



RESULTS IN AFRICA

As we mentioned already, before starting to do our main investigation our team did a preliminary monitoring to check if there was any e-trade in the following African countries: Burundi, Djibouti, Gabon, Mozambique, Tanzania and Tunisia.

This is what our team found:

Burundi– No advertisements

Djibouti– No advertisements

Gabon– No advertisements

Mozambique– We found several advertisements but all were for sellers abroad, none in the country

Most of those advertisements took us to classified websites in Brazil and Portugal selling a considerable amount of ivory

Tanzania– There was only a single advertisement but the seller was in Malaysia

That advertisement was offering several elephant tusks and also rhino horns

Tunisia– We found only one advertisement for a tusk worth it \$979.75 USD

When CATCA was investigating Morocco we found some links to classified ads in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Emirates, so our colleagues of the ACWF researched these countries and also Algeria.

ALGERIA

We monitored the Algerian websites but only found ivory in five websites, with few ads but with some interesting results. Mostly tusks. None seems to be legal.

We found an advertisement with 70 kilos of elephant tusks for sale.

Category	# Ads	# Items	Value
A	0	0	\$0
J	1	3	\$3,826.04
M	5	6	\$47,334.54
S	1	2	\$382.60
T	3	12	\$15,304.18
Total =	10	23	\$66,847

Algeria results



CATEGORIES OF SPECIMENS FOUND

A=Accessories: cigarette holders, handbag mirrors, card holders, hair pins, etc.

M=Miscellaneous: knives, chopsticks, ear sticks, guns, shoe helpers, boxes, etc.

J=Jewelry: earrings, necklaces, pendants, rings, brooches, bracelets, etc.

S=Statues: carved figures, netsuke's, statues, sculptures

T=Tusks: raw or carved elephant ivory.

H= Hankos ONLY IN JAPAN.

MOROCCO

Morocco showed fewer advertisements of elephant ivory and the least ivory e-trade in this investigation. The specimens that we found didn't mention CITES nor any proper documentation. Our team found only pianos and bracelets.

Category	# Ads	# Items	Value
A	0	0	\$0.00
J	3	9	\$1,399.74
M	2	2	\$4,306.89
S	1	1	\$95.70
T	0	0	\$0.00
Total =	6	12	\$5,802

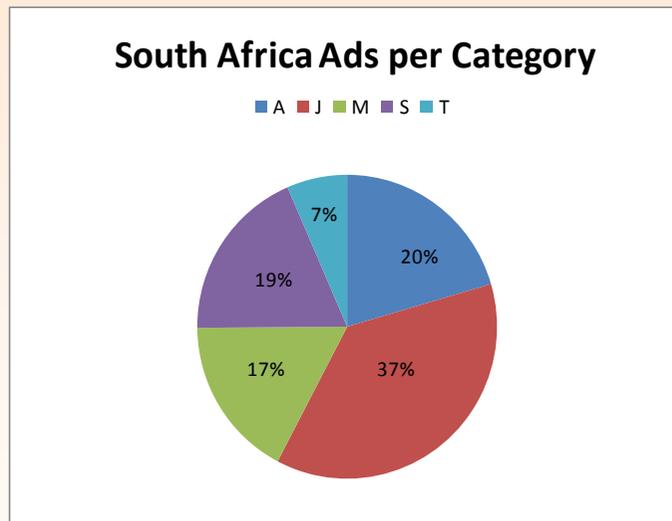
Morocco results

SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa we checked 22 classified websites but only found elephant ivory in six websites.

It is interesting to mention that we found in this country a total of 194 items (bracelets, rings, pendants and earrings) made with elephant hair in 7 different websites (2 private websites). We also found two ads of elephant feet for sale and a briefcase made of elephant skin. More odd was to find in OXL two elephant feet side tables.

An estimated 90% of the advertisements doesn't mention CITES, any permits or anything about shipping restrictions.



Percentage of all the advertisements found by category



Website	A	J	M	S	T
www.adoos.co.za	1	0	0	2	2
www.bidorbuy.co.za	43	73	27	30	4
www.capetown-westerncape.gumtree.co.za	0	0	0	2	1
www.junkmail.co.za	0	1	5	3	2
www.sellstuff.co.za	0	1	0	0	1
www.capetown.olx.co.za	0	2	2	1	2
www.centurion.oxl.co.za	0	0	1	1	0
www.johannesburg.oxl.co.za	0	2	1	0	0
www.pretoria.oxl.co.za	0	0	0	0	0
www.portshepstone.oxl.co.za	0	0	1	1	0
www.somersetwest.oxl.co.za	0	1	0	0	1
www.worcester.oxl.co.ca	0	0	0	0	1

Ads per category and websites in South Africa
(For OXL we added the totals per city)

Category	# Ads	# Items	Value
A	44	60	\$34,981.57
J	80	105	\$8,789.04
M	37	118	\$308,749.26
S	40	72	\$7,971.61
T	14	34	\$53,412.66
Total =	215	383	\$378,922.57

South Africa results



Other elephant products found in South Africa

RESULTS IN ASIA

ARAB EMIRATES

Our team only found five websites with ads of ivory in the Arab Emirates. Almost all the items that we found were in internet forums.

Most of the ivory found in the Arab Emirates comes from Egypt, Dubai and Turkey.

On the ads we found several raw tusks and praying beads. Only one seller with a large amount of tusks claimed to be legal and to have the proper documentation.

Category	# Ads	# Items	Value
A	9	36	\$6,915
J	1	1	\$136,13
M	1	2	\$408,38
S	0	0	0
T	7	67	\$59,486.63
Total =	18	106	\$66,266 .11

Arab Emirates results

SAUDI ARABIA

In this country we researched dozens of websites and web forums, but only found classifieds of ivory in 7 websites.

Most of the ivory that we found in this country was in internet forums. None of these ads mentioned any documentation, but one mentioned that the tusks were antique and pre-ban.

We found mostly raw tusks, statues and praying beads.

Category	# Ads	# Items	Value
A	2	2	\$133
J	0	0	\$0
M	0	0	\$0
S	1	31	\$1,333.00
T	8	50	\$33,462.65
Total =	11	83	\$34,929.65

Saudi Arabia results



INDIA

It is interesting to mention that the items that we found in India are ironically mostly in the shape of Asian elephants (jewelry of all kinds, statues, etc). We also found Hindu statues, chess games and paintings on ivory. There was also one advertisement selling elephant skin.

Among the oddities that we found were Gaja Mukta's. We have never heard of them. When we searched the definition it says: "Elephant pearl" (Gajamukta) are rare "pearls" found within the elephant tusks. We found an advertisements selling 120 items a year and another ad with 3 items. It seems to be a very valued item. Apparently these elephant "pearls" come from the root of the tusks and is a rare bony growth very valued by the Buddhists. Most of the prices were over \$1,000 USD a piece.

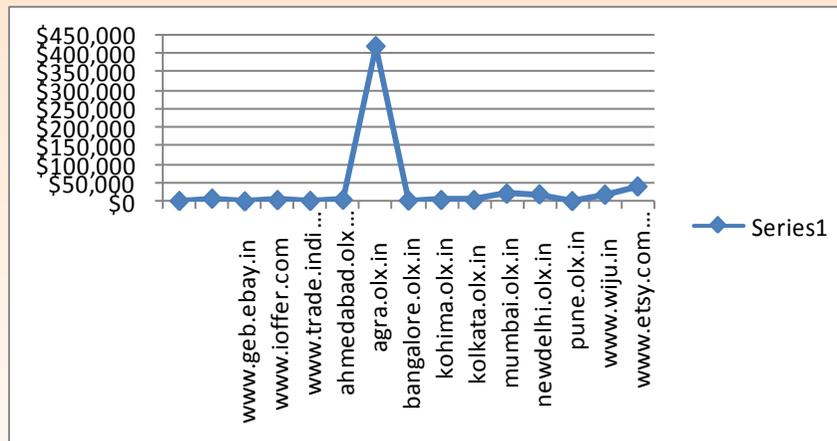


In one article that we found, it claims that eBay offered one in 2010 for \$15,000 USD!

In this country we researched a total of 45 classified websites but found only eight classified websites with ivory for sale in India, except by *Etsy.com* that advertises in India but sells the ivory abroad. From 188 ads on this website only 60 are not ivory from India. In general, some few ads mention that they can't ship abroad the ivory because of the ban and even fewer advertisements mention CITES. We found 5 websites with huge amounts of elephant tusks(see box below).

Category	# Ads	# Items	Value
A	3	3	\$265.71
J	152	200	\$24,292.50
M	78	117	\$295,968.65
S	34	75	\$472,201.73
T	19	159	\$17,904.48
Total =	286	554	\$792,728.59

India totals



Total values per website

On the *Etsy.com* ads in India, the sellers were abroad but we found 60 varied items many Chinese, African and also Native American items. In the website *Trade.Indiamart.com* we found four alarming advertisements of elephant tusks. In one of those advertisements, the seller claims to have an unlimited maximum amount of tusks to order and up to 500,000 Kilos available! This trader is in Germany. The seller claims that he has a partnership agreement with Tropical African hunters for the purchase and supply of elephant tusks and skin and also rhino horns. There is another ad with many elephants tusks in Cameroon, other similar in South Africa, one in Spain and one in India. These last two claim to be legal!

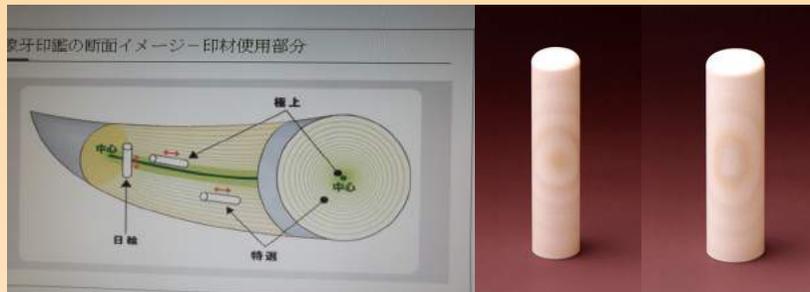


JAPAN

Japan shows a large amount of elephant ivory on their classified websites, but we found only few websites that actually offered ivory for sale.

In only one classified website (Rakuten) when we were searching for hankos, we found 183 pages with about 35 advertisements on each page, which was about 6,000 advertisements to check! We got an enormous amount of hankos (17,138) worth it almost 12 million USD. Hankos are seals used for companies, for professionals and individuals. The hankos are made from a extensive variety of materials that range from titanium, stone and wood to plastic, but the elephant ivory ones are still in a huge demand.

The elephant ivory hankos prices mostly range from around \$100 to \$4,000 USD per piece. We found out that the most expensive ones (exclusive), have a special cut that comes from the center of the tusk, producing some fine rings on the hankos.



The Hankoya website has information about CITES. Some few individuals selling hankos in the Rakuten website mention that they can't ship the items abroad because of the ban on ivory and CITES. Some few ads have the proper documents.



Pictures of hankos for sale in Japan

From all the countries that we investigated, Japan was the country that took more efforts to investigate. From July 2012 to early February 2013, we have been researching and capturing data from Japan almost everyday. Since December we were monitoring the Japanese websites for new advertisements.

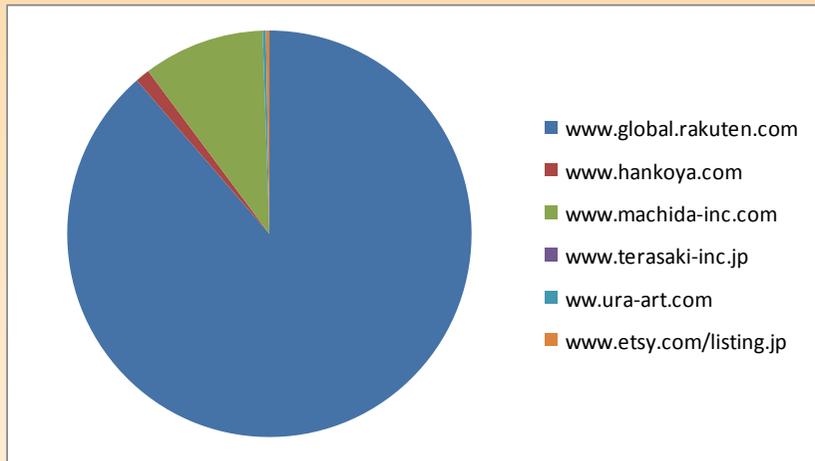
We also checked several Japanese classified websites which were selling elephant ivory abroad but not in Japan.

Among the most unconventional ivory items that we found are ivory chopsticks with gold for the price of \$15,128.54 USD and other eccentric items such as: ear sticks, tooth picks and several types of shoe helpers.



Category	# Ads	# Items	Value
A	46	46	\$10,013.75
H	661	19,830	\$23,796,890.00
J	269	431	\$93,832.46
M	133	1,271	\$1,574,103.30
S	87	110	\$35,226.84
T	2	2	\$75,390
TOTAL =	1187	18994	\$25,575,442.60

Ads and items found in this investigation in Japan



Total number of items found in Japan per website

Website	Accessories	Hankos	Jewelry	Miscellaneous	Statues	Tusks	Total ads
www.global.rakuten.com	5	494	52	70	7	0	628
www.hankoya.com	0	61	1	0	0	0	62
www.machida-inc.com	35	72	211	48	31	0	397
www.terasaki-inc.jp	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
www.ura-art.com	1	0	0	9	33	1	44
www.etsy.com/listing.jp	3	0	5	6	16	1	30

Ads by category found per website

As we also did it in India, we added the Etsy website here, because they also have many classified advertisements for Japan.

An estimated 87% of all the advertisements failed to mention any documentation accompanying the items on sale.

We contacted some sellers and very few mentioned that they had the proper documentation. Some few mentioned to have CITES or/and other permits.



PHILLIPINES

In the Philippines we searched widely the internet but found only five websites with 46 classified advertisements.

It is interesting to mention than from the 46 advertisements, 23 were religious items better known as “Santos” (statues of saints) and the well known “Santo Niño of Cebú” (Holy Child) Catholic images, which is typical from the Philippines and that we found for the first time in 2009-2010, when we were monitoring the e-trade of elephant ivory in Latin America.

Besides the traditional Catholic religious figures there were also several elephant figures, jewelry from India with Asian elephant carvings, some African and Chinese statues and some few carved tusks.



Most of the items that we found and also the most expensive were statues.

Some of the religious statues found are quite old but some are new.

The majority of the advertisements that we found in the Philippines were from www.sulit.com.ph.



The most expensive ivory item that we found while investigating the e-trade on the eight chosen countries was in Philippines, and it was a carved elephant covered by precious stones and gold worth it \$123,000 USD.

(Check the top right picture on this page).

We also found a couple of jewelry pieces made of ivory with elephant hair.

Our team calculates that a 95% of these advertisements lack any documents or permits. We contacted some chosen sellers but the few ones that replied failed to provide any convincing documentation.

Category	# Ads	# Items	Value
A	1	1	\$246,12
J	7	5	\$6,714.30
M	9	76	\$8,154.64
S	27	38	\$301,685.25
T	3	6	\$3,285.00
Total =	47	163	\$319,839

The Philippines results



CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained in each country about their number of advertisements, categories of the items found per country, number of items and total value of items on sale is quite diverse.

The e-trade is existent and active in all the eight monitored countries of this investigation.

The majority of the sellers lack any legit documentation or permits to sell elephant ivory, and do not provide any information to the potential buyers about the requirements for purchasing new ivory or pre-ban ivory, etc.

An estimated 8% of the sellers claim that they sell “old” or “antique ivory”, but there is no way to confirm that the items are truly pre-ban. Sometimes by looking at the pictures of the items (which usually are with poor resolution, too dark, or with too much light and blurry), it is hard to judge if what the seller claims is real or not. If the items are carved as old fashion they may be pre ban, but new ivory could also be created with old styles imitating some real antique designs to pass undetected, to be sold with a fake “certificate of antiquity”. We can only judge by what we see on the pictures, the information on the advertisements and the sellers replies after we contact them.

Even these days when the brutal slaughter of elephants in Africa is appearing almost every day on the news worldwide, it seems that many of the sellers are quite naïve and apparently some are clueless about selling elephant ivory or that even are aware of the elephant trade ban.

Unless the e-commerce of ivory is dealt in an effective way by the countries own enforcement authorities, countries like India, the Philippines and South Africa could escalate this trade to alarming levels that would be almost impossible to tackle, while the African elephants get decimated just to satisfy the Asian never ending demand for elephant ivory.

CONCLUSIONS PER COUNTRY

Algeria– This country has only 10 ads, but has the highest number of items and total value in the Arab African countries investigated.

Morocco– Morocco offers the smallest total value of items found in this whole investigation.

Our team somehow expected to find much more on their classified websites.

South Africa– This country occupies the third place in number of ads, items found and total value.

Arab Emirates– Of all the Arab countries investigated in Africa and Asia, this one offers more ads with more items and a higher total value of items on sale. Not much e-trade, few ads but lots of elephant tusks found.

Saudi Arabia– Not much e-trade, few ads but high number of tusks found.

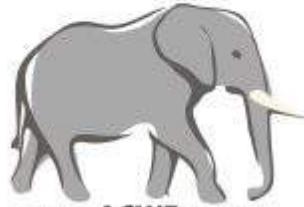
India– India ranks as second place on the e-trade of elephant ivory in number of advertisements, items found and total value. Large number of elephant tusks found on their classifieds.

Japan– This is the leading country for the elephant ivory e-trade on our eight monitored countries. Large number of ads and items were found on the websites researched. Hankos are the most common item sold on the e-trade in Japan.

Philippines– This country has the fourth place in all the investigation and has a large number of religious Catholic statues.



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Campaigns Against the Cruelty to Animals was founded in the Netherlands in 1989. We are an animal welfare and conservation organization created to fight against animal exploitation and cruelty worldwide.



ACWF is a Polish NGO that brings the Animal Welfare to the Animal Conservation issues.

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