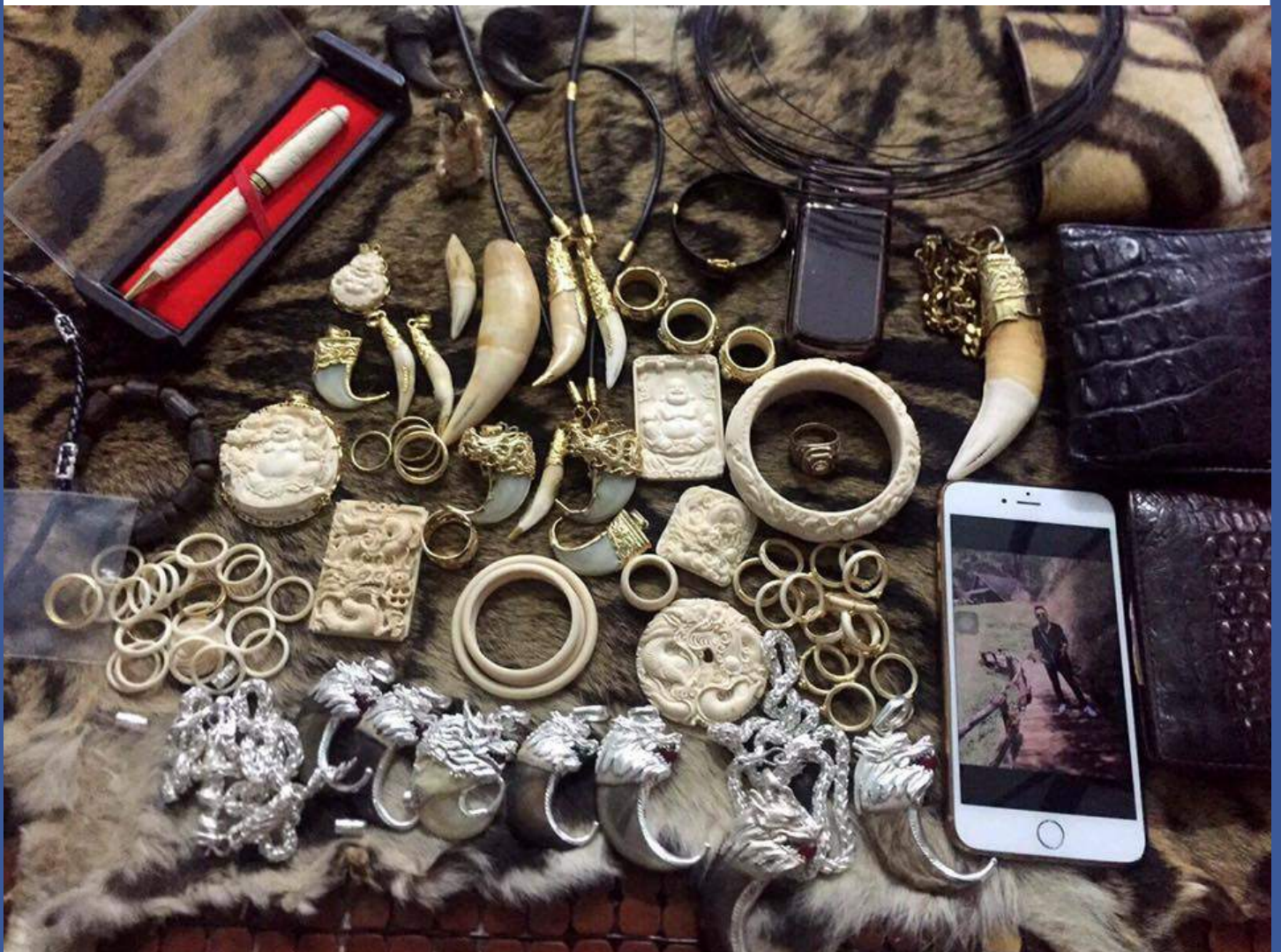




# THE SOCIAL TRADE NETWORK: FACEBOOK'S RELATIONSHIP STATUS WITH WILDLIFE TRADERS IN VIETNAM



# ABOUT WILDACT

WildAct is a local conservation charity and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) based in Hanoi, Viet Nam. Our work involves raising awareness of the Vietnamese people on conservation issues by providing information and education programs for the younger generation. Despite having a small team, we are fiercely dedicated to changing the minds of Vietnamese citizens through scientific evidence, and also the needs of the local people. In addition, WildAct attempts to cooperate with other international and local conservation NGOs to tackle the issue of threatened species and ecosystems. One of the main aims of WildAct is to reduce the demand for wildlife products in Viet Nam, which is noted to have a heavy consumption of rhino horns, ivory and bear bile. Finally, WildAct maintains strong connections with other conservation organisations including United For Wildlife (UFW), Kingsley Holgate Foundation, Humane Society International (HSI), Helping Rhinos, Breaking The Brand – Nia’s Friend, and One More Generation (OMG).

[www.wildact-vn.org](http://www.wildact-vn.org)

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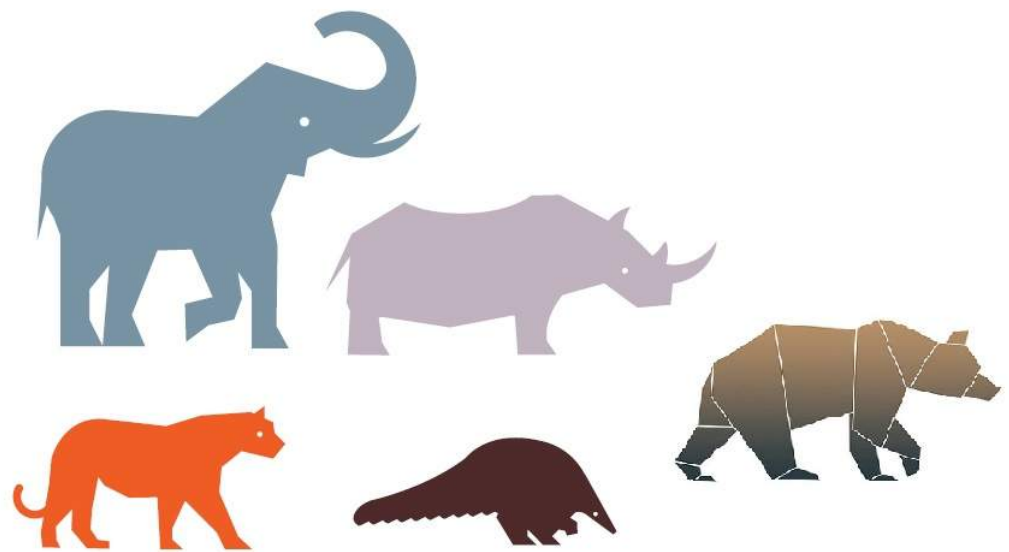


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AN ESTIMATE 3400 TONS OF WILDLIFE  
IS CONSUMED IN VIETNAM EVERY YEAR



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rapid spread of Internet use underpins a potential threat to endangered wildlife impacted by trade and demand for their products. The number of Internet users in Vietnam is approximately 50 million, while Internet shopping, including for certain wildlife products, is likewise growing year on year. Facebook has 30 million monthly active users in Vietnam, making it the most popular social media platform in the country. Previous research showed that a wide array of endangered species and wildlife products were being sold in several Vietnamese online platforms, such as websites, Facebook pages and online forums.

We conducted an online market survey focusing on Facebook – as the number one social media platform in Vietnam. Survey was conducted from October 2015 – April 2016. A total of 46 Facebook accounts, with 2490 advertisements and 26498 wildlife products were found. The most frequently traded wildlife products on Facebook were: Elephant products, followed by live tortoise and turtle. Big cat (Tiger, Leopard, and clouded leopard) were also often found on Facebook with bear products. Rare items, such as rhino and pangolin products are opportunistically advertised.

3051 comments made by consumers and potential consumers were also analysed and categorised. Consumers and potential consumers of wildlife products traded on Facebook in Vietnam are not always local Vietnamese, foreigners and Vietnamese living overseas are also involved in the trade. Ho Chi Minh City has the highest number of consumers for wildlife parts online, followed by Hanoi. The most frequently comments made for advertisement of wildlife products found in this survey were those showing interest in purchasing the products (asking for prices, bargain, asking for transport or payment method). None of these comments show any concern about the animal's welfare, or giving indicators that the trade of endangered turtle and tortoise is illegal.



# INTRODUCTION

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The internet is increasingly becoming a tool for wildlife traders, increasing the risk of over-exploitation of populations through illegal trade of protected species (Izzo. 2010; Kay and Hoyle. 2001). There are almost 2 billion internet users in Asia, thus, the growing use of internet and social media platforms is posing a great threat to wildlife. In Viet Nam, a main part of the capital's cultural heritage is an appreciation for food with notable emphasis on rare and expensive wild animal dishes (Venkataraman. 2007). This is a major problem as citizens of Vietnam have increased their demand for these dishes and having possession of these wild animals is seen as proof that one belongs to a growing Asian elite. For example, our online survey in 2015 indicated that food accounts for the greatest percentage of wild animal products consumed by Vietnamese youth, followed by medicine and ornaments (Nguyen and Burola. 2015).

The rapid spread of Internet use underpins a potential threat to endangered wildlife impacted by trade and demand for their products. The number of Internet users in Vietnam is approximately 50 million, while internet shopping, including shopping for certain wildlife products, is likewise growing year on year. Currently, Facebook has 30 million monthly active users in Vietnam, making it the most popular social media platform in the country (internetworldstat. 2016). Facebook is an online social media and social networking service and can be accessed by a wide range of devices such as laptop, desktop, tablet computers and smartphone. Users of Facebook can create their own profile with details of their education, occupation, age and gender. They can add other users as friends, sending messages, sharing photo, updating status and creating notes. People can also join common-interest groups, or create a new group themselves, or even create a "fan-page" where other users can become "followers" by clicking "Like" and they will be updated of news and activities from their subscribed page. This online social platform provides a wider reach, flexibility and greater bonds with the customers. Facebook and other social media sites can also provide a degree of anonymity and security for users. Thus the trade of protected species is growing rapidly online, especially on social media platform such as Facebook, and may represent a significant portion of the domestic trade. Therefore, it is vital to understand this market in order to tackle the illegal trade of wildlife in Vietnam.

In 1994, Vietnam joined CITES – Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, an international agreement between governments across the world to prevent over-exploitation of wild species. There are three different levels of protection, listed as Appendices I, II and III. Appendix I lists wild species that are most threatened and therefore CITES prohibits international trade in specimens of these species, with some exceptions (i.e for scientific purpose). Appendix II lists species that are not threatened with extinction but may become so if their trade is not controlled. International trade of these species maybe authorised with export permit. Appendix III listed species that requested by a party that already regulates the trade in that species, but needs cooperation of other parties to prevent overexploitation.

The Vietnamese government issued Decree 32 ND-CP in 2006, in an attempt to address the illegal trade of wild plants and animals within its own border. Here, endangered species of wild plants and animals are classified into two groups: Group I includes species that are endangered and commercial trade of these species are prohibited (it is illegal to possess species listed in this group). Group II includes species that are restricted to exploitation and commercial purpose (Might be authorised with permission). These groups are also divided into two: IA and IIA include wild plants; IB and IIB include wild animals.

## METHODOLOGY

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We focus on products of species that are frequently traded or in high demand in Vietnam, such as bear, pangolin, primate, turtle and tortoise, rhino, big cats and elephant. Key words such as “*gấu*” (bear), “*tê tê*” (pangolin), “*khỉ*”, “*vượn*”, “*voọc*” (monkey, gibbon, langur), “*rùa*” (turtle and tortoise), “*tê giác*” (rhino), “*hổ*”, “*báo*” (big cats) and “*voi*” (elephant) were used to search for advertisement of named species on Facebook and Google searching tool. Only advertisements found on Facebook (personal account, fanpage or social group) are included in this survey.

Once located, we recorded the observation by noting the date and time, the species, type of products, prices, number of products, number of comments, type of comments, details of the seller and commentators (occupation, age, location, education, gender and marriage status). We identified 6 different type of age group: teenager (10 – 19), early twenties (20 – 25), late twenties – early thirties (26 – 35), late thirties – early forties (36 – 45), late forties – early fifties (46 – 54) and late fifties to older (>55).

We reviewed the comments made on each advertisement, and categorise them into 10 different categories (Table 1). These categories were used throughout the data collection and data analysis process. Data were collected from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2016..

# RESULTS

46 Facebook accounts, with 2,490 advertisements were surveyed during the 6 months period and 26,498 wildlife products were found. Ho Chi Minh City has the highest number of consumers for wildlife parts online (25%), followed by Hanoi (22%) (Figure 1). The majority of the consumers were male (85%), university student and low-skilled labour (26.8 and 19.5% respectively), educated to undergraduate degree (61.7%) and aged from 20 – 30 (65.4%).

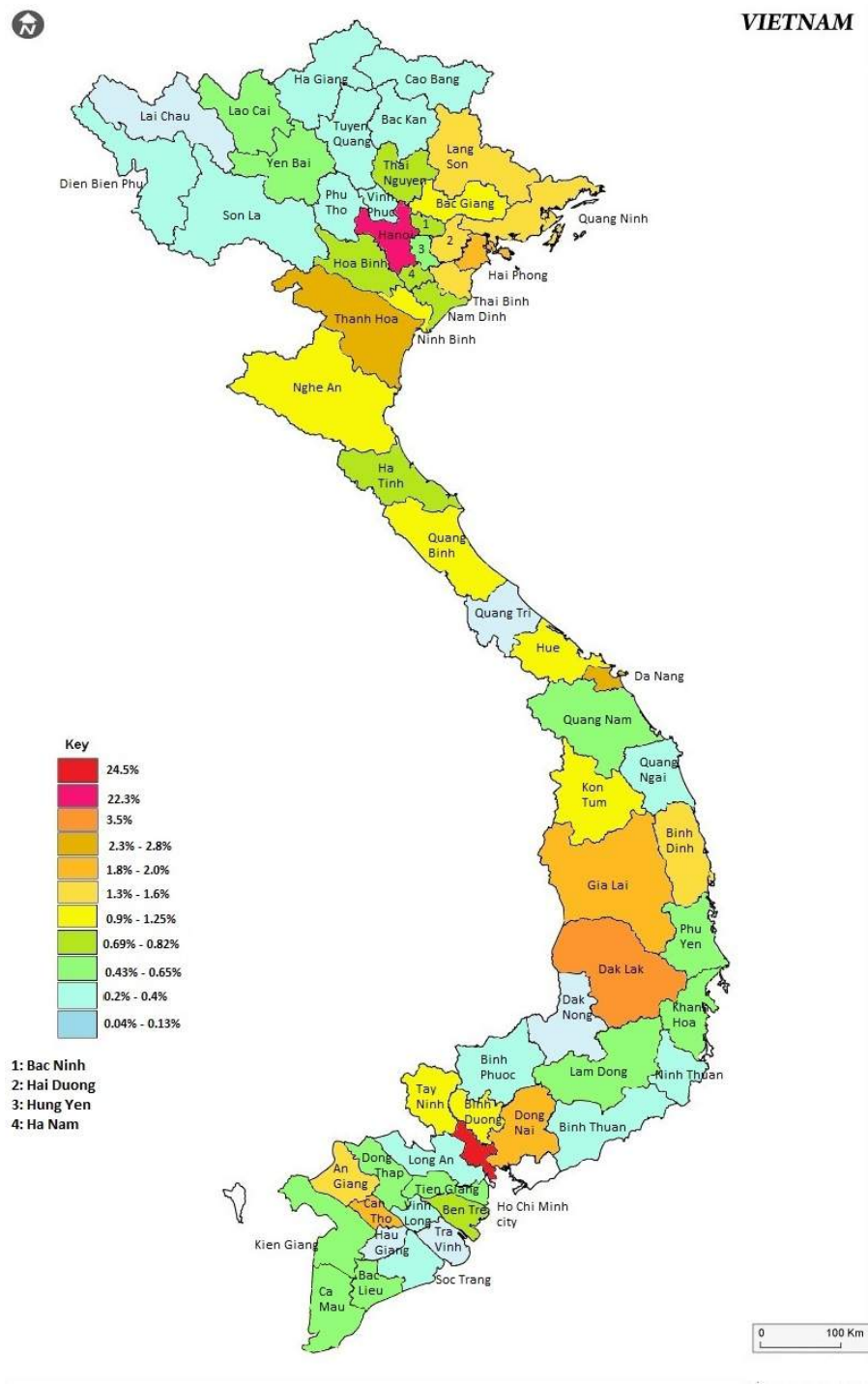


Figure 1: Map showing percentage of online consumers and potential consumers that expressed interest in purchasing wildlife products advertised on Facebook, according to province.



The most frequently traded wildlife products on Facebook were: Elephant products (81%), followed by live tortoise and turtle (10%) (Figure 2). Big cat (Tiger, Leopard, and clouded leopard) were also often found on Facebook with bear products (4.7% and 3.1% respectively). Rare items, such as rhino and pangolin products are opportunistically advertised. We were not successful in locating advertisements for primate products in this survey.

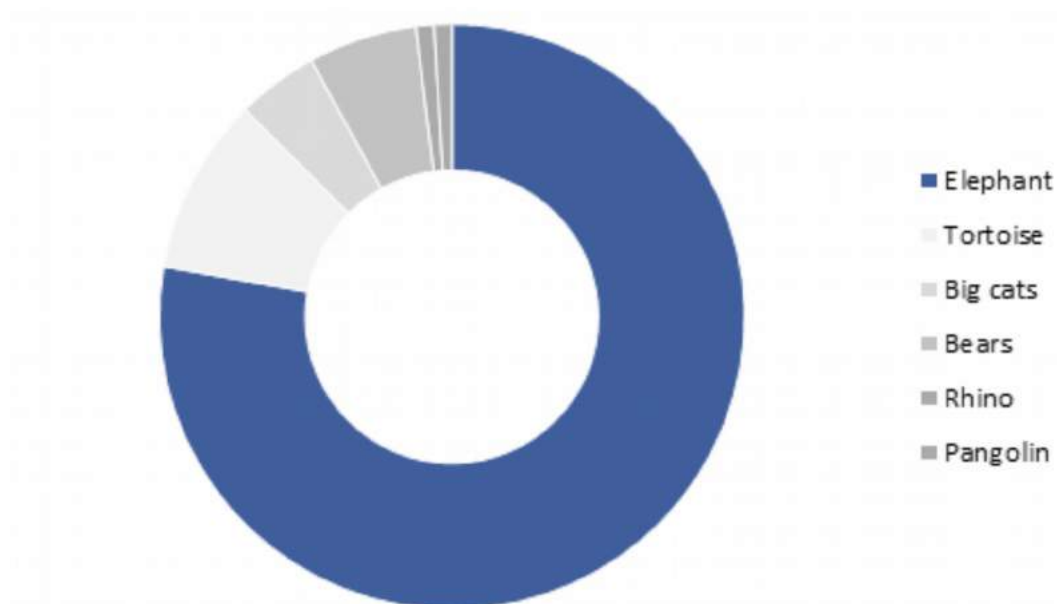


Figure 2: Percentage of frequently traded wildlife products on Facebook in Vietnam.

Consumers and potential consumers of wildlife products traded on Facebook in Vietnam are not always local Vietnamese - foreigners and Vietnamese living overseas are also involved in the trade. Of all the foreigners interacted with Vietnamese Facebook wildlife trader, Portuguese appears to be the most frequently commented on these adverts (31.2%), followed by Cambodian (14.3%) and Singaporean (11.4%) (Figure 3).

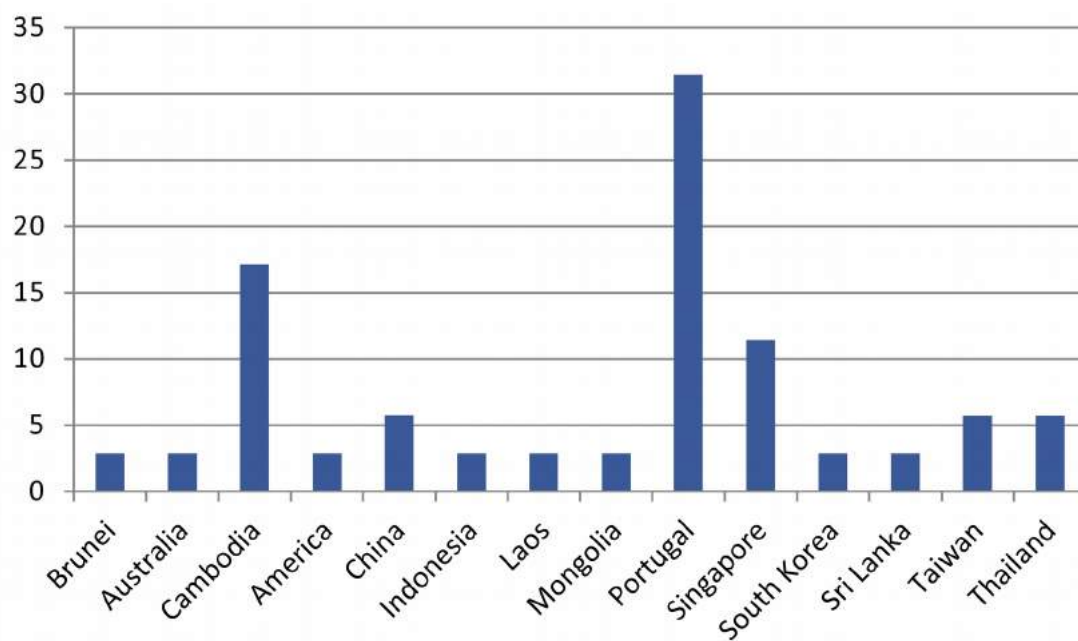


Figure 3: Percentage of international consumers interested in wildlife products for sale on Vietnamese Facebook's account.

The most frequent means of shipping to post traded items to consumers were EMS and FedEx, as advertised by 80.4% of wildlife traders on Facebook. These traders also use national bus service to transport wildlife products, especially live wild animals or big ornaments to consumers living in Vietnam. 90% of advertisements on Facebook were selling parts and products of endangered wildlife, 10% selling live animals.

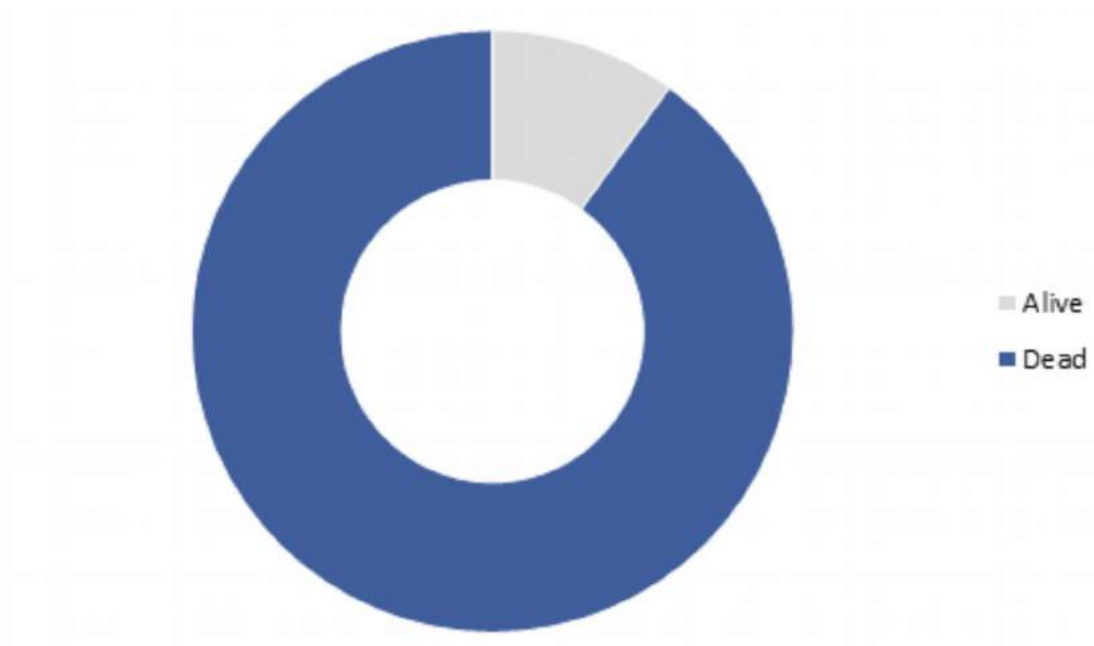


Figure 4: Percentage of advertisements selling live animals and products made from wildlife.

The most frequent comments made for advertisement of wildlife products found in this survey were those showing interest in purchasing the products (asking for prices, bargain, asking for transport or payment method). Based on the content of the comments on Facebook, we were able to categorise them into 10 different categories (Table 1).

Table 1: Categories of comment made by consumers and potential consumers on Facebook throughout the survey period.

	Category	Example
1	Comment on behaviour and/or character of products	The turtle is swimming so fast! This ivory have so many patterns
2	Express interest in purchasing the products	How much does this cost?
3	Adore the products	This rhino horn looks so impressive!
4	Clarify endangered species, mentioning law and authorities	This animal is protected under the law, I will report this activity.
5	Clarify the authenticity of the product	This is not real ivory, this is plastic
6	Giving fact about the advertised products	This tortoise does not eat meat, they only eat vegetable
7	Concern about the welfare of the animal	Poor elephant were killed for the ivory
8	Directing to another seller	Market A offers a cheaper price!
9	Asking for instruction of using a product	How can I use this bear gallbladder?
10	Introducing friends to the products	Hey A, do you like this ivory ring?

## THE FACEBOOK'S TRADE IN TURTLE AND TORTOISE

### The trade

A total of 12 Facebook accounts were found advertising live tortoises and turtles as pets. 903 advertisements and 2,625 tortoises and turtles were recorded during the survey period. 13 different species of turtle and tortoise were advertised for sale as pets, with 90% of advertised species listed as Endangered and 6% as Critically Endangered (Figure 5). 60% of advertised species were listed on CITES Appendix II and 30% of species are protected under Vietnamese law.

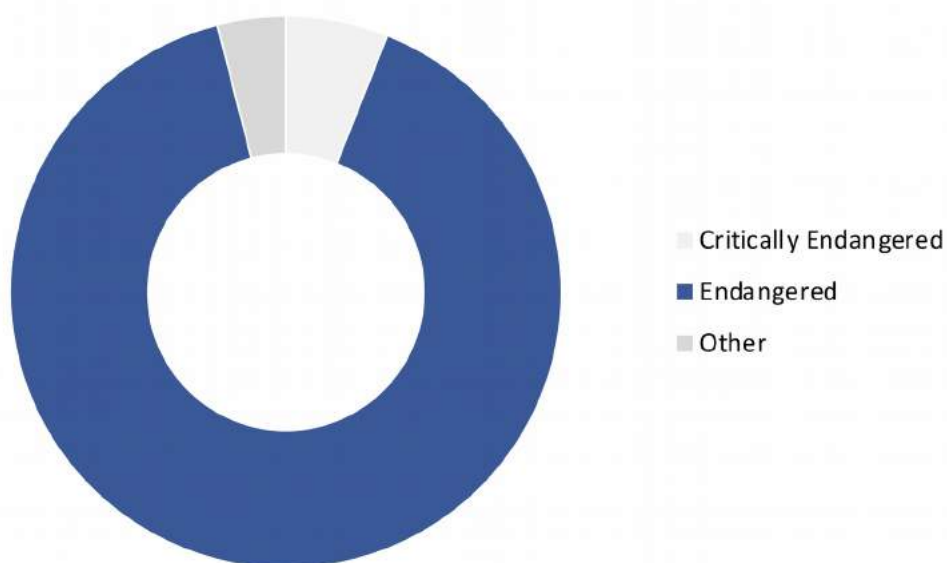


Figure 5: Percentage of turtle and tortoise species classified as Endangered and Critically Endangered for sale on Facebook.

Elongated tortoise (*Indotestudo elongata*) is the most frequently traded species: Up to 93% of advertisements for turtles and tortoises on Facebook in Vietnam were advertising this species. It is also important to note that non-native species, such as Caspian turtle (*Mauremys caspica*) and Eastern box turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) which originate from America are being sold in Vietnam as pet. The Critically Endangered Radiated tortoise (*Astrochelys radiata*) native to Madagascar was also found for sale in Vietnam during this survey.

Most turtle and tortoise species advertised for sale on Facebook during this survey are protected under international and Vietnamese law. Trade values of these species are not presented here. However, data collected show that the value of live turtles and tortoises accounted for 30% of the illegal trade of endangered species on Facebook (Figure 6).

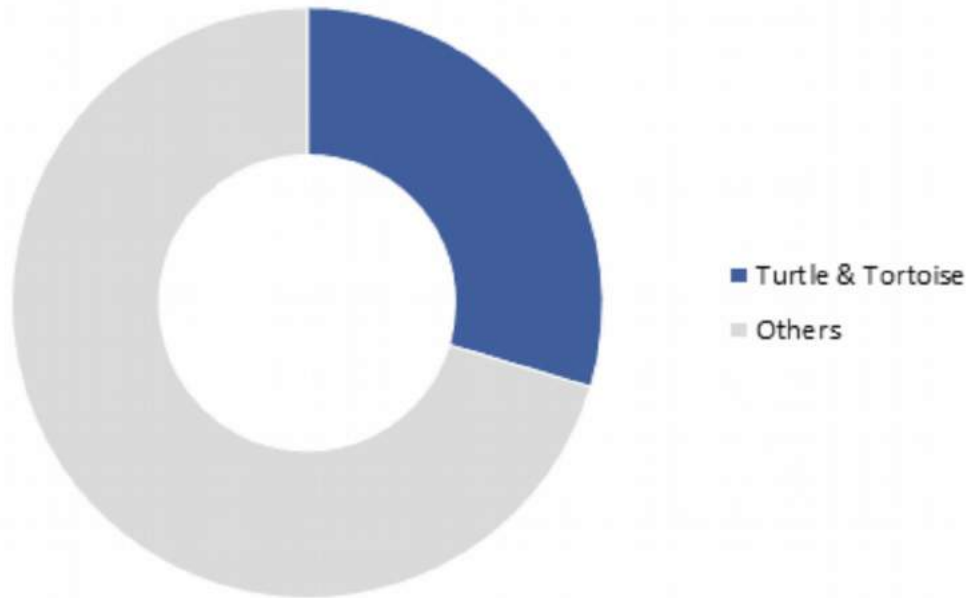


Figure 6: Percentage of trade values of turtles and tortoises on Facebook

### The traders

Ten Facebook accounts were found selling live turtles and tortoises. These accounts are created in the form of fanpage accounts, to which people can subscribe to the page activities by clicking “Like”. Eight accounts were unique, two accounts were created by the same person. Most of the turtle and tortoise traders are male 89% (n=8), and living in Ho Chi Minh City (n=6).



Picture 1: Example of an advert on Facebook selling the Critically Endangered Southern Vietnam box turtle.

## The consumers and potential consumers

A total of 1,418 comments were made by 1,276 Facebook accounts between October 2015 and April 2016. On average, 1.5 comments were made per advertisement, with 87.8% of commenters making a single comment.

The consumers came from 68 provinces and cities in Vietnam, mainly from Hanoi (25.8%) and Ho Chi Minh City (26.4%) (Figure 7). Two foreigners, one from Brunei and one from the United State of America were also showing interest in these adverts.

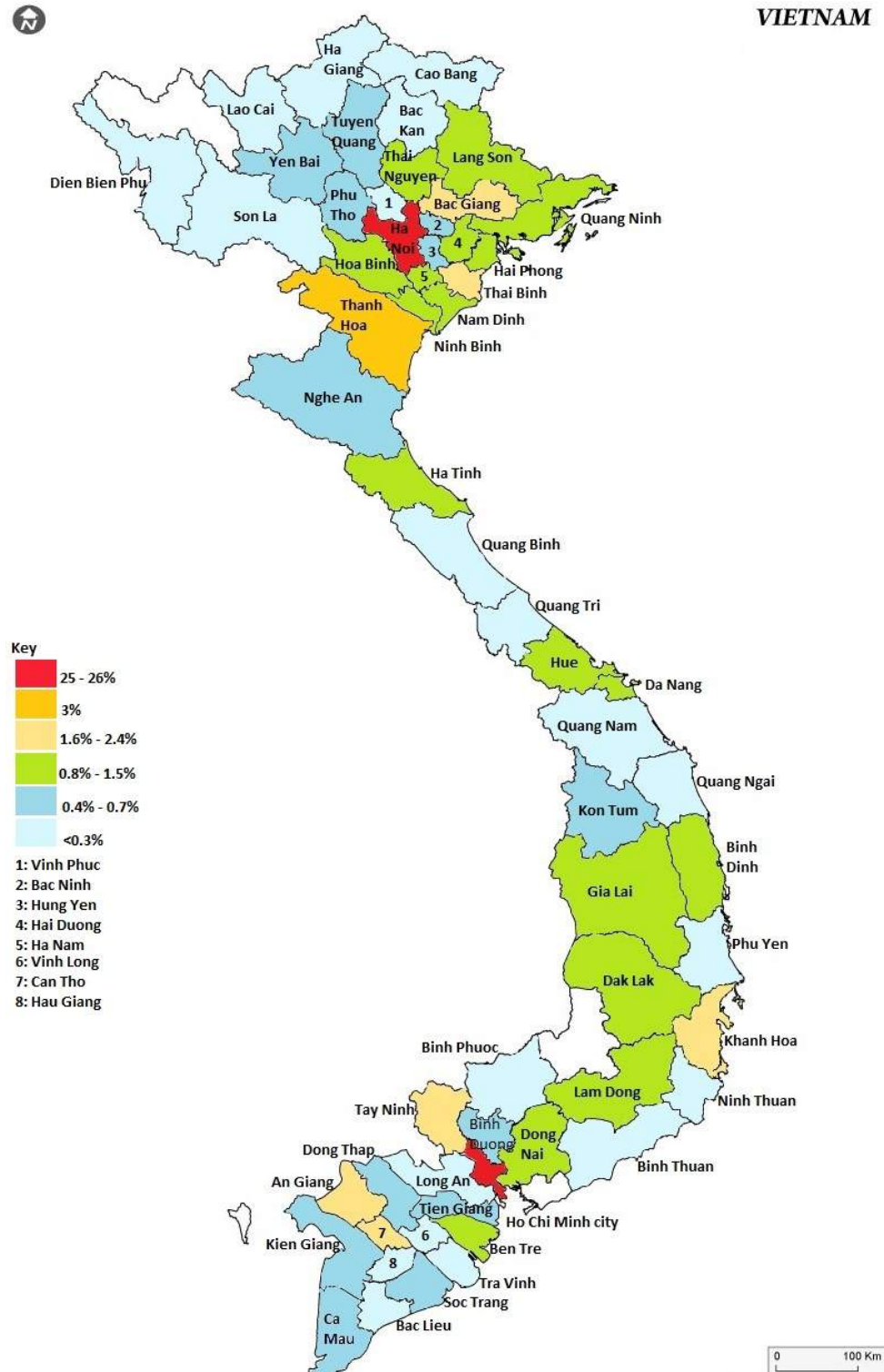


Figure 7: Map showing percentage of Facebook's consumers and potential consumers that expressed interest in purchasing turtles and tortoises advertised on Facebook, according to province



A majority of consumers are male (81%), mostly are students (44%) and non-financial professionals (25%) (Figure 8). Most consumers are educated to undergraduate degree level (65%). Age ranged from 15 – 30 years old (91%). However, it is also important to point out that 1.5% of this group of consumers are secondary school students, making them the youngest consumer group in this survey.

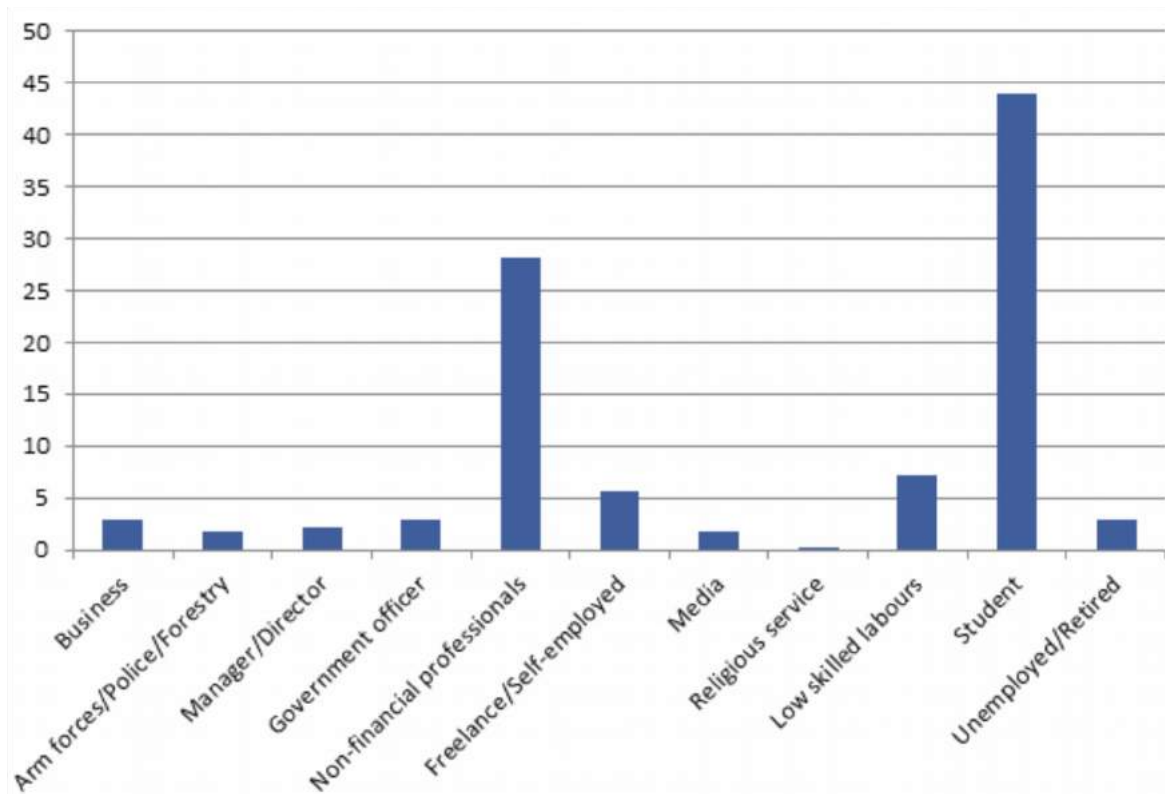


Figure 8: Occupation of tortoise and turtle’s consumers and potential consumers.

**The content of comments**

A majority of comments on posts advertising wildlife were to express interest in purchasing the advertised animals (86%) and introducing the advertised products to friends (7.3%). None of the commenter showed any concern about the welfare of the animals, nor acknowledge that the trade of endangered turtle and tortoise is illegal (Figure 9).

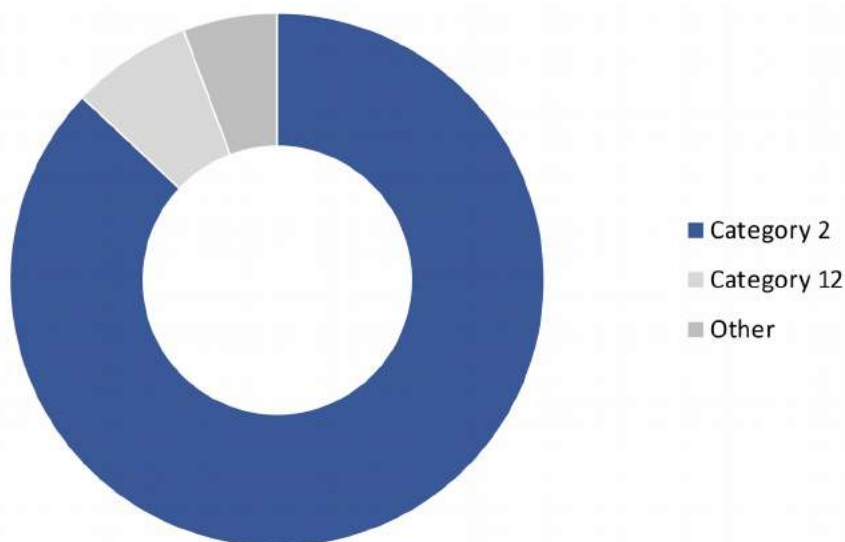


Figure 9: Percentages of comments showing interest in the trade of live turtles and tortoises.

## THE FACEBOOK'S TRADE IN BEAR PRODUCTS

### The trade

There are two species of bears living in Vietnam: The Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) and the Sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*). Both species are listed as Vulnerable under the IUCN Red list, and are protected from international trade under CITES Appendix I and domestic trade and possession under Vietnamese law.

Six Vietnamese Facebook accounts were found advertising bear products, such as bear bile, gallbladders, claws, paws and teeth - usually canines. Four of these six accounts are created to only advertise bear bile. A total of 212 advertisements and 1,618 bear products were recorded. Bear bile, gallbladders and paws were advertised as Traditional Medicine or tonic to boost health, whereas other bear parts, such as claws and teeth are often made into different type of jewellery and decorated with gemstones, gold or silver. Bear claws (raw, necklace and pendants) were the most popular bear products on Facebook, accounting for 70% of advertised bear products. Seven per-cents of advertisements were for bear bile and gallbladders (Figure 10).

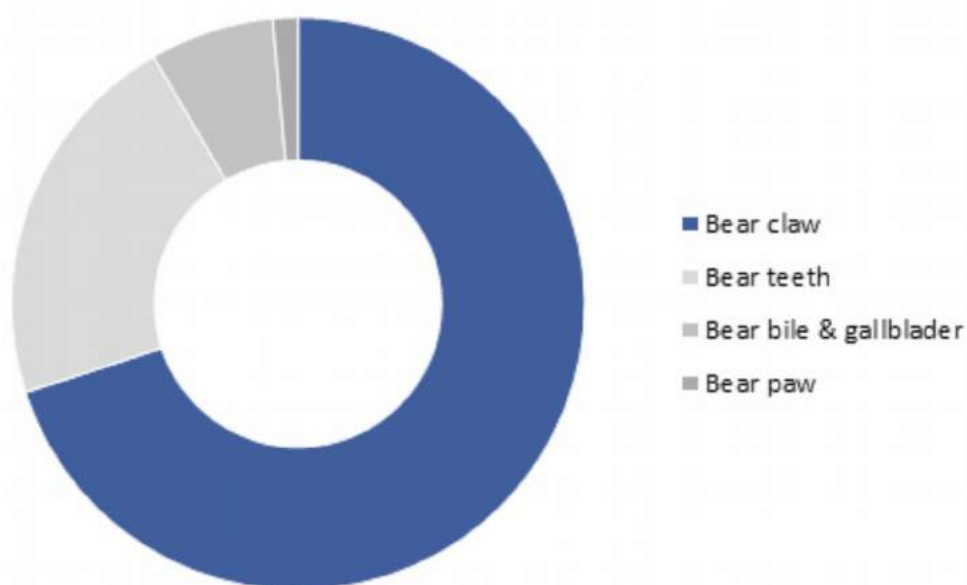


Figure10: Percentage of bear product types advertised for sale on Facebook in Vietnam.

Bear are protected under the international and Vietnamese law, trading bear products whether in the market or on online platform is illegal. Therefore, trade values of these products are not presented here. However, data collected showed that the values of bear products trade accounted for 5% of the illegal trade in endangered species on Facebook during this survey (Figure 11).

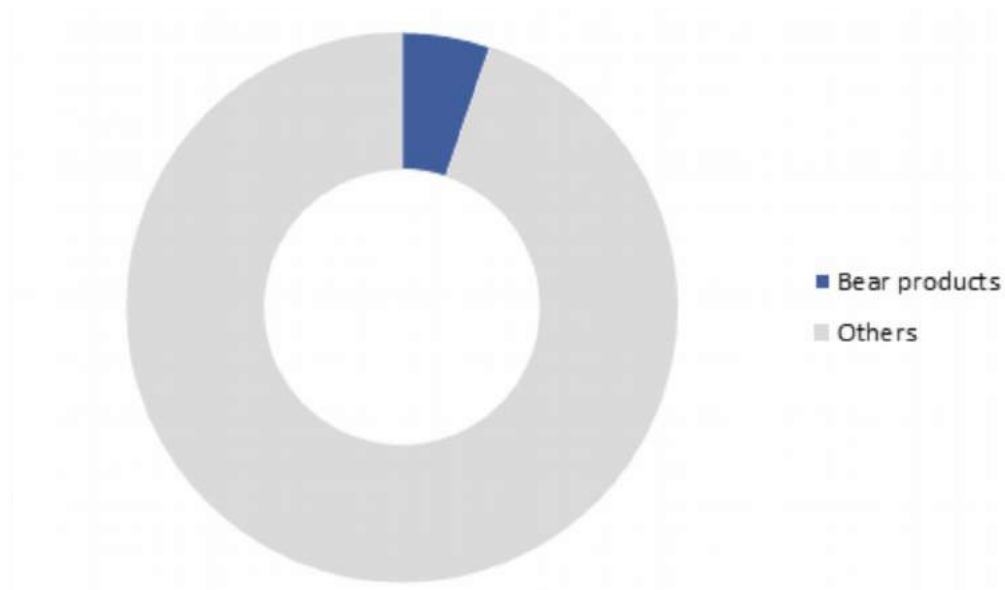


Figure 11: Percentage of trade values of bear products on Facebook in Vietnam



Picture 2: Advertisements for bear products on Facebook in Vietnam

## The traders

Bear product traders are mostly married males (83%), living in Hanoi and Lam Dong. Bear bile traders tend to create a Facebook fanpage to advertise for their products, rather than advertise them on their own personal page. Other bear products, such as paws, claws and teeth are advertised under elephant product trader accounts (n=2). Occasionally, bear products are found advertising on Facebook group created to trade household items or even in cooking group – where people exchanging ideas and cooking recipe.

## The consumers and potential consumers

267 comments were made on the advertised bear products by 205 Facebook accounts between October 2015 and April 2016. On average, 1.2 comments were made per advertisement, with 76.8% of commenters making just a single comment.

The consumers came from 38 out of 68 provinces and cities in Vietnam, mainly from Ho Chi Minh City (25.2%) and Hanoi (12%) (Figure 12). A majority of consumers of bear products, including bile and gallbladders, are married male (86.7%), freelancer or self-employed (42%) and educated to high school level (51%), with age ranged from 25 – 40 years old (78.7%).

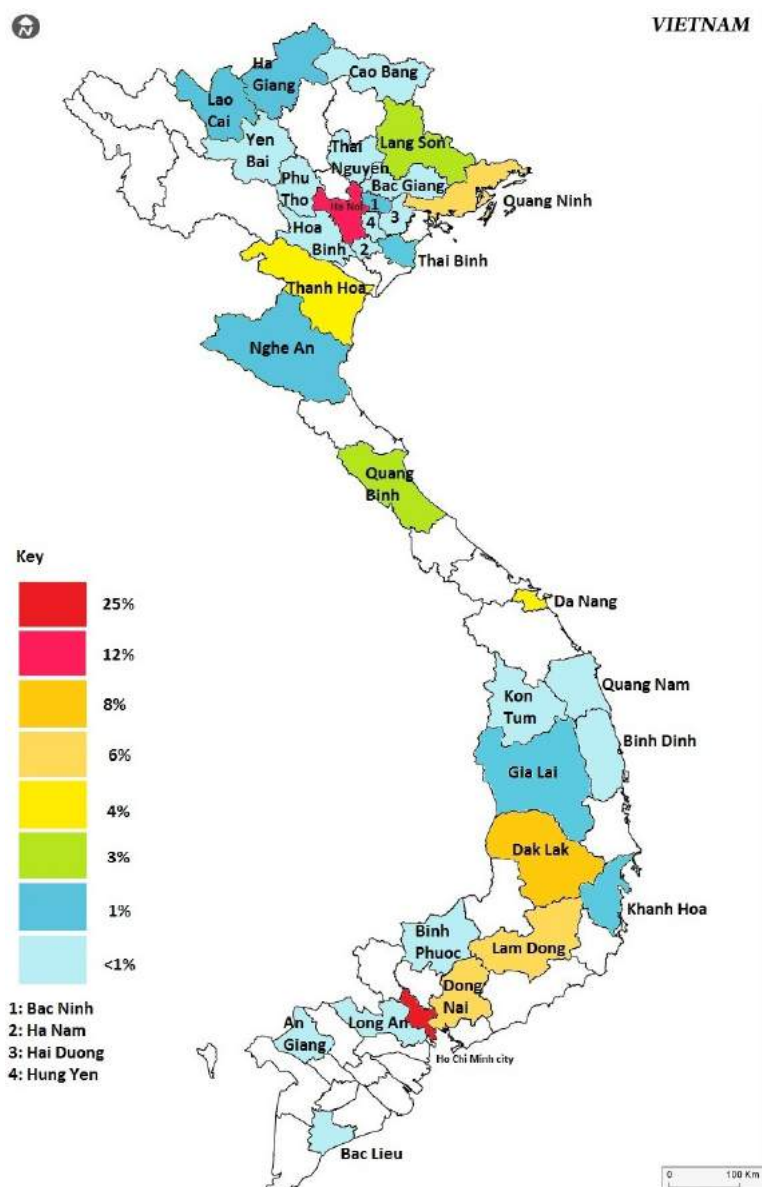


Figure 12: Map showing percentage of online consumers and potential consumers that expressed interest in purchasing bear products advertised on Facebook, according to province.

## The content of comments

Most comments were made to express interest in buying the products (89%) and to compare the price of the advertised products to the same products being sold elsewhere (11%). Again, none of the comment shows any concern for animal welfare, nor acknowledged that the trade of bear products is illegal (Figure 13). Remarkably, four consumers directly asked the trader for bear gallbladder, as they stated that gallbladders are more effective than using bear bile in treating illness.

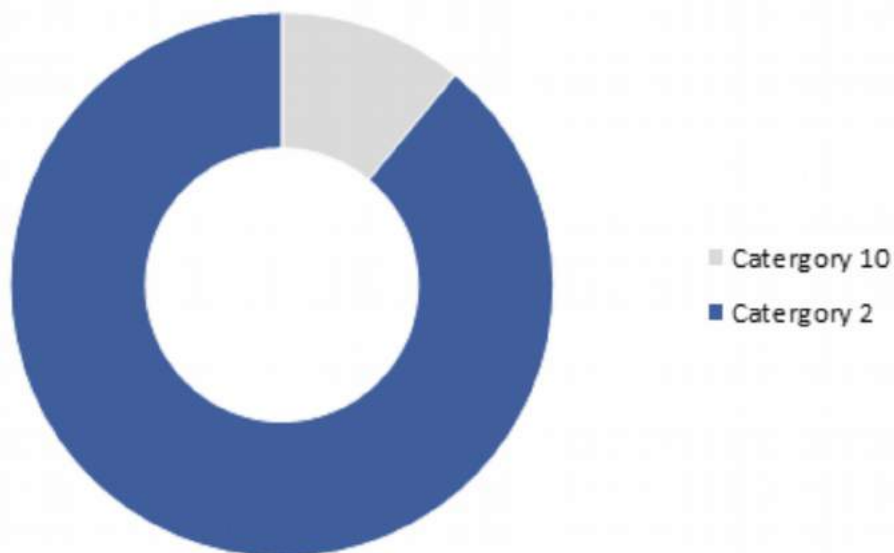


Figure 13: Percentages of comment showing interest in bear products trade on Facebook in Vietnam.



## THE FACEBOOK'S TRADE IN ELEPHANT PRODUCTS

### The trade

Ivory or suspected ivory made up the largest amount of advertised items on this Facebook survey. African elephant is listed as Vulnerable whereas its relative, the Asian elephant is listed as Endangered, by the IUCN Red list. Both species are protected under CITES Appendix I and the trade of elephant ivory, whether African or Asian elephant ivory, is illegal under the Vietnamese law.

29 Vietnamese Facebook accounts were found advertising elephant products, such as ivory, foot stumps, whole tail or tail hairs. A total of 1,055 advertisements and 20,930 elephant products were recorded. Elephant ivory or suspected ivory carved into jewellery were the most popular items: 69% of products advertised were jewellery (23% rings, 19% pendant, 18% bangle, 8.5% beads and bracelet) and 15% were ivory carved into Buddha figurines (Figure 14).

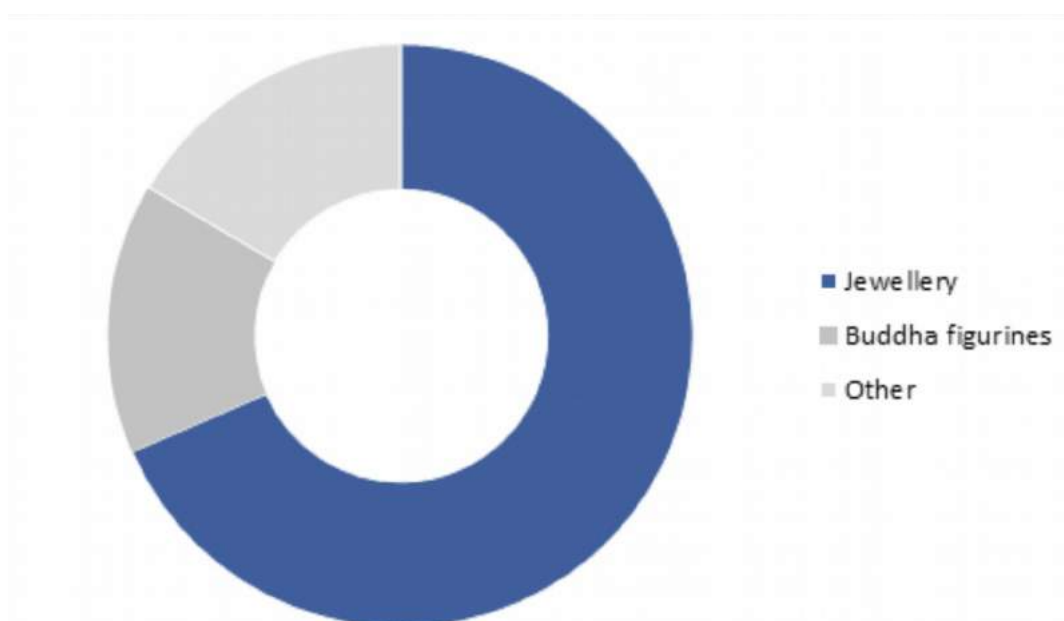


Figure 14: Most frequently advertised ivory and suspected ivory products on Facebook in Vietnam

Whole elephant tails and tail hairs were advertised on 100% of ivory traders' Facebook accounts. They are either sold unprocessed, or use as decoration on carved ivory. In fact, 10% of carved ivory items used elephant tail hairs as decoration. Tail hair was also often advertised as to "ward off evil spirit".

The trade of ivory is illegal under the Vietnamese law. Therefore we will not show details of the trade values in this report. The trade of elephant products accounted for 40% of the illegal trade of endangered species on Facebook during this survey (Figure 15).

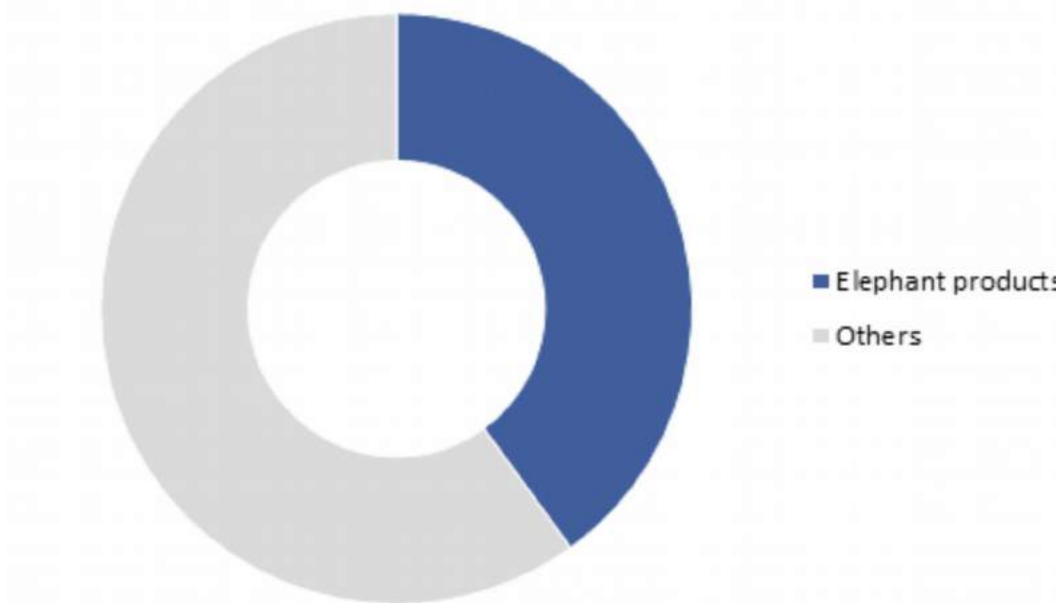
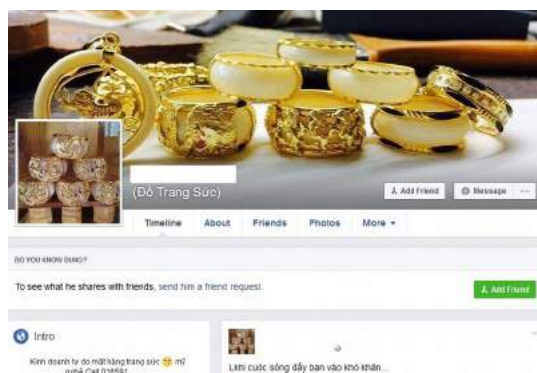
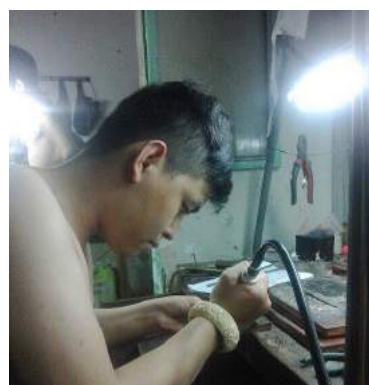


Figure 15: Percentage of trade values of elephant products on Facebook in Vietnam

### The traders

29 Facebook accounts were created to sell ivory, most are private accounts (75.8%), and traders are mostly self-employed males (89.6%), living in Ho Chi Minh City and Binh Duong province (67%). It is worth noting that most ivory traders also carve ivory at home by themselves, they tend to own a small local shop and use Facebook as a mean of advertising their products to a wider range of customers. These ivory traders seem to frequently interact with each other, and are willing to trade amongst each other if being offered a good deal.



Picture 2: Advertisement of elephant products on Facebook

## The consumers and potential consumers

A total of 1,171 comments were made on advertised elephant products by 991 Facebook accounts between October 2015 and April 2016. On average, 1.1 comments were made per advertisement, with 84.6% of commenters making a single comment. The consumers came from 63 out of 68 provinces and cities in Vietnam, mainly from Ho Chi Minh City (22.2%) and Hanoi (19.2%) (Figure 16).

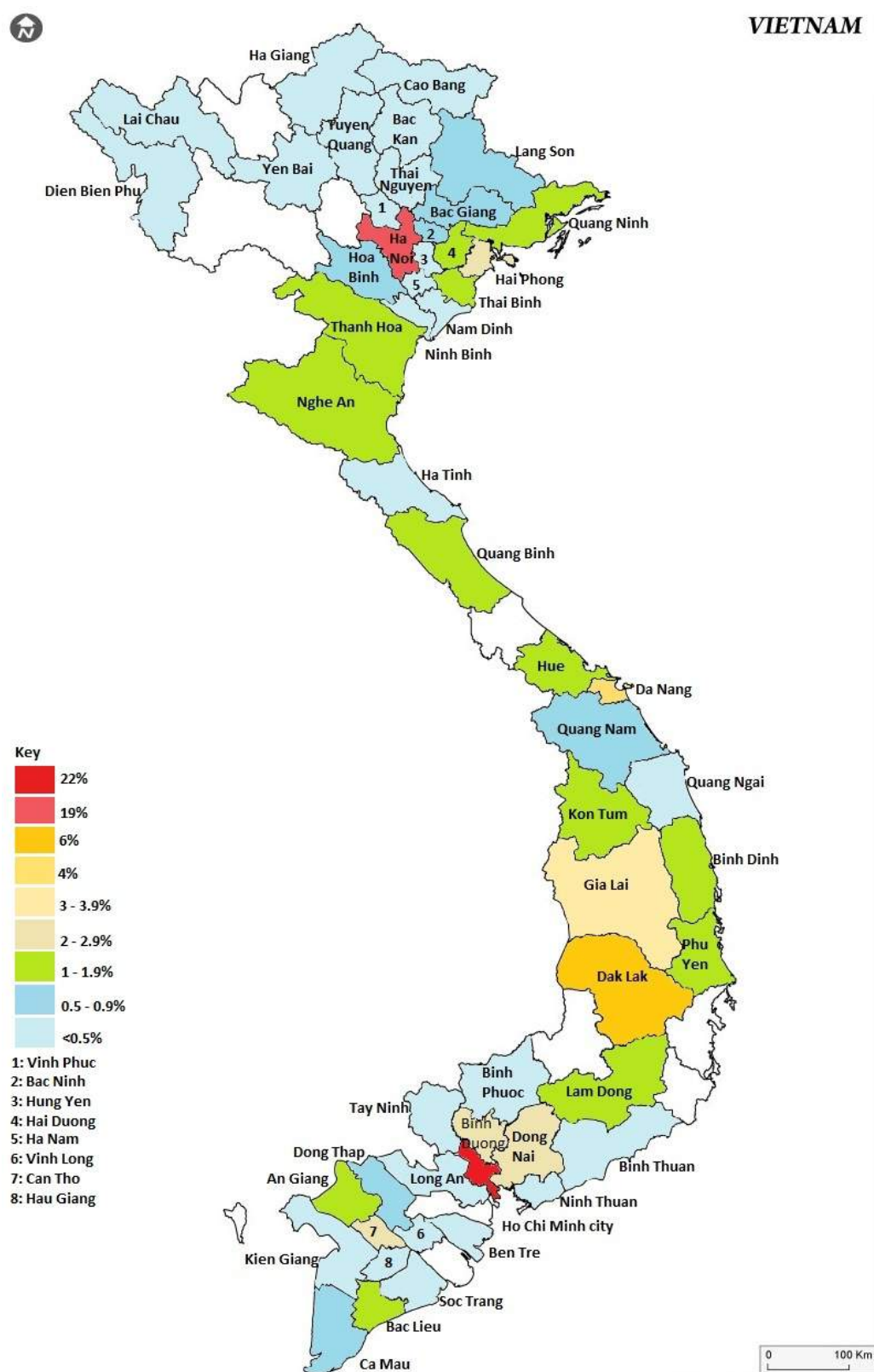


Figure 16: Map showing percentage of online consumers and potential consumers that expressed interest in purchasing elephant products advertised on Facebook, according to province.

A majority consumers of elephant products, including elephant tail hairs, are married males (85.5%) and low skilled labours (49.8%). The elephant product consumer group is the most diverse group in terms of occupation (Figure 17). It is worth mentioning that government officers, armed forces and people working at high management level (Director, CEO) accounted for 10% of ivory consumers. People who participate in religious practice, such as Buddhist monks, including those from Mongolia, Thailand and Cambodia are often found asking for ivory beads. Illegal wildlife traders, including those trading on Facebook are found involved in trading elephant products with each other, including those from overseas.

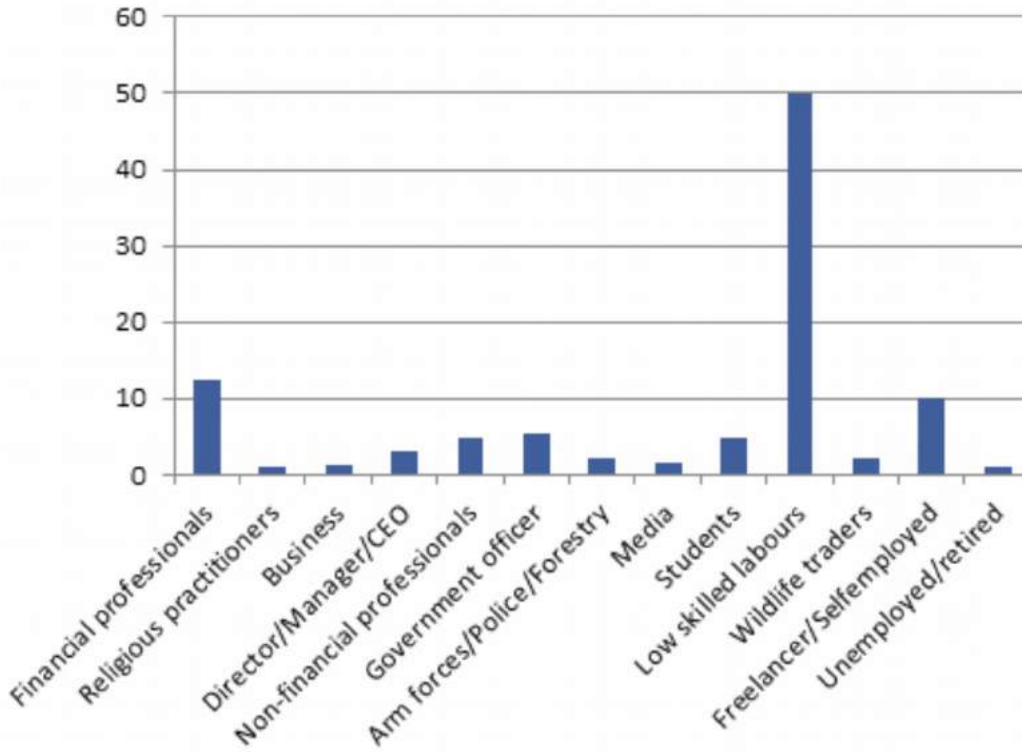


Figure 17: Consumers and potential consumers of elephant products occupation.

Consumers of elephant products are also highly educated, with 59% educated to college and university level. Most of them are aged 20 – 40 (86.4%). In addition, the illegal trade of ivory and suspected ivory on Facebook in Vietnam also attracted attention from a wide range of foreigners, with 33% of comments coming from Portuguese people, followed by 18% from Cambodian and 12% from Singaporean (Figure 18).

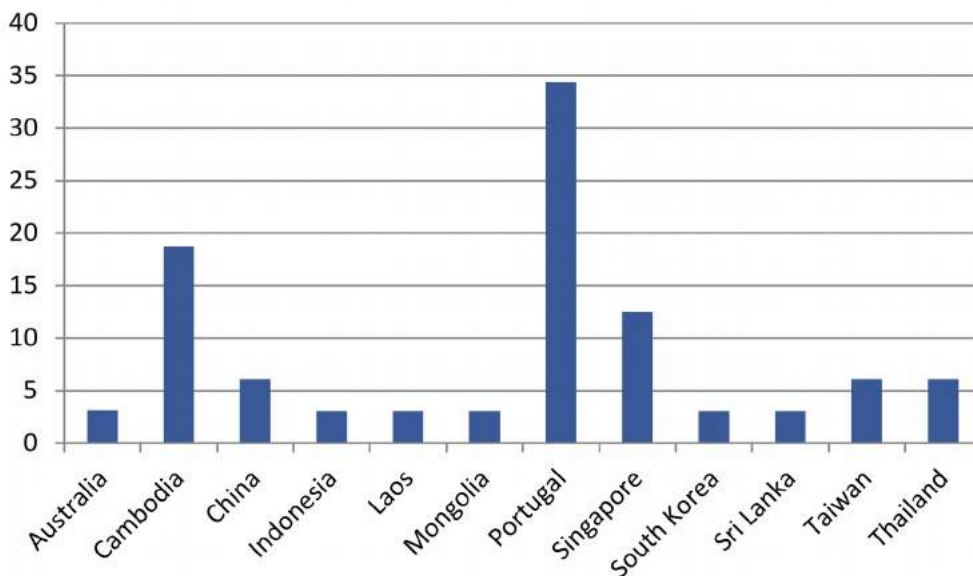


Figure 18: Foreigner consumers express interest in purchasing elephant products advertised on Facebook in Vietnam

## The content of comments

95% of comments were made to express interest in buying the products and to admire the products (2.6%). Some were made to clarify whether the ivory comes from Africa or Asia. However, none of the comments shows any concern for animal welfare, nor acknowledges that the trade of elephant products is illegal (Figure 19).

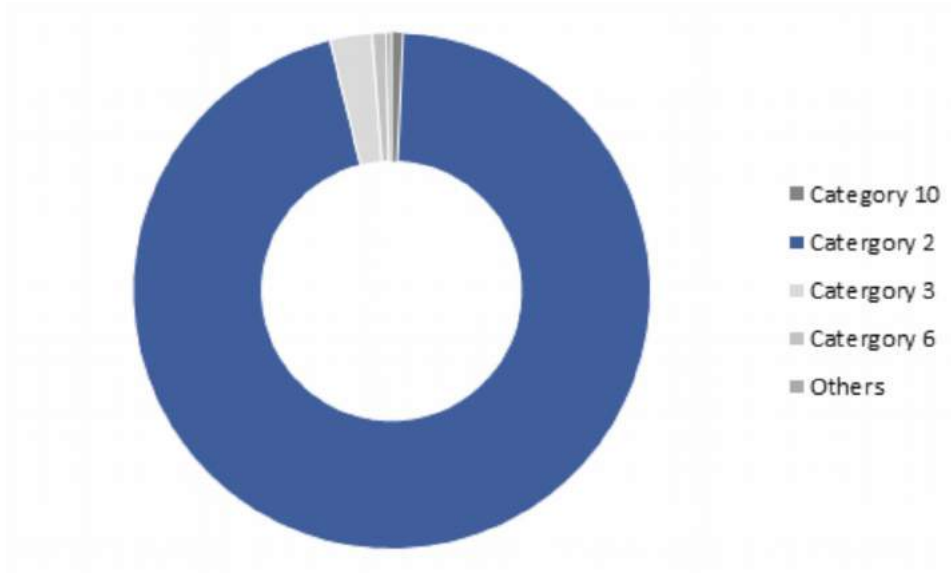


Figure 19: Percentages of comment showing interest in elephant products trade on Facebook in Vietnam



## THE FACEBOOK'S TRADE IN BIG CAT PRODUCTS

### The trade

Products from three big cat species, all native to Vietnam, being advertised on Facebook were Tiger, Leopard and Clouded Leopard. Tiger is listed as Endangered, while leopard and clouded leopard are listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red list. All three species are listed under CITES Appendix I and the trade of their products is illegal under the Vietnamese law.

12 Vietnamese Facebook accounts were found advertising big cat products alongside elephant and bear products. Items such as skin (whole or part), teeth, claws and bones were found in this survey. A total of 312 advertisements and 1,211 big cat products were recorded. Tiger products were more frequently advertised (88.8%), than clouded leopard (6.5%) and leopard products (4.5%) (Figure 20).

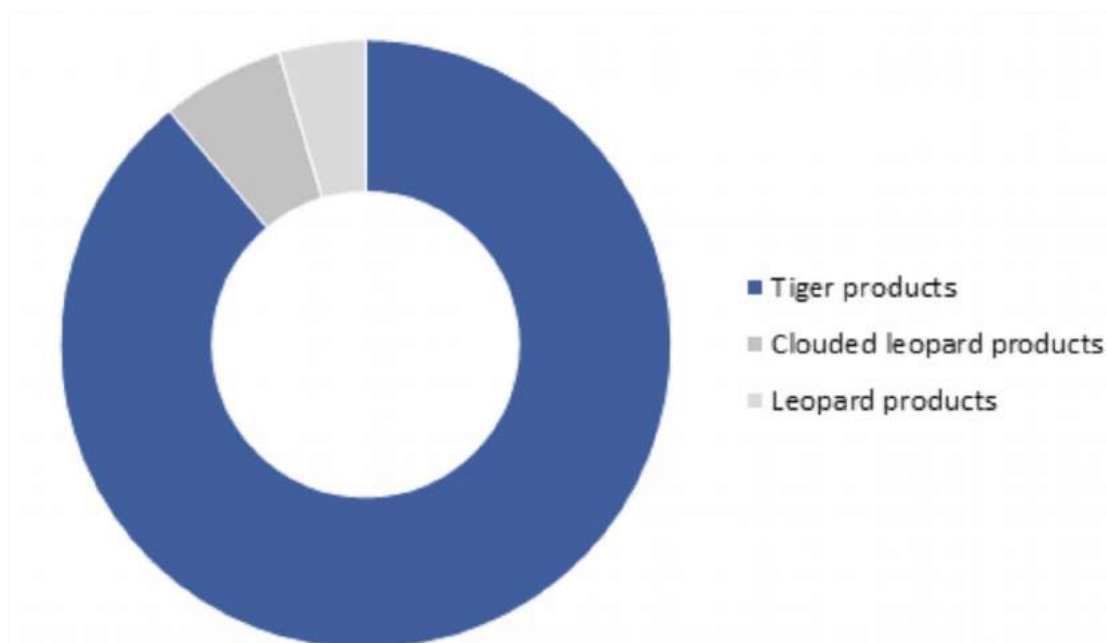


Figure 20: Percentage of adverts for tiger products compare to other big cat products

Tiger claws (unprocessed, pendant, necklace and bracelet) accounted for 83.8% of all tiger products for sale on Facebook, followed by tiger teeth products (unprocessed, pendant, necklace, bracelet and ring) with 12.1%. Products from tiger bone (such as tiger balm and tonic) are opportunistically found on only two occasions. Tiger skin was advertised for sale as a whole, in part or made in to wallets (Figure 21).

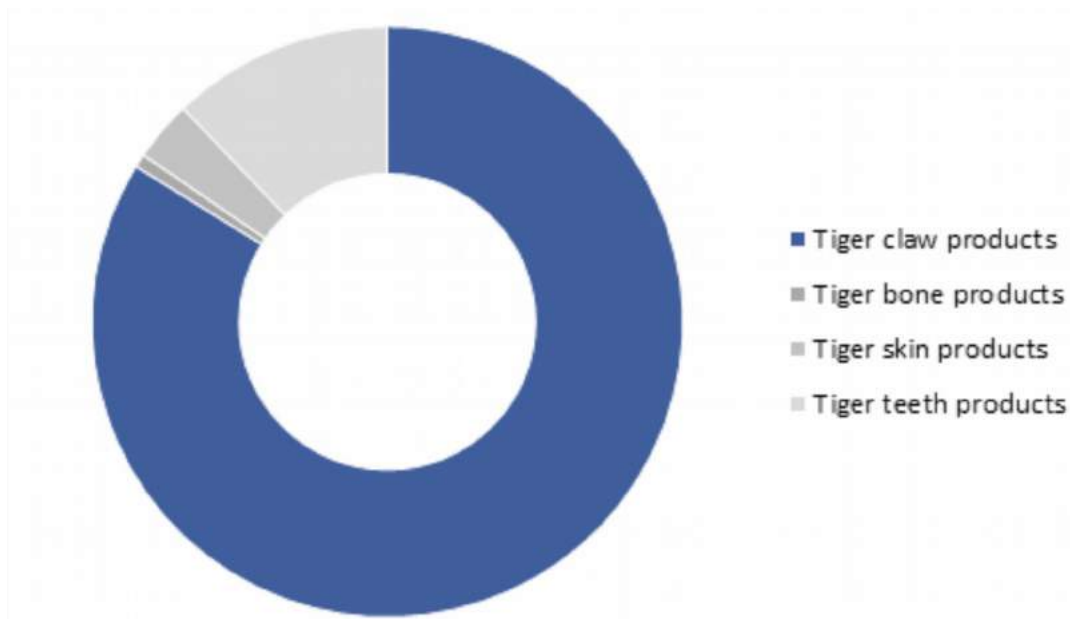


Figure 21: Percentage of tiger products being advertised on Facebook in Vietnam.

70% of clouded leopard products for sale were claws (unprocessed, pendant and necklace), and 30% were skin (whole and wallet). The most frequently advertised leopard products were leopard teeth (unprocessed, necklace and pendant) (64.2%), followed by 28.5% skin (whole, part or wallet) and 7.1% claw (unprocessed) (Figure 22).

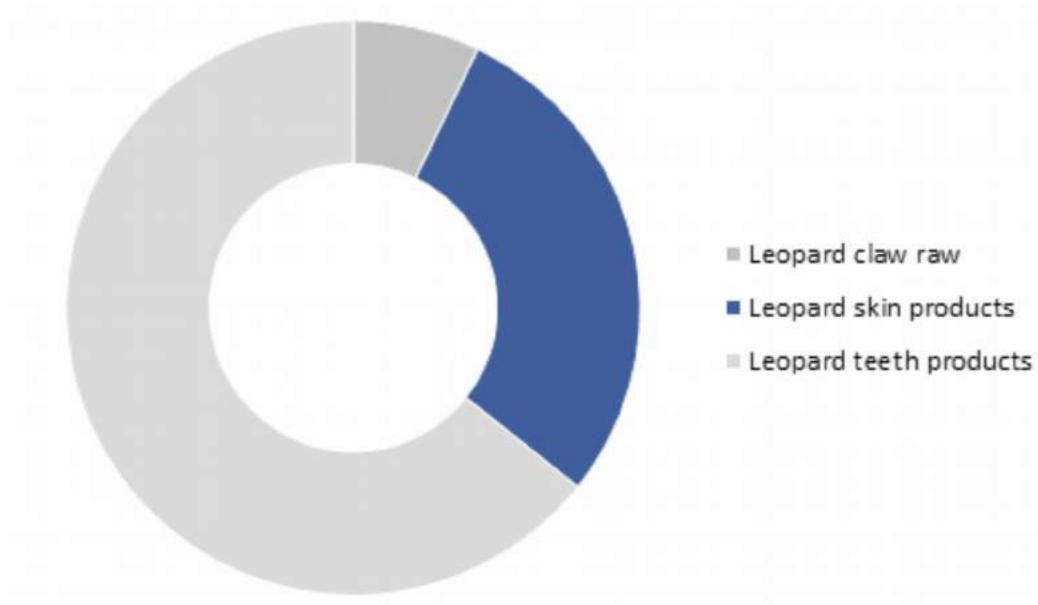


Figure 22: Percentage of leopard products advertised on Facebook in Vietnam

The trade of big cat products is violating the Vietnamese law. Therefore we will not show detail of the trade values in this report. However, the trade accounts for 24.5% of the illegal trade of endangered species on Facebook during this survey (Figure 23).

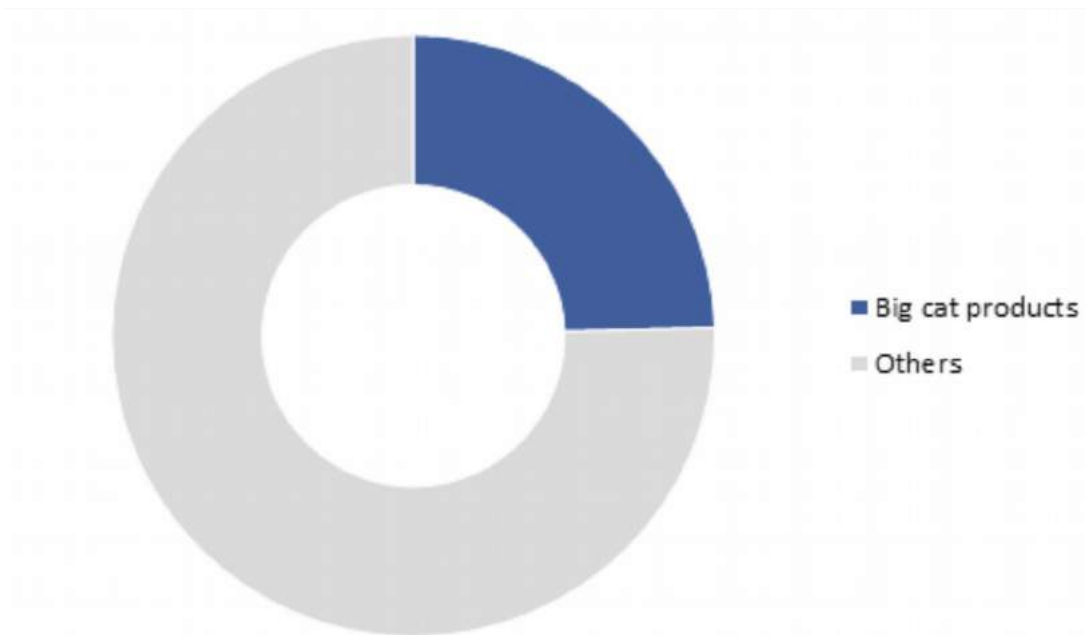


Figure 23: Percentage of the trade value of big cat products on Facebook in Vietnam during the survey period

### The traders

Traders of big cat products are male (100%), mostly living in Ho Chi Minh City (30%) and Hanoi (20%). Advertisements of big cat products were found on Facebook created to sell elephant products. No Facebook account discovered were created to sell big cat products only. These products were also occasionally found on Facebook groups created to trade household items.

### The consumers and potential consumers

A total of 181 comments were made by 178 Facebook accounts during the survey period. On average, 1.7 comments were made per advertisement, with 98.3% of commenters making a single comment. The consumers came from 41 out of 68 provinces and cities in Vietnam, mainly from Ho Chi Minh City (21.8%) and Hanoi (10.5%) (Figure 24).

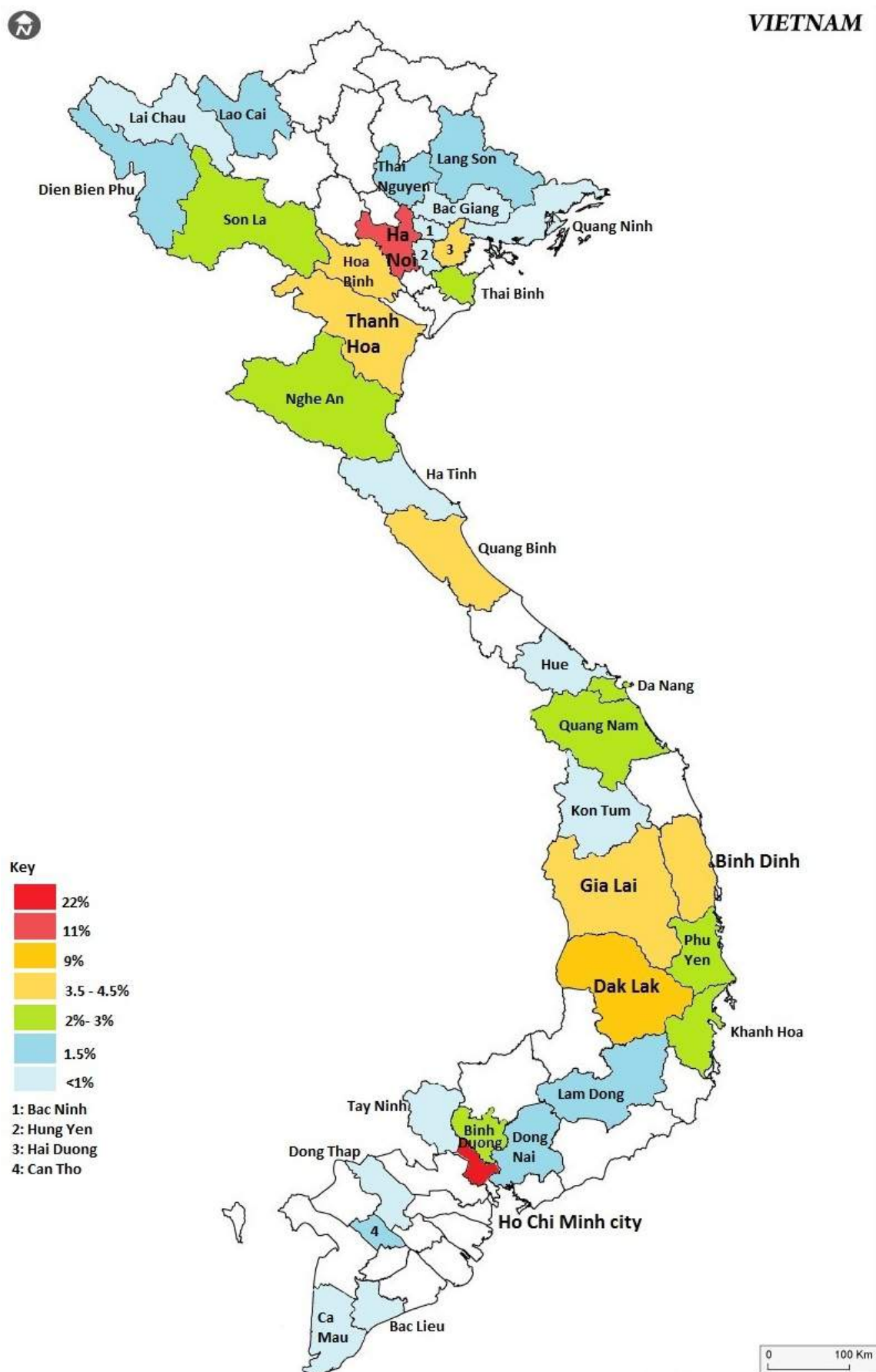


Figure 24: Map showing percentage of online consumers and potential consumers that expressed interest in purchasing big cat products advertised on Facebook, according to province.

A majority of big cat products consumers are male (98.3%), non-financial professionals (48.7%) (Figure 25). Government officers and people work at high management level (Director, CEO) accounted for 5% of big cat product consumers. 52% of the consumers were married. We were not able to extract age range of consumers from Facebook for this group of consumers. 51.8% of consumers received college/university education.

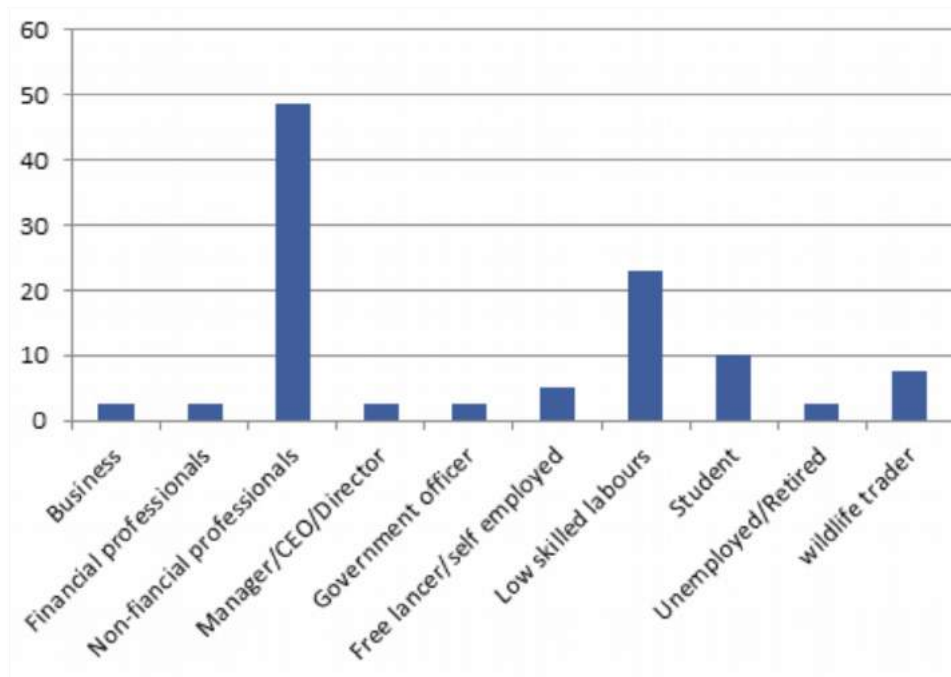


Figure 25: Occupation of consumer and potential consumers of big cat species.

Taiwanese and Thai people were also found asking for big cat skin during this survey.

98.8% of comments were made to express interest in buying the products, and 1.1% was to ask for the origin of the products. Some traders clarified that they have imported their products from Thailand and Laos. None of the comment shows any concern for animal welfare, nor acknowledged that the trade of big cat products is illegal.



Picture 3: Advertisements of big cat species' skin were found on Vietnamese facebook



## THE FACEBOOK'S TRADE IN RHINO HORN AND PANGOLIN PRODUCTS

Five Facebook accounts were found advertising rhino horn and pangolin products, with five advertisements for rhino horn and two adverts for pangolin products. These products seem to be advertised opportunistically: accounts advertising rhino horn and pangolin products were created mainly to sell ivory and other elephant products. Pangolin products found on this survey were carved scales advertised as ornaments and whole body advertised as food.

All species and subspecies of rhino and pangolin are classified as Threatened on the IUCN Red list and are listed under CITES Appendix I. They are also protected species under the Vietnamese law.

Seven comments were extracted with six unique Facebook accounts on the rhino horn advertisements. All comments were made by male, educated to university level and mostly from Ho Chi Minh City (3/7), Hanoi (2/7), Lam Dong (1/7) and Dak Lak (1/7). We were not able to extract more details about these consumers on their personal Facebook accounts. Comments were made to express interest in purchasing the rhino horn, and to admire the seller for having such prohibited item. None of the comments recorded from rhino horn adverts show any concern about violating the law, or for animal welfare.

Consumers and potential consumers of pangolin scale are mostly married males and self-employed. The scales were carved into Buddha plates and for sale as a lucky charm. The pangolin body was sold as food, with scales removed. Most people who show interest in this advert are married, female, non-financial professionals. Their comments show interest in purchasing the animal, and exchanging different methods for cooking the meat. None show any concern or knowledge of violating the law.

The trade of rhino horn and pangolin products accounted for 1% of the illegal trade of wild animals on Facebook in Vietnam, during this survey period.



Picture 4: Advertisement for carved pangolin scale and rhino horn on Facebook

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### Conclusion

November 2016, the Vietnam government decided to destroy 2.2 ton of elephant ivory and 70 kg of rhino horn, to show their commitment to tackle the illegal trade of wildlife products. Despite these efforts, this report shows more than 26,000 parts and products of protected wildlife available for sale openly on Facebook in Vietnam, within only 6 months of the survey.

Poaching in Africa is taking a heavy toll on the population of elephant and rhino to satisfy the demand in Vietnam and other Asian countries. More than half of items found in this survey were elephant ivory and elephant products (n=20,930). Besides the trade of elephant ivory, other parts, such as elephant tail hair, are not yet receiving enough attention from conservation bodies and authorities. In fact, 10% of carved ivory jewellery items in this report also included elephant tail hair. In tourist areas across Vietnam, it is quite easy to spot elephant tail hair rings (made of silver with elephant tail hair embedded inside the ring) openly for sale to local and foreign tourists (Nguyen & Burola, 2015). It is important to stress that an extra 45 Facebook accounts, with approximately 35,000 elephant products, were identified after the survey period. These data were not included in this report.

Despite all awareness raising campaigns in Vietnam over the last decade, rhino horn, tiger bone and bear parts, such as gallbladder and bile, were still being advertised openly on Facebook as traditional medicine, or tonic to boost health. In addition, we also found a large number of traditional medicine websites still include these wild animal parts as ingredients for medicine. Traditional medicine doctors, including those working in government-run hospitals, were found advertising bear bile products on their own personal Facebook page.

The trade of live turtles and tortoises is attractive to a young group of consumers – some are still secondary school students. Results of this report matched with our previous survey on the attitudes and behaviour of young Vietnamese, when keeping wildlife as pet is considered as a form of conservation, rather than exploitation. Many of these young people are attracted to keeping exotic species, such as the Radiated tortoise of Madagascar, or the American snapping turtle. This poses a potential risk of introducing invasive species to the natural habitat in Vietnam. For example, the red eared sliders were imported from North America and were kept as pets in Vietnam. The Vietnamese also have a tradition of releasing animals, such as turtle/tortoise, birds and fish a week before their traditional new year (Tết). The famous Hoan Kiem turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) were competed and bitten by this invasive species, which were introduced to the lake by locals. In 2010, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has instructed the Fisheries department and provincial agencies to investigate the invasion of the red eared sliders in Vietnam.

The involvement of foreign consumers and Vietnamese consumers living overseas on the Facebook trade in Vietnam exposes the flexibility and the large scale of the trade. Facebook provides a free platform, easy to connect to and maintain anonymity. Buyers only need to place the order, transfer the requested amount of money, and trader can post the ordered products through the post office, or using service from Express Mail Service (EMS) and FedEx.

In our study, we show the need for better regulations on social media platforms such as Facebook. Currently, Facebook is only governed by the public to report illegal activities, however, illegal trade of wild species are not yet included in Facebook terms and conditions. Facebook needs to take more responsibility for illegal activities that are happening on their platform, and they should recognise that Facebook is not just a technological innovation; it is a tool that could lead to the destruction of our wildlife.

The online trade of endangered wildlife is growing rapidly in Vietnam, in accordance with the expansion of the internet. We need to recognise that online trade of endangered species is a significant component of illegal wildlife trade and it's in contravention of Vietnamese legislation and should be dealt with accordingly.

## Recommendations

Based on the results obtained from this survey, we provide the following recommendations:

- Under Vietnamese law, it is illegal to advertise, buy or sell protected species. Vietnamese authority should investigate online trade of wildlife, prosecute violation and publicise the outcome.
- Vietnamese authorities should receive training in how to investigate online wildlife crime to monitor the trade and prosecute violations.
- In order to assist Vietnamese authorities to tackle the online trade of wildlife, an online platform should be created to facilitate members of the public to report suspected online wildlife crime.
- Social media has emerged as an important tool for wildlife traders and as a growing threat to endangered species. As Vietnam's number one social media platform, Facebook should provide a facility to report suspected illegal wildlife trade and collaborate with Vietnamese authorities to investigate wildlife crime.
- Conservation NGOs should collaborate with Facebook Vietnam to tackle the illegal online trade of wildlife.
- Education information should be displayed on online platforms and information of illegal activities, such as trading protected species online, should be displayed to the public.
- The trade in elephant products constitutes a considerable portion of the online trade in Vietnam and facilitates the trade in other species such as bears, pangolins, and rhinos. Law enforcement resources in Vietnam should be targeted towards combating the online trade in ivory and other elephant products in order to impact the global trade in endangered species.

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