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CURBING IVORY CONSUMPTION IN CHINA

Messaging Research Language Memo

WHO ARE WE TRYING TO REACH?

APCO Insight's research identified three distinct segments and classified them based on how they responded to the set of messaging statements. The segment that is most likely to be persuaded are referred to as the *Persudables*. Persudables tend to be...

- **Under 40:** Roughly half of Persudables are under 40 (51%)
- **Include Men and Women:** Gender split roughly equally (Male 48% vs. Female 52%)
- **Upper Middle Income Bracket:** About two-thirds of this segment (68%) sit in the upper middle income bracket
- **College Graduates (or higher):** Nearly three-in-four (73%) of Persudables have a college degree or higher
- **Living in Guanghaiou (but also Shanghai and Beijing):** Persudables are largely found in Guanghaiou (45%), but do have a presence in Shanghai (29%) and Beijing (26%)
- **On Social Media:** This segment is most likely to be active on social media (91% of Persudables are on WeChat, 76% are on Weibo and 73% are on Qzone)

CONSIDER THIS WHEN DEVELOPING MESSAGES

Use Messages that.....

Contain facts and figures...

- Results from both the qualitative and quantitative research indicate that General Public Influencers respond best to messages containing clear facts and/or figures. We also know from the study results that General Public Influencers are most likely to be convinced by opinions of experts - including facts and figures in your messages helps to convey this sense of authority and expertise.
- Keep messages simple - one or two facts supported by one or two figures.
- Don't overwhelm the public with numbers - there is too much of a good thing.

...from expert spokespeople and reputable sources

- Based on the study results, we know that General Public Influencers are most likely to be persuaded by individuals with authority or expertise, such as Scholars/Scientists, International NGOs, Chinese NGOs, or Media/Journalists.

Create a sense of urgency

- One of the other common themes across the messages identified as most persuasive and convincing is a sense of urgency that elephants will not survive without our help. The most convincing messages - as identified by respondents - were related to elephant extinction and the inability of baby elephants to survive without their mother. Messages stressing the urgency of the situation are most likely to resonate with General Public Influencers.

WHAT DO WE SAY FIRST?

Educate the public on the origins of ivory

- Messages that lay out the simple and basic facts of where ivory comes from (ivory comes from elephants and elephants are killed for their tusks) are most likely to resonate with the public.
- Use this message on its own, or fold into a larger story of where ivory comes from and what challenges currently face the elephant (i.e. extinction).

Top message: *Ivory comes from elephants and is made from an elephant tusk. As tusks don't fall out on their own like teeth, people kill elephants to remove their tusks.*

Emphasize extinction

- Respondents in the focus group discussions were surprised to learn that elephants are not only facing extinction, but that the extinction of African elephants could occur in our lifetime. Validating the qualitative findings, the survey identified a message around elephant extinction as one of the most convincing and impactful messages. When talking about extinction, messages should stress the overall impact of the ivory trade on the elephant population as well as the likelihood of extinction in our lifetime.
- Be sure to include numbers to convey both the extent of the problem as well as its urgency.
 - Top message: *Illegal ivory is decimating the elephant population in Africa, 70 years ago there were between 3 and 5 million elephants. Today, there are only around 430,000 left. At this rate, some experts believe that elephants in Africa will be extinct in 20 years.*

Frame elephant conservation in a larger story of environmentalism

- Results suggest that connecting environmental conservation and the prevention of elephant extinction can help to dissuade General Public influencers from buying ivory. Notably, environmental concerns are on the rise in China and research conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Survey in 2013 documented these heightening environmental concerns¹. Take advantage of growing environmental concerns and connect the preservation of elephants to environmentalism in general.
- Messages should stress the impact of elephant extinction on the environment.
 - Top message: *Saving elephants is part of protecting the environment. If the elephant is extinct in the future, our environment will be out of balance.*

Use the Confusion Over the Legal and Illegal Ivory Trade

- General Public Influencers have a poor understanding of the laws governing ivory as the survey results indicate that a solid majority know nothing to only a little about China's regulations of the ivory trade. Furthermore, research results indicate that messages highlighting the confusion of the law are impactful on dissuading respondents from buying ivory.
- Messages should use this low level of awareness to our advantage and stress the confusion between the legal and illegal ivory trade and how easy it is to unintentionally buy illegal ivory.
- Boost impact of messages by including the consequences of buying illegal ivory, such as mandated jail sentences or even something as simple as "you will be breaking the law."
 - Top message: *Elephants are killed for their ivory in the illegal ivory trade. A majority of the ivory in China is illegal and it is impossible to tell the difference between legal and illegal ivory. This makes it very difficult for the average consumer to ensure they are not violating the law by buying illegal ivory.*

WHAT SHOULD WE NOT SAY OR DO?

Don't talk about "illegality"

- Survey results indicate that messages discussing the illegality of the ivory trade only *encourage* respondents to buy ivory. The segment of the population already buying ivory or who are highly likely to buy in the future – the Unconvinced Likely Buyers – associate ivory with being "precious," a "luxury," and "expensive." Messages emphasizing the illegality of ivory only perpetuate this notion that ivory is rare and should be purchased now before it is too late.
 - Message tested and shown to *increase* likelihood to buy: *It is illegal to purchase ivory products.*
- NOTE OF CLARIFICATION: While both the extinction and illegality messages convey a similar idea – that soon ivory will no longer be available – the research has found that the extinction message reduces the likelihood to buy ivory and the illegality message has the opposite effect. Based upon the survey results, we know that messages including a consequence are far more likely to resonate with respondents than those that do not. Talking about the possibility of the extinction of elephants sends a loud and clear message of a consequence to one's actions while a simple message of illegality has no consequence.

¹ *Environmental Concerns on the Rise in China*, Pew Global Attitudes Project, survey conducted in China March 4 – April 6, 2013.

Don't Shame or Use "Guilt Triggers"

- Results from the research indicate that messages on immorality and those that shame the public for buying ivory encourage the buying of ivory. These types of messages only turns Influencers off when you need to start a conversation.
 - Messages tested and shown to *increase* likelihood to buy:
 - *The killing of elephants for ivory is brutal and cruel. When you buy an ivory product you are an accomplice to the killing of an elephant.*
 - *The buying or selling of any ivory product is immoral.*

Statements of opinion are not effective messages – facts are needed!

- Based on the study results, messages built on a foundation of facts are more likely to resonate. We cannot coerce the public to stop buying ivory with statements of opinion – messages rooted in facts and figures are most likely to be successful.

Don't use a celebrity spokesperson

- General Public Influencers are most likely to be persuaded by individuals with authority or expertise, such as Scholars/Scientists, International NGOs, Chinese NGOs, or Media/Journalists.

THINGS TO CONSIDER IN COMMUNICATIONS

Top-down change seen positively....

- The survey results show widespread support for a full government ban on ivory – a solid majority of General Public Influencers support the government banning the buying and selling of all ivory products. Moreover, messages emphasizing greater government action such as the tightening of government restrictions on the buying/selling of ivory products are shown to be persuasive. While most in the international community view the recent government ban on the import of ivory carvings as ineffective, in the focus groups and in-depth interviews most respondents viewed this as a good thing. Many focus group respondents believed that the ban is a demonstration of the government getting tough on this issue. The research results indicate that greater government action – and even talk – can have an impact on reducing ivory consumption.

Government toughness on corruption helpful to our cause...

- Of note, the research found that connecting the reduction of the legal and illegal ivory trade to the reduction of government corruption reduces the likelihood of buying ivory.

The message of brutality heard loud and clear, but now is the time for a new message....

- The news is saturated with messages about ivory and the ivory trade. Roughly three-in-four General Public Influencers report hearing/reading/seeing something about ivory in the past year. Notably, messages about the brutality and cruelty of the ivory trade are reaching General Public Influencers in these three cities. About half (48%) of General Public Influencers reported hearing about something related to the consequences elephants face as a result of the ivory trade. Notably, the segment of the population most likely to have heard this message of brutality – Ivory Rejectors – are the least likely to buy ivory. The research suggests that the messages of brutality have helped to build a substantial segment who are unlikely to buy ivory. However, now the conversation needs to shift to focus on the individuals who are already buying ivory.

WHO ISN'T LISTENING?

APCO Insight identified a segment of the population who are not likely to be persuadable – referred to as the "Unconvinced Likely Buyers." These individuals are...

- **Male:** 65% of Unconvinced Likely Buyers are male.
- **Young and Old:** 46% of Unconvinced Likely Buyers are under 40; 35% are 55 or older
- **On the low-side of middle income:** 41% of this segment sit in the lower middle income brackets.
- **College Graduates (or higher):** 69% have a college degree or higher.
- **Living in Shanghai (but also in Guangzhou and Beijing):** A majority of Unconvinced Likely Buyers are found in Shanghai, with smaller proportions in Guangzhou (22%) and Beijing (18%).

METHODOLOGY

APCO Insight, a global research firm that specializes in conducting messaging research for communication campaigns, conducted qualitative (focus groups in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and in-depth interviews) and quantitative research (survey) to develop and assess messaging to compel long-term behavioral and perception change. This executive memo summarizes the results from the quantitative survey among General Public Influencers – these are the informed and engaged segment of the Chinese general population known for their “opinion influencing” behavior. Minimum income requirement for participation in the survey: 5000 yuan per month. The survey was conducted using a high-quality online panel and respondents were pre-screened to ensure they met the criteria for a General Public Influencer. A total of 1,000 interviews (MOE +/- 3.1%) were completed targeting General Public Influencers in Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou between August 6 – 19, 2015. Data were weighted by age and gender to reflect the population parameters of China. Data also weighted to ensure equal split across the three cities.

IDENTIFIED EFFECTIVE MESSAGES

In the first phase of the project, qualitative research in the form of focus groups and in-depth interviews explored this issue and identified an array of key themes and messages for the second phase of research – the quantitative survey. The survey tested 21 messages designed to convince respondents to not buy ivory. Statistical analysis following the completion of the survey identified six messages that were most impactful in dissuading respondents from buying ivory.

Summary of Impactful Messages

It is important for our government to reduce corruption at all levels and many people give ivory products as gifts to build up or maintain relationships with government officials. The availability of legal and illegal ivory products encourages these corrupt practices to continue.

The Chinese government will gradually ban the buying and selling of all ivory products.

Elephants are killed for their ivory in the illegal ivory trade. A majority of the ivory in China is illegal and it is impossible to tell the difference between legal and illegal ivory. This makes it very difficult for the average consumer to ensure they are not violating the law by buying illegal ivory.

Saving elephants is part of protecting the environment. If the elephant is extinct in the future, our environment will be out of balance.

Ivory comes from elephants and is made from an elephant tusk. As tusks don't fall out on their own like teeth, people kill elephants to remove their tusks.

Illegal ivory is decimating the elephant population in Africa, 70 years ago there were between 3 and 5 million elephants. Today, there are only around 430,000 left. At this rate, some experts believe that elephants in Africa will be extinct in 20 years.