

# **STRATEGISING CAMPAIGNS ON WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING: A STUDY ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOS) IN MALAYSIA AND THAILAND**

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## **ABSTRACT**

There are many negative impacts due to wildlife trafficking among which is the extinction of species which in turn would affect the humans as any drastic change to the natural world will impact all on earth. Malaysia is a location for illegal hunting and is a hub for international wildlife trafficking. Many incidents include the involvement of Thailand whereby trafficked animals destined to Thailand pass through Malaysia or in some cases, seizures by Custom officials often occur at the Thai-Malaysia border. Poor public awareness is said to be one of the reasons wildlife trafficking crimes occur therefore creating awareness about wildlife trafficking is vital to help curb the problem. One common method to create awareness is through awareness campaigns and both government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) deploy this method to reach out to their target audience. This research's goals are to analyse the campaign strategies, examine the cooperation between, and analyse the challenges faced by government agencies and NGOs in Malaysia and Thailand to create awareness on wildlife trafficking and also to suggest ideas/improvement for future awareness campaigns. To achieve these aims, four methods will be used; group discussion and in-depth interviews will be the main methods and, observation and content analysis of newspapers will be done too. It is crucial to stop wildlife trafficking, as such awareness, understanding and participation from target audiences are important to do it. This research hopes to enlighten on the campaign strategies used by government agencies and NGOs in Malaysia and Thailand and to lay out the cooperation existing between and challenges faced by them. Finally ideas/improvement for future awareness campaigns will be suggested. This research is in the proposal stage.

**Keywords:** Environmental communication, Wildlife trafficking, Awareness campaign, Malaysia, Thailand

## **INTRODUCTION**

Wildlife trafficking is a lucrative transnational crime. Warchol (2004) has stated that guerrilla insurgency groups, military units and organised criminal syndicates along with opportunistic poachers and traffickers are among the key people involved in this crime. Warchol (2004) further stated that the impact of wildlife poaching and trafficking extends beyond the threat posed to the survival of selected species and Still (2003) has mentioned that each and every species on earth plays an important and unique role in the intricate network of relationships of nature. The loss of any one species equals to a

grim situation for the coming generations of humans. Distance is not a problem for wildlife trade to happen, thanks to globalisation as said by Dr Richard Thomas, the communications coordinator of The Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network (TRAFFIC) whereby animal parts are traded mostly because local supply or reserve is not enough and is diminishing (Cavaliere, 2010). Moreover, in this information technology era, traffickers are using the available advancements to carry out their illegal activities. For instance traffickers communicate with their clients through the internet using web applications like Skype (Zimmerman, 2003); transactions too can be easily performed through online banking facilities. Wyler and Sheikh (2008) has reported on auction websites like Ebay which had dealings involving wildlife. Besides that, in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, there are many species listed in the Appendix I and II of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wilde Fauna and Flora (CITES) found on the Chinese language Internet, with more than 20,000 advertisements in China alone (Wilson-Wilde, 2010). This shows the extent of the wildlife trade market, and the demand it has. It also displays the various methods used to sell illegally procured wildlife. To reach their potential buyers, traffickers had to find ways to advertise their products. Communication is essential here; traffickers have to attract, entice or persuade their customers. In a similar manner, the group of people working against wildlife trafficking also have to communicate with the public, especially people who create the demand for wildlife products. Strategic methods have to be deployed to enlighten or educate on the perils of wildlife trafficking and to encourage the public to be aware of this illicit activity and not be part of the people who contribute to the destruction of the natural world.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

There are many negative impacts due to wildlife trafficking. Besides the risk of extinction of many species of animals and plants, other impacts are the loss of their inputs to decisive natural processes which in turn compromises human related aspects like health and economic security (Schaedla, 2007). Malaysia is a location for illegal hunting and is a hub for international wildlife trafficking. Many incidents include the involvement of Thailand whereby trafficked animals destined to Thailand pass through Malaysia or in some cases, seizures by Custom officials often occur at the Thai-Malaysia border. In an incident, a surprise attack on Thai nationals in Malaysian forest resulted in the arrest of one accomplice with precious agarwood and Sunda Pangolin scales (Or & Tang, 2011). Using data obtained from CITES listed animals from the year 1998–2007, Nijman (2010) discovered that Malaysia is among the major countries exporting wild-caught animals. Besides that, for certain animals over 90% of all exports originate from single countries; butterflies from Malaysia and seahorses from Thailand. Nijman (2010) reported that illegal trade through Malaysia almost exclusively involved the re-export of reptiles or reptile skins with the reported origin mostly being Thailand. This shows the link between Malaysia and Thailand in the illegal wildlife trade.

According to Schaedla (2007), one of the factors which make Asia a global hotspot for wildlife crimes, including wildlife trafficking, is a poor public awareness of the problem. As such, creating awareness about wildlife trafficking is vital to help curb the problem. One common method to create awareness is through awareness campaigns and both government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) deploy this method to reach out to their target audience. It is said that campaigns can access large

populations at relatively low cost and work to increase awareness, knowledge, beliefs and, intention and behaviour change (Cavill & Bauman, 2004). Demand reduction in consumer countries is deemed the best way to fight illicit wildlife trafficking (World Wildlife Fund for Nature [WWF] & Dalberg, 2012) and thus to reduce demand, it is vital to educate communities through awareness raising campaigns (United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP], 2014). Targeted consumer campaigns by governments and through civil society, can make aware consumers of the impact of consuming illegal wildlife products and the associated destruction of the environment (WWF & Dalberg, 2012). For instance, Grace Gabriel (Asia's regional director for International Fund for Animal Welfare [IFAW]) said, in a IFAW survey done in China, when explained how ivory is sourced (i.e. from dead elephants), 82% of consumers said they would have not bought any if they had known, because in Chinese, ivory means "elephant teeth", thus the misunderstanding (Pinholster, 2015). It was further stated that public-awareness campaigns can go a long way in the effort to reduce user demand for unlawfully procured items.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions for this study are as below:

1. What are the campaign strategies used by government agencies and NGOs in Malaysia and Thailand to create awareness on wildlife trafficking through awareness campaigns.
2. How and what are the cooperation between Malaysian and Thailand government agencies and NGOs to create awareness on wildlife trafficking.
3. What are the challenges faced by government agencies and NGOs in Malaysia and Thailand to create awareness on wildlife trafficking through awareness campaigns.
4. How to improve future awareness campaigns by government agencies and NGOs in Malaysia and Thailand.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Specifically, this research aims:

1. To analyse the campaign strategies used by government agencies and NGOs in Malaysia and Thailand to create awareness on wildlife trafficking through awareness campaigns.
2. To examine the cooperation between Malaysian and Thailand government agencies and NGOs to create awareness on wildlife trafficking.
3. To analyse the challenges faced by government agencies and NGOs in Malaysia and Thailand to create awareness on wildlife trafficking through awareness campaigns.
4. To suggest ideas/improvement for future awareness campaigns by government agencies and NGOs in Malaysia and Thailand.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Environmental Communication Campaigns**

Campaigns are a means of communication, and scholars and practitioners in the environmental communication field have established the International Environmental Communication Association (<http://environmentalcomm.org>) to coordinate research and activities, including campaigns worldwide among which for example The Environmental Communication Network of Latin America and the Caribbean is said to have given their support to reporters covering environmental topics to 15 countries in that region (Cox, 2013). This shows the importance of having a network to offer assistance and to organise research is well realised amongst the people who are involved in environmental communication. Cox (2013) stated that environmental communication is pragmatic and frequently is part of public education campaigns, for example when environmental organisations teach its followers and mobilises support for protecting a wilderness area.

It is said studies of campaigns emerged as an early focus of the new field, with advocacy campaigns by environmental groups, corporations and scientists concerned about global warming being one of the growing area of study (Cox, 2013). For example Al Gore had carried out campaigns such as the “We Can Solve It” advertising campaign designed to recruit supporters to seek laws and policies to reduce greenhouse gases (Nisbet et al., 2012). The “We Can Solve It” campaign featured social networking elements like Facebook in their site, whereby visitors can create a profile, friend other people, post entries, create their own groups or even try to organise a local event in their community. These campaigns aims to educate, change attitudes and rally support, and involve not just the public but also businesses and the government.

Technology can be used to improve campaigns, and the Participate project is carried out to explore how pervasive computing can support future mass scale environmental campaigns in which the public can interact by uploading and accessing information on their local environments, and also engage in reflection, discussion and debate (Paxton, n.d.). Pervasive computing is believed to be able to among others, involve millions of people in mass participation environmental campaigns, raising awareness of environmental issues, and delivering environmental data on a never seen scale. The Participate project looks at how the convergence of mobile, online and broadcast media can make possible a broad cross-section of the public can at the same time contribute and access environmental information at any time and any place; to explore this the cooperation of a group of industry and academic partners is required (Paxton, n.d.).

Improving campaigns does not just stop with coming with new and innovative ways to conduct them, but also requires organisers to look into issue which could dampen or hamper their campaign efforts. Crompton and Kasser (2009) in their book, *Meeting Environmental Challenges: The Role of Human Identity*, have discussed some aspects of commonly used approaches of environmental communications and campaigns and to seek some answers as to why these methods are not creating the desired level of change. It is said that the environmental movement pursues two basic types of strategy to meet environmental challenges, that is engaging organisations which includes the government and businesses, and engaging the particular behaviours that individual citizens pursue. A third approach was introduced in Crompton and Kasser’s book, called the identity campaigning, which is hoped to enhance the effectiveness of the environmental movement’s current work and for developing useful strategies for new types of intervention. Identity campaigning is said to be able to assist environmental organisations to foresee and steer clear of certain ways which might

cause counter-productive effects using current strategies. This is because identity campaigning focuses on a person's identity, that is the parts which lead them to demand more ambitious change on part of organisations or parts which underlie their motivation to be involved in pro-environmental behaviour; it works on to understand the psychological make-up of that person, which will ultimately help the other two more commonly used strategies to be more effective. Thus, a focus on human identity can help environmental organisations to refine existing campaigns and incorporate strategies that are at the moment overlooked. For instance, instead of presenting information which are often terrifying about environmental challenges with little emotional content or context, environmental organisations can help people to express their emotions on environmental destruction. Besides that, Crompton and Kasser have expressed that environmental organisations need to be alert whereby their communications and campaigns might encourage the adoption of defence and coping mechanisms that tend to worsen environmental problems, or reinforce materialistic and self-enhancing values and goals. For example, placing a financial value on an endangered species and building an economic case for its conservation risks its commodification because this equates the species to the same value of other assets like a hotel chain for instance. As such, environmental organisations need to re-examine their communication strategies. Among the suggestions listed were: avoid language and campaigns that reinforce materialistic, self-enhancing values; build awareness that humans are part of nature too and confront society's believe that legitimise prejudice towards the non-human nature; design environmental campaigns to minimise the risk of people deploying environmentally problematic coping strategies and so on.

According to Rootes (2007), local campaigns are best used for environmental conflicts or issues as it is persistently recurrent, and this is important because to keep a goal or campaign purpose alive and active, the public need to be reminded often of the environmental problem.

Rootes (2007) stated that that the wealth of data collected through participant observation of protests and campaigns along with participant interviews is priceless. Campaigns are shaped by the local characteristics and at the same time, they have a part in shaping the environmental identities of communities and local environment networks (Rootes 2007). Explaining further, Rootes (2007) stated a major campaign may cause the birth of groups or organisations that could potentially leave more or less durable legacies by reshaping local environmental identities and producing new organisations and relationship among them. Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) is one of the locally active NGO championing environmental issues in Malaysia. They have carried out numerous local projects for instance Hornbill Conservation Project, Restore Our Awesome Reefs (ROAR) and so on (MNS, 2010).

### **Wildlife Communication Campaigns**

According to Princen et al. (1995) local NGOs running at the grassroots level can carry out important and worthy activities in the field along with compiling considerable knowledge regarding the local framework within which they are evolving. In this, Tournier (2015) has stated that local NGOs play an important part in reducing wildlife crime on a local scale. For example is the Vietnamese local NGO Education for Nature Vietnam (ENV) which was founded in 2000 with the goal to raise awareness and educate the public about the illicit wildlife trade problem (ENV, 2013a). ENV has

developed programmes to assist the collection of on field information regarding wildlife trade and has worked with local authorities to apply appropriate sanctions to the accused (ENV, 2013b). Tournier (2015) conducted in depth interview with experts from NGOs dealing with wildlife trafficking as part of the research. One expert stated that national level campaigns are designed to raise awareness among the citizens to create public interest and concern about wildlife trade, and both traditional and new media (social networks like Facebook) are used to relay messages which could be comprehended by a large audience. At times, these awareness initiatives involve famous people and this plays a part in strengthening the impact the message leaves on the public, as further stated by the same expert. Another expert mentioned a campaign called the Chi campaign carried out in Vietnam, specifically targeting consumers (mostly consisting of rich businessmen from main cities) of rhinoceros horn. The strong message this campaign carried is one's desired trait (for example masculinity) resides within that person, and not from wildlife parts consumed. This campaign displayed the intended messages at strategic locations such as professional newspapers, websites or through outdoor visuals at work places. Another way to reach the public is through a hotline, as revealed by the third expert. This hotline is seen as a problem solver for the public to report wildlife crime to the NGO, which will then work alongside the local authorities. To ensure people know the existence of the hotline, awareness campaigns were implemented and to determine its efficiency, the NGO assessed the number of calls made to the hotline during the course of the awareness campaign.

Besides interviews, Tournier (2015) conducted on field observations. An NGO employee mentioned regarding outposts which is vital to increase the adaptability of an awareness initiative. The employee supervises those outposts found across the country, and stated support like materials for public events including posters and documents, and capacity building are provided through the outposts; this helps the volunteers of the NGO to be able to conduct the local activities. One of the experts was involved in developing events in schools to increase awareness and concern among the young. Such awareness activities aim to stop future demands for wildlife products as the young are sensitised early on. Tournier (2015) mentioned that the initiative to educate and to influence consumers of wildlife products can potentially assist in lessening the dramatic increase of the regional demand and at the same time prevent the occurrence of future demands for wildlife products, albeit the impact of it remains uncertain.

### **Wildlife Trafficking**

Wildlife trafficking, which is a wildlife and forest crime, can be defined as the taking, trading (supplying and selling), importing, exporting, processing, possessing, obtaining, and consumption of wild flora and fauna in contravention of national or international law (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNDOC], 2010). Wildlife contraband consists of pets, hunting trophies, fashion accessories, cultural artefact, ingredients for traditional medicine, bush meat for human consumption and so on (Wyler & Sheikh, 2008). With such a variety of uses, capturing wildlife is definitely something worthy to be carried out, even illegally, as the return or profit is high. With an increase in demand for animal products to be used for purposes as mentioned above, traders are becoming bolder to go against the law and evade the authorities to procure the wildlife. As such wildlife trafficking has increased steeply.

The process of wildlife trafficking usually involves the smuggling of contents in three ways: (1) hidden in secret compartments in luggage, shipping containers or clothing items; (2) wrongfully declared in the custom forms and trade permits as similar looking non-protected species, changing the declared item number, changing the value of the declared item or declaring the wildlife as captive-bred; (3) smuggled in using stolen or altered trade permit to make seem that the contents are lawfully traded (Wylar & Sheikh, 2008).

The illicit trafficking of wildlife and derivatives or parts of wildlife which involves over the limit capture and non-sustainable usage of wildlife (Li, Ning & Shan, 2008), is said to be worth USD 10 billion to USD 20 billion globally (Wilson-Wilde, 2010), although due to the illicit and secretive nature of this trade it is difficult to accurately estimate its value (Dunn, 2010).

It is estimated that 10%–20% of all vertebrates and plant species are at risk of extinction; over exploitation activities of humans have threatened approximately one third of endangered vertebrate species (Manel, Berthier & Luikart, 2002). According to the Red List published by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), more than 15,000 species of animals and plants are at risk of extinction (Schneider, 2008), such as the Chinese pangolins (*Manis pentadactyla*) and tiger (*Panthera tigris*) (Li, Ning & Shan, 2008). Another type of pangolin, the Sunda pangolins are under extreme hunting pressure due to the scientifically unproven belief that their scales (whole and in powdered form) can help treat medical conditions such as psoriasis, infertility, to improve blood circulation, treat asthma, and even cancer whereas the meat is consumed with the assumption that it can nourish the kidneys (Challender, 2011).

It is predicted that elephants, one of the most important species in Africa can experience extinction by the year 2020 (Wasser et al., 2008). This is because these majestic species are hunted down for their precious ivory (even though hunting of elephants for ivory is banned since 1989). Another vital species in Africa, the rhinoceros too face the similar danger. Their number have declined in Kenya, even though it is a protected species, due to the demand for its horns for purposes such as to make ceremonial daggers in Yemen and for use in traditional Chinese medicines (Warchol, 2004). Warchol (2004) also notes that the rhino horn can retail for as much as \$ 30000 a kilo in the consumer market in Asia.

Dunn (2010) states that of all the plant and animal species affected by the wildlife trade, the most exploited group is probably birds where 4,000 species of birds, involving several million individuals, are subjected to the wildlife trade, either internationally or domestically each year.

In South East Asia, wildlife trafficking is a big problem which is diminishing the forest biodiversity. According to Beastall and Yee (2011) South East Asia is a chief supplier of wildlife to the rest of the world, besides also being a centre of wildlife consumption. It is estimated that more than 100,000 specimens are smuggled out every year from countries like Laos, Vietnam and Indonesia and shipped to countries like China, which has the highest demand for wildlife in this region (Deeks, 2006). It is said that it is getting more difficult to find specimen in wild forests whereby on the other hand, scientist are said to be able to come across new species by just strolling in markets in South East Asia and China (Deeks, 2006). These two situations show that it is easier to spot wildlife, especially a previously unknown species, in markets being traded as pet or for consumption, than to be found in their natural habitat, the forest.

Wildlife trafficking is said to begin with local hunters or fishermen with detailed knowledge of the local forest or wetlands. They will then sell the products in local markets or to low level dealers, who will then ship it to high end smugglers or traffickers who deal with international clients (Deeks, 2006) consisting of private collectors, pet shop owners, animal brokers, game farms owners, biomedical labs, circuses and even exotic meat dealers (Warchol, 2004).

Dunn (2010) explains that most of the poaching for the illegal wildlife trade occurs in poorer nations that are rich in natural resources, like African and Asian countries. It is further stated that one main impediment to end wildlife trade is the fact that those involved in this activity live at poverty level. They do not stop to think about the cost their actions have on the wildlife populations from which they are poaching or hunting. To make things worse, rich city dwellers further perpetuate domestic trade, providing an important source of income for rural hunters and traders (Nekaris et al., 2010).

There are many negative impacts due to wildlife trafficking. Warchol (2004) stressed that this illegal activity pose threat to the survival of species, as stated above by accounts of Manel, Berthier and Luikart (2002) and Schneider (2008). Schaedla (2007) states that as these species are lost due to excessive trafficking activities, their inputs to decisive natural processes and ecosystem resilience also disappear. Important aspects like human health, economic security and also national political stability all stand to be compromised in turn (Schaedla, 2007).

Due to its detrimental effect the United Nations has set up CITES to regulate wildlife trade. Countries which have signed this regulation follow the three tier system to determine the level of endangerment a wildlife face. As Dunn (2010) simplified, the three tiers are: Appendix I (species threatened with extinction and trade permitted in exceptional circumstances only; Appendix II (species not threatened with extinction but survival relies on trade being controlled and trade regulated by a permit system; Appendix III (species protected in at least one country and that country has asked other members for help in controlling trade).

Besides that, international NGOs too are set up to help curb illegal wildlife trafficking. Among them is TRAFFIC, an organisation created especially to monitor trade in wildlife. TRAFFIC is founded by WWF, and “works to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature” (Dunn, 2010).

### *Wildlife Trafficking in Malaysia*

Malaysia is a country with high biodiversity and this makes it a hotspot for wildlife trafficking. A lot of species in our country are smuggled out for instance owls, pangolins and lizards to be part of exotic menus; this has made some of the animal to be listed as endangered. Other animals like tigers on the other hand, are estimated to be reduced up to 80% of the current population in 50 years' time, based on reports (Rosmidzatul, 2009). Gratwicke et al. (2008) mentioned that press reports in Malaysia (besides Vietnam and China) have pointed out the widespread occurrence of illegal markets for tiger meat.

Malaysia, besides being a location for illegal hunting is listed along with the Philippines, the United States of America (USA) and Singapore by TRAFFIC as a hub for international wildlife trafficking (MNS, 2009). For example, at the end of 2009, Hong Kong customs had apprehended a container from Malaysia which had ivory from



Nigeria; this container was labelled as “white wood” (Abang, 2011). Besides that, it is said that Malaysia is a key hub for the illegal trade of Tokay geckos (taken as pets or used in traditional Chinese medicines) (Caillabet, 2011). Caillabet (2011) also stated that in recent time, messages circulating in blogs, forum, newspapers and amongst wildlife dealers (particularly in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines) discussed with conviction of the consumption of Tokay gecko parts as a cure for HIV and cancer. Comments left on advertisements websites implied that these geckos are imported to Malaysia from all over South East Asia, to fulfil the demands. Other than geckos, almost a thousand Madagascan tortoises were found veiled in baggage at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in 2010, a sign of the escalating local pet trade and an example of goods being shipped in specifically for the Malaysian market (Heng, 2011).

For pangolins, Malaysia is the centre for collection and distribution. When the supplies in Thailand diminished, pangolins were brought in from Aceh, Indonesia. These pangolins then pass through Malaysia to be finally sent to China. Traffickers from Sabah send the captured pangolins to Peninsular Malaysia, also to be trucked out (Hays, 2011).

Native wildlife like tiger, Orang Utan, bears and so on is also trafficked out of Malaysia. It is reported that Orang Asli or aboriginal people, who dwell deep in the country’s rain forests, are involved in the illegal hunting and trade of wildlife, for example in the Belum-Temengor Forest Complex (BTFC) (Or & Tang, 2011). The Deputy Director of the CITES unit at the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia (PERHILITAN) has stated that poachers have networks and that they engage the assistance of paid Orang Asli to guide them during their hunts (Pereira, Loh & Bonfiglio, 2002). Or and Tang (2011) mention in their writing the detainment of an Orang Asli (together with a local Chinese) for being in possession of almost 70 frozen common palm civets (*Paradoxurus hermaphrodites*) in his home in Johor. According to a top official in PERHILITAN, Orang Asli are exploited by middlemen to hunt and capture wildlife; this is due to their skill in tracking wildlife routes and resting places which will boost the probability of killing an animal (Or & Tang, 2011).

Also in the BTFC, foreign poachers also operate, in large groups averaging 12 to 20 people and said to remain in the forest for between 30 to 45 days at a time. In the year 2009, a joint enforcement initiative between Malaysia, TRAFFIC and local enforcement agencies, resulted in a surprise attack on a foreigners’ camp where four Thai nationals escaped but an accomplice was subsequently arrested with six sacks of agarwood and Sunda Pangolin scales (Or & Tang, 2011).

In November 2003, Malaysia was entangled in a smuggling scandal involving western lowland gorillas, a critically endangered species. Traffickers had used Nigeria's University of Ibadan Zoological Gardens as a front to smuggle four infants, snatched from the forest in Cameroon, to Malaysia's Taiping Zoo (Christy, 2010).

In a more recent case The Straits Times (2015) reported on 6<sup>th</sup> August of the rampant illegal trade of wildlife in Chinese medicine shops in a number of big cities in Malaysia (example Kuala Lumpur, George Town and Kuching). Products available include from endangered and protected species like the Saiga antelope. Other products are snake and bear gall bladder and porcupine bezoar stones. Besides that, in the same month, an arrest made under the Ops Taring III was reported by TRAFFIC (2015). This special operation is a government-led crackdown on illegal wildlife trade using the social media. This arrest came about when one of the four men caught advertised two juvenile Orang Utans for sale through a social media page used by a surreptitious group

to trade exotic wildlife online. PERHILITAN said the operation leading to the arrest had been a joint effort between its cybercrime division, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, CyberSecurity Malaysia and Interpol, with supporting information from the public. TRAFFIC (2015) also mentioned the arrest and subsequent prosecution of 7 other online wildlife traffickers March, who had in their possession protected animals like bear cub, fox and slow loris.

Conservationists such as Chris Shepherd, the Deputy Regional Director of TRAFFIC South East Asia commented that Malaysia deeply lacks research on the local wildlife population and hence faced the difficulty of determining how much effort should be channelled towards their protection (Pereira, Loh & Bonfiglio, 2002). He also states that the Asiatic and Sun bears are already given the “vulnerable” status and confirmed that the latter is being killed in Malaysia for local consumption and smuggling (Maria, 2012).

### *Wildlife Trafficking in Thailand*

Gray (2012) mentioned that conservations groups allege that one of Southeast Asia’s biggest tiger dealers is a Mrs. Daoreung Chaimas from Thailand. Unfortunately, she has evaded prosecution due to her influential husband, a police officer. In the same report, Gary (2012) revealed information shared by Thai and foreign enforcement agents about a key Thai smuggler who traffics rhino horns, ivory and tiger parts to China, as he has a gamut of law enforcement officers in his pocket to turn a blind eye to his illegal activities.

In 2011, about 100 endangered pangolins (worth about \$ 32,000) were rescued by Thailand authorities and the Customs Department Director-General Prasong Poontaneat believes the animals could have originated from Malaysia or Indonesia, and were en route to be sold and eaten in Vietnam or China (Huffington Post, 2011).

Researchers Nijman and Shepherd (2007) conducted surveys in Bangkok’s Chatuchak market in 2006 and 2007 and discovered a noteworthy trade in non-native CITES-listed freshwater turtles and tortoises (from different regions of the world and many were threatened with extinction) to be used as pets. Many of the customers were Thai but a significant number were retailers from neighbouring countries. Both Nijman and Shepherd conducted further research on turtles and tortoises and in 2008 reported about the trade of rare tortoise species from Bangkok to Malaysia and Indonesia (Shepherd & Nijman, 2008). Also in the same report, a number of incidents in the Chatuchak market were reported, as seen and noted by TRAFFIC researchers. For instance, buyers from Malaysia were spotted purchasing Radiated Tortoises (*Astrochelys radiata*) allegedly procured from Madagascar, to be sold back in Kuala Lumpur. In another incident, a dealer explained how turtles and tortoises are smuggled out of Bangkok, and that he gets buyers from Malaysia, Singapore and Japan. It is said a dealer from Petaling Jaya, Selangor (Malaysia) goes three weeks once to Bangkok to purchase turtles and tortoises (Shepherd & Nijman, 2008).

In 2010, Nijman and Shepherd published a report on the international trade in dendrobatid frogs, and Thailand is said to import the animals from Central Asian suppliers, in particular Kazakhstan whereby according to Thailand’s import records, all specimens from Kazakhstan were first exported to Lebanon first (Nijman & Shepherd, 2010). Based on the findings above, it can be seen that Thailand has become a significant importer of amphibians and reptiles with increase in the volume imported

(Nijman & Shepherd, 2011). It was stated that a total of individuals of 169 species of reptiles and amphibians (including 27 globally threatened species) were imported into Thailand in the years 1990–2007, according to the data in the WCMC-CITES database (Nijman & Shepherd, 2011).

Besides live animals, Thailand is quite notorious for its ivory trade. According to an undercover survey in Bangkok from January 2013 till May 2014 by TRAFFIC, there is a significant increase in the availability of ivory products (i.e. from 5,865 items to 14,512 items) and also in the number of shops selling ivory (from 61 to 120) (WWF, 2014). Thailand is said to have the biggest unregulated ivory market in the world and is mostly fuelled by smuggled ivory poached from African elephants (WWF, 2015).

## **Responsible Parties/Bodies and Stakeholders to Fight against Wildlife Trafficking**

### *Government Agencies*

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (2014) provide support to Asian consumer nations' government and non-government partners in public awareness and demand-reduction campaigns. As stated by the Director of the Service, Dan Ashe, to educate and inform US consumers on wildlife trafficking they have partnered with NGOs on a long-running "Buyer Beware" campaign, assigned law enforcement officers to present outreach programs at the local, state and national levels and, used airport billboards and social media to engage the public (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2014).

In a program at the Lower Mekong Basin, with target countries of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, demand reduction campaigns will be held. Asia's Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking (ARREST) will use its extensive media and advertising resources to support campaigns in those countries in an effort to eliminate the consumption of protected wildlife; the program will be expanded where monitoring shows a positive outcome to the campaigns (Duffy & Humphreys, 2014).

Shepherd (2014) has stated that the Malaysian government has begun working with the USA government to tackle wildlife crime through awareness programs for judges and prosecutors in Malaysia. He further stated both countries are supportive of the ASEAN-Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) whereby Malaysian frontline staffs together with others in the region are receiving information and training.

As a follow up to the London Declaration, Malaysia has prepared a self-assessment report of the progress on commitments agreed, presented in the Kasane Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2015 (Kasane Report, 2015). Among the actions taken since February 2014 are: 1) Malaysia has continued the efforts to eradicate the market for illegal wildlife products through the enforcement of International Trade In Endangered Species Act 2008 [Act 686], Wildlife Conservation Act 2010 [Act 716], Sarawak Wild Life Protection Ordinance 1998 and Sabah Wildlife Conservation Enactment 1997; 2) awareness events such as "World Orang Utan Day" were organised; 3) to prohibit trade in elephant ivory, agencies in Malaysia have recruited the help of CITES specialist in conducting DNA samplings on seized ivory; 4) enforce strict wildlife tagging upon entry to the country. In an effort to strengthen and increase public awareness, Malaysia will among others: 1) organise and collaborate with NGOs and public; 2) organise more awareness programs for both local and international consumers, and also for local hunters on the sustainable use of wildlife resources and on wildlife crime; 3) increase number of reporting and awareness articles in local media

(newspaper, television, radio etc.); 4) use awareness posters (to be displayed at strategic entry points) to portray illicit wildlife trade as a serious crime. To make sure awareness programs reach all levels of the public (school goers, activists, animal lovers etc.), collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and NGO's like Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers (MYCAT), WWF and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) will be carried out.

#### *Non-governmental Organisation*

The symposium, International Wildlife Trafficking: Solutions to a Global Crisis was held in London in February 2014. Among the issues discussed was on creating awareness. Heather Sohl of WWF, UK mentioned that from 2012, WWF and TRAFFIC carried out a global campaign to elevate the political profile of the wildlife trafficking issue (Sohl, 2014).

As a step in TRAFFIC's demand reduction program, a consumer research was conducted in Vietnam on consumption of rhino horn, and efforts have already begun to engage identified consumer groups by awareness raising work with an approach focused on behaviour change (Doak, 2014). WildAid worked closely with their media partners to broadcast the campaign messages on sharks via television and video-boards in public transportation areas and university campuses in China (Knights, 2014). Working with Save the Elephants, WildAid launched a three-year campaign in 2013 whereby in 2014, they will proceed with building momentum through creation of new messages and extensive street-level and social media campaigns (Knights, 2014).

IFAW employs behaviour change communication strategies to address the supply and demand of ivory in China whereby consumer will be motivated to reject ivory consumption and the ad campaign reduced the percentage from 54% to 26% the segment of China's population which are thought to be most likely to buy ivory (Ge Gabriel, 2014). TRAFFIC has done a lot campaigns among which are poster campaigns and text message campaigns in Vietnam on rhino horn (Smith, 2013). Lin (2005) has stated that the focus of 2000–2004 Wildlife Trade Campaign by WWF in Thailand was to reduce demand for wildlife products such as tourist favourite ivory items. Other campaigns are The Humane Society's "Don't Buy Wild" and series of advert by WildAid featuring celebrities such as Yao Ming on "If the buying stops, the killing can too" (Duffy & Humpreys, 2014).

A series of photographs highlighting illegal wildlife trade was displayed in the city of Shanghai in the underground rail network; the photos were taken by leading wildlife photographers and focuses on endangered species traded items like elephant ivory, rhino horn, skins, fins, flowers and so on (UNEP, 2013). A film called Elephant in the Room, with the tagline "when we stop buying, they stop dying", focusing on illegally sources ivory, will be displayed too in Shanghai, at the main city square; this film was produced in partnership with CITES (UNEP, 2013).

In Malaysia, TRAFFIC has carried out a campaign involving taxi drivers and specially designed car stickers (TRAFFIC, 2014a) which call on passengers to report on suspicious and illegal trade in wildlife to the Wildlife Crime Hotline. Another project by TRAFFIC is the Wildlife Witness app whereby besides getting information on threatened species, users can report suspected illegal wildlife trade in South East Asia (TRAFFIC, 2014b).

In February 2007, a campaign called “Sold Out” was launched by the NGO PeunPa to end illegal wildlife trade, especially since the Chatuchak market in Bangkok is recognised as a major trade hub for unlawfully procured wildlife (Shepherd & Nijman, 2008).

*Others (Scientists, Business Corporations, Celebrities and Public)*

Besides government agencies and NGOs, other sections of the public also contribute and do their part to eradicate wildlife trafficking. Among them are scientists or researchers and academicians. For example, researchers from the University of Maryland, USA, has successfully implemented an anti-poaching programme which uses analytical technology (which can predict the movement of the animal and also poachers) in South Africa, using their Falcon Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) (Bergen et al., 2013). Bergen et al. (2013) have suggested that more advanced drones or UAV should be used widely, which can operate at a longer time frame and higher altitude, thus can increase the potential to identify shipment points, trafficking routes and also middlemen. In a different kind of research, an internet monitoring system was implemented to track online trade of invasive species; refining the search parameters allowed the system to also monitor Internet sales of CITES-listed species (Hansen et al., 2012). More recently an automated digital surveillance system was developed to monitor reports on illegally traded wildlife and wildlife products; it is a free tool and displays real-time reports with interactive visualisation and is available at <http://www.healthmap.org/wildlifetrade> (Hansen et al., 2012). Similar systems are also available like the Law Enforcement Management Information System (LEMIS) tracker and the Tiger Tracker (both created by WWF in partnership with TRAFFIC) (Hansen et al., 2012). Advancement in the genetic field has helped in identifying the origin of trafficked wildlife. As stated by Nuwer (2011), DNA used in wildlife forensics can assist to identify the victims (bred in captivity or captured in the wild, as well as its species, origin, and source population) and the criminal. Nuwer (2011) mentioned about a genetics scientist, Ashwin Naidu from the University of Arizona, USA, who plans to set up a dedicated wildlife forensics service unit in the future; at the moment he is building a forensic database for mountain lions in Arizona. To trace ivory origins, researchers have created a large genetic database from 1,500 individual animals from all over Africa, and have used it to determine the origin of seized ivory samples (representing up to 60% of large seizures in recent years) (Nuwer 2015). Most were determined to originate from two key areas that are Tanzania and northern Mozambique, or the West Africa nexus where Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Cameroon and Central African Republic converge.

Looking at corporations or companies contribution, Google is funding a WWF project which uses drones to protect elephants and rhinoceros in Africa (Bergen et al., 2013). It is said the use of drones are encouraged as it is a cheaper alternative for surveillance purposes and can access difficult to reach remote locations (Bergen et al., 2013). DNA codes can be stored in a database and be referred to compare with unidentified samples. Bittel (2015) has reported that TRAFFIC has requested online transaction and courier companies, and social media companies to join the fight to stop wildlife trafficking. This is because TRAFFIC has been monitoring the web since 2006 to hunt for wildlife dealers. For example in China alone, about 50,000 illegal wildlife advertisements were posted online (in May 2012). As such, in June 2012, 15 of China's

leading e-commerce sellers (including Alibaba, Taobao and Tencent) signed a zero-tolerance declaration with TRAFFIC, China's delegation of CITES and the National Forest Police Bureau to smother illicit online wildlife trade; in 2015, 17 courier companies like FedEx and DHL also signed a zero-tolerance pledge (Bittel, 2015).

The public too can play their part in the fight against wildlife trafficking. For instance, in Sabah, members of the public who noticed a man marketing and selling wildlife via Facebook, informed the authorities and had him arrested. The man was found to possess a live Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), a protected species under the Wildlife Conservation Enactment 1997 (Lajiun, 2015).

Celebrities are usually known to support a movement or cause which in turn encourages their fans to do the same. This is agreed by Tournier (2015) who stated that influential individuals can increase the impact of awareness initiatives due to their ability to influence wide groups of individuals and affect their behaviour pattern. For example, film star Li Bingbing from China has pressed for bigger effort by governments and consumers to combat illegal wildlife trade (UNEP, 2013). She paid a visit to Kenya and talked about the survival of elephants and rhinos which is threatened due to poaching.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This research is based on three theories. The first is Environmental Communication Theory. According to Meisner (2014), in Robert Cox's book titled Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere, Cox had stated that environmental communication is "the pragmatic and constitutive vehicle for our understanding of the environment as well as our relationships to the natural world; it is the symbolic medium that we use in constructing environmental problems and negotiating society's different responses to them". Looking at pragmatism, examples are advocacy campaigns through which it is possible to bring attention to environmental problems or encourage participation whereas the constitutive section assist people to grasp environmental issues as well as help to gain knowledge (Marciano, 2011). Milstein (2009) has stated that environmental communication, besides being a field within the communication discipline is also one that cuts across disciplines. Furthermore Milstein (2009) mentioned that the topical focus on communication and human relations with the environment unites the research and theory within this field; scholars in the environmental communication field are specifically interested in the ways people communicate about the natural world as they have faith that such communication has far-reaching effects especially at this time whereby there are many human-caused environmental crises, for instance, the environmental issue at the focus of this study, wildlife trafficking. Robert Cox has listed seven major areas of study for environmental communication (Cox, 2010) and those that are in relevance to this study are media and environmental journalism, public participation in environmental decision making, social marketing and advocacy campaigns, environmental collaboration and conflict resolution, and risk communication. Thus through this study, it will be determined if the Malaysian and Thailand government agencies and NGOs are cooperating on creating awareness on wildlife trafficking, what are the strategies applied and the challenges faced.

Environmental advocacy campaign will also be looked into. Marciano (2011, as quoted from Cox, 2006) mentioned that environmental advocacy campaigns are one of

the least developed fields of environmental communication, however after Cox's book was published the number went up. It was stated that Cox went on to say that the "advocacy campaigns rely on communication to persuade key decision to act on certain objectives – from campaigns that mobilize the public to protect wilderness area, halt a waste dump, or raise the fuel efficiency on cars and SUV's, to corporate accountability campaigns to persuade business to abide by strict environmental standards" (Marciano, 2011, as quoted from Cox, 2006). Advocacy campaigns most commonly look into on the change of attitude and/or behaviour by changing external conditions such as policies and nature or society, and the campaigns do not have specific formulae to be followed instead it depends on the target, the issue and the objectives (Marciano, 2011). As such, for this research, the campaigns carried out by Malaysian and Thailand government agencies and NGOs on creating awareness on wildlife trafficking will be studied, based on the environmental advocacy campaign theory.

In communication, framing is involved in defining how news media coverage can play a part in moulding public opinion; on the most basic level, framing is stated as being the combination of words that from a sentence, phrase or story that eventually gives a message to its recipient whereby this message is framed in some way (Cissel, 2012). It was stated by de Vreese (2005) that the media may influentially shape public opinion through framing events and issues in a certain way, and framing involves a communication source presenting and defining an issue. Numerous researchers have listed and/or suggested framing mechanism to identify and measure news frames. The most comprehensive one consist of headlines, subheads, photos, photo captions, leads, source selection, quotes selection, pull quotes, logos, statistic and charts, and concluding statements and paragraph (de Vreese, 2005 as quoted from Tankard, 2001). The framing theory therefore will be used to gauge the media reporting on campaigns by Malaysian and Thailand government agencies and NGOs on creating awareness on wildlife trafficking.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Three NGOs from Malaysia will be studied in this research that is TRAFFIC, WWF and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). All three NGOs are concerned about the welfare of wildlife and more importantly one of their core mission and specialization is using appropriate communication means like campaigns to reach and instil awareness amongst the public, and also in cooperating with government agencies, especially in regards to policies (TRAFFIC, 2014c; WCS, 2014; WWF-Malaysia, 2014).

Looking at Thailand, two NGOs will be looked into that is Freeland and Wildlife Friends Foundations Thailand. Both NGOs work towards reducing wildlife trafficking and their activities include public awareness campaigns and cooperating with government agencies (Freeland, 2014; Wildlife Friends Foundations Thailand, 2014). Moreover, Freeland coordinates the international counter-trafficking alliance ARREST, Asia's Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking.

Both the Malaysian and Thailand government agency in charge of wildlife trafficking issues will be looked into too, that is the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP), under the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry, Malaysia, and Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNPWPC) under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand. Also

included is the ASEAN-WEN which is the regional intergovernmental law-enforcement network designed to combat the illegal wildlife trade (ASEAN-WEN, 2014).

This research employs focus group discussion and in-depth interviews as main methods. Focus group discussion will include officials from the government agencies, officers from NGOs and members of the public. It aims to explore opinions and feedback from the participants which could improve future campaigns. Next, in-depth interview method will be conducted with the governmental officials and NGOs to explore deeper on the information gathered in focus group.

Simultaneously, is to understand the campaign strategies, examine cooperation and analyse challenges faced by Malaysian and Thailand government agencies and NGOs. The interviews will be held during the observation, whereby I will take part in the campaigns run by both the government agencies and NGOs. Lastly, content analysis of newspapers (will be identified later) will be carried out. The purpose is to explore how wildlife trafficking issues are seen from the eyes of the media. Also it aims to triangulate the information gathered from the first three methods with what the media perceive about wildlife trafficking and the activities done by the government agencies and NGOs.

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