



Demand Reduction Campaigning

Snapshot, Observations and Suggested Next Steps

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Introduction

Based on a number of blogs I have written recently in relation to demand reduction, I feel we are now at a point that calls for a ‘snapshot’ document on my observations of what has been happening in Viet Nam and suggestions for next steps in the evolution of demand reduction campaigns.

In 2015 we have seen some advances in demand reduction campaigning, when it comes to rhino horn use in Viet Nam. An increasing number of organisation have **realised the need to move away from rational argument (rhino horn is the same as fingernails, rhino horn can’t cure cancer) and empathy (‘extinction is forever’ type adverts)**. Instead the **users of rhino horn are presented with their self-image (‘this is about people like me’)** or initiatives involving people to whom the main user groups genuinely aspire.



As mentioned in a recent blog: <http://breakingthebrand.org/farmed-rhino-horn-not-seen-as-substitute-product/> since launching Breaking The Brand in 2013, we have seen only four campaigns that specifically target the users of genuine, wild rhino horn in Viet Nam in a way that could resonate with them. This is progress, but it has been glacially slow. As people who say we care about rhinos we need to **make a decision to get smarter faster if we really want to save these animals** from extinction in the wild.

Just as the likes of Colin Bell et al have been working on an integrated strategy for the rhino range countries, the time for the current piecemeal approach on the demand side has passed. There is an **increasing desire to better define what demand reduction is and is not**; and design more relevant and useful measures of success: <http://breakingthebrand.org/how-to-elicite-and-measure-behaviour-that-people-dont-easily-admit-to/> This is not only critical for the rhino, but is also desperately needed for elephants, pangolin etc.

Rhinos – The Next 12 Months

As highlighted in a January 2015 blog, **one of the final things to stand in the way of the pro-trade lobby is a successful demand reduction approach** to stop rhino poaching: <http://breakingthebrand.org/poor-quality-demand-reduction-campaigns-and-strategies-will-provide-ammunition-for-pro-trade-lobby-groups/>

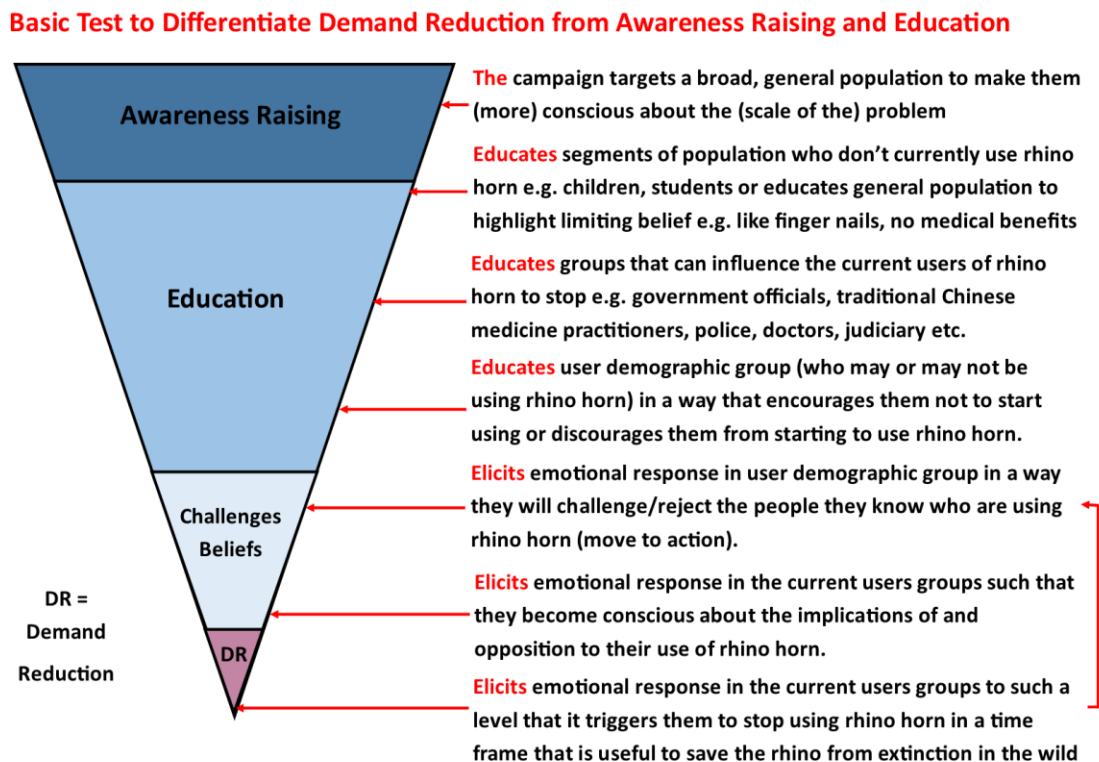
In the run-up to the presentation of an integrated rhino poaching strategy dubbed “The Plan” (1st October 2015, Cape Town), Pelham Jones, chairman of the Private Rhino Owners Association (PROA) of South Africa stated "Despite billions being spent on an annual basis to collapse the illegal demand, it is not working." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lj6NoXq43sI> Statements such as this have been a constant from the pro-trade people over the last year. Yet his quoted numbers are pure fantasy; BTB, for instance, has spent a grand total of US\$41,000 on our Viet Nam adverts to-date.

At present, conservationists are still providing pro-trade people with the ammunition for such outrageous claims. **Given demand reduction is 'in' with donors, too many awareness raising and education strategies are being packaged and sold to the public as demand reduction and they are not.** If this is not recognised and stopped immediately, it has the potential to provide the pro-trade lobby with 'evidence' that demand reduction strategies haven't worked to save the rhino. This not only ruins the strategy for the rhino but also all the other wildlife issues to which it can be applied.

Demand Reduction Campaigns vs. Education Campaigns vs. Awareness Raising Campaigns

Over the last 12 months BTB has been speaking to a number of people about this issue and how we start to get some shared agreement on what constitutes an awareness raising campaign vs. an education campaign vs. a demand reduction campaign; together with how best to collaborate to develop this further.

As a first step BTB came up with a simple test to get people talking:



We discussed this in more detail, using rhino horn as a case study, on page 22 of BTB's second annual report <http://breakingthebrand.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Breaking-The-Brand-Project-Second-Annual-Report.pdf> published April 2015. Again, this offers a starting point to generate ideas.

When a demand reduction campaign is created the conservation body needs to ask itself questions such as:

1. Have we researched the user groups and have we elicited from the current users their motivations to stop buying/consuming the product?

2. Have we inadvertently created a campaign that plays to our own values, but won't work for the users of the wildlife 'product' and so is unlikely to reduce the demand?

3. Have we created a campaign that will appeal to our donors' values and gives us a better chance of future donations rather than something that will work with the users of the wildlife 'product' and so is unlikely to reduce the demand?

For those who like to read more on this a good introduction is an article in **Conservation Biology: Conservation Means Behaviour, 2011 (P. Wesley Schultz)**. The article highlights psychological studies that have shown consistently that increasing knowledge alone, through awareness raising and education, does not lead to a change in behaviour.

The Need for Ongoing Awareness-Raising and Education

Awareness-raising and education campaigns are critical to an integrated strategy to ensure that once demand is reduced that the change is a sustainable change; ensuring that future generations and people in other emerging economies (e.g. Cambodia, Myanmar) don't become the consumers of the future.

The hazard of not having an integrated plan is highlighted with the re-emergence of fur in fashion.

Campaign 1980s



Recent Campaign given reemergence of fur



What can we learn from this?:

1. The Lynx campaign of the mid 1980s, in just a couple of years, changed the culture of wearing fur in several countries.

2. This demand reduction campaign was exclusively targeted at the customers; there were no parallel campaigns targeting school children (and calling themselves demand reduction) regarding wearing fur!
3. Saying that, because there hasn't been an integrated approach a lack of education has meant that fur has re-emerged in recent years in the countries that shunned it after the 1980s campaign.
4. One possible reason for this re-emergence is that mainstream, larger conservation organisations, who have the resources, have not taken up this type of campaigning. They are much more likely to create initiatives that 'play it safe' and don't risk upsetting their donors sensitivities and the organisation brand. With the anti-fur campaign is is Respect for Animals (evolving from Lynx) a small organisation that has created recent campaigns to tackle the re-emerging demand for fur.

Not Only Smarter, But Also More Emotionally Resilient



As demand reduction needs to become a key conservation policy it is critical that the **conservation sector reflects on its overly sensitive approach and accepts that people change their behaviour based on intrinsic and extrinsic factors.**

Currently, there is too strong a belief in moving people to 'higher values' using intrinsic motivation only. This ignores the fact that many

people rewrite their belief system in response to extrinsic motivations for change. **Corporations have been triggering peoples fear and anxiety to get them to buy things for decades. The mechanism for doing this can also trigger people to stop buying** and so can be applied to demand for wildlife 'products'. To read more on this, check out a blog from December 2014:

<http://breakingthebrand.org/by-harnessing-humans-reptilian-brain-we-have-a-chance-to-save-the-rhino/>

As a result of basic human behaviour, we must accept that sometimes people are intrinsically motivated and design campaigns for them and in other circumstances extrinsic motivation will work better or faster and have additional campaigns for this. This was covered in a July 2015 blog, exploring how discomfort can be a useful strategy to trigger behaviour change:

<http://breakingthebrand.org/discomfort-triggers-behaviour-change/>

The belief that all messages should be positive, shouldn't upset people, that people only learn and change when they feel positive or are having fun and are engaged is limiting. **This mindset is pervasive; it is naïve and just plain wrong.** If this were true, then from a media perspective why don't anti-smoking adverts show happy people playing with their children and saying "I have much more energy to play with my kids because I don't smoke" or road safety adverts with drivers saying "Home again safe and sound because I don't drink and drive". Do you think such adverts would reduce the smoking rate or the incidences of drinking and driving? Do you think such adverts would have worked? No, me neither. **The reality is, for many issues as human we need to feel discomfort to trigger us into action to do something different.** This is used in the media to great effect.



Since the launch of our campaigns we have had people in the rhino conservation space tell us what we do is ‘too hard hitting’, ‘racist’ and ‘would offend our donors’. From our perspective our adverts simply target the primary users of rhino horn in a way that triggers their motivation to stop.

So in addition to getting smarter quicker, **the conservation sector and donors need to become more emotionally resilient to**

tackle the many users of wildlife products. If they remain overly sensitive to even the most minimally challenging messages this will undermine the success of the demand reduction approach; it is already doing so.

Supply Drives Demand (in Addition to Demand Driving Supply)

The determination, focus and resources of the pro-trade group means that an integrated and comprehensive strategy to tackle the desire to supply is also required; certainly in the case of the rhino. This desire to supply has:

1. Undermined demand reduction efforts
2. Slowed enforcement based success in Viet Nam <http://breakingthebrand.org/trade-legalisation-debate-the-new-root-cause-of-rhino-poaching/>
3. Created additional demand by designing new uses for rhino horn: <http://breakingthebrand.org/desire-to-supply-rhino-horn-drives-manufacture-of-demand/>
4. Further emboldened the wildlife traffickers: <http://breakingthebrand.org/conservation-vs-wildlife-traffickers-who-do-you-think-will-win-the-war-in-wildlife-crime/>

Demand reduction initiatives cannot be considered without looking at the supply side. For a product with proven demand and which has luxury status increasing supply will either drive down prices and hence increase demand or it will lead to a market split into a genuine, high-priced article (‘wild rhino horn’, with proof attached, such as the ears/tail from the animal that was killed to obtain it) and an ‘aspirational substitute’ (currently water buffalo horn from China, if trade is legalised this role will be played by farmed rhino horn). While the demand exists, poaching will continue.

The result is increased demand, increased exploitation and commoditisation of wildlife. This approach is completely in line with the dominant neoliberal model of ‘free-market’ capitalism, where every market is by definition a good market and every product or service brought into the market increases GDP and therefore ‘wealth’. We cannot successfully combat the pro-trade agenda or demand for rhino horn without acknowledging the role played by neoliberal thinking, which is pervasive even in the conservation sector.

In relation to the demand for illegal wildlife products it does not matter much if the market is legal or not. If consumers want the products and can get access to them, then increasing supply will increase demand. Suddenly new uses will be found for the product – as we saw recently with Pembient’s push to sell synthetic rhino horn as a luxury cosmetic product. Or shark fin soup will become a ‘must have’ for any

wedding reception of the aspirational class. Traffickers have proven themselves to be inventive not just in their ability to corrupt officials and finding ways to smuggle the products, but they also have proven their ability to manufacture demand to further enrich themselves.

Conservation Collaborating With Social Science

Rightly or wrongly, in the end, only by changing peoples' behaviour in both the range and demand countries, and to a degree in the conservation sector, will we save the world's wildlife and environments.

What is clear is that behaviour change for demand reduction is outside the current expertise of the conservation sector. The conservation sector needs to be more willing to collaborate with disciplines much better attuned to understanding and shaping consumer behaviour – cultural anthropology, social marketing, luxury brand marketing, social psychology and behavioural economics are the main disciplines we need to collaborate with.

A number of models describing and predicting human values/behavioural evolution have been developed over many years. These models are always approximations, but can – and do – provide useful insights; one such model Spiral Dynamics. How it can be applied to demand reduction is outlined in a January 2014 blog: <http://breakingthebrand.org/values-development-behaviour-change-and-conservation/> and in a March 2014 talk given to the Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA) Annual Conference <http://breakingthebrand.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ZAA-Talk-v2.pdf>

From Spiral Dynamics Model

Conservation Movement

- Based on GREEN values system (Empathy, Egalitarian, Caring)
- Support base is GREEN
- Donors are GREEN
- Donations are based on GREEN values
- Hence:
 - Focus is on empathy with the animal
 - Can't relate to motivation of users (ORANGE) or poachers (RED)
 - Not prepared to single out the primary users for fear of being seen as racist etc
 - Not prepared to engage in strategies that may alienate (cause discomfort in) the support and donor base. Political Correctness emerged with GREEN
- Result:
 - Money spent on strategies that don't impact or change the user



Rhino Horn Users

- Rhino Horn Customers Status Conscious = ORANGE
- Society in Viet Nam is in transition Confucian/Communist (BLUE) to Unregulated Capitalist (ORANGE+RED)
- Still different from Western ORANGE:
 - Male dominated
 - Peer Group oriented, not purely individualistic can't lose face by standing against group
 - GREEN fledgling
 - No cultural affinity with animals
- Result:
 - Conservation messages are ignored if they are GREEN
 - Law Enforcement messages are ignored, regressed from BLUE to RED
 - Can't go via wives/children – ignored
 - Influencers – They follow the likes of: Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, Richard Branson Bill Clinton (No women, no Asian men)



There are other models of behaviour change that have been used in designing demand reduction initiatives, for instance to reduce smoking rates and road deaths. There are a wealth of insights about what shapes consumer preferences and how people consume luxury goods. As a result of this Breaking The Brand cannot recommend strongly enough a close and targeted collaboration with social and behavioural scientists to create effective demand reduction campaigns.

Social Validation

Ideas spread through social validation. Initially, a new idea is created or promoted by a disruptor, who challenges the status quo. It is at this point that history is either made or defeated; demand reduction in conservation is at this point. These early adopters typically live on the fringe of the

mainstream social networks which harbour the status-quo belief system. Only if people from this mainstream come around to the new way of thinking and start spreading the new ideas into their networks can the idea become socially infectious. This is the so-called 'chasm' faced by any new idea or disruptive belief system.

The process that bridges the chasm is literally the social validation of people who can bridge the new idea into the existing networks that the disrupters don't have access to or have no credibility in. The people building these bridges typically incorporate the new idea into an existing (broader) belief system and thereby make it palatable to those who would otherwise reject it. Social status of the 'bridge builders' within the network is paramount to their ability to provide social validation and shift belief systems.

This process normally takes decades (see gay marriage or delay between 'Silent Spring' and adoption of environmental concerns in the mainstream), but we haven't got decades for the rhino. We need those who can bridge the chasm to become aware of their role in spreading the new ideas and drive adoption of a rhino conservation strategy that includes demand reduction measures worth the label.

Next Steps For Breaking The Brand

The Breaking The Brand team is delighted to be able to continue its work and collaboration, be it informally and formally, with a number of small and large conservation agencies. While our primary focus will continue to be designing and publishing demand reduction campaigns to tackle the demand for rhino horn, I am delighted to inform BTBs supporters that I have been offered an Honorary Research Fellowship at the Australian National University in the School of Archaeology & Anthropology. The subject of the research is: **How do current and historical cultures ascribe status to wildlife products and what turns them into luxury items?** I look forward to sharing my findings throughout the year ahead and hope that the work will provide useful insight into the further evolution of demand reduction campaigning.



These are the views of the writer:
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