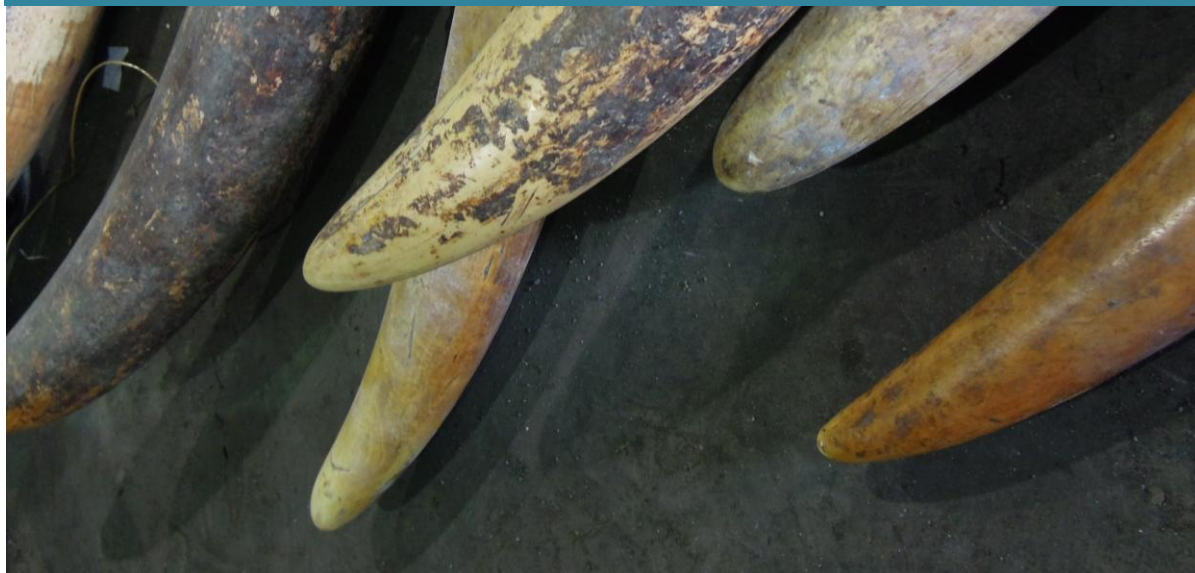


BRIEFING PAPER

An Assessment of Ivory Product Availability in Singapore



In 2012, TRAFFIC and WWF-Singapore initiated a study to determine the availability of ivory products in Singapore.

Ivory sales are legal in Singapore, provided it can be demonstrated the ivory is “pre-Convention”, that is it was acquired before the date Singapore joined the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) or pre-1990, when elephants became protected species in Singapore.

A summary of the findings appears below; the full results will be published later this year in the TRAFFIC Bulletin, as well as in the form of a report which will be made available to governments and other relevant stakeholders.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In total, 100 retail outlets of various types were surveyed in 2012 in 21 localities that were thought to be representative of the overall ivory trade in Singapore. The types of outlets where ivory was found for sale were: antiques, handicraft, jewellery and souvenir shops. Ivory products were most common in jewellery and antiques shops.

The number of surveyed retail outlets openly selling ivory products decreased from 55% in 2002 to 19% in 2012. In addition, the variety of ivory products decreased significantly in the same period. In 2002, 18 different types of products were observed, including chopsticks, letter holders and picture frames, compared to seven in 2012.

The quantity of different products had also decreased significantly: in 2002, a total of 8,121 ivory products were observed for sale, compared to just 365 in 2012.

All vendors reported that they were selling old stocks of worked ivory, and claimed the ivory was “pre-Convention ban”. They also claimed that ivory was no longer popular in Singapore and that the stocks were old and difficult to sell. One vendor claimed an ivory ornament to be “fake ivory” when it was in fact real ivory, and only one shop had labelled products as “ivory”.

Jewellery

Various types of jewellery were openly for sale in 17 (17%) outlets surveyed, and a wide range of different types and sizes of ornaments (ranging from less than 10 cm in height to over 30 cm in height) were found in six (6%) of the outlets surveyed. Ivory jewellery was usually displayed openly in glass tables or cases, with rings and pendants often stored in bowls. Most vendors stated that the ivory originated from Africa and was carved in China or Japan. Pendants were observed in the greatest quantity followed by bracelets, but necklaces were sold in the greatest number of outlets.

Ornaments

Four shops sold large numbers of ornaments (ranging from 10 pieces to 60 pieces), claimed to be imported from China, 20-30 years ago. The ornaments were usually kept in glass cases or found in the window displays of shops. Small ornaments (<10 cm in height) were often carvings of Chinese characters, children, animals of the Chinese zodiac, elephants, and Buddhas. Medium and large-sized ornaments were often intricate carvings of ivory Canton balls where a loose ball is carved into a large ivory sphere. However, like the large ornaments, medium-sized ornaments also consisted of carvings of Chinese goddesses or saints.

Other Products

Other ivory products included carved and uncarved tusks, snuff bottles, name seals, and a chess set. All vendors reported they were selling old stocks of worked ivory, and claimed the ivory was “pre-Convention ban” and imported from China, or in one case, Japan, 20-30 years ago, apparently with no new ivory entering the local market.

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