1	Reducing Demand for Overexploited Wildlife Products: Lessons from Systematic Reviews
2	from Outside Conservation Science

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#### Abstract

Conservationists have long sought to reduce consumer demand for products from 20 overexploited wildlife species. Health practitioners have also begun calling for reductions in 21 the wildlife trade to reduce pandemic risk. Most wildlife-focused demand reduction 22 campaigns have lacked rigorous evaluations and thus their impacts remain unknown. There 23 is thus an urgent need to review the evidence from beyond conservation science to inform 24 future demand-reduction efforts. We searched for systematic reviews of interventions that 25 aimed to reduce consumer demand for products that are harmful (e.g., cigarettes and illicit 26 drugs). In total, 41 systematic reviews were assessed, and their data extracted. 27 Mass-media campaigns and incentive programs were, on average, ineffective. While 28 advertising bans, social marketing, and location bans were promising, there was insufficient 29 robust evidence to draw firm conclusions. In contrast, the evidence for the effectiveness of 30 norm appeals and risk warnings was stronger, with some caveats. 31 Keywords: illegal wildlife trade  $\cdot$  demand reduction  $\cdot$  evidence-based interventions  $\cdot$ 32

<sup>32</sup> *Regulation* · negativitation · definited reduction · evidence-based interventions ·
 <sup>33</sup> overconsumption · biodiversity conservation · mass-media campaigns · social norms · fear
 <sup>34</sup> appeals · behaviour change · zoonoses

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# Introduction

The overexploitation of wild animals, plants, and fungi is a major driver of 38 biodiversity decline (Maxwell et al., 2016; Rosen & Smith, 2010). In addition to directly 39 depleting population numbers, overexploitation can affect the balance of predator and prey 40 species within food webs and diminish the productivity of important human food sources. 41 For example, the global shark-fin industry, driven primarily by Asian demand for shark-fin 42 soup (Dulvy et al., 2014), is an important cause of declining shark populations (S. Clarke 43 et al., 2007). Sharks play a crucial role in maintaining ecosystem health, and their 44 overexploitation dramatically restructures marine-life communities, which in turn, has been 45 linked to the collapse of fishing industries (Brierley, 2007; Myers et al., 2007). 46

A major driver of overexploitation is the wildlife trade, which comprises a diverse set 47 of actors, ranging from suppliers that hunt and transport products, to consumers who buy 48 and trade them through tourist markets, exotic pet forums, and other means. Consumer 49 demand for wildlife products such as rhino horn, pangolin scales, and bat meat 50 (Suwannarong & Schuler, 2016) can threaten biodiversity in complex ways. For example, 51 the international trade in wildlife can facilitate the global spread of infectious wildlife 52 diseases (Kolby, 2016) such as the amphibian chytrid fungus, which is spread through the 53 amphibian trade and has already caused more extinctions than any other pathogen in 54 recorded history (Scheele et al., 2019). 55

Beyond its alarming environmental impacts, the illegal and unethical aspects of the
wildlife trade can have devastating effects on human communities by accelerating
government corruption (Wittig, 2016) and militarising conservation responses (Crayne &
Haenlein, 2016; Duffy & Humphreys, 2016). The wildlife trade has likely contributed to the
emergence of several major human disease outbreaks, including at least two novel

<sup>61</sup> coronavirus outbreaks in the last two decades (Cyranoski, 2020). Virologists have
<sup>62</sup> consistently warned that the highest risk of virulent zoonotic spillovers comes from the
<sup>63</sup> mixing of taxonomically diverse species and increased human-animal interaction (Johnson
<sup>64</sup> et al., 2015, 2020) that are ubiquitous in the wildlife trade.

The traditional response to the overexploitation of wildlife has been to attempt to 65 reduce supply via international trade bans and regulations under the Convention on 66 International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Whilst there is some 67 evidence that trade bans can be effective when accompanied by other measures (Kasterine 68 & Lichtenstein, 2018), they can have adverse impacts. For example, trade bans can 69 increase demand among consumers who believe the resource may soon be unavailable. 70 driving price hikes that incentivise illegal poaching (e.g., bush meat and black rhinoceros; 71 Cronin et al., 2015; Leader-Williams, 2014). This can also occur when a product ban is 72 poorly enforced and demand is inelastic, which incentivises traders to supply markets 73 illegally and use force to control the market (Challender et al., 2019; Heltberg, 1999). 74

Given these limitations, conservationists increasingly want to complement supply-side 75 interventions with actions to reduce consumer demand such as public communications and 76 awareness-raising campaigns to counter the illegal wildlife trade (E. M. Wright et al., 77 2016). However, fundamental questions remain about which campaigns are the most 78 effective in reducing consumer demand for overexploited (also illegal or unethical) wildlife 79 products. Are awareness-raising campaigns effective for changing consumer behaviour? Are 80 positively framed messages more effective than negative ones? Can incentive provide 81 sustainable consumer behaviour change? Is social marketing a key to halting 82 overconsumption? Does banning location-based consumption, such as China's ban on 83 shark-fin soup at government banquets (Ng, 2013), reduce overall consumption, or merely 84 displace it? The present overview seeks to provide novel insight into these questions. 85

<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately, the evidence on the impact of interventions aiming to alter the <sup>87</sup> behaviour of wildlife consumers is largely anecdotal or based on weak research designs with

a high risk of bias, such as pre-post studies without control comparisons. A recent review 88 by Veríssimo and Wan (2019) identified 236 demand-reduction campaigns aimed at wildlife 89 products but found only five that reported direct changes in consumer behaviour. 90 Furthermore, only two campaigns reported behavioural outcomes that allowed estimates of 91 variability and effect sizes. The authors concluded the absence of robust evaluations 92 precluded meaningful recommendations to inform future action. There is urgent need for 93 empirical evidence to increase the likelihood that future demand-reduction campaigns are 94 effective and efficient, and do not have counterproductive effects. 95

To fill this knowledge gap, we examine the broader literature on "what works" in 96 reducing consumer demand for products that are harmful to health, society, or the 97 environment. Since most demand-reduction campaigns are intended to counter behaviours 98 that cause such harms, we confined our search criteria to interventions that target products 99 considered harmful (e.g., alcohol, cigarettes, unhealthy foods). This multidisciplinary 100 approach is important for two primary reasons. First, compared to conservation, greater 101 resources have been devoted to testing behaviour-change interventions to reduce harmful 102 consumer demand in health, criminology, and education (Kidd, Bekessy, & Garrard, 2019b; 103 Leigh, 2018; Pynegar et al., 2019). Consequently, there is more robust evidence on the 104 effectiveness of interventions targeting harmful consumer demand in disciplines other than 105 conservation. Second, there is little reason to suggest this situation is likely to change. 106 Until conservation organisations adopt experimental (or robust quasi-experimental) designs 107 to test behaviour-change interventions (Bayliss et al., 2016; Kidd, Bekessy, & Garrard, 108 2019a), it will be difficult to determine which strategies are effective, ineffective, or harmful. 109

Our aim was to synthesise evidence on demand-reduction interventions targeting products that may have parallels with the wildlife trade (i.e., sharing similar consumer motivations, such as the desire for recreation or social recognition; Table 1). We acknowledge that consumer dynamics of non-wildlife products will inevitably differ in ways that may limit the generalisability of the results to conservation (e.g., alcohol is cheap, accessible, and mostly legal, whereas rhino horn is expensive, harder to source, and often
illegal). However, conceptually similar underlying consumer motivations (Table 1) and
analogous approaches to demand-reduction campaigns provide a sufficient basis to estimate
the potential effectiveness of commonly used behavioural interventions.

The demand-reduction campaigns that are the subject of our review were primarily 119 designed to reduce demand for products that are harmful to the health of the user. While 120 many wildlife products carry considerable health risks (e.g., bush meats have been linked 121 to infectious diseases), we recognise that many others do not (e.g., ivory), which may thus 122 limit the generalisability of the conclusions drawn from our analysis pertaining to such 123 products. However, if we assume that people prioritise their own welfare over other issues, 124 then finding that a strategy is ineffective at reducing demand for a product that is harmful 125 to health suggests the same strategy will also be ineffective at reducing demand for 126 products that are non-harmful to health. Thus, our focus on products that are harmful to 127 health is justifiable as it may help determine the upper-bound for effectiveness of strategies 128 to reduce demand for wildlife products that are non-harmful to health. 129

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#### Methods and Results

We formed an advisory board of experts in health, psychology, social marketing, 131 economics, and conservation to inform our search strategy. The advisory board generated a 132 list of relevant terms to initiate the literature search (Supplementary Search Strategy and 133 Table S1). We began with a systematic search of the Cochrane Library, followed by a 134 systematic search of the Web of Science, PsychINFO, and Scopus platforms. We then 135 manually retrieved any additional citations either suggested by the advisory board or 136 identified by backwards citation searching from included studies. To provide a manageable 137 overview of the vast body of evidence, we imposed several eligibility criteria 138 (Supplementary Eligibility Criteria and Table S2). Chief amongst these was that we 139 limited our analysis to systematic reviews or meta-analyses of interventions to reduce 140

demand for a harmful product using quantitative data vis-à-vis intervention effectiveness
that were judged by the research team to be relevant to wildlife products and related
behaviours. The final list of included articles contained forty-one systematic reviews, of
which sixteen contained meta-analyses. Data were extracted from reviews using a
standardised form that collected information regarding the outcome indicators assessed,
results of any meta-analysis, study limitations, and a summary of the authors' conclusions
(Supplementary Data Extraction and Table S3).

Reviews were categorised into seven broadly defined intervention types: mass-media 148 campaigns, incentives, advertising bans and regulations, social-marketing campaigns, 149 location-based bans, norm appeals, and risk warnings (this taxonomy of intervention types 150 emerged whilst conducting the data screening and extraction, since they were common 151 approaches assessed by the systematic reviews). Reviews were assessed according to quality 152 (Supplementary Quality Assessment), with twelve rated as Quality A (no limitations 153 identified); thirteen as Quality B (one limitation identified); and sixteen as Quality C (two 154 or more limitations identified). We assessed reviewer agreement across each review-quality 155 criterion individually with a reliability analysis using Cohen's  $\kappa$  (Supplementary  $\kappa$ 156 Analysis). Mean percentage agreement was 88% and average  $\kappa = 0.63$  ( $\kappa > 0.6 =$ 157 substantial agreement; McHugh, 2012). Individual criteria with  $\kappa < 0.6$  were revisited for 158 discussion and reconciliation. Only one criterion (Supplementary  $\kappa$  Analysis) failed to meet 159 this benchmark ( $\kappa = 0.22$ ). Subsequently, four instances of disagreement were revisited and 160 some additional limitations were noted. The reconciliation process did not change the 161 overall review-quality ratings, as most disagreements related to low-quality reviews with 162 several other limitations. 163

Narrative summaries of each systematic review are provided next (for more detailed information, see Supplementary Table S3). Reviews under each intervention category are ordered by review quality, date, and name of first author. Number of studies included in each systematic review is denoted via k. When reviews provided information on experimental design of included studies, we provide this information using the following
abbreviations: RCT = Randomised control trial; ITS = Interrupted time series; NRSI =
Non-randomised studies of interventions; BA = Before/after; L = Longitudinal; Obs =
Observational.

## 172 Mass-Media Campaigns

This category included initiatives that used mass-media communication to persuade people to change their behaviour. A typical example was a campaign that ran advertisements at cinemas to challenge perceptions about smoking.

Nine systematic reviews focused on the impact of mass-media campaigns, mostly on 176 drug consumption (illicit drugs, alcohol, and tobacco). Review Quality A: 177 Carson-Chahhoud et al. (2017, k = 8, 7 RCT, 1 ITS) noted most (five of eight) studies 178 found no effect of mass-media campaigns on preventing youth smoking. However, they 179 concluded it would be unwise to draw firm conclusions due to inconsistent results and risk 180 of bias in study designs and methods. Mosdøl et al. (2017, k = 6, 5 RCT, 1 ITS) concluded 181 that their confidence in the impact of mass-media campaigns on multiple behaviours 182 (including tobacco and alcohol consumption) in ethnic minorities was very low because 183 most studies were of low quality. Allara et al. (2015, k = 19, 8 RCT) found no effect of 184 mass-media campaigns on illicit drug use in eight studies, evidence of beneficial effects in 185 four studies, and evidence of maladaptive effects in two studies. They concluded it is not 186 possible to draw general conclusions due to paucity and inconsistency of available evidence. 187 **Review Quality B:** Bala et al. (2017, k = 11, NRSI) concluded comprehensive tobacco 188 control programs may change smoking behaviours in adults, but noted evidence came from 189 a small number of very low quality studies. Trieu et al. (2017, k = 22, 4 RCT) found 190 population-level mass-media campaigns can reduce salt consumption, but higher-quality 191 studies showed smaller effect sizes and inconsistent results, so they concluded that 192 mass-media campaigns are likely ineffective. Werb et al. (2011, k = 11, 7 RCT, 4 Obs) 193

found only one of seven RCTs found evidence that public-service announcements reduce 194 illicit drug use and two found evidence that they increased usage. A meta-analysis of 195 eligible RCTs showed no significant effect. Observational studies revealed evidence of 196 beneficial and harmful effects. Review Quality C: Allen et al. (2015, k = 34, NRSI) 197 concluded there was strong evidence supporting use of mass-media campaigns to reduce 198 youth smoking. Durkin et al. (2012, k = 26, NRSI) concluded the effectiveness of 199 mass-media campaigns on reducing youth smoking depended on campaign reach, intensity, 200 duration, and messaging used—communicating negative health effects was most effective at 201 encouraging quitting. Snyder et al. (2004, k = 21, mostly NRSI) concluded that 202 mass-media health campaigns have only small measurable effects on tobacco and alcohol 203 consumption over the short term. 204

## 205 Incentives

These interventions inform participants that they will receive future benefits if they adopt a desired health behaviour (e.g., smoking cessation). Incentives included contests, competitions, incentive schemes, lotteries, raffles, and contingent payments. An example is the smoke-free class competition, which involves asking students to enter into a contract not to smoke for a set period and promises of prizes for classes that stay mostly (> 90%) smoke-free.

Three systematic reviews focused on the impact of incentive campaigns (e.g., contests 212 and lotteries) in smoking behaviours. Review Quality A: Corepal et al. (2018, k = 8, 213 RCT) concluded that incentives have a small impact on reducing smoking in children and 214 adolescents (5-18 years). Mantzari et al. (2015, k = 34, RCT) concluded that financial 215 incentives can be effective for smoking cessation for up to 18 months, but effects did not 216 persist beyond 3 months after their removal. Review Quality B: Hefler et al. (2017, k =217 8, 3 RCT) concluded the small number of studies suggested incentive programs did not 218 prevent smoking initiation. 219

## 220 Advertising Bans

This category includes bans or restrictions on advertising to promote the consumption of harmful products, such as cigarettes or alcohol. Bans could cover, for example, advertising on television, internet, or billboards. Another common example is legislation requiring cigarettes to be sold in plain-packaging to remove the colourful and attractive branding used in product promotion.

Six systematic reviews focused on the impact of advertising bans on cigarette and 226 alcohol consumption. Review Quality B: McNeill et al. (2017, k = 51, 1 RCT) concluded 227 that plain cigarette packaging may reduce consumption, noting that evidence was mostly 228 based on one large observational study in Australia (N = 700,000). Siegfried et al. (2014, k 229 = 4, 1 RCT, 3 ITS) concluded that the quality of evidence was too low to support a ban on 230 alcohol advertising. Review Quality C: Hughes et al. (2016, k = 4) concluded that there 231 is insufficient evidence from low-income countries to draw firm conclusions about the 232 impact of plain packaging on cigarette consumption. Moodie et al. (2012, k = 37, 2 RCT) 233 found the evidence for impact of plain packaging on cigarette consumption was mixed but 234 suggested it had a deterrent effect. Capella et al. (2008, k = 50) concluded that cigarette 235 advertising bans (both full or partial, e.g., only in broadcast media) did not have a 236 significant impact on cigarette consumption. Quentin et al. (2007, k = 24, NRSI) found in 237 10 of 24 studies that full-advertising bans had a significant effect on cigarette consumption, 238 but noted significant limitations in drawing conclusions from time-series data. 230

# 240 Social Marketing

Social marketing is broadly defined as the use of marketing techniques to achieve positive social ends (Carins & Rundle-Thiele, 2014). Although social-marketing campaigns can utilise mass-media, the approach differs from mass-media campaigns (as broadly defined in the present paper) by encouraging adoption of other intervention approaches such as education, social initiatives (e.g., designated driver campaigns), and counseling (e.g., quit lines and cessation groups). Social marketing is commonly conceived as a
process in which intervention design is guided by key marketing principles such as customer
orientation, market segmentation, and motivational exchange (increasing incentives and
decreasing barriers to change) (Andreasen, 2002; Janssen et al., 2013).

Five systematic reviews focused on the impact of social-marketing campaigns on drug 250 consumption (cigarettes, alcohol, and illicit drugs). Review Quality B: Janssen et al. 251 (2013, k = 6) concluded that the impact of social-marketing campaigns could not be 252 assessed due to lack of quality studies. Stead et al. (2007, k = 35) used a problematic 253 vote-counting approach (comparing the number of studies with significant vs. 254 non-significant results) to conclude that social-marketing principles could be effective in 255 reducing use of tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs. Review Quality C: Hung (2017, k =256 48) concluded interventions based on social-marketing principles had small significant 257 effects on smoking, but no effect on alcohol consumption. Almestahiri et al. (2017, k = 8) 258 concluded that social-marketing interventions can positively influence smoking behaviours 250 (e.g., quit attempts and smoking prevalence). Kubacki et al. (2015, k = 10) found positive 260 results in 6 of 10 studies and concluded that social marketing was largely effective in 261 reducing alcohol consumption. 262

# 263 Location Bans

This category included bans on cigarette smoking in public places. Typically, legislative bans and policies prohibit smoking in public spaces (e.g., restaurants and trains) and workplaces (e.g., offices, hospitals, schools, and universities).

Seven systematic reviews focused on the impact of location bans on cigarette consumption. **Review Quality A:** Frazer, McHugh, et al. (2016, k = 17, NSRI) concluded that location-based smoking policies in hospitals, prisons, and universities can reduce smoking rates, although they noted that the evidence quality was low. **Review Quality B:** Monson and Arsenault (2017, k = 16, BA & L) concluded legislated bans on smoking in

public areas had an overall positive effect on reducing smoking rates at home. Frazer, 272 Callinan, et al. (2016, k = 77, NSRIs) concluded that the impact of smoking bans on 273 smoker numbers and cigarette consumption were inconsistent, but that national bans were 274 effective. Review Quality C: Bennett et al. (2017, k = 11, NRSI, mostly cross-sectional) 275 concluded that more longitudinal studies were needed, while noting two promising studies 276 showing that smoke-free policies significantly reduced smoking at universities. Hopkins et 277 al. (2010, k = 57, BA) concluded smoke-free policies reduce tobacco consumption, but their 278 results were less compelling when only the strongest study designs were assessed. Bell et al. 279 (2009, k = 16, NRSI: 1 quasi experimental, 3 cohort, 12 cross-sectional) concluded that 280 smoking bans at worksites can reduce overall cigarette consumption but results varied 281 across sub-groups (e.g., less impact on low income groups) and bans may have unintended 282 consequences (e.g., displacement of smoking). Chapman et al. (1999, k = 19) found 18 of 283 19 studies showed smoke-free policies reduced daily smoking during working hours. 284

# 285 Norm Appeals

Social norms are rules or standards about how members of a community should behave. They range from the explicit (e.g., laws and regulations) to the implicit and unspoken (e.g., norms about where to sit on a train). A norm appeal communicates a desirable social norm with the aim of altering people's behaviour towards that norm. A common example involves providing personalised normative feedback about actual consumption (e.g., average student drinking norms) so that outliers (e.g., students who drink more than average) adjust their behaviour towards the norm (Wood et al., 2012).

Three systematic reviews focused on the impact of social-norm appeals on alcohol consumption. **Review Quality A:** Prestwich et al. (2016, k = 41, RCT) concluded even large changes in beliefs about social norms produce only small changes in alcohol intake, and thus norm appeals should be combined with other interventions. Foxcroft et al. (2015, k = 66, RCT) found social-norm appeals had small but significant effects on drinking frequency and quantity (namely, 0.9 alcoholic drinks less per week compared to a baseline of 13.7 drinks). However, they suggested the effect sizes may be too small to be practically useful. Dotson et al. (2015, k = 8, 13 RCT) concluded that personalised normative feedback had a small but clinically relevant impact on college student drinking (a reduction of  $\approx 3$  drinks per week).

## 303 Risk Warnings

These interventions draw consumers' attention to the potential risks of consuming a harmful product. Most evidence on reducing harmful consumer demand assessed through systematic reviews has focused on the impacts of highlighting risks to personal health (e.g., requiring cigarette packages to display graphic images of smoking-related diseases). The results therefore may not generalise to risk warnings outside this specific context (e.g., risks to reputation, conservation outcomes, or cruelty to animals).

Eight systematic reviews focused on the impact of risk-warning messaging on mostly 310 tobacco, and to a lesser extent, alcohol consumption. Review Quality A: N. Clarke et al. 311 (2020, k = 12, RCT) concluded health warning labels have significant potential for 312 decreasing the selection of unhealthy food and drink products. However, they noted all 313 experimental studies to date had been conducted in the laboratory or online. Sheeran et al. 314 (2014, k = 209, RCT) concluded heightening risk appraisals (namely risk perceptions, 315 anticipated emotions, and perceived severity) had a small but significant impact on 316 smoking, but not on alcohol consumption. Risk warnings were most effective when 317 accompanied by appeals to self-efficacy (confidence in one's ability to change towards a 318 recommended behaviour) and response-efficacy (perceptions about how much the 319 recommended behaviour will alleviate the hazard). Review Quality B: Noar, Hall, et al. 320 (2016, k = 37, RCT) concluded that pictorial warnings were more effective than text 321 warnings for most non-behavioural outcomes (e.g., elicited negative attitudes towards 322 smoking). However, they identified only a single experimental study that assessed their 323

impact on behaviour. Tannenbaum et al. (2015, k = 127, RCT) concluded fear appeals 324 positively influenced behaviours in all but a few circumstances. Monárrez-Espino et al. 325 (2014, k = 12, 5 RCT) concluded there was poor evidence for, or against, the sustained 326 impact of pictorial health warnings on smoking. The authors noted that risk warnings are 327 likely to have a modest impact on behaviour. Peters et al. (2013, k = 13, RCT) concluded 328 that threatening communications were only effective when the target population had high 320 self-efficacy. Review Quality C: Noar, Francis, et al. (2016, k = 22 NRSI) concluded that 330 strengthened cigarette-pack warnings (e.g., increased size of text warning, change from text 331 to graphic image) reduced smoking and increased cessation. Scholes-Balog et al. (2012, k =332 10, NRSI) concluded that alcohol warning labels were not associated with changes in 333

#### 335 Meta-Analytic Summary

self-reported risky alcohol use amongst adolescents.

Figure 1 provides a visual summary of the primary effect size reported in each 336 systematic review that included a meta-analysis (Supplementary Data Analysis). Effect 337 sizes in Figure 1 are displayed to demonstrate whether each intervention type was effective 338 in reducing a harmful consumer behaviour, ineffective, or counterproductive (i.e., increased 339 harmful consumer behaviour). Social marketing, location bans, norm appeals, and risk 340 warnings were all effective. The effectiveness of the latter two interventions was 341 particularly robust and noteworthy across multiple meta-analyses of high-quality reviews 342 (norm appeals) and moderate to high-quality reviews (risk warnings). By contrast, 343 mass-media campaigns, incentives, and advertising bans generally had no effect on 344 behaviour. Reassuringly, none of the intervention types were counterproductive. 345

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#### Discussion

Our analysis sought to provide a broad overview of the evidence, from outside the conservation literature, on seven types of interventions that aim to reduce harmful consumption. Some results will come as a surprise to many engaged in delivering

demand-reduction campaigns for overexploited wildlife products. Notably, two of the most 350 commonly used approaches to effecting behaviour change for conservation—mass-media 351 campaigns and incentive programs—were ineffective, on average. Moreover, any effects of 352 incentive programs disappeared shortly after programs ended (> 3 months). In contrast, 353 the two strategies that emerged as most supported, with some caveats, have been 354 under-utilised (norm appeals; Kidd, Garrard, et al., 2019) or actively resisted by some in 355 conservation (risk warnings; Kidd, Bekessy, & Garrard, 2019b). We found some evidence 356 the remaining three interventions can be effective, namely advertising bans, social 357 marketing, and location bans, but a lack of robust evidence precluded firm conclusions 358 about their overall impact. 359

We also found that none of the intervention types appear, on average, to be 360 counterproductive. This finding must be interpreted with some caution as the reviewed 361 literature contains only a few precisely estimated zero effects from well-designed studies, 362 and instead contains many noisy estimates from poorly-designed studies. However, the 363 available data suggests there may be little risk in investigating whether combinations of 364 multiple approaches are more effective than individual approaches. Indeed, there is already 365 considerable overlap between our broadly defined intervention types, such as location bans 366 that signal social norms or social-marketing campaigns that utilise mass-media. However, 367 the non-mutually exclusive nature of our taxonomic categories is also problematic in that 368 they may be difficult to tease apart, which makes replication and drawing firm conclusions 369 potentially difficult. The inability to completely distinguish between intervention types 370 suggests future research might benefit from exploring alternative frameworks for assessing 371 campaign efficacy, such as cost-benefit analysis or compatibility with theoretical 372 behaviour-change frameworks (e.g., Michie et al., 2011). 373

Interestingly, despite the considerable investment in evaluating behaviour-change campaigns within the public health domain, many systematic reviews were unable to draw firm conclusions about the impact of several popular approaches, owing to a lack of robust study designs. Specifically, systematic reviews of mass-media campaigns and social
marketing often concluded that multiple methodological shortcomings limited conclusions,
whereas higher quality reviews concluded that insufficient high-quality studies prevented
firm conclusions being reached. This highlights the importance of considering evidence
quality when drawing conclusions about the impact of a particular intervention.

We now discuss results of each specific intervention type with reference to insights from psychology and consider to what extent, and under what contexts, each might be useful in reducing demand for wildlife products.

# <sup>385</sup> Interventions Found to be Generally Ineffective

Mass-media campaigns are often seen as synonymous Mass-media campaigns. 386 with awareness raising, arguably the most common behaviour-change approach in 387 conservation (Kidd, Garrard, et al., 2019). Despite their popularity, mass-media campaigns 388 were adjudged to be ineffective in all four meta-analyses. Only one of nine systematic 380 reviews, with multiple methodological limitations, suggested there was strong evidence 390 supporting the use of mass-media campaigns. This review noted that effectiveness varied 391 with message content, with strongest evidence for messages highlighting health risks. The 392 remaining eight reviews argued that the low quality of primary evidence precluded firm 393 conclusions about effectiveness. 394

These results do not mean that all reviewed mass-media campaigns were ineffective. Systematic reviews of mass-media campaigns tended to encompass other interventions, which were more targeted and supported by insights from psychology, and that were found to be effective when considered separately, such as norm appeals and risk warnings. We thus restrict our critique of mass-media campaigns to those that fail to target specific psychological drivers of harmful consumption other than lack of awareness.

<sup>401</sup> A major problem with awareness-raising campaigns is they rely on an intuitive, but <sup>402</sup> incomplete, mental model of human behaviour—"if people only knew what I know about

this problem, then they would change their behaviour." This is the information-deficit 403 model—the assumption people's behaviour will change once they have the right 404 information (Sturgis & Allum, 2004). However, much research shows that access to 405 information is only one of many competing influences on human behaviour (MacFarlane et 406 al., 2020b; Marteau et al., 2012; Rossen et al., 2016). For example, the success of a 407 campaign to increase household recycling will be limited by structural barriers such as 408 access to recycling facilities, cost of services, and inconvenience to householders. Even 400 when such barriers are low, the success of an intervention may be limited by internal 410 psychological barriers such as lack of motivation to participate in recycling programs or a 411 widespread perception that it is socially acceptable not to recycle (Hornik et al., 1995). 412

We advise conservation practitioners against using mass-media campaigns that ignore the structural or psychological barriers to behaviour change (Figure 2). This conclusion is shared by those who have argued that organisations seeking social change should not solely rely on awareness-raising (Burgess, 2016; Christiano & Neimand, 2017).

Incentives. All three systematic reviews of incentives noted their analyses were based on a small number of studies so results should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, two concluded that incentives were probably ineffective and the third found they can be effective, but only in the short-term.

Incentive schemes for reducing environmental harms are likely familiar to many conservationists (Pearce & Turner, 1990), including those combating the supply side of the illegal wildlife trade (Bulte et al., 2003). However, to the best of our knowledge, such schemes have not yet been applied to the demand side (i.e., to discourage consumption).

On the available evidence, we caution against using incentives to target long-term behaviour in wildlife consumers. Practitioners who use incentives should be prepared to robustly test their effectiveness. The reasons incentive schemes can fail to change behaviour include: (i) introducing extrinsic incentives can undermine people's intrinsic motives, thereby reducing overall motivation to conserve wildlife (Rode et al., 2015); (ii) incentives can lead to "moral licencing" that enables people to "pay" some financial cost to
offset any feelings of guilt, and thus encourages even more problematic behaviours (e.g., to
buy more wildlife products; Bowles, 2009); and (iii) incentives tend to have short-term
effects, meaning once the incentive is withdrawn, people revert to their previous behaviours
(P. Schultz & Kaiser, 2012). An alternative approach to incentives may be to invigorate
and amplify existing consumer intrinsic motivations towards conserving wildlife (Figure 2),
such as by making flagship species a symbol of national pride (Smith et al., 2020).

#### <sup>437</sup> Promising Interventions that Require more Robust Evidence

Advertising bans. There is limited evidence that advertising bans can be effective 438 in reducing harmful consumer demand. Five of six reviews noted there was insufficient 439 evidence to draw strong conclusions, yet half nonetheless still concluded that they can be 440 effective. In support, McNeill et al. (2017) noted that studies have consistently shown 441 consumers prefer branded over plain-packaged cigarettes. In the reviews classed as having 442 two or more limitations, two concluded that the evidence generally supported the use of 443 advertising bans, whereas one concluded advertising bans did not reduce cigarette 444 consumption. 445

Given the limited evidence, we recommend that wildlife researchers first evaluate 446 whether, and to what extent, advertising drives consumer demand for wildlife products 447 (Figure 3). For example, practitioners could conduct a randomised controlled experiment 448 assessing consumers' hypothetical willingness-to-pay (MacFarlane et al., 2020a) for 449 plain-packaged vs. branded wildlife products (see Figure 4 for examples). If branding is 450 shown to significantly increase wildlife consumer demand, then practitioners should 451 consider how to limit advertising/branding of wildlife products (e.g., by lobbying 452 governments to penalize companies that produce product packaging). 453

<sup>454</sup> If advertising motivates demand, then the effectiveness of bans will be limited by two <sup>455</sup> factors. First, the illegal nature of much wildlife trade would make it difficult to enforce regulations. Second, effectiveness would be limited by how much influence advertising has
on consumer demand compared to other factors such as health, hedonism, and culture
(Thomas-Walters et al., 2020), and price, portability, and availability (Kurland et al.,
2017).

**Social marketing.** Despite conservationists' growing enthusiasm for social 460 marketing (Greenfield & Veríssimo, 2019; MacMillan & Challender, 2014; A. J. Wright et 461 al., 2015) only a handful of campaigns have attempted to reduce demand for wildlife 462 products (Veríssimo & Wan, 2019). Outside conservation, there was poor-quality evidence 463 to support this approach. Of two reviews, each classed as having a single methodological 464 limitation, one found insufficient evidence to draw conclusions while the other suggested the 465 approach could be effective but acknowledged many studies found no benefit. Conclusions 466 were mixed in the three remaining reviews, each with multiple methodological limitations. 467

Two limitations must be considered. First, social marketing has often been used 468 inconsistently, and opportunistically (Janssen et al., 2013), with many studies 469 misconstruing social marketing as simply advertising or communication for social goals 470 (Greenfield & Veríssimo, 2019; Stead et al., 2007). Thus, systematic reviews cannot simply 471 rely on assessing interventions labelled as "social marketing" because not all incorporate 472 key social-marketing principles. Second, one core principle of social marketing is the use of 473 multiple interventions, which can range from TV commercials to education campaigns. In 474 practice, this renders it difficult to determine which strategies have been effective. Hung 475 (2017) also noted that most studies of social-marketing campaigns did not provide 476 adequate information about study designs or methods. 477

Despite these limitations, several social marketing principles (Janssen et al., 2013) are valuable in guiding design of effective behavioural interventions. One is exchange: to increase the uptake of a desired behaviour, interventions should increase consumer motivations to adopt the behaviour, and remove barriers to doing so. Another useful principle is segmentation: dividing larger heterogeneous groups of people into smaller more <sup>483</sup> homogenous groups who may share important values, motives, behaviours, attitudes, and
<sup>484</sup> social pressures.

In conclusion, whilst the evidence for the effectiveness of social marketing in reducing 485 the use of harmful products is weak, its principles may have merit (Firestone et al., 2017; 486 Green et al., 2019). We therefore advise practitioners considering using social marketing to 487 influence wildlife consumers to employ robust experimental designs to evaluate the impact 488 of interventions (Figure 3) that comply with core social-marketing benchmarks (Andreasen, 489 2002). Indeed, one recent robust evaluation of a social-marketing campaign found it 490 successfully reduced unsustainable wild-meat consumption by  $\approx 62\%$  (Chaves et al., 2018, 491 see also Salazar et al., 2019). 492

Location bans. There was some evidence that banning harmful consumption in specific locations reduced cigarette consumption, including outside the banned locations. However, the latest and most comprehensive review (Frazer, McHugh, et al., 2016) noted overall evidence quality was low.

In addition to directly reducing consumption, location bans may operate indirectly by 497 descriptive-norm appeals (i.e., making smoking less visible and hence signalling it is 498 uncommon) and injunctive-norm appeals (i.e., signalling smoking is socially disapproved). 490 Although one review noted location bans could displace consumption to private areas (Bell 500 et al., 2009), more recent and comprehensive reviews did not support displacement (Frazer, 501 McHugh, et al., 2016; Monson & Arsenault, 2017). This highlights the importance of 502 carefully evaluating these interventions to ensure that they reduce, rather than simply 503 displace, demand (Figure 4). 504

<sup>505</sup> Unfortunately, evidence in favour of location bans is limited to smoking. This <sup>506</sup> provides limited evidence that similar impacts might be expected on eating or purchasing <sup>507</sup> wildlife products in public places (e.g., marketplaces, restaurants, or governmental <sup>508</sup> banquets). Nevertheless, the results suggest that bans on conspicuous wildlife consumption <sup>509</sup> may be a potent way to reduce overall demand for wildlife products (Chaves et al., 2018; Truong et al., 2016). Indeed, the apparent reduction in demand for shark-fin soup in
mainland China (Vallianos et al., 2018) might be linked to bans on consumption in
prominent locations (e.g., hotels, restaurants, and airline menus; Whitcraft et al., 2014).
Arguably the most significant location ban was in 2013 when Chinese authorities banned
the consumption of shark-fin soup, bird nests, and other wild animal products at official
banquets (Ng, 2013).

## 516 Interventions Found to be Generally Effective

There was consistent evidence in all three reviews without any Norm appeals. 517 methodological limitations that norm appeals can have a small impact on consumer 518 demand for alcohol. Two reviews noted that these effects were clinically relevant but the 519 third suggested they were too small to be useful for policy. Importantly, one review, 520 Dotson et al. (2015), focused only on personalised normative feedback—individualized 521 feedback on a person's drinking behaviour—whereas the other two reviews also assessed 522 generalised social norms. The focus on individualised norms may have explained Dotson et 523 al's relatively stronger support for the impact of social norms. 524

Three key findings from our analysis may help ensure conservationists have realistic 525 expectations about the potentially limited impact of norm appeals. First, while social 526 influences and normative beliefs can be changed by, for example, communicating how much 527 others drink, these belief changes produce only small changes in consumption. 528 Consequently, norm appeals are likely to be more effective when accompanied by other 529 interventions. Second, impersonal social norms may be less effective than personalised 530 normative feedback. However, such highly targeted approaches will not be feasible for 531 many, often hidden, wildlife consumption behaviours. Third, poorly designed norm appeals 532 can backfire if they inadvertently suggest that many people are engaged in the undesired 533 social conduct (P. W. Schultz et al., 2018). 534

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In designing norm appeals to reduce demand for wildlife products, we recommend

that practitioners pilot-test norm appeal messages (Figure 5) to ensure that they are
targeted, persuasive, and do not backfire (Burgess, 2016; Cialdini, 2003), before using them
in campaigns. We also advise practitioners to refer to one of the many science-based guides
for designing effective norm appeals (Farrow et al., 2017; MacFarlane et al., 2020b; Rare &
Team, 2019). They should also augment such appeals with other promising interventions,
such as risk warnings.

**Risk warnings.** Of the seven intervention types reviewed, evidence was strongest 542 on the impact of warnings about risks to individual's health. Six of seven reviews 543 concluded that risk warnings were effective in reducing cigarette or alcohol consumption, 544 with an eighth concluding they are effective in altering unhealthy food selection. Only one 545 review, with multiple methodological limitations, concluded that risk warnings do not 546 reduce self-reported risky alcohol consumption in adolescents. Risk warnings that were 547 effective typically included messages to boost self-efficacy (people's ability to adopt the 548 recommended behaviour) and response-efficacy (people's perception about how changing 540 their behaviour will alleviate the risks). They incorporated pictorial health warnings (vs. 550 text only), and emphasised high susceptibility (i.e., the vulnerability of the target group) 551 (Tannenbaum et al., 2015). 552

Our findings were confined to health-related warnings and so may not generalise to 553 warnings about other risks relevant to conservation contexts (e.g., risks to reputation, 554 conservation outcomes, or cruelty to animals). We also acknowledge that health-risk 555 warnings are likely to be met with resistance from some conservationists. Despite the 556 pervasive use of risk messaging in political, advertising, and public-health campaigns, 557 conservationists have fiercely debated whether optimistic or pessimistic communication 558 framing strategies are better at inducing behaviour change (Kidd, Bekessy, & Garrard, 559 2019b). Yet, Kidd, Bekessy, and Garrard (2019b) noted that the papers advocating for 560 either approach substantially outnumber the papers providing empirical, 561

<sup>562</sup> conservation-specific evidence. They called for building a stronger evidence base on the

<sup>563</sup> best ways to communicate conservation messages.

The present review does not aim to settle the debate because the target behaviours of 564 many conservation communications were outside the present focus (e.g., donation, policy 565 support, environmental action). However, our synthesis indicates that warning people 566 about the health risks of their behaviours can reduce demand. As many activities within 567 the wildlife trade carry significant health risks—such as heightened risk of zoonoses from 568 bushmeat consumption (Alexander et al., 2015), animal markets (Johnson et al., 2015), 569 and hunting (Johnson et al., 2020)—conservationists should consider using risk warnings to 570 reduce consumer demand for overexploited wildlife products. Indeed, in light of the 571 devastation caused by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, conservationists may have a 572 moral responsibility to incorporate factual health-risk warnings into communications about 573 wildlife trade activities (for conservation relevant guidance, see MacFarlane & Rocha, 574 2020). 575

In our view, rather than asking whether negative or positive messages are more 576 effective, we agree with McAfee and Connell (2019) that greater appreciation is needed for 577 how the two framing approaches can work independently and in tandem, and how their 578 effectiveness may vary with context. Experiments show people's evaluations of risks and 579 benefits tend to be negatively correlated (Alhakami & Slovic, 1994). For example, if 580 antibiotics are portrayed as effective, this will encourage the perception they are also low in 581 side effects, and vice versa. Equally, if pesticide use is considered high risk, this will 582 encourage the perception it is less effective, and vice versa. Thus, by communicating that 583 consuming primate meat is both high in risk (e.g., of contracting disease; Peeters et al., 584 2002) and low in benefit (no more nutritious than other forms of protein), both elements 585 can be used to reduce people's perception of the value of the product. Indeed, a recent 586 experiment found that while the perceived value of an ineffective health remedy could be 587 reduced by communicating either its lack of benefits (by 23%) or its potential health risks 588 (by 30%), communicating both produced the largest reduction in perceived value (by 50%) 589

(MacFarlane et al., 2020a). These results have implications for framing conservation
 messaging about traditional health remedies that contain wildlife products.

Careless risk messaging can also have negative conservation outcomes. For example, 592 recent communications about the health risks posed by consuming bats (e.g., the potential 593 for contracting novel zoonoses) may have reduced conservation support and increased 594 violent retaliation towards wild bat communities (Zhao, 2020). One way to neutralise the 595 unintended effects of risk communications is to highlight ways to boost self-efficacy (Figure 596 5), and include messages about potential benefits of wildlife conservation (e.g., the positive 597 ecological impacts of wild bats; Lu et al., 2017). Another tactic is to put the risk into 598 context, for example, by communicating the risks of zoonoses from a diverse range of 599 animals. This may discourage contact with animals, while avoiding disproportionate 600 negative attention to individual species (Davis et al., 2017). For further guidance on risk 601 communications, see MacFarlane and Rocha (2020). 602

## 603 Potential Limitations

There are several potential limitations of our review. First, we need research to assess whether the insights gleaned from our analysis will generalise to addressing the wildlife trade. Therefore, conservationists should apply one or more of the intervention types reviewed with caution and use robust experimental intervention designs to ensure that subsequent evaluations can improve the evidence base.

Second, in presenting such a broad overview of the literature we have necessarily
oversimplified many of the cultural and contextual differences between the consumption of
specific harmful products (e.g., alcohol and cigarettes) and many wildlife products. For
instance, the evidence reviewed mostly originates from countries that are Western,
educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic, with populations that may have distinct
cognitive and motivational differences from non-Western countries (Henrich et al., 2010).
While this may limit generalisability to non-Western countries, we nevertheless hope our

<sup>616</sup> approach provides valuable insights on how to modify consumer behaviour.

Third, while we adopted a systematic approach to assessing literature, three elements 617 of gold standard systematic review methods were not included. These included (i) 618 pre-registering a review protocol; (ii) recruiting multiple researchers to apply the exclusion 619 criteria and conduct data extraction in duplicate (thus also precluding consistency checking 620 at these stages); and (iii) preserving the originally-proposed exclusion criteria, since 621 additional criteria had to be added (i.e., the scope of the relevant intervention types 622 extended to include financial incentives, education projects, and brief interventions) after 623 the initial screening phase to ensure the final list of papers was sufficiently applicable to 624 the project. These omissions reflected both available resources and the primary purpose of 625 the review being to identify promising intervention foci rather than necessarily exhaustively 626 collate the existing literature. 627

Fourth, by excluding non-systematic reviews, we may have missed some primary literature. This limitation is somewhat offset by the fact the included systematic reviews have already collated, screened, and applied quality-control processes to much of the relevant literature and undergone peer review.

Fifth, we neglected to include a systematic review filter (e.g., explicit search terms for 'meta-analyses', 'quantitative synthesis', 'metaregression' and other related terms), meaning that some relevant reviews may have been excluded from our search. However, we are hopeful that the included search terms were sufficiently broad so as to capture the majority of reviews.

Finally, our categorisation of evidence into broad intervention types invariably oversimplifies the details of successful intervention campaigns. We acknowledge, for example, not all location-based campaigns are identical.

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## Conclusion

Conservationists have sought to reduce consumer demand for overexploited wildlife 641 products to address the current biodiversity crisis. Many are now calling for reductions in 642 the wildlife trade to reduce the risk of pandemics. We sought to learn from systematic 643 reviews of interventions that aim to reduce consumer demand for harmful products such as 644 alcohol and tobacco. We found that mass-media campaigns were, on average, ineffective 645 and incentives were either ineffective or their effects were short-lived. Advertising bans, 646 social marketing, and location bans are promising approaches but more high-quality 647 evidence is needed to draw firm conclusions. There was more robust evidence that norm 648 appeals can be effective, but effect sizes were often too small to be useful for policy. We 649 found robust evidence that risk warnings can be effective provided that key ingredients 650 (e.g., message components for boosting self- and response-efficacy) are included. By 651 learning from disciplines other than conservation, we can benefit from a vast body of 652 scientific knowledge on 'what works' to alter consumer behaviour. Our findings thus 653 provide some insights into why some conservation campaigns may be more effective than 654 others. However, they also serve as a reminder that the conservation community has got to 655 do more than simply evaluate whether the evidence provided by a set of studies is credible. 656 It has to start generating its own credible evidence. Every conservation action that is done 657 in a way that makes it difficult to ascertain its impact, and whether the underlying 658 behavioural model is a good approximation of reality, is a missed opportunity for learning. 659 We cannot just keep lamenting the poor state of the conservation evidence base. We have 660 to do something about it. 661

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41

Sensory Motiva includi	Social Motiva relation ers on wealth.	nal tional	Drivers Description
Motivated by the desire to please the senses including aesthetic, olfactory and tactile.	Motivated by the desire to form or strengthen Drug c relationships, including to impress upon oth- (e.g., ers one's social standing or perceptions of juana). wealth.	Motivated by the desire to fulfil hedonistic pleasure. Includes both recreational pursuit of leisure and sensory pursuit to please the senses. Motivated by the desire to treat an illness, motivated wellness, and/or avoid pain.	otion
Demand driven by product branding (e.g., expensive alcohol bottles) and/or tied to drug consumption (e.g., tobacco smoking	Drug consumption driven by social norms (e.g., alcohol, cigarettes, cocaine, mari- juana).		Example Harmful Products
Ivory carvings (Graham-Rowe, 2011) Animal skins (Moyle, 2009) Elephant skin (McEvoy et al., 2019)	Rhino horn (Truong et al., 2016) Shark fin soup (Brierley, 2007) Tiger bones (Moyle, 2009)	<ul> <li>Tiger bone wine (Gratwicke et al., 2008)</li> <li>Rhino horn hangover detox (Truong et al., 2016)</li> <li>Songbirds (Lee et al., 2016)</li> <li>Traditional remedies containing wildlife:</li> <li>Bear-bile (Feng et al., 2009)</li> <li>Pangolin scales (Newman et al., 2014)</li> <li>Rhino horn (Watts, 2011)</li> <li>Rattlesnake pills (da Nóbrega Alves et al., 2008)</li> </ul>	Example Wildlife Products

(Continued)

Drivers	Description	Example Harmful Products	Example Wildlife Products
Financial	Financial Motivated by the desire for financial gain.	Trade in licit, illicit, and/or counterfeit drugs	Trade in licit, illicit, and/or counterfeit drugs Speculator investment in ivory (Mason et al., 2012)
		(e.g., alcohol, cigarettes, adulterated illicit	The exotic pet trade (e.g., rare or namental fish $\&$
		drugs).	reptiles) (Dee et al., 2014)
Dietary	Motivated by the desire to fulfil a dietary de-	dietary de- Junk foods (high fat and/or sugar)	Pangolin meat (McEvoy et al., 2019)
	sire or due to a penchant for a specific culi-	Unsustainable food (e.g., Blue-fin tuna)	Primate bushmeat (Peeters et al., 2002)
	nary delicacy.	Unethical food (e.g., cage eggs)	Bat meat (Anti et al., 2015; Suwannarong &
			Schuler, 2016)
Note. The	<i>Note.</i> The driver categories and subsequent descript	ions have been adapted from recent work	lent descriptions have been adapted from recent work by Thomas-Walters et al. (2020) to categorise

motivations for wildlife consumer products.

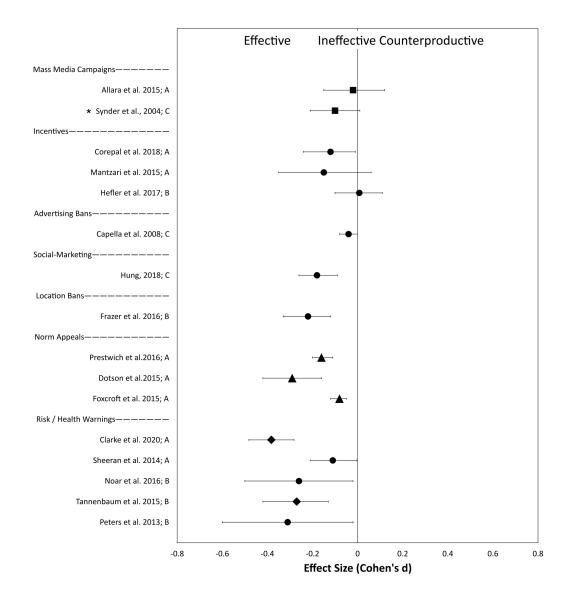


Figure 1. Forest plot of effect sizes (Cohen's d) for each systematic review containing meta-analysis (error bars represent 95% confidence intervals). Effect sizes indicate whether an intervention was effective (cases where the upper confidence interval sits below zero), ineffective (cases where the confidence interval encompasses zero), or counterproductive (cases where the lower confidence interval exceeds zero) in reducing harmful consumer behaviour. For transparency, we also include an assessment of each source's review quality (i.e., A, B, or C). \* Snyder et al. (2008) did not provide confidence intervals. Thus, these were conservatively estimated based on the reported lack of significance. Symbol key: squares = illicit drugs, circles = tobacco, triangles = alcohol, and diamond = tobacco, alcohol, and other behaviours combined.

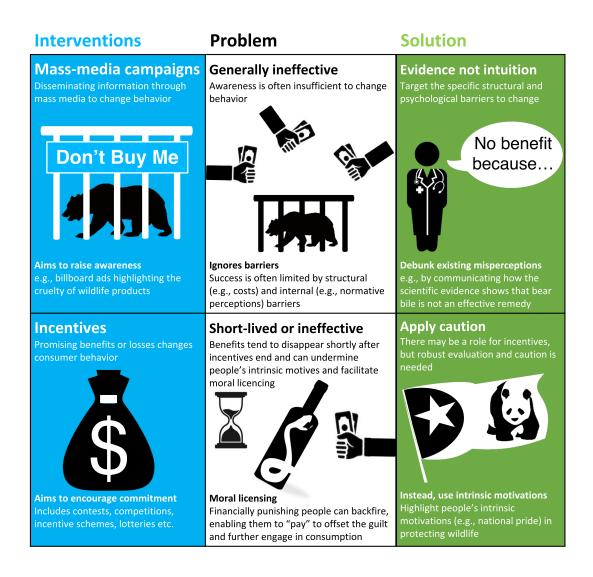


Figure 2. Summary of interventions found to be, on average, ineffective.

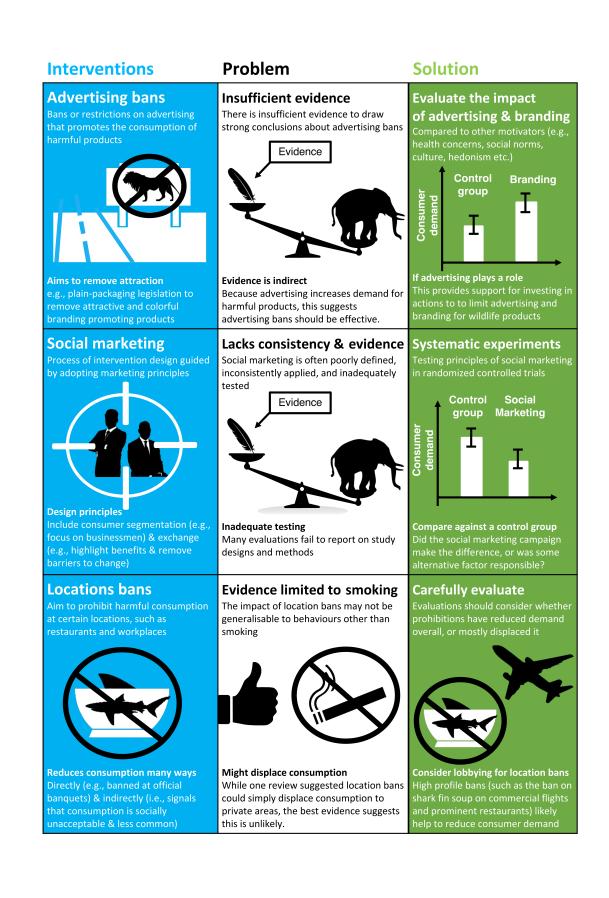


Figure 3. Summary of interventions that are promising but more robust evidence is needed.



*Figure 4*. Example branding for wildlife products. (a) Herbal "turtle jelly" (Gui-Ling-Gao, contains turtle plastron), photo by Diogo Veríssimo; (b) Shark liver oil capsules, photo by Diogo Veríssimo; (c) and (d) Bear bile extract, photos by Amy Hinsley.

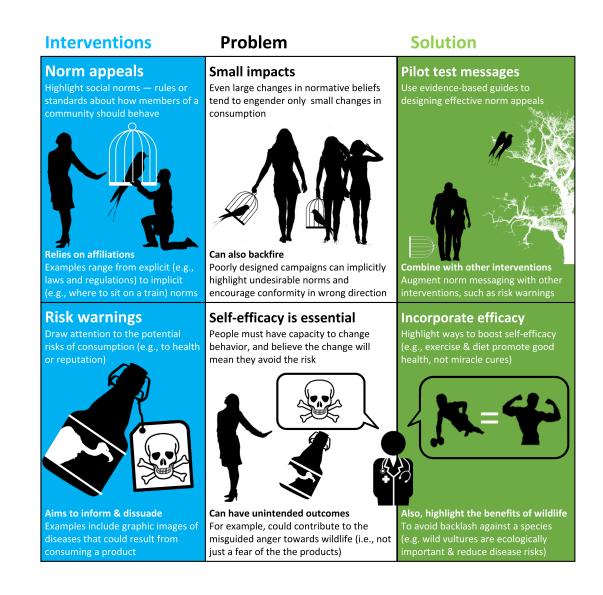


Figure 5. Summary of interventions found to be effective, with important caveats.