

Online Appendices

Appendix Section OA-A: Details on Experimental Design

Experimental Procedure and Cover Story

Participants were told they would receive a monetary reward for watching television and completing a questionnaire related to their views about television programmes. As people entered the RCCC facility they were randomly assigned to one of seven experimental treatments, which are described below. A lab assistant then showed each person to a viewing room and instructed her how to use a pair of headphones while watching a video on a computer. All participants watched the same series of commercials and a recently aired news program into which one of two PSAs—either with one of two source logos or without a source logo—was inserted. After viewing the eight-minute video, participants went into a second room to fill out a self-administered questionnaire, which was developed based on insights from four focus groups and two pre-tests. The questionnaire asked people about their habits of watching television, their views on television program content, concerns and opinions on three issues explained below, trust and satisfaction with their government, and inclination to participate in politics. There was no mention of the term “PSA“ until the end of the questionnaire. The questionnaire concluded with a note that informed participants they could obtain informational materials about how to save water, fight corruption, and strengthen the nation through advancements in technology and science (the subject of the news broadcast) after they had finished all tasks. To impose a small cost on the participant to obtain additional information, the room where the materials were distributed was located one floor above the experimental location. In order to avoid pressuring people to obtain information as a component in

their participation in the study, participants first received a small fee for their participation upon turning in the questionnaires, were guided to the exit, and could leave unobserved. People exited the experimental location via a different location than incoming participants, thus eliminating the possibility that they could influence other participants. Since the experiment continued after people left the experimental location, we debriefed participants by mail.

Even though people did not watch television in a natural setting, the experiment simulated reality in an important way that facilitates generalization: exposure to PSAs was incidental and occurred during the airing of commercials prior to the start of the evening news program. This is how PSAs are actually broadcast on China Central Television (CCTV). As a result, the ads shown in the study faced the challenge of attracting the attention of viewers in a manner similar to that of genuine PSAs. We believe that such a natural setting is particularly important in an authoritarian context when conducting laboratory experiment in order to address possible ethical concerns. The manner in which attitudes and behavior were manipulated is no different from than situations television viewers encounter every day on television.

Selection of PSAs

The two PSAs we selected for the experiment have been broadcast previously on Chinese television, although not in Beijing. They had both been evaluated positively by the central government. This ensured the authenticity of the ads and allowed us to conduct a most-difficult test of our hypothesis that some PSAs may undermine instead of promote political support. We selected the PSAs from an archive created from prize winners in the

biannual National PSA Competition organized by the central government. The PSAs are fairly typical in their focus on valence issues and the promotion of changes in citizen behavior. From this archive, we selected one PSA about fighting corruption and one promoting water conservation. In both cases viewers are supposed to change their behavior in order to address important societal problems – in one case conserving water and in the other abstaining from giving gifts to officials or accepting gifts in order to reduce corruption.

While both ads focused on valence issues, they also differed in terms of their relevance to citizen participation in politics. The anti-corruption PSA pertains to the problem of reining in the bribery of venal government officials—an activity in which many citizens do not participate and may feel powerless to prevent. The PSA on water conservation, however, concerns an issue that can be affected, to some extent, by all citizens. This key difference between the content of the two ads allows us to identify whether the effect of PSAs differs by their political relevance.

The two ads were also similar in terms of how the story was told, both relying on humoristic surprise. The *environmental PSA* portrays a group of 15 children arm wrestling after school. One small bespectacled boy defeats all opponents and is later shown turning off dripping facets. The resulting physical exercise, a viewer assumes, is the source of his hidden strength. The sentence, “I want to conserve water” then appears prior to the source logo. The second advertisement was part of an anti-corruption drive. The *anti-corruption PSA* shows the hands of a bureaucrat on a black desk. The bureaucrat is presented with a document, which is rejected, until a gift appears, whereupon the document receives a stamp of approval. Then, documents accompanied by a wrist watch,

a credit card, and car keys receive approval. The next items to appear are a pair of handcuffs and an arrest notice that is stamped “I approve.” The bureaucrat’s hands are then shown cuffed while a melodious voice says “oppose corruption and promote clean government, know honor and illuminate disgrace.” Each of these ads includes a surprising turn of events at the end of the ad. Both ads start with a visual narrative, but the true intention of the story is only subsequently revealed. The unexpected outcomes produced smiling and laughter among viewers.

Selection of Source Logo

Many source logos in China have a plain background on which the logo of the corporate or state sponsor is displayed, a format we kept for the source logos we constructed. In order to be able to compare the effects of the content of the logo we reduced the number of sponsoring institutions displayed on the state logo to one. We chose the Guidance Committee on Building Spiritual Civilization Construction (GCBSC) for the state logo, a high-ranking party unit that is usually involved in PSA campaigning at the central level and dependent on the Central Propaganda Department of the CCP in terms of finances and personnel appointments. For the corporate logo we chose to display the logo of Haier, a nationally recognized manufacturer of freezers, washing machines, televisions, water heaters, air conditioners, and microwave ovens. In the past, Haier has supported PSA campaigns. Both names were displayed in white on black background of equal size; in case of the state logo we chose the font that is commonly used in state logos for PSAs and in case of the corporate logo we displayed the actual logo of the company. Both

logos were shown for five seconds after the respective PSA, which is consistent with regulations (see Figure OA1 below).

Figure OA1. Screenshots of State Logo (left) and Corporate Logo (right)



Appendix Section OA-B: Question-wording of Key Variables

Dependent Variables	English Version	Chinese Version
Liking	<p>Please indicate which advertisement you watched today and how much you like it?</p> <p>1. An advertisement regarding saving water in order to protect the environment: 1: I watched it; 2: I didn't watch it</p> <p>1.1) 1: I don't like it at all; 2: I don't like it very much; 3: I somewhat like it; 4: I like it very much</p> <p>2. An advertisement regarding fighting corruption: 1: I watched it; 2: I didn't watch it</p> <p>2.1) 1: I don't like it at all; 2: I don't like it very much; 3: I somewhat like it; 4: I like it very much</p>	<p>请选择您今天看过的广告，并选择您对该广告的喜欢程度。</p> <p>1. 关于节约用水的广告：1：看过；2：没看过</p> <p>1.1) 1: 完全不喜欢；2：不太喜欢；3：比较喜欢；4：非常喜欢</p> <p>2. 关于反腐倡廉的广告：1：看过；2：没看过</p> <p>2.1) 1: 完全不喜欢；2：不太喜欢；3：比较喜欢；4：非常喜欢</p>
Criticism	<p>If you have some tips or methods on how to save water, please note them here: (open ended)</p> <p>If you have some tips or methods on how to prevent corruption, please note them here: (open ended)</p>	<p>如果您有节约用水的小窍门或好方法，请您写下来</p> <p>如果您有防止贪污腐败的办法，请您写下来</p>
Trust in central government	<p>Generally speaking how much do you trust the following organizations: the central government?</p> <p>1: I don't trust it at all; 2: I somewhat don't trust it; 3: I somewhat trust it; 4: I trust it very much</p>	<p>一般而言，您对中央政府的信任程度如何？</p> <p>1. 完全不信任；2. 不太信任；3. 比较信任；4. 非常信任</p>
Awareness	<p>Have you ever heard the term "Public Service Advertisement" before?</p> <p>Public Service Advertisements will often be shown on television; did the broadcasting program you watched today contain a PSA?</p> <p>Please describe the content of the PSA: (open ended)</p> <p>What do you think, which organization initiated the PSA? (open ended)</p>	<p>请问，您是否听说过公益广告？</p> <p>现在电视经常播放公益广告，今天我们播放的节目中是否包括公益广告？</p> <p>您能详细描述一下这则广告吗？</p> <p>请问，您觉得这则公益广告是由什么机构发起制作的？</p>

Appendix Section OA-C: Criticism by treatment group

Table OA1. Frequencies and percentages of people volunteering an idea about how to fight corruption within each treatment group

	No logo	Corporate Logo	State Logo	N
Anti-corruption PSA	36.7% (11)	23.33% (7)	26.67% (8)	90
Environmental PSA	13.3% (4)	16.7% (5)	43.3% (13)	90
N	60	60	60	

Table OA2. Examples of Criticism of State by Treatment Group

	No logo	Corporate Logo	State Logo	Total N
Anti-corruption PSA	“Fish begins to rot from the head, corruption is the result of learning from the higher level, to solve the issue, the higher level should be killed.”	“Increase penalties, strengthen supervision by the people and society, the structure of system is the main reason for the serious corruption issues.”	“Establish a separate department which has the absolute right to enforce law and is not required to report to superiors, have the direct right to investigate.”	7
Environmental PSA	“No one-party system!”	“Supervise personal bank accounts of senior officials and their close relatives, strengthen the reporting system, use the death penalty as a standard.”	“Power should not be in the hands of one person.”	7
Total N	6	4	4	

Appendix Section OA-D:

Table OA3. Ordinal Probit Regression Results of Treatment Conditions on Trust as Awareness of the Source Changes.¹

	Trust in Central Government	
Exposure to State Logo	0.660*** (0.229)	0.674*** (0.257)
Exposure to State Logo * Source Perception as Center	-0.473 (0.524)	--
Source Perception as Center	-0.018 (0.338)	--
Exposure to State Logo * Source Perception as State	--	-0.233 (0.392)
Source Perception as State	--	-0.192 (0.226)
Exposure to Corporate Logo	0.215 (0.21)	0.218 (0.209)
Anti-Corruption Experiment	0.219 (0.174)	0.192 (0.175)
Cut 1	-1.531*** (0.232)	-1.605*** (0.245)
Cut 2	-1.142*** (0.2)	-1.216*** (0.215)
Cut 3	0.502*** (0.18)	0.433** (0.192)
N	180	180
Pseudo R2	0.03	0.03

¹ Standard errors are displayed in parentheses. Entries for support variables are ordinal probit maximum-likelihood regression coefficients. Sample sizes for each cell were n=30; significance tests are two-tailed. Parallel regression assumption holds for all models.

z-value: *** $z < 0.01$; ** $z < 0.05$; * $z < 0.1$;

Appendix Section OA-E: Notes on Political Trust in China Compared to other Authoritarian Regimes

Survey data on political trust in authoritarian regimes is skewed into a positive direction. Compared to liberal democracies, citizens living under authoritarian rule tend to give more positive responses to questions about trust in political institutions, as illustrated by data from the World Value Survey 2005-2007. Figure II displays a scatterplot of the bivariate relationship between the Polity scale, indicated on the x-axis, and country averages of political trust, displayed on the y-axis.² As a country's level of political liberalization increases (moving from a negative towards a positive polity scale), the population's average levels of political trust declines. China represents a case of a regime that is considered as highly politically closed characterized with high levels of political trust (see Figure OA2 below).

² The relationship is replicated when using Freedom House ratings. Results are available upon request.

Figure OA2. Political Trust and Political Liberalization (Scatterplot). Source: WVS, 2005-2007.



