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# The emotive effect of government branding on citizens' trust and its boundaries: Does the personal relevance of the policy issue matter?

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## Abstract

Recent studies have demonstrated the potency of government branding to enhance citizens' trust in government organizations and policies. In addition, studies have pointed to the detrimental implications of this emotive effect, mainly its ability to compensate for organizations' poor functioning, and accordingly to elicit undue trust. In light of these concerns, this study explores the boundaries of governments' persuasion of citizens through branding and symbolic communications. Building on social psychology and marketing research, I hypothesize that citizens are less susceptible to persuasion by branding the more they perceive the policy issue as personally relevant. I test this expectation through a survey experiment, focused on air pollution policy in Israel, exploiting the natural variation in the perceived personal relevance between citizens residing in a polluted area in the country and others. The results indicate that even high levels of perceived personal relevance do not attenuate the effect of symbolic brand elements. This means that the boundaries of persuasion and manipulation through branding are wider than expected.

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Public administration scholarship has shown a growing interest in public sector branding and its potency to influence citizens' perceptions and direct their behaviour (Eshuis and Klijn 2012; Sataøen and Wæraas 2015; Marland et al. 2017). Congruently, recent empirical studies established that symbolic brand elements entangled in government communications (e.g., agency names, logos, colours and figures) can have a positive emotional effect on citizens, which leads them to view public organizations and their policies and services more favourably (Marvel 2015b; Karens et al. 2016; Alon-Barkat and Gilad 2017; Teodoro and An 2018; Alon-Barkat 2019). This growing scholarly interest corresponds with the overall increase in the use of branding practices by public sector organizations over the past decade or so, in part due to the expansion of digital communication and social media (Mergel and Bretschneider 2013; Mickoleit 2014).

The ability of government organizations to modify citizens' attitudes via such symbolic communications can be perceived favourably, in so far as it mitigates citizens' distrust in organizations and undervaluation of their performance. Accordingly, symbolic communications, as opposed to the delivery of mere factual information and substantive arguments, may enable organizations to overcome citizens' negative prior beliefs and biases against the public sector (Marvel 2015a, 2015b; Hvidman and Andersen 2016; Hvidman 2019). Nonetheless, this form of persuasion is also highly problematic. Normatively, we expect citizens in a democratic society to form their opinions about their government based on critical thinking, rather than on unconscious emotive responses. A yet more serious concern regards the potency of government branding to compensate for organizations' poor performance, poorly planned policies and logically unpersuasive explanations, as indicated by previous studies (Alon-Barkat and Gilad 2017; Alon-Barkat 2019). Congruently, it can yield a misalignment between citizens' positive view and the 'real world', which would undermine governments' democratic accountability and responsiveness. Moreover, government agencies and/or politicians controlling them could exploit branding as an instrument of propaganda, and seek to manipulate public opinion and mitigate justified public criticism of agencies' failures.

The above-mentioned concerns about the negative implications of branding for democracy are the main motivation of this study. These concerns necessitate a better theoretical understanding of the boundaries of governments' persuasion (and possibly manipulation) of citizens through branding, which would enable us to assess more effectively the scope of the risk that these practices pose for democracy. In line with this motivation, this study focuses on an important potential limitation that regards the perceived personal relevance of the policy issue. I explore whether the effect of symbolic brand elements in communications is restricted to policy issues that are not perceived by citizens as having a significant consequence for their personal lives, or rather that citizens are similarly susceptible to persuasion via branding even with regard to such personally relevant issues. This moderating factor is particularly important, since we tend to expect these affected groups to pay more attention to government actions that concern their interests and to hold them to account for their consequences to a greater extent. That expectation can be supported, theoretically, by the social psychology Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). The model postulates that the more people perceive the communication as personally relevant, the more inclined they are to scrutinize its message, and accordingly the less likely they are to rely on peripheral, symbolic elements.

Employing a survey experiment, I test this latter expectation in the empirical context of the Israeli Environmental Protection Ministry and its policy regarding air pollution in a specific area—the Haifa Bay. The research sample ( $N = 859$ ) consists of citizens residing in the polluted area, matched with residents of other cities in the centre of the country that are not exposed to high levels of air pollution. I present all participants with a policy plan regarding the air pollution in the Haifa Bay area, while experimentally varying both its appearance (familiar symbolic elements from the Ministry's communications versus two control groups) and substantive information (logically persuasive versus unpersuasive policy plans). I examine the effects of these manipulations on participants' trust in the policy plan across the two areas, and test the hypothesis that residents of the polluted area are less affected by symbolic brand elements (and more affected by the differences in substantive arguments). I further supplement this observational

comparison between the areas with an experimental treatment for the perceived personal relevance of the policy, and with additional robustness tests.

Contrary to my expectations, the results consistently indicate that even high levels of perceived personal relevance do not attenuate the effect of symbols on citizens' trust. These findings suggest that the boundaries of persuasion through branding are wider than expected. I discuss the theoretical and normative implications of these findings.

## 2 | PERSUASION BY SYMBOLS AND ITS MODERATION BY PERCEIVED PERSONAL RELEVANCE

A brand can be defined as 'a symbolic construct that consists of a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of these, created deliberately to identify a phenomenon and differentiate it from similar phenomena by adding particular meaning to it' (Eshuis and Klijn 2012, p. 19). Branding, therefore, can be considered a form of symbolic communication. In practice, symbolic elements that are strategically designed to evoke positive emotions and associations can be found in almost every government communication with citizens.

Symbolic elements entangled in communications can affect citizens' attitudes through a psychological mechanism of evaluative conditioning, whereby the positive associations triggered by the symbols are unconsciously transferred to the public organization (De Houwer 2012; Alon-Barkat and Gilad 2017). So for instance, when a public organization uses a celebrity endorser in a public campaign, the positive connotations for the celebrity (e.g., physically attractive, funny, talented) can be extended to the organization, which would lead citizens to also view the organization and its actions more favourably. This mechanism is considered a primitive form of persuasion which requires very little cognitive effort, as opposed to persuasion resulting from thoughtful consideration of substantive arguments. Thus, the question of under which circumstances are citizens more/less susceptible to persuasion via branding can be linked to a more general discussion in social psychology regarding the relations between different psychological processes of persuasion through communication, and to the determinants and moderators of these different processes.

According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Petty and Briñol 2011), persuasion can occur via different processes that can be placed along an 'elaboration continuum'. At the high end of that continuum, also called the 'central route', persuasion occurs through processes that require high degrees of thought and cognitive effort. This type of processing involves thoughtful scrutiny of arguments in the communication that are central to the merits of the issue. People located at the high end are more likely to form their judgements on the matter based on the quality of the arguments. They are more likely to differentiate between strong and weak arguments, and would be persuaded mainly by strong, logically persuasive arguments. As for those who are located at the low end of that continuum, or 'peripheral route', persuasion may occur mainly through processes that require only a small amount of thinking, such as evaluative conditioning. Another prominent example for peripheral route processing is people's reliance on message source as a heuristic cue (James and Van Ryzin 2017). When people are located between the two ends of the continuum, a mixture of these persuasion processes will operate.

In any given situation, the position of people along that continuum (and accordingly the dominant type of processing) would be determined by their motivation and ability to scrutinize the message. The more motivated people are to elaborate on the message and the more capable they are of doing so, the more likely they are to focus on the substantive arguments, and likewise the less susceptible they are to persuasion via peripheral route processes. The ELM literature has pointed to a variety of factors that may shape people's motivation and ability to think about a message, and that accordingly affect their inclination to be persuaded either by arguments or by peripheral cues. Perhaps the most studied factor in this regard is the perceived personal relevance of the communication (or 'issue involvement'), namely the extent to which they perceive the issue at hand as having significant consequences for their own lives. That variable has been considered the most important determinant of motivation to scrutinize the

message (Petty et al. 2002; Petty and Briñol 2011).<sup>1</sup> It has been theorized that the more people perceive an issue as personally relevant, the more motivated they are to invest in thinking about it, since the consequences of being incorrect are greater (Petty and Cacioppo 1979; Petty et al. 1981; Petty et al. 1983; Burnkrant and Unnava 1989). Accordingly, experimental studies in marketing and social psychology have shown that individuals are more affected by peripheral cues and less affected by argument quality the less they perceive the issue as personally relevant.

For instance, in a marketing study by Petty et al. (1983), participants were asked about their attitudes towards a new disposable razor, after being exposed to a magazine ad. The ad involved either a celebrity endorser or a non-famous endorser (a symbolic peripheral cue) and contained substantive information about the product that represented either strong or weak arguments about its quality. In addition, scholars manipulated the perceived personal relevance of the product by telling subjects either that the product would soon be available in their local area (high relevance), or that it would be available in other areas (low relevance). The results of the study indicated that the celebrity endorser had a positive effect on participants' attitudes about the product under the low personal relevance condition (estimated as roughly 0.7 SDs), but had no effect under the high personal relevance condition. Likewise, the effect of argument quality was more than three times greater for the high personal relevance group.

Viewed against the above theoretical framework, symbolic brand elements in government communications can be regarded as peripheral cues, which can affect citizens' attitudes through a peripheral route process of evaluative conditioning. Hence, based on ELM, citizens' judgements about public organizations are less likely to be affected by symbolic brand elements (and more likely to be shaped by substantive arguments) the more motivated they are to critically think about the message. Citizens' level of motivation is likely to be determined, to a great extent, by the degree to which they perceive the policy issue in the communication as having personal relevance for themselves.

In sum, I derive from the social psychology and marketing literatures the following moderation hypotheses:

*H<sub>1</sub>*: Symbolic elements in communications are likely to have a greater positive effect on citizens' attitudes about government organizations and policies the lower the perceived personal relevance of the communication.

*H<sub>2</sub>*: The argument quality of the information in communications is likely to have a weaker effect on citizens' attitudes about government organizations and policies the lower the perceived personal relevance of the communication.

### 3 | METHODOLOGY

The above-mentioned expectations are tested via a survey experiment, building on the methodology of Petty et al. (1983). The experiment focuses empirically on the case of the Israeli Environmental Protection Ministry (hereafter: EPM) and its policy for reducing air pollution in the highly polluted Haifa Bay area. In the following section, I describe the empirical case, data collection, experimental design and operationalization of research variables.<sup>2</sup>

The experiment was also designed to test a set of hypotheses regarding the interaction between symbols and information. In this article, I focus on those methodological and empirical parts of the study that are consequential for examining the moderating role of personal relevance.<sup>3</sup>

#### 3.1 | The empirical case

The EPM is a national-level bureau responsible for the formulation, coordination and execution of environmental policy in Israel. Among other things, the EPM is responsible for monitoring and regulating air quality across the country. The Haifa Bay area, located in the north of Israel, has been characterized by relatively high levels of air pollution,

mainly due to the Haifa Bay industrial zone, which is located in proximity to a number of urban residential areas. It is considered the largest industrial zone in the country, with a concentration of petrochemical industries, including oil refineries, power plants and chemical factories. Beginning in the mid-2000s, the EPM has been developing and implementing a series of policy programmes to monitor and reduce the high levels of air pollution specifically in that area (Ministry of Environmental Protection 2019). While the EPM has claimed that its programmes have been effective and have led to a significant reduction in air pollution levels, local residents, professionals and other public agencies have remained greatly concerned about the issue, and accordingly it remained high on the public agenda (State Comptroller of Israel 2019).

Specifically, the issue received much media and public attention in 2015–16, following a series of reports and media publications about the health consequences of the air pollution to Haifa Bay residents. In 2015, the Ministry of Health published statistical data indicating that Haifa Bay residents experience significantly higher rates of cancer and asthma compared to other areas of the country. Thereafter, in 2016, media reporters revealed the interim results of a large epidemiological study, establishing a link between air pollution in the Haifa Bay and certain types of cancer, as well as abnormal measurements of newborn babies and growth curves of infants. The media reports of that study repeatedly highlighted a particular finding that babies in the Haifa Bay are born with 'smaller heads' (e.g., Koriel 2016; Rivlin 2016). These publications, and others, caused much panic among the local population, and especially among young parents.

The air pollution in the Haifa Bay offers an opportune case for examining the moderating role of perceived personal relevance. The distinction between those who reside in the polluted area and those who do not entails a natural variation in that moderating variable. Importantly, because this policy issue is intangible and scientifically complicated, the variation in personal relevance is not strongly confounded with personal knowledge about the issue, as is normally the case. Accordingly, those residing in the polluted Haifa Bay area are more motivated to scrutinize a communication about the air pollution in their area, yet they are not necessarily more capable of critically evaluating its content. That latter assumption was the main reason for selecting this case.

While comparing those residing in the Haifa Bay to others enables me to examine the moderating effect of perceived personal relevance, it still has an important limitation—it represents an observational comparison. The differences in personal relevance can be theoretically confounded by unobserved covariates, which cannot be effectively controlled in the analyses. I address this limitation in the research design in three main ways. First, in the selection of the research population, I sought to reduce differences in socioeconomic and demographic variables between residents of Haifa Bay and their comparison group. Accordingly, I selected the major cities in the Haifa Bay area (Haifa, Nesher, Qiryat-Hayim, Qiryat-Bialik, Qiryat-Mozkin, Qiryat-Ata and Qiryat-Yam) and matched them with citizens from cities with a similar profile and population size in the centre of the country (Natania, Petach-Tikva and Rishon-Lezion).<sup>4</sup> I further searched relevant EPM documents and news websites and confirmed that there were no reports of high air pollution levels in the three centre cities.

Second, in addition to the policy regarding Haifa Bay air pollution, I included in the experiment a second policy plan that is expected to be perceived by the two groups as equally relevant. For this purpose, I selected a policy plan of EPM that regards reducing domestic waste and increasing recycling (henceforth: recycling policy). The comparison between the two policies is intended to confirm that respondents' divergent responses to symbolic elements in the communication of the Haifa Bay air pollution policy, if found, can only be attributed to differences in perceived personal relevance. Third, in addition to the observational comparison between the two areas, I included an experimental manipulation aimed at enhancing the perceived personal relevance of the air pollution policy among the Haifa Bay residents.

## 3.2 | Data collection and procedure

I was assisted by an Israeli internet research panel company *iPanel* for the selection and recruitment of residents of these selected cities. The survey was conducted online through Qualtrics Survey Software, between 28 January and

1 February 2018. A total of 1,101 respondents completed the survey (a response rate of 21.7 per cent). I further filtered out 242 observations (22 per cent) due to the following criteria: multiple entries from the same IP address ( $n = 32$ ), failure in the instructional manipulation test ( $n = 125$ ), submitting the survey in less than three or more than 30 minutes ( $n = 37$ ), and reported age under 18 ( $n = 48$ ). These filters are neither associated with the areas nor with the experimental conditions. Following this screening, I ended up with a sizable analytical sample of 859 subjects, of whom 496 live in the Haifa Bay cities, and 363 live in the centre cities.<sup>5</sup>

The survey was presented to the participants as an academic study about citizens' attitudes regarding environmental policies in general. After a set of pre-manipulation questions, all subjects, regardless of their area of residence, were randomly assigned to treatment or control conditions of perceived personal relevance (hereafter: relevance manipulation). Subjects assigned to the relevance treatment were asked three questions about their perceptions of environmental policy in general. They were then asked to state their area and locality of residence, and to describe, in their own words, the most disturbing environmental issue in their area. These questions were designed to prime those residing in the Haifa Bay to think about the personal relevance of air pollution in their area. Subjects in the relevance control group were asked equivalent questions about their field of occupation.

Participants were then presented with the two policy plans (Haifa Bay air pollution and recycling), displayed in random order. They were informed that these plans were obtained from the EPM's annual work plan for the following year. The participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions of symbolic elements in the communication (hereafter: symbols manipulation): treatment-'real symbols', control-'no symbols' and control-'fake symbols'. In the real symbols condition, the two policies are displayed with three symbolic brand elements, which have been used in the EPM's public communications and became widely recognized by the public.

The first symbolic element is the unique brand logo of the EPM, which consists of a pair of green and orange leaves that resemble two hands, designed to symbolize peace and harmony with the environment. The second element is the green colour, which is strongly associated with taking care of the environment. The third element is the images of celebrity comedians from advertising campaigns of the EPM. The Haifa Bay air pollution policy (in the real symbols condition) was presented with an image from the EPM campaign from 2010 under the slogan 'starting to think green', starring the Israeli celebrity comedian Tal Friedman. The recycling policy was presented with an image from a campaign from 2017 for reducing the use of disposable bags ('taking every bag seriously'), starring the comedian Ido Rosenblum. In the control no-symbols condition, the two policies are displayed in a minimal black and white design, and without the logo and the celebrities' images. Finally, in the control fake-symbols condition, the EPM logo is replaced by a fake logo, the green colour is replaced with blue, and the images of celebrities from the campaigns are replaced with edited images of unfamiliar people. The purpose of the fake-logo condition was to distinguish the effect of the symbolic meaning of the EPM's graphic brand elements from a possible effect of their aesthetic design. Accordingly, I specifically designed the 'fake' symbols so that they would resemble the real symbols and have equivalent aesthetic qualities, without activating particular emotions and associations related to the EPM, or environmental policy. Hence, these elements can also be regarded as peripheral cues, yet they do not represent familiar brand symbols of the EPM. The symbols conditions are displayed in appendix A. Further details about the real and fake symbols are found in the supplementary appendix (section 2).

In addition, I included a manipulation of the argument quality of the information in the communication about the policy plan (hereafter: information manipulation). Per each policy, subjects were randomly allocated to one of two conditions of information: strong policy (i.e., logically persuasive policy plan) or weak policy (i.e., logically unpersuasive). Each subject was exposed to two policy plans, one strong and one weak, displayed in a random order. Each policy plan included the title of the policy goal, followed by short descriptions of two actions to be taken by the EPM to fulfil this goal. The actions mentioned in the strong policy plan condition were taken from the EPM's real work plan and from other official sources, whereas those in the weak policy plan were fictional, and deliberately designed to create a poor policy plan, which is incompatible with achieving the policy goals. For instance, the proposed actions for the strong Haifa Bay air pollution policy involved increasing the supervision of polluting factories, and reducing diesel smoke emissions by vehicles, whereas the actions for the weak policy were to decrease the

supervision of polluting factories, and raise citizens' awareness of the Ministry's efforts to improve air quality. The full texts of the weak and strong conditions for the two policy plans are found in the supplementary appendix (section 3).

Each policy plan was followed by six questions about respondents' trust in the policy. After the trust questions of the second policy, the subjects were asked additional questions about the two policies, including the degree to which they perceive each of them as personally relevant. These questions were followed by an instructional manipulation check item, intended to assess participants' diligence. The last sections included a set of demographic questions, questions about their place of residence and work, and manipulation checks for participants' familiarity with the real symbols. At the end of the survey, the participants were briefed about the manipulations, and the possible deception.

In line with the above-mentioned hypotheses, my main focus in this article is on participants' trust in the Haifa Bay air pollution policy, and the two-way interactions between residence in Haifa Bay and the symbols and information manipulations of that policy. I also explore these interactions with regard to the recycling policy, and compare them to the air pollution interactions. In addition, within the Haifa Bay sample, I examine the two-way interactions between the relevance manipulation and the symbols and information manipulations.

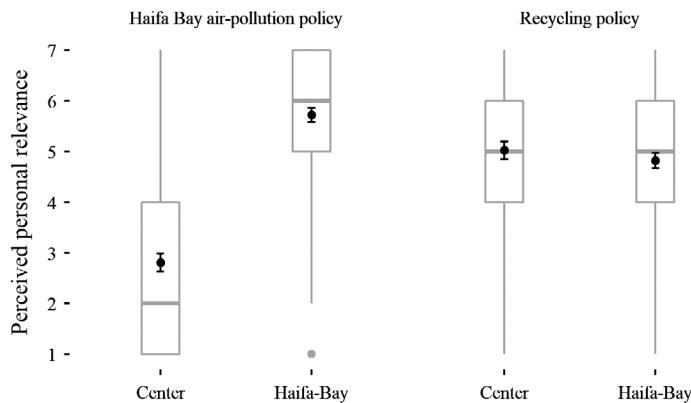
I conducted power estimations for the main effects of the symbols and information manipulations, their conditional effects within each area and the aforementioned interactions. I conducted these estimations after the data collection and analyses, based on the analytical sample size. The detectable (power = .8) interaction coefficient between areas and the real symbols treatment is estimated as 0.27 *SDs*, and between areas and weak information manipulation is estimated as 0.23 *SDs*. As for the interactions with the relevance manipulation, the detectable coefficients of their interactions with the symbols and information conditions among Haifa Bay respondents are estimated as 0.36 and 0.29 *SDs*, respectively. These power estimations are reported in detail in the supplementary appendix (section 5).

### 3.3 | Variables

The outcome variable, citizens' trust in policy, is measured in the survey using a composite index of six items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ ). This scale was adopted with modifications from validated trust scales used in previous public administration studies (Karens et al. 2016; Grimmelikhuijsen and Knies 2017). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statements, between 1 (weakly agree) and 7 (strongly agree): (1) I believe that the actions mentioned in the policy plan will assist in fulfilling the policy goal; (2) I believe that the actions mentioned in the policy plan were designed in a professional manner; (3) I believe that the policy plan is in the interest of citizens; (4) I believe that the policy plan reflects a genuine attempt to improve the well-being of citizens; (5) I believe that the EPM made an honest attempt to design a good policy plan; (6) I believe that the Ministry of Environmental Protection aims to keep its commitments in that policy plan.

The key independent variables are the manipulations of symbols and information in the communication, as described above, and their interactions with the perceived personal relevance of the communication. The latter is operationalized observationally (through the distinction between the two areas) as well as experimentally (through the relevance manipulation).

Living in the Haifa Bay area was coded according to respondents' reporting of residence, work or studying in one of the Haifa Bay cities. To confirm the empirical assumption that the Haifa Bay air pollution policy (but not the recycling policy) is perceived as more personally relevant by Haifa Bay residents compared with centre residents, respondents were asked, after the outcome variable items: 'To what extent did you feel that the policy on ... is personally relevant to you?' (1 = 'very little'; 7 = 'very much'). Figure 1 shows the distributions of the latter items across the two areas. As expected, the Haifa Bay air pollution policy is perceived as more personally relevant by the local residents compared with those residing in the centre (Cohen's  $d = 1.73 [1.57, 1.89]$ ). The recycling policy is perceived



**FIGURE 1** Perceived personal relevance of policy issues across areas

Note: In all figures, points and error bars represent means and 95 per cent confidence intervals

by both groups as relatively personally relevant, with no statistically significant differences. Additional support for these differences is provided by respondents' answers to the open question presented to the relevance treatment group about the most salient environmental issue in their area of residence. Indeed, 176 of the 263 Haifa Bay subjects who were asked this question referred in their responses to the air pollution generated from the industrial area (67 per cent),<sup>6</sup> and many of them explicitly linked it to higher morbidity rates in their area. Subjects from centre cities referred to a variety of issues, including recycling, traffic jams and cleanliness, and only 8 per cent of them mentioned air pollution as a prominent environmental concern in their area.

As for the relevance manipulation, data suggest that assignment to relevance priming questions did not increase Haifa Bay respondents' perceptions of personal relevance of the air pollution policy. The Haifa Bay participants assigned to the treatment group reported a slightly lower level of personal relevance on average, yet these differences are not statistically significant (Cohen's  $d = .14$  [ $-.03, .32$ ],  $t = 1.61$ ,  $p = .108$ ). This limitation should be kept in mind when interpreting the results regarding this manipulation.

The results of all manipulation and validation checks are available in the supplementary appendix, along with summary statistics and a correlation matrix for all variables (sections 4, 6).

## 4 | RESULTS

I begin by examining the random assignment to the different experimental conditions. Table 1 provides a comparison between the different conditions, within each of the two areas, on demographic variables and pre-manipulation covariates. These comparisons confirm that these random assignments yielded fairly balanced groups.<sup>7</sup> The table further suggests that the samples of Haifa Bay and centre residents are fairly balanced with regard to gender, trust in national-level government ministries and interest in environmental issues. Yet, Haifa Bay respondents are somewhat older, more educated, and have a more left-wing ideology.

I now turn to exploring the main outcome variable of interest—respondents' trust in the Haifa Bay air pollution policy. This outcome variable has a right-skewed distribution (Mean = 3.95,  $SD = 1.54$ , Median = 4), which entails that more subjects reported very low levels of trust than very high levels of trust in the policy. Figure 2 shows the means and distributions of the outcome variable across the different experimental conditions of symbolic elements and information, and across the two areas. The real symbols condition (in the left panel) has a positive and significant main effect on trust in that policy plan compared with the no symbols condition ( $diff = .41$  [ $.16, .67$ ],  $t = 3.197$ ). That effect amounts to 0.27 SDs [ $0.1, 0.43$ ]. Subjects who saw the real symbols also reported, on average, greater trust in

**TABLE 1** Balancing of experimental groups across areas

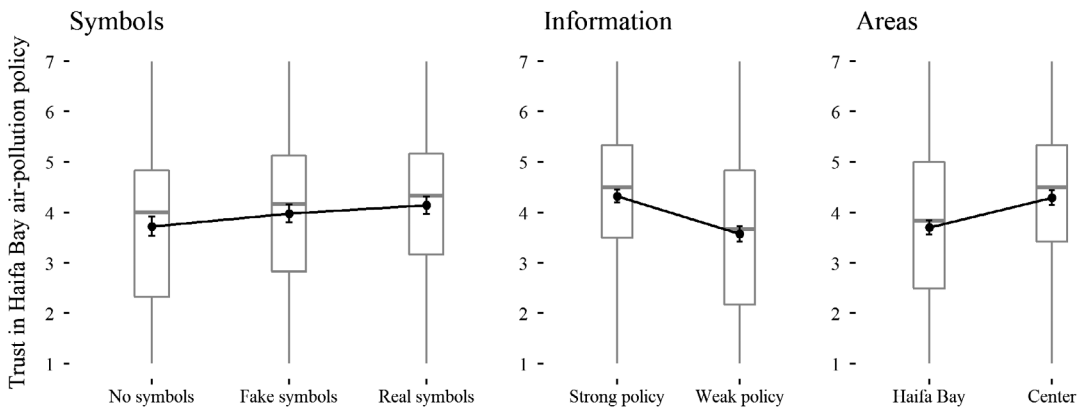
	Symbols groups			Information groups			Relevance groups				
	All sample	No symbols		F-test	Strong air pollution (Weak recycling)		t-test	Weak air pollution (Strong recycling)		t-test	
		Fake symbols	Real symbols		Real symbols	Treatment		Control			
<i>Haifa Bay</i>											
Gender (Woman = 1)	.486 (.5)	.462 (.5)	.521 (.501)	.474 (.501)	.639	.521 (.501)	.453 (.499)	1.508	.506 (.501)	.464 (.5)	.937
Age	37.513 (13.75)	37.968 (14.33)	37.044 (13.47)	37.533 (13.52)	.176	37.848 (13.46)	37.201 (14.03)	.516	38.008 (13.99)	36.932 (13.47)	.857
Trust in government ministries	3.401 (1.445)	3.348 (1.409)	3.394 (1.513)	3.457 (1.416)	.235	3.346 (1.4)	3.453 (1.486)	.828	3.479 (1.475)	3.313 (1.408)	1.28
Political Ideology (10 = extreme left)	4.409 (1.84)	4.494 (1.78)	4.412 (1.979)	4.329 (1.762)	.328	4.533 (1.711)	4.293 (1.949)	1.462	4.471 (1.841)	4.339 (1.841)	.8
Education	6.065 (1.596)	6.215 (1.565)	5.994 (1.644)	5.994 (1.577)	1.032	6.067 (1.621)	6.062 (1.576)	.033	5.908 (1.616)	6.241 (1.558)	2.33
Income (5 = high)	2.689 (1.257)	2.707 (1.355)	2.537 (1.195)	2.821 (1.21)	2.165	2.747 (1.24)	2.635 (1.272)	.985	2.636 (1.241)	2.75 (1.275)	.999
Parents	.595 (491)	.614 (.488)	.582 (.495)	.59 (.493)	.186	.6 (.491)	.59 (.493)	.230	.62 (.486)	.567 (.497)	1.203
Parents of young children (under 12)	.393 (.489)	.411 (.494)	.376 (.486)	.393 (.49)	.214	.408 (.493)	.379 (.486)	.669	.411 (.493)	.373 (.485)	.848
Interest in environmental issues	4.559 (1.429)	4.605 (1.536)	4.607 (1.38)	4.473 (1.38)	.258	4.512 (1.368)	4.603 (1.487)	.518	-	-	-
<i>n</i>	496	158	165	173	240	240	256	263	233		
<i>Centre</i>											
Gender	.515 (.5)	.522 (.502)	.488 (.502)	.538 (.501)	.320	.495 (.501)	.539 (.5)	.841	.48 (.501)	.548 (.499)	1.299
Age	34.763 (13.72)	35.219 (12.55)	34.449 (14.11)	34.661 (14.47)	.099	34.281 (14.04)	35.344 (13.35)	.734	34.366 (13.93)	35.128 (13.55)	.524
Trust in government ministries	3.388 (1.47)	3.322 (1.496)	3.426 (1.545)	3.412 (1.368)	.175	3.355 (1.369)	3.428 (1.585)	.461	3.352 (1.542)	3.422 (1.402)	.453
Political Ideology	4.028 (1.834)	4.052 (2.008)	3.891 (1.692)	4.151 (1.812)	.635	3.985 (1.789)	4.078 (1.891)	.481	4.159 (1.872)	3.904 (1.793)	1.325
Education	5.705 (1.746)	5.939 (1.764)	5.465 (1.746)	5.739 (1.71)	2.291	5.685 (1.718)	5.729 (1.783)	.236	5.705 (1.774)	5.706 (1.724)	.007
Income	2.883 (1.243)	2.982 (1.283)	2.883 (1.214)	2.788 (1.239)	.707	2.784 (1.281)	3 (1.191)	1.660	2.908 (1.199)	2.86 (1.287)	.365

(Continues)

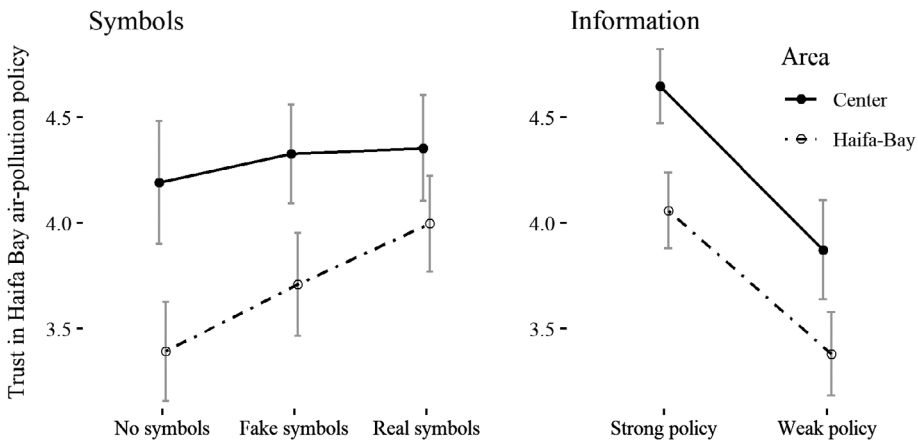
TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Symbols groups			Information groups			Relevance groups				
	All sample	No symbols	Fake symbols	Real symbols	F-test	Strong air pollution (Weak recycling)	Weak air pollution (Strong recycling)	t-test	Treatment	Control	t-test
Parents	.614 (.487)	.678 (.469)	.543 (.5)	.63 (.485)	2.468	.574 (.496)	.663 (.474)	1.745	.58 (.495)	.647 (.479)	1.319
Parents of young children	.49 (.501)	.565 (.498)	.395 (.491)	.521 (.502)	3.893	.442 (.498)	.548 (.499)	2.029	.472 (.501)	.508 (.501)	.692
Interest in environmental issues	4.591 (1.443)	4.541 (1.545)	4.449 (1.388)	4.87 (1.376)	1.229	4.495 (1.364)	4.699 (1.528)	.930	-	-	-
<i>n</i>	363	115	129	119	197	166	176	187			

Notes: Table entries are means with SDs in parentheses; absolute *t*-test values are presented.



**FIGURE 2** Main effects



**FIGURE 3** The effects of symbolic elements and information on trust across areas

the policy, compared with those who received fake symbols, yet these differences are not significant at the 95 per cent level ( $diff = .16 [-.08, .41]$ ,  $t = 1.307$ ,  $p = .192$ ). The increase in the lower bound of the box in the real symbols shows that real symbols reduced to a great extent the number of participants who reported a very low trust score. Descriptively, 21 per cent of the participants in the no symbols group reported a score of 2 or less which indicates a very low level of trust, compared with 15 per cent and only 11 per cent in the real symbols group. As shown in the middle panel, the main effect of the weak information condition is negative and significant ( $diff = .75 [.95, .55]$ ,  $t = 7.338$ ). That effect amounts to 0.49 SDs [0.36, 0.62].

Finally, as presented in the right panel, participants from Haifa Bay reported significantly lower levels of trust in the Haifa Bay air pollution policy, compared to centre participants ( $diff = .59 [.38, .79]$ ,  $t = 5.67$ ). Descriptively, 51 per cent of Haifa Bay subjects have a trust-index score lower than 4, the scale's middle point (compared with 34 per cent of the centre subjects). This indicates that the majority of the sampled Haifa Bay residents tend to have prior negative attitudes towards the EPM's actions regarding air pollution in their area.

Next, I examine the interactions between the symbols and information manipulation, and the two areas. To reiterate, based on my theoretical hypotheses, I expect that subjects living in the Haifa Bay, who perceive this issue as personally relevant, would be less affected by the symbolic elements, compared with those living in the Centre ( $H_1$ ).

**TABLE 2** Regression analyses—Trust in Haifa Bay air pollution policy

	Trust in Haifa Bay air pollution policy							
	(1.1)		(1.2)		(1.3)		(1.4)	
	p-value		p-value		p-value		p-value	
Real symbols	.431	.001	.438	<.001	.633	<.001	.579	<.001
	(.126)		(.123)		(.162)		(.153)	
Fake symbols	.251	.045	.241	.050	.388	.018	.367	.018
	(.126)		(.124)		(.168)		(.160)	
Weak information	-.756	<.001	-.725	.000	-.699	<.001	-.770	<.001
	(.102)		(.100)		(.135)		(.128)	
Area (0 = Haifa Bay; 1 = centre)			.546	<.001	.866	<.001	.832	<.001
			(.100)		(.204)		(.189)	
Area × Real symbols					-.470	.061	-.453	.054
					(.250)		(.235)	
Area × Fake symbols					-.355	.155	-.435	.064
					(.249)		(.233)	
Area × Weak information					-.082	.688	-.057	.767
					(.203)		(.192)	
Constant	4.094	<.001	3.849	<.001	3.719	<.001	3.411	<.001
	(.103)		(.109)		(.129)		(.299)	
Controls	No		No		No		Yes	
F-statistic	22.62		26.15		15.86		20.13	
N	859		859		859		828	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.069		.099		.100		.233	

Notes: In all regression tables, entries are nonstandardized OLS-regression coefficients. Robust standard errors are in parentheses and p-values (two-tailed) are reported. The reference category for the symbols manipulation conditions is the control (no symbols).

Likewise, I expect Haifa Bay respondents to be more affected by the differences in the argument quality of the communication (strong versus weak information), compared with centre respondents (H<sub>2</sub>).

Figure 3 graphically illustrates the conditional effects of the manipulations, within each of the two areas. As for the effect of the symbols manipulation (displayed in the left panel), the results show that the symbols had a greater effect on those living in the polluted Haifa Bay area, and not smaller as expected. Their exposure to the real symbols increased their trust in the policy by 0.39 SDs [0.18,0.61] compared with the no symbols group, and 0.19 SDs [0.03,0.4] compared to the fake symbols group. The centre participants who saw the real symbols also reported, on average, higher levels of trust in the policy, compared with the two control groups. However, these differences were smaller and not sufficiently significant. The effect of the information manipulation (displayed in the right panel) was roughly similar in both groups.

These results are at odds with the initial theoretical expectations. They suggest that those residing in the polluted area were equally, and perhaps even more, likely to be influenced by symbolic elements in the communication (and to a lesser extent, by the unfamiliar graphical elements). Similarly, these analyses do not provide evidence that Haifa Bay residents were more likely than others to scrutinize the communication, and differentiate between strong and weak arguments.

**TABLE 3** Regression analyses—Trust in recycling policy

	Trust in recycling policy							
	(2.1)		(2.2)		(2.3)		(2.4)	
	p-value		p-value		p-value		p-value	
Real symbols	.298 (.112)	.008	.300 (.112)	.007	.539 (.145)	<.001	.536 (.136)	<.001
Fake symbols	.192 (.113)	.085	.188 (.112)	.090	.433 (.148)	.004	.446 (.138)	.002
Weak information	-.421 (.090)	<.001	-.432 (.090)	<.001	-.398 (.117)	.001	-.320 (.109)	.005
Area (0 = Haifa Bay; 1 = centre)			.208 (.092)	.023	.617 (.185)	.001	.677 (.172)	<.001
Area × Real symbols					-.571 (.226)	.012	-.571 (.213)	.007
Area × Fake symbols					-.568 (.227)	.012	-.661 (.208)	.002
Area × Weak information					-.042 (.185)	.817	-.082 (.173)	.635
Constant	4.549 (.093)	<.001	4.468 (.098)	<.001	4.286 (.121)	<.001	3.060 (.253)	<.001
Controls	No		No		No		Yes	
F-statistic	9.67		8.11		5.85		16.6	
N	859		859		859		828	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.030		.035		.041		.195	

I further examined the interactions between the manipulations and the two areas via a series of multiple linear regression models, presented in Table 2. In model 1.1, I regress trust in Haifa Bay air pollution policy on the manipulations, then I add the areas and the interaction between them (models 1.2, 1.3). In model 1.4, I test the robustness of the interaction model by controlling for individual-level covariates.<sup>8</sup> In all regression models, I use robust standard errors to adjust for heteroskedasticity.<sup>9</sup> The results of these models are largely consistent with the raw findings presented above. In models 1.3 and 1.4 the interactions between living in the centre and the real symbols are negative and significant at the 90 per cent level, and the interactions with the weak information are insignificant. A comparison between models 1.2 and 1.3 via ANOVA reveals that adding these interactions does not significantly improve the model fit ( $F(3) = 1.33, p = .26$ ).

In summary, the findings with regard to the Haifa Bay air pollution policy indicate, tentatively, that higher levels of perceived personal relevance of the communication neither attenuate the positive effect of brand elements entangled in communications, nor enhance citizens' attention to their substantive content. As discussed in the methodology section, this analysis is based on an observational comparison, and hence a concern of endogeneity cannot be entirely ruled out. Accordingly, the null findings regarding the interactions between the areas and the manipulations can be the result of other, unobserved differences between the two populations. Yet, as explained, the experimental design provides two additional tests which enable this concern to be addressed: the comparison to the recycling policy, for which there are no relevance differences between the two areas, and the relevance manipulation. I now discuss the results of these two tests.

**TABLE 4** Regression analyses—Experimental manipulation of perceived personal relevance

	Trust in Haifa Bay air pollution policy					
	(3.1)		(3.2)		(3.3)	
		<i>p</i> -value		<i>p</i> -value		<i>p</i> -value
Real symbols	.633 (.162)	<.001	.704 (.227)	.005	.690 (.224)	.004
Fake symbols	.385 (.169)	.023	.337 (.226)	.169	.306 (.226)	.191
Weak information	-.699 (.135)	<.001	-.831 (.186)	<.001	-.935 (.184)	<.001
Relevance treatment	-.064 (.135)	.639	-.173 (.256)	.526	-.293 (.232)	.254
Relevance treatment × Real symbols			-.127 (.323)	.704	-.173 (.306)	.586
Relevance treatment × Fake symbols			.086 (.335)	.799	.103 (.325)	.747
Relevance treatment × Weak information			.242 (.270)	.376	.301 (.256)	.247
Constant	3.753 (.146)		3.814 (.171)		3.534 (.422)	
Controls	No		No		Yes	
<i>F</i> -statistic	10.49		6.19		10.65	
<i>N</i>	496		496		474	
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.068		.064		.209	

Table 3 replicates the above models for trust in the recycling policy. Overall, these models reveal relatively similar patterns to those found in the air pollution policy. Notice that Haifa Bay subjects reported lower trust on that policy as well, which may indicate that their negative perceptions about the Ministry's actions regarding air pollution in their area shapes their general perceptions of the organization. The directions of the simple effects and interaction terms remain intact, while the main effects and conditional effects are smaller and less significant.<sup>10</sup> Consistent with the air pollution policy, Haifa Bay subjects were more affected by the symbols, and the two areas responded similarly to the differences in the information. The fact that similar patterns are observed across these policies further weakens the hypotheses regarding the moderating role of personal relevance. It also rules out a possible argument that greater relevance enhances (rather than reduces) the effect of symbols. If this was the case, then we should not have found a similar interaction in relation to the recycling policy.

Next, Table 4 presents the two-way interactions between the relevance manipulation and the symbols and information manipulations. All models are restricted to Haifa Bay residents. In model 3.1, I regress trust in Haifa Bay air pollution policy on the three manipulations, then in model 3.2, I add the two-way interactions, and in model 3.3 I add controls. In all these models, the coefficients of the relevance treatment are negative but far from significant. The interactions between the real symbols and the relevance manipulation are negative, which indicates that among those who were primed to think about the personal relevance of the air pollution problem, the increase in trust due to the appearance of the familiar symbols was slightly smaller. However, these interaction coefficients are far from significant and relatively weak. The interactions between the relevance treatment and weak information

manipulations are also in the expected direction, but again insignificant.<sup>11</sup> Hence, these analyses also do not lend sufficient support for the hypotheses.

Two limitations about these latter analyses should be acknowledged. First, since the treatment manipulation did not affect participants' self-reporting of the personal relevance, there is no certainty that the manipulation actually succeeded in modifying the perceptions of those subjects. Second, these analyses have more limited statistical power, compared to the observational comparisons, since they are restricted only to the sample of Haifa Bay subjects. Still, based on the interactions in model 3.2, we can assess that even if the relevance manipulation does attenuate the effect of the real symbols, their effect on that group compared with the no symbols can be estimated as 0.37 SDs [0.08,0.659]. Remarkably, even when restricting the relevance treatment group to those who mentioned the air pollution as an acute environmental issue in their area of residence (67 per cent of that group,  $n = 176$ ), the real symbols still had a roughly similar positive effect on trust in the policy plan, compared with the no symbols ( $diff = .61$  [.05–1.17],  $t = 2.167$ ). Overall, the data indicate that even Haifa Bay residents that were reminded about the relevance of the air pollution were positively affected by familiar symbols of the ministry, at least to some degree.

Finally, I further explore the robustness of these findings through additional analyses, reported in the supplementary appendix (section 8). First, I replicate the main models while restricting the analyses to the first policy seen by the participants. This enables me to rule out the possibility that subjects' responses are affected by the manipulations in the first policy presented to them (a carryover effect), or by their evaluation of it (assimilation or contrast effects). Second, I restrict the analyses to Haifa Bay residents, and compare between those who are more/less likely to perceive the air pollution as personally relevant, based on two proxies: (a) subjects' city of residence, and its geographical proximity to the polluting industrial area; (b) parents of young children. Third, I replicate the analyses on the unfiltered sample. All these additional analyses are largely consistent with the analyses presented in the article, and do not provide evidence that greater levels of perceived personal relevance attenuate the effect of symbols.

## 5 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the growing public administration research on government branding and its potency to influence and possibly manipulate citizens' perceptions of government organizations and their policies and services. I explored whether persuasion through branding can also occur in policy matters that have significant, clear implications for citizens' well-being. I examined the hypothesis, derived from social psychology theory, that the effect of familiar symbolic elements in communications is attenuated the more citizens perceive the communication as personally relevant. I put this hypothesis to rigorous empirical testing using a survey experiment focused on air pollution policy, utilizing a natural variation in perceived personal relevance. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study to explore the moderating role of perceived personal relevance on citizens' responses to government branding, and to public communications at large.

Contrary to my expectations, and those of extant research in social psychology and marketing, I did not find that higher levels of perceived personal relevance attenuate the effect of symbols. While subjects residing in the polluted Haifa Bay reported in the survey that they perceive the governmental policy for reducing air pollution in that area as highly relevant for their lives, they were similarly, and perhaps even more, affected by the appearance of familiar brand elements in the communication of that policy plan. Furthermore, I find that even priming Haifa Bay residents to think about the personal relevance of the air pollution did not significantly attenuate their susceptibility to persuasion by the symbols.

How can we reconcile the findings of this study with the proposed theory? One plausible explanation is that despite the relatively high involvement of Haifa Bay residents, they were still not motivated enough to rely only on the central route and disregard the peripheral cues. If this explanation holds, it entails that citizens may resist the emotional effect of symbols perhaps only in rare circumstances, which are characterized by extremely high levels of personal relevance—policies that have immediate, tangible and unambiguous consequences for citizens' well-being.

Indeed, previous ELM scholars have acknowledged that the extreme personal relevance conditions generated in experimental settings can rarely be found in the world outside the laboratory (Petty and Cacioppo 1986, p. 206).

How can we explain the finding that the positive effect of the real symbols was stronger to some extent among Haifa Bay residents? Given that this pattern is also evident for the recycling policy, it is unlikely that it is linked to differences in perceived personal relevance. Rather, I tentatively suggest two other possible explanations. First, these patterns could be the result of the higher intercept of centre residents' trust in EPM policies, or a ceiling effect. More generally, it could be the case that symbolic elements are more effective in shifting people from low to medium levels of trust (i.e., as in the case of Haifa Bay subjects), than shifting them from medium to high levels (i.e., as in the case of centre subjects, and the recycling policy). In other words, symbols may be more effective in reducing citizens' distrust, than increasing their trust.<sup>12</sup>

A second explanation could be that EPM symbols attenuated the effect of Haifa Bay residents' negative prior beliefs on their judgements of the policy plans. Accordingly, there could be an interaction between the emotive effect of symbols and citizens' prior positions embedded in their group affiliation and social identities (in our case, the local identity of Haifa Bay residents). I theorize, tentatively, that the direction of the interaction depends on whether or not the symbolic associations are related to the relevant group identities. When the symbols are not strongly linked to identities of specific groups having strong prior positions on the policy or the organization, as in this case, symbols would attenuate the influence of the prior beliefs on people's judgements. Conversely, when symbolic associations activate group identities and make them more salient, they may enhance the effect of dominant positions embedded in them, and increase polarization between parties (Teodoro and An 2018). Hence, future research may further examine the interactions between different types of symbols and citizens' prior beliefs and group identities.

Still, several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The study focuses on environmental policy, and on a specific issue—air pollution in a specific area. Future studies may put these findings to further test by exploring cases of air pollution in other locations, as well as by exploring cases of other environmental policies, and other domains. In addition, future studies may conduct more rigorous comparisons between different levels of personal relevance through natural experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Finally, although this study includes an experimental manipulation for perceived personal relevance, I acknowledge the limitations of that test, namely its statistical power and the fact that the manipulation checks do not validate the effectiveness of the manipulation. Therefore, future studies may explore alternative approaches for manipulating this variable.

The results of this study, if generalizable, have significant implications. They suggest that citizens are susceptible to persuasion by government branding and symbolic communication, even with regard to salient, contested policy issues that have significant consequences for their own lives. Accordingly, these findings suggest that the boundaries of persuasion via branding are much wider than expected. This entails that public organizations can affect and manipulate citizens' perceptions in a broad array of policy domains and contexts by investing in branding. Alongside the benefits of this instrument in mitigating citizens' distrust, it also has the potency to yield a distorted, emotive, overoptimistic view of government organizations and their policies, which may undermine basic democratic accountability mechanisms. These concerns become even more prevalent and serious in the age of digital communication and artificial intelligence technologies, which enable organizations to engage with targeted audiences more easily, and to adapt messages and symbols to groups and individuals in a manner that would trigger their emotional responses more effectively. For good or for ill, citizens are affected by the emotional connections and associations of symbols.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For a thorough review of motivational and ability factors affecting likelihood to elaborate see Petty and Wegener (1998).
- <sup>2</sup> The full survey and summary statistics of all variables are available in the supplementary appendix. Replication materials are available at: [https://github.com/saaralonbarkat/SVIVA\\_2018](https://github.com/saaralonbarkat/SVIVA_2018).
- <sup>3</sup> The methodological aspects which are relevant for examining the additional hypotheses are described in Alon-Barkat (2019).
- <sup>4</sup> The socioeconomic characteristics of these selected cities are summarized in the supplementary appendix (section 1).
- <sup>5</sup> In the supplementary appendix (section 8), I replicate the main models on the unfiltered sample, with no significant change to the results.
- <sup>6</sup> I coded any reference to either air pollution or the chemical factories in the Haifa Bay area, as related to air pollution. To confirm inter-coder reliability, a second coder independently coded 70 observations (Krippendorff's alpha = .84).
- <sup>7</sup> Within the centre respondents, there were statistically significant differences between the symbols groups: regarding education levels and the percentage of parents; and between the information groups: regarding the percentage of parents of young children.
- <sup>8</sup> I control for all the variables that are included in the balancing tables, except for interest in environmental issues, which was reported by only half of the sample. In other analyses, I also included that variable, with no significant change to the main results.
- <sup>9</sup> Breusch-Pagan test confirms the presence of heteroskedasticity (for model 1.3, Breusch-Pagan test = 22.204,  $p = .002$ ). Robust standard errors are estimated using R sandwich package with estimation type 'HC1'.
- <sup>10</sup> The weaker effect of the real symbols can be partly explained by the fact that I used a different celebrity campaign image for the recycling policy, which was less familiar compared with the image presented for the Haifa Bay air pollution policy.
- <sup>11</sup> In additional analyses, I also examine the moderating effect of the relevance treatment for the recycling policy, and for centre subjects' responses to the air pollution policy. The interactions with the relevance treatment are insignificant.
- <sup>12</sup> This explanation is supported by the comparison of the percentages of subjects who reported very low levels of trust in the two policies. In the Haifa Bay, the percentage of those who reported a trust score of less than 2 in the air pollution policy decreased from 18 per cent in the no symbols group to 13 per cent in the real symbols. Among the centre subjects, only 11 per cent of the no symbols group reported a trust score lower than 2 in the no symbols, and this percentage dropped to 6 per cent among the real symbols group.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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APPENDIX A

Symbols manipulation

Haifa Bay Air-pollution policy

Control no-symbols

**הפחתת זיהום האוויר במפרץ חיפה**

המשרד להגנת הסביבה פועל להפחית את זיהום האוויר במפרץ חיפה באמצעות:

- הגברת הפיקוח על המפעלים במפרץ חיפה** - על מנת לצמצם את פליטות המזהמים המפעלים באזור המעשייה, פועל המשרד להגברת הפיקוח על המפעלים במספר דרכים. המשרד יעלה את מספר טווי הפיקוח, ידווח את השימוש בבקורות פתע, ויגדיל את היקף הקנסות והאכיפה למהומים.
- הפחתת פליטות עשן מכלי רכב במפרץ חיפה** - המשרד נוקט במספר פעולות מרכזיות במטרה להפחית את כמות זיהום האוויר מכלי רכב באזור. המשרד מוביל התקנה של מסנני חלקיקים במאות רכבים באזור, ומקדם הפעלת "אזור אוויר נקי" המגביל כניסת מל רכב מהומים.

המשרד להגנת הסביבה | מונגיו עבודה לשנת 2018

Control fake-symbols

**הפחתת זיהום האוויר במפרץ חיפה**



המשרד להגנת הסביבה פועל להפחית את זיהום האוויר במפרץ חיפה באמצעות:

- הגברת הפיקוח על המפעלים במפרץ חיפה** - על מנת לצמצם את פליטות המזהמים המפעלים באזור המעשייה, פועל המשרד להגברת הפיקוח על המפעלים במספר דרכים. המשרד יעלה את מספר טווי הפיקוח, ידווח את השימוש בבקורות פתע, ויגדיל את היקף הקנסות והאכיפה למהומים.
- הפחתת פליטות עשן מכלי רכב במפרץ חיפה** - המשרד נוקט במספר פעולות מרכזיות במטרה להפחית את כמות זיהום האוויר מכלי רכב באזור. המשרד מוביל התקנה של מסנני חלקיקים במאות רכבים באזור, ומקדם הפעלת "אזור אוויר נקי" המגביל כניסת מל רכב מהומים.

המשרד להגנת הסביבה | מונגיו עבודה לשנת 2018

Treatment

**הפחתת זיהום האוויר במפרץ חיפה**



המשרד להגנת הסביבה פועל להפחית את זיהום האוויר במפרץ חיפה באמצעות:

- הגברת הפיקוח על המפעלים במפרץ חיפה** - על מנת לצמצם את פליטות המזהמים המפעלים באזור המעשייה, פועל המשרד להגברת הפיקוח על המפעלים במספר דרכים. המשרד יעלה את מספר טווי הפיקוח, ידווח את השימוש בבקורות פתע, ויגדיל את היקף הקנסות והאכיפה למהומים.
- הפחתת פליטות עשן מכלי רכב במפרץ חיפה** - המשרד נוקט במספר פעולות מרכזיות במטרה להפחית את כמות זיהום האוויר מכלי רכב באזור. המשרד מוביל התקנה של מסנני חלקיקים במאות רכבים באזור, ומקדם הפעלת "אזור אוויר נקי" המגביל כניסת מל רכב מהומים.

המשרד להגנת הסביבה | מונגיו עבודה לשנת 2018

Recycling policy

Control no-symbols

**אצמום הפסולת והגדלת המיחזור**

המשרד להגנת הסביבה פועל לצמצם את כמות הפסולת ולהגדיל את היקף מיחזור הפסולת באמצעות:

- מיחזור אריות—הגברת הפיקוח על היצרנים** - על מנת לצמצם את כמות הפסולת הנוצרת מאריות ולעודד את מיחזורן, המשרד מיישם את חוק האריות, המסיל על היצרנים והיבואנים אחריות למיחזור האריות. המשרד יפעל להגביר את האכיפה מחם החוק, ויבצע אכיפה נגד יצרנים ויבואנים נוספים.
- אצמום השימוש בשקיות חד-פעמיות** - על מנת לצמצם את השימוש בשקיות מלסטיק חד-פעמיות, המשרד אסף את חוק השקיות, הקובע היסל על שקיות הנמכרות ברשתות השוקיות הגדולות ומסיל על הרשתות חובות דיווח. המשרד פועל ליישום החוק, ומעודד מעבר ללל יצרנים ויבואנים נוספים.

המשרד להגנת הסביבה | מונגיו עבודה לשנת 2018

Control fake-symbols

**אצמום הפסולת והגדלת המיחזור**



המשרד להגנת הסביבה פועל לצמצם את כמות הפסולת ולהגדיל את היקף מיחזור הפסולת באמצעות:

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- אצמום השימוש בשקיות חד-פעמיות** - על מנת לצמצם את השימוש בשקיות מלסטיק חד-פעמיות, המשרד אסף את חוק השקיות, הקובע היסל על שקיות הנמכרות ברשתות השוקיות הגדולות ומסיל על הרשתות חובות דיווח. המשרד פועל ליישום החוק, ומעודד מעבר ללל יצרנים ויבואנים נוספים.

המשרד להגנת הסביבה | מונגיו עבודה לשנת 2018

Treatment

**אצמום הפסולת והגדלת המיחזור**



המשרד להגנת הסביבה פועל לצמצם את כמות הפסולת ולהגדיל את היקף מיחזור הפסולת באמצעות:

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המשרד להגנת הסביבה | מונגיו עבודה לשנת 2018