

EVALUATING FOREIGN AID BRANDING: SURVEY EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE FROM BANGLADESH

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Branding of Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy

HOME » WORK WITH USAID » BRANDING

BRANDING

USAID's framework legislation, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, section 641, requires that all programs under the Foreign Assistance Act be identified appropriately overseas as "American Aid."

Further, since 9/11, America's foreign assistance programs have been more fully integrated into the United States' National Security Strategy.

This elevation to the so-called "third-D" (development being added to diplomacy and defense) increased the need for U.S. foreign assistance activities to be more fully identified in the host country as being provided "from the American People." We have been identified as "America's good-news story" and have been tasked to make our efforts more visible and better known in the countries where we work.

Source: <http://www.usaid.gov/branding> (2 May 2013)

Does It Work from a Foreign Policy Perspective?

- USAID Branding Website (as of April 2013):

Clear evidence of the value of the increased visibility of foreign aid came in the aftermath of the 2004/2005 U.S. tsunami relief effort, the first time USAID's new "brand identity" was used publicly.

According to a State Department study, in 2004, favorable opinions of the U.S. were at record lows in many Muslim countries. But, in early 2005, favorability of the U.S. nearly doubled in Indonesia (from 37 to 66 percent) thanks to the massive delivery of -- for the first time "well branded" -- U.S. foreign assistance.

- Relatively little other evidence (but see Goldsmith et al. 2014; Milner, Nielson, and Findley 2014)



Source: author

Why Would Branding Work?

- By providing goods and services needed by local populations (e.g. development projects and humanitarian relief), the United States generates feelings of gratitude that results in positive affect toward and trust in the United States
 - Blau (1964): social exchange (versus economic exchange) generates trust
 - Dunn and Schweitzer (2005); Bartlett and DeSteno (2006): gratitude creates trust
 - Brewer et al. (2004): trust in other countries generates positive attitudes toward those countries



Source:
explore.org/aviewfromthecave.com

Why Would Branding Not Work?

- Instead of creating gratitude, branding might create feelings of shame that result in resentment of or anger toward the outsider (Barber 2010)
- The instrumental motives of branding are transparent and may therefore create suspicion and mistrust rather than trust
- Local elites may be able to direct local grievances against the outside actor (Blaydes and Linzer 2012)



Externalities of Branding

- The foreignness of an intervention may create anxiety among citizens that reduces the use of the intervention (Ferguson 1994; Mosse 2005) *or* may make the intervention more attractive (Milner, Nielson and Findley 2014)
- When external actors provide basic goods and services, citizens may doubt the efficacy of their domestic government (Lake 2010; Sacks 2012)



Source: state.gov



Source: demotix.com

Survey Experimental Context

- The Smiling Sun Clinics are a network of NGO-run clinics throughout Bangladesh that seek to provide basic health services to poor communities
- Supported by USAID since 1997 in a series of programs
 - National Integrated Health and Population Program
 - NGO Service Delivery Project
 - Smiling Sun Franchise Program



Survey Experimental Context

- Many clinics are branded with the USAID logo
- Our field visits, however, revealed little preexisting awareness of the USAID logo or understanding of what it indicated



Source: author

Survey Experiment

- Nationally representative survey of N=2,294 with random assignment to either treatment or control
- Both treatment and control: watch a video about the Smiling Sun Clinics



Survey Experiment

- Control:
 - No reference to United States or USAID (local logo and name)
 - Open-ended question about source of funding
- Treatment:
 - USAID branding in video (logo and “From the American People”)
 - Same question about funding
 - Direct information about U.S. funding
 - Open-ended follow-up questions about why the U.S. funds the clinics and whether it is good for Bangladesh to use U.S. funding



Outcomes of Interest

- Follow-up questions probed respondents' attitudes toward...
 - ... the project itself
 - ... foreign aid
 - ... the United States as an international partner
 - ... commercial goods from the United States
 - ... Bangladeshi government institutions
- A mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions
 - Open-ended questions are still being transcribed, translated, and coded

Results: Attitudes toward the Project

- Ten percentage point difference in the number of people saying that SSCs are “successful” in their mission

Outcome	Unbranded: Proportion Saying “Yes”	Branded: Proportion Saying “Yes”	Difference	p-value for H ₀ : No Difference
Do you think the Smiling Sun Clinics are successful in providing health care to the poorest people of Bangladesh? Yes or No?	0.77 (0.02) N=659	0.87 (0.01) N=795	0.10 (0.01)	0.01

- Question about the continued expansion of SSCs received 99 percent support in both conditions

Results: Attitudes toward Foreign Aid

- No difference in proportion of people saying that an SSC expansion should be funded through foreign aid
 - High levels of support for using foreign aid in both conditions
- A 13 percentage point increase in proportion of people saying that U.S. should provide the funding

Outcome	Unbranded	Branded	Difference	p-value for H_0 : No Difference
How should the government finance the expansion of the Smiling Sun Clinics? ... with money from foreign countries?	0.76 (0.01) N=988	0.77 (0.01) N=1,086	0.01 (0.02)	0.55
Which government or IO would be best to ask? ... United States?	0.52 (0.02) N=840	0.65 (0.02) N=983	0.13 (0.02)	0.01

Results: Foreign Policy Attitudes

- Limited evidence of treatment affecting the expression of pro-U.S. attitudes on relevant foreign policy questions

Outcome	Unbranded	Branded	Difference	p-value for H ₀ : No Difference
Should Bangladesh trade more with U.S. or else diversify its trading partners? (“Trade More”)	0.16 (0.01) N=1,039	0.18 (0.01) N=1,125	0.01 (0.02)	0.41
Bangladeshi troops serving under a foreign commander in a UN PKO: ...US?	0.03 (0.005) N=776	0.02 (0.005) N=859	-0.007 (0.007)	0.34
U.S. Influence: Negative, Null, or Positive (-1, 0, 1)	0.80 (0.02) N=1,103	0.84 (0.01) N=1,191	0.05 (0.02)	0.03

Results: Commercial Attitudes

- Some evidence of an effect on attitudes toward U.S. commercial products

Outcome	Unbranded	Branded	Difference	p-value for H ₀ : No Difference
Trust in Brand: Coca-Cola (1 – 7)	4.47 (0.06) N=1,103	4.53 (0.05) N=1,191	0.06 (0.08)	0.44
Trust in Brand: Apple (1 – 7)	3.60 (0.07) N=1,103	3.87 (0.06) N=1,191	0.27 (0.09)	0.01
Number of six products (e.g., cars, mobile phones) for which respondents thought U.S. made “highest quality products” (0 – 6)	0.75 (0.05) N=518	0.88 (0.05) N=597	0.13 (0.07)	0.07

Results: Domestic Government Legitimacy

- Largely null effects with regard to how people rate domestic government institutions
 - Maybe a small increase for local government

Outcome	Unbranded	Branded	Difference	p-value for H ₀ : No Difference
Level of Confidence in National Government ... no, partial, or full (1 – 3)	2.36 (0.02) N=1,103	2.38 (0.02) N=1,191	0.01 (0.03)	0.64
Level of Confidence in Local Government ... no, partial, or full (1 – 3)	2.18 (0.02) N=1,103	2.24 (0.02) N=1,191	0.06 (0.03)	0.03
Level of Confidence in Village Leader ... no, partial, or full (1 – 3)	1.96 (0.02) N=1,103	1.96 (0.02) N=1,191	0.00 (0.03)	0.97
Tax department has the right to make people pay taxes ... strongly disagree ... strongly agree? (1 – 5)	4.08 (0.03) N=1,035	4.08 (0.03) N=1,116	0.01 (0.04)	0.82

Summary and Next Steps

- Branding has a large effect on assessment of project and assignment of responsibility for project
- Smaller effects on commercial attitudes and general assessment of U.S. influence
- Mostly null effects with regard to domestic government legitimacy
- Open-ended responses and sub-group analyses to follow!

