

INSTITUTIONAL ENDORSEMENTS AND PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

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Emerging Technologies and Public Authority

- Digital technologies increasingly shape core domains of public life
 - *Money and payments*
 - *Transportation and safety*
 - *Health and well-being*
- Governments and authoritative institutions routinely promote new technologies as safe, regulated and socially beneficial.

Trusted Institutions, Untrusted Technologies

- Institutional endorsement does not guarantee public support
 - *Digital ID initiatives framed as public goods → public resistance*
 - *Central banks trusted on inflation → skepticism toward CBDCs*
- Puzzle: If trust in institutions underpins policy legitimacy, why does institutional endorsement fail to translate into public support for emerging technologies?

Literature



Trust in public
institutions

Citizen's confidence in public institutions to act competently, fairly and in the public interest



Digital service adoption
in the public sector

Citizens who are more satisfied with e-gov tend to trust the government, and those who trust the government are also more likely to be satisfied with e-gov services.



Trust in technology

Trust in tech is inferred from users' prior experiences and satisfaction with similar systems.

Theory



“Expert systems”

Expert systems, such as governments or regulatory agencies, produce trust by establishing rules, standards and enforcement mechanisms (Bodó, 2020).



Source credibility

Source credibility and persuasion, shows that messages from trusted sources are more persuasive than identical messages from less trusted ones (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Whitehead Jr., 1968).



Institutional signals

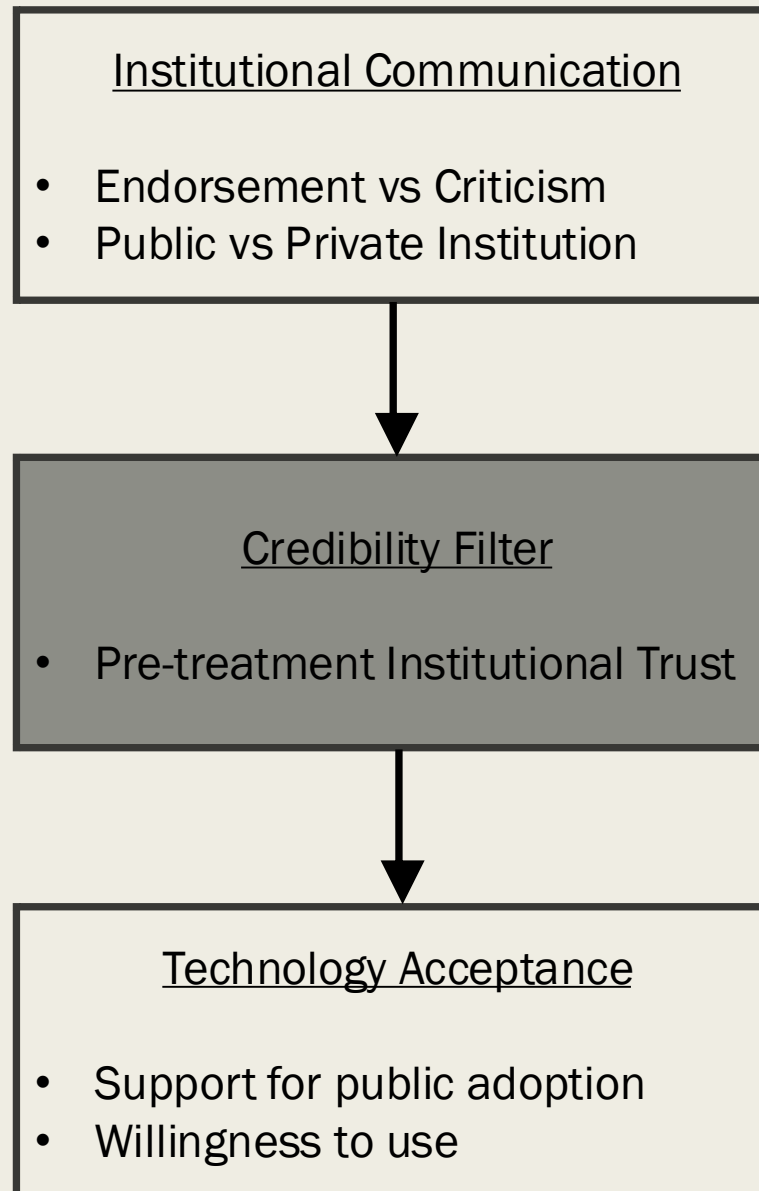
Institutional actors routinely communicate evaluative judgment about emerging technologies, framing them as safe and beneficial or as risky and premature.

Trust Shapes How Institutional Signals Are Interpreted

This paper aims to advance a theory in which institutional trust conditions how information about technological risk is interpreted.

- When personal experience is limited:
 - *Citizens rely on institutional signals*
 - *Signals are filtered through pre-existing institutional trust*
- High trust → signal amplified
- Low trust → signal discounted or resisted
- Trust shapes *how information is processed*.

Trust moderates how
institutional information is
processed under uncertainty



Case selection

Technology	Domain	Risk, Uncertainty
CBDCs	Finance	Privacy, surveillance
Autonomous vehicles	Transport	Physical safety
Brain–computer interfaces	Neurotech	Ethics, autonomy

Hypotheses

- H1a & b: Institutional endorsements increase support; criticisms decrease support
- H2 & 3: The positive/negative effect of institutional endorsements is stronger among individuals with higher pre-treatment trust in the endorsing/criticizing institution.
- H4: Public institutional signals have stronger effects on support for emerging technologies than private institutions.

Survey flow

- (1) Familiarity with technology
 - *How familiar are you with CBDCs?*
- (2) Trust in technology
 - *I trust that self-driving vehicles would operate safely on public roads.*
 - *I would feel comfortable riding in a self-driving vehicle*
- (3) Trust matrix (public/private institutions)
- (4) Survey experiment

Experimental design

- Within-subjects survey experiment, vignettes (Canada, $n = \sim 1,000$)
- Each respondent evaluates:
 - 3 emerging technologies
- Randomized for each technology:
 - Endorsement vs. criticism
 - Public vs. private institution

Autonomous vehicles, also known as self-driving cars, are vehicles that can drive themselves.

Suppose Transport Canada stated that self-driving cars meet safety standards for widespread public use.

Based on this information, would you be more or less likely to support the public adoption of self-driving cars?

Much less
likely

Somewhat
less likely

Neither more
nor less
likely

Somewhat
more likely

Much more
likely

If a self-driving vehicle were available today, how likely would you be to use it?

Extremely
unlikely

Somewhat
unlikely

Neither likely
nor unlikely

Somewhat
likely

Extremely
likely

Example: AVs

- Institution: public
- Treatment: endorsement

Brain-computer interfaces are devices that let the brain communicate directly with computers or machines.

Suppose a private medical technology company advised against public rollout of brain-computer interface implants.

Based on this information, would you be more or less likely to support the public adoption of brain-computer interface implants?

Much less
likely

Somewhat
less likely

Neither more
nor less
likely

Somewhat
more likely

Much more
likely

If a brain-computer interface implant were available today, how likely would you be to use it?

Extremely
unlikely

Somewhat
unlikely

Neither likely
nor unlikely

Somewhat
likely

Extremely
likely

Example: BCIs

- Institution: private
- Treatment: criticism

Why Institutional Trust Matters for Technology Governance

- Theoretical contribution
 - Trust conditions credibility under uncertainty
- Policy relevance
 - Communication strategies matter
 - Institutional legitimacy shapes technology governance outcomes
- Institutions need credibility, not just technical capacity.

THANK YOU

Please help.