

## *Mass Publicity of Chinese Court Decisions: Market-Driven or Authoritarian Transparency?*

Yingmao Tang and John Zhuang Liu

### ***Abstract***

This article discusses the online disclosure rates of Chinese court decisions, a measure of judicial transparency, based on a study of over 40 million court decisions disclosed on the designated website of the Supreme People's Court of China between 2008 and 2016. We tested the online disclosure rates in various provinces against three determinants of government transparency suggested by existing theories: authority, market development level, and public trust in the judiciary. The results suggest that authority plays a decisive role, and the level of market development a limited role, in improving judicial transparency. We reject in part the hypothesis that public trust improves judicial transparency, or vice versa.

In November 2013, the Supreme People's Court of China (SPC) issued a notice (revised in 2016, the "2013 SPC Notice" hereafter) mandating that Chinese courts at all levels from January 2014 upload judicial decisions to a centralized website operated by the SPC (the "SPC website" hereafter).<sup>1</sup> As of December 2017, over 40 million judicial decisions had been made publicly available on the website.<sup>2</sup> This mass publicity of Chinese court decisions has generated enormous opportunities for academic

---

**Yingmao Tang** is an Associate Professor in Peking University Law School, China.

**John Zhuang Liu** is an Assistant Professor of Law and Economics in the School of Management and Economics, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, China. Correspondence should be sent to [zhuangliu@cuhk.edu.cn](mailto:zhuangliu@cuhk.edu.cn).