

V. Specific Aspects of Persuasion in Advertising: how Attitudes Towards a Product Change According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model

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Abstract

Understanding the processes through which different aspects of communication in marketing affect consumer behavior is obviously important for many reasons but still far from complete. For more than 30 years studies in social psychology and marketing focused on analyzing consumers evaluation of issues, people or products under the influence of advertisements in different media. Research that was conducted in order to enlighten the process of attitude formation and change was done under different theoretical framework.

As the authors of one of the most popular persuasion theories, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981) claim, most theories emphasize one of two distinct routes to attitude change. First, called the central route, views attitude change as a result of persons careful consideration of information while the second, the so-called peripheral route, perceives change as a result of attitude object association with positive or negative cues.

It is also necessary to mention that the research conducted in this area has focused on the concept of involvement as an important moderator of the amount and type of communication processing. The objective of this research came from the fact that it is still not completely clear what are the situations in which consumers actively process information about the product and when do they concentrate more on the analysis of the advertisement itself. As an attempt to test the applicability of the Elaboration Likelihood Model in the area of advertising, we tried to examine some of the basic elements of the model.

More specifically, the major goal of the experiment reported in this paper was to test the hypothesis that under high involvement conditions, attitudes are affected through the central route to persuasion, while under low involvement conditions; attitudes are affected via the peripheral route.

Povzetek

Specifični vidiki prepričevanja v oglaševanju: kako se na podlagi modela Elaboration Likelihood spreminja odnos do izdelka

Razumevanje vpliva različnih vidikov komunikacije v marketingu na vedenje potrošnikov je nedvomno pomembno, vendar je še nepopolno. Več kakor 30 let se študije na področju socialne psihologije in marketinga ukvarjajo z analiziranjem potrošnikove ocene pomembnih vprašanj, ljudi ali izdelkov pod vplivom oglasov v različnih medijih. Raziskava, ki je bila izvedena z namenom osvetlitve

procesa oblikovanja in spreminjanja vedenja potrošnikov, je temeljila na več teoretičnih konceptih. kakor trdita avtorja ene najbolj priljubljenih teorij prepričevanja Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty in Cacioppo, 1981), večina teorij izpostavlja eno izmed dveh distinktivnih poti, ki vodita v spremembo vedenja. Prva, centralna pot šteje spremembo kot posledico posameznikovega skrbnega razmisleka o informaciji. Druga, periferna pot pa spremembo vidi kot rezultat vedenjske povezave objekta s pozitivnimi ali negativnimi dražljaji. Treba je omeniti tudi, da je raziskovanje na tem področju koncept vpletenosti upoštevalo kot pomemben regulator količine in vrste komunikacijskega procesiranja.

Namen raziskave sloni na dejstvu, da še vedno ni popolnoma jasno, v katerih situacijah potrošniki aktivno procesirajo informacije o izdelku in kdaj se osredotočijo bolj na analizo samega oglasa. Da bi preučili uporabnost modela Elaboration Likelihood na področju oglaševanja, smo poizkusili proučiti nekaj osnovnih elementov modela. Bolj specifično, največji cilj eksperimenta, opisanega v članku, je bil testirati hipotezo, da je na vedenje pod pogoji visoke vključenosti vplivano po centralni poti, pod pogoji nizke vključenosti pa po periferni.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important factors that have to be considered in advertising planning is a full understanding of the communication and persuasion process. Even though a lot has been researched and written about the effects of advertising and how it works, it is important to take into consideration that this is a subject with few definitive answers. Over the last three decades many studies concentrated on product evaluation by the customer and how the advertising message affects this evaluation.

As an attempt to provide a specific test of a persuasion theory utility for understanding the effectiveness of an advertising message a study was conducted in which three variables were manipulated: the involvement level while reading an advertising message (high and low depending on the personal relevance as perceived by the subject); the quality of the arguments in the message; and the credibility of the message source.

The present study has emerged and is based on a substantial body of research done by the authors of the Elaboration likelihood model. Even though there is considerable data on the persuasion process, there is insufficient data information on the elements of persuasion in the advertising context.

The primary purpose of the research reported here is to test empirically several specific hypothesized characteristics of the persuasion process in an advertising context. Two key issues are addressed: first, whether the quality of the arguments of a persuasive message has a greater impact on attitudes under high rather than low involvement conditions; and the second - will the credibility of a source have a greater impact on attitudes under low rather than high involvement.

A synthesis of the comparative literature on the persuasion process and the Elaboration likelihood model is presented first. Next, the concept of involvement, as an important moderator of information processing is discussed. The next two sections go over some findings concerned with the quality of

arguments and message source characteristics as important elements of the analyzed model and this particular research. Consequently, the application of the Elaboration likelihood model in an advertising context is examined and specific hypotheses are developed. Finally, the results are presented and their implications for future theory development are discussed.

THE PERSUASION PROCESS

When attitude change is studied in marketing communication it is primarily focused on the process of persuasion (Eagly and Chaiken, 1984). Persuasion can be defined as a form of communication in which the communicator tries to affect his audiences judgments, attitudes, beliefs or actions through using rational arguments or information.

Theories of persuasion were postulated in order to explain changes in attitudes and beliefs of people exposed to relatively complex messages. These messages usually express the position of the communicator and are made of one or more arguments that support that position. Traditionally psychologists explained changes in attitudes and beliefs through the fact that communication affects one or more psychological processes that consequently cause change. The success of the persuasion process depends on a whole variety of factors that include cognitive, affective and motivational components.

There has been substantial progress in understanding persuasion during the last 35 years. Since Hovland, Janis and Kelley (according to Eagly and Chaiken, 1993) presented their first work in this area in 1953, social psychologists have tried to explain the psychological mediation of the effects of persuasive communications. During a period when many researchers studied variables such as level of fear, new theoretical frames were constructed, inspired mostly by the work of William McGuire (1960, 1972). These "new" persuasion theories have focused on the cognitive issues that have dominated social psychology of that time. Even though much work has been concentrated in this field, today there is still no general theory in the area of persuasion.

In order to analyze the receiver of communication we examine a model that integrates some of the factors that may account for different types and levels of cognitive processing of a message.

THE ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL

According to the Elaboration likelihood model, developed by psychologists Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo (1981) a basic dimension of information processing and attitude change is the depth or amount of information processing. At one extreme, the consumer can consciously and diligently consider the information provided in the ad in forming attitudes toward the advertised brand. Here attitudes are changed or formed by careful consideration, thinking and

integration of information relevant to the product or object of advertising. The consumer is highly involved in processing the advertisement. This type of persuasion is named the central route to attitude change (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

In contrast to such central processing there also exists what Petty and Cacioppo call the peripheral route to attitude change. In the peripheral route, attitudes are formed and changed without active thinking about the brands attributes and its pros and cons. Through peripheral processing the persuasive impact occurs by associating the brand with positive or negative aspects or executional cues in the ad that really aren't central to the worth of the brand. For example rather than considering the strength of the arguments presented in an advertisement an audience member may accept the conclusion that the brand is superior because of numerous arguments offered (even if they were not really strong). The other reasons for accepting the conclusion could be an expert endorsee, or an attractive and likable one. The same effect could be the result of the fact that the consumer liked the way the advertisement was made, the music in it and so on.

Conversely, a conclusion may be rejected not because of the logic of the argument but because of some surrounding cues. These involve the fact that the advocated position may have been too extreme or the endorsee may suspect that the magazine in which the ad appears is not respected.

Attitudes resulting from central processing should be relatively strong and enduring, resistant to change and predict behavior better than attitudes formed through the peripheral route. Such an observation makes sense particularly if the extreme cases are considered. If a person reaches a conclusion after conscious thought and deliberation, that conclusion should be firmer than if he or she merely based attitudes on peripheral cues. Some research shows that attitudes formed centrally, because of higher motivation, predict purchase intentions more strongly (MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch, 1986). However attitudes formed peripherally can still end up determining choice, especially if the central information available to the consumer doesn't really help in selection.

An advertiser setting objectives needs to predict whether in a given context the central route is feasible whether audience members will actually apply the effort involved to deeply process an advertisement with strong arguments. If this is unlikely and the consumer is more likely to form attitudes peripherally, then the advertiser is better off creating an ad with likable or credible spokespeople, rather than relying on strong logical arguments.

Petty and Cacioppo have proposed the framework that predicts when the audience member will cognitively elaborate and follow the central route. Two factors identified in the ELM as significant are: an audience member's motivation to process information and ability to process information. Consumers are most likely to process centrally when both

motivation and ability are high; when either is low, peripheral processing is more likely.

For an advertisement to be relevant the consumer should be a user or a potential user of the product. Such motivational involvement can also be dependent on the message itself; comparative advertisements for example get consumers more motivated to process messages centrally, compared with non-comparative ones.

In addition to being motivated to process information centrally, the consumer must also have the ability and capacity to process information. There is no point in attempting to communicate information or make an argument that the target audience simply cannot process without a level of effort that is unacceptably high.

Involvement

In recent years substantial research has been done analyzing the concept of involvement and its importance in determining the way in which advertising shapes consumer attitudes and behaviors. There is substantial agreement that the degree to which the consumer is involved is of critical importance in determining which part of the advertisement will shape the consumer's final attitude toward the brand (Petty, Cacioppo and Goldman, 1981)

It is also commonly agreed that consumers are highly involved when they consider the message content more relevant (high motivation), when they have the knowledge and experience to think about that message content (high ability) and when the environment in which that message content is presented does not interfere with such thinking (high opportunity). The motivational involvement factor is determined both by the individual's intrinsic level of interest in the product category, as well as more temporary factors, such as how close the consumer is to the purchase in that product category and the degree of perceived risk in making a purchase in that category.

As we already mentioned according to the ELM one of the ways of affecting attitudes is by varying the argument quality in the message. Another possibility is to, in the case of non-processing the arguments, use simple executional elements in a persuasive situation.

Since the cues are defined in a way that allows independent processing of arguments it is possible to test their effect applying them individually to a certain advocated position (without the persuasive arguments). If this kind of manipulation can serve as a potential cue, which basically means that it can independently affect attitudes even though there is a lack of arguments.

The quality of arguments

One of the central terms in the Elaboration likelihood model is, what the authors call, argument quality. Model defines this

variable in empirical terms and defines a method that generates messages that contain high and low quality arguments. Argument quality is defined through the perception of the receiver and their opinion of the strength and weakness of particular arguments in the message. In order to construct a message with either strong or weak arguments Petty and Cacioppo (1986, pg. 133) suggested a method that consists of three basic steps. First, its necessary do develop a big number of intuitively strong or weak arguments on a certain topic, after what these arguments are rated in pre-testing. Finally, the messages are presented to a second group of subjects that are asked to evaluate the presented arguments and write down all the thoughts connected to them. By using this method strong messages have been operationalized as the ones that predominantly initiate positive thoughts about the message position, while weak messages are defines as the ones that initiate predominantly negative thoughts.

Petty, Harkins and Williams (1980, according to Eagly and Chaiken 1993) have applied this procedure in developing "weak", "very weak" and "strong" messages that advocated developing a final college exam. A similar procedure was conducted by Ćorkalo (1997) at the University of Zagreb. The authors of the model have also conducted a number of experiments in which this was the procedure to reach high and low quality arguments that were the core of further research. The same procedure is applied in this work.

Message source characteristics

Affecting attitudes is easier when the receiver considers the source of the message credible. This characteristic is a combination of two basic dimensions: trust and expertise. A source that has no obvious reasons for incomplete, not objective or incorrect information is a source that is perceived as trustworthy. Most people perceive their good friends as people that can be trusted but at the same time tend to believe that they dont have the adequate knowledge level to be trustworthy. Sales people that have the expertise are not perceived as people that can be trusted. Research shows that credibility increases if the source of the message is perceived as physically attractive (Mills and Harvey, 1972).

Research in social psychology has supported the view that different variables affect persuasion under high and low involvement conditions. For example, the quality of the arguments contained in a message has had a greater impact on persuasion under conditions of high rather than low involvement (Petty and Cacioppo, 1979; Petty, Cacioppo and Heesacker, 1981). On the other hand, peripheral cues such as the expertise or attractiveness of a message source (Cheiken 1980; Petty, Cacioppo and Goldman, 1981) have had a greater impact on persuasion under conditions of low rather than high involvement. In sum, under high involvement conditions people appear to apply the cognitive effort required to evaluate the issue-relevant arguments presented, and their attitudes are a function of this information processing activity (central route). Under low involvement

conditions attitudes appear to be affected by simple acceptance and rejection cues in the persuasion context and are less affected by argument quality (peripheral route).

THE APPLICATION OF THE ELM IN THE ADVERTISING CONTEXT

From the advertising planning point of view, the key implication of this kind of research is that the motivation and ability of the target audience are the key criteria in objective setting. If motivation and ability are both high and central processing is most likely, it makes sense to try to focus on changing attitudes through strong arguments.

But if either motivation or ability are low and peripheral processing is more likely, the objective should be to create a likeable feeling for the brand through the choice of the spokesperson and or executional elements, rather than through the strength and quality of arguments about the brand.

Research in the area of attitude formation and change have labeled the persuasion process as a result of rational elaboration of arguments relevant to the topic and attributes connected to the product (central route), or in other cases as a result of connecting the attitude object to different positive and negative peripheral cues (peripheral route). During the last three decades social psychologists and consumer psychologists accentuated the central route of persuasion.

In their experiment from 1986, Petty, Cacioppo and Goldman concluded that the informational value of an advertising message in certain conditions can be the most important determination of attitudes toward a product, but in other cases non-content manipulations can prove more important. More specifically in situations where the advertising message is about a low involvement product (a product that with its characteristics causes a low level of involvement), the credibility of the message source can be a very important determinant of forming attitudes toward the product. In contrast, when the message is about a high involvement product, the credibility of the source doesnt play a significant role in attitude formation. This information indicates that accentuating the arguments in a message isnt always the answer and that peripheral cues have been neglected in certain situations.

GOAL AND HYPOTHESES OF THE RESEARCH

Understanding the process through which different aspects of communication in marketing affect consumer behavior is very important and not yet clear enough. Many different studies concentrated on analyzing the ways through which consumers evaluate issues, people or products under the influence of advertisements in different media. Research that was conducted in order to enlighten the process of attitude formation and change was done under different theoretical

framework. Even though particular persuasion theories differ in their terminology, postulates, motives and effects, they all put emphasis on one of two alternative routes to persuasion. Experts agree that neither of these two routes can for itself explain the discrepancies among results in this kind of research.

The main goal of this research came from the fact that it is still not completely clear in what situations consumers actively process information about the product and in which situations they concentrate more on the analysis of the advertisement itself.

It is also still uncertain how future behavior can be predicted from the changes caused by advertising messages. As an attempt to test the applicability of the Elaboration Likelihood Model in the area of advertising, we tried to examine some of the basic elements of the model.

As we already mentioned according to the ELM one of the ways of affecting attitudes is by varying the argument quality in the message. Another possibility is to, in the case of non-processing the arguments, use simple executional elements in a persuasive situation.

Since the cues are defined in a way that allows independent processing of arguments it is possible to test their effect applying them individually to a certain advocated position (without the persuasive arguments). This kind of manipulation can serve as a potential cue, which basically means that it can independently affect attitudes even though there is a lack of arguments. The two major hypotheses were:

1. The quality of the arguments presented in the advertising message will have a greater impact on product attitudes under high rather than under low conditions.
2. The credibility of the message source will have a greater impact on product attitudes under low than under high involvement conditions.

METHOD

A total of 593 male and female undergraduates at the University of Zagreb participated in the experiment. Subjects were randomly assigned to each of the cells in a 2 (involvement: high or low) \times 2 (argument quality: strong or weak) \times 2 (credibility: high or low) factorial design. The subjects were isolated from each other so they could complete the experiment independently, and subjects in a different session participated in different experimental conditions

Procedure

In the study 8 different booklets were used. The first page of all advertising booklets explained that the study concerned the evaluation of different advertisements for a line of personal hygiene products. The first page also involved the involvement manipulation. The instructions told subjects to continue

through the booklet at their own pace and to raise their hands when finished. They also had an option of ordering any of the products that were mentioned in the booklet at a discount price. The advertisement booklet contained six advertising messages for six products. The position of crucial advertisement for Shield toothpaste (brand name Shield was invented for the purpose of this research) varied. When subjects had completed reading the ad booklet, they were given a questionnaire; the subjects were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Involvement

Involvement was embedded in the cover page of the booklet. In the introduction for subjects a free gift was offered for participation in the experiment. Half of the subjects were informed that they were a part of a small group of people whose opinion would be taken into consideration when constructing final ads, and as a gesture of appreciation would be given a Shield toothpaste. The other half was informed that they were a part of a very big group of people who will give their opinion on the ads.

Messages

In the experiment 6 advertising messages for personal hygiene products were used. The products (with an invented brand name Shield) included a toothpaste, a toothbrush, hair shampoo, liquid soap and soap bars. The reason for choosing this kind of products is in their universality and wide target market. We assumed that most of the subjects used these products and that there arent any big differences in the initial attitude towards the toothpaste (which was the target product). We also assumed that any gender differences would be the smallest in the case of toothpaste. The brand name (Shield) was invented in the attempt to find a name that doesnt differ a lot from the existing popular brands, but doesnt sound too much like any of them.

Argument quality

Based on previous research and the methods advised by the authors of the model (Petty, Harkins and Williams, 1980; Petty and Cacioppo 1986) we constructed the arguments of the message. The construction of messages is one of the most sensitive parts of the experiment, because argument quality is a determinant of the route of persuasion that was taken. A variety of arguments for different Shield products were pretested for potency on a sample of undergraduates. Based on descriptive statistics we chose 4 arguments with highest average grades and 4 with lowest. In the strong arguments advertisement the toothpaste was characterized as clinically tested, completely natural, breath refreshing and preventing decay. In the weak arguments version of the advertisement the toothpaste was characterized as a toothpaste that brings the taste of nature in your mouth,

trendy, makes you beautiful and is a fine addition to your bathroom.

All the messages consisted of 110 to 113 words in order to avoid any message length effect.

Peripheral cue

As a peripheral cue in the experiment we manipulated the credibility of the message source. Five different sources were pretested on a group of student and the analysis of variance showed that the most credible was the "Stomatology Institute in Harvard" and the least credible was "Student Ivana P."

DEPENDENT MEASURES

Attitudes

In order to measure attitudes toward the attitude object (Shield White toothpaste) we used semantic differential scales that are most common in these kinds of research. Five different bipolar scales were used and they were bordered by terms like extremely high/extremely low quality, attractive product/not attractive product, worth buying/not worth buying.

All of the scales used were seven point scales (from 1 to 7, with 4 being neutral). A linear combination of all five scales represented an index of object evaluation, or the attitude itself (Prišlin, according to Čorkalo 1997). Theoretically the possible attitude span went from 7 (extremely negative) to 35 (extremely positive), while the value of 20 signified a neutral attitude.

Behavioral intention

Behavioral intention of subjects was measured through the expressed evaluation in the likelihood of using the Shield toothpaste. Evaluation was also made on a seven point scale bordered with very likely / not at all likely.

Several questions were asked to check on the experimental manipulation and subjects were asked to try and list as many of the product as they could recall in any order, some specific questions about the toothpaste advertisement and other questions.

MANIPULATION CHECKS

Subjects were asked to name all the products that they can remember from the booklet, to state which one they read most carefully, how personally relevant did they perceive the message about the toothpaste, how much effort they put into reading the toothpaste ad in comparison to other ads and finally to state the name of the toothpaste (Shield White). In response to all the questions the difference in answers between the high and low involvement groups was satisfactory and statistically significant.

As a check of the argument persuasiveness manipulation, subjects were given three bipolar scales that questioned the level of understanding, strength and conviction. Here also the difference between the experimental groups (strong and weak arguments) was statistically significant.

To assess the effectiveness of the endorser manipulation only one question was asked (did the subject find the endorser credible) and here also the difference between two groups (high and low credibility) was statically significant.

Results and discussion

As was noted earlier, previous research on attitude formation and change has tended to characterize the persuasion process as resulting either from a thoughtful (though not necessarily rational) consideration of issue relevant arguments and product relevant attributes (central route), or from associating the attitude objects with various positive and negative cues and operating with simple decision rules (peripheral route).

According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, personal relevance is thought to be only one determinant to the route to persuasion. Personal relevance is thought to increase a persons motivation for engaging in a careful consideration of the issue or product relevant information presented in order to form an opinion. Just as different situations may induce different motivation to think, different people may typically employ different styles of information processing.

Since the main goal of this study was an attempt to test the applicability of the model in an advertising situation, we primarily wanted to check some basic assumptions of the model. We were interested in the relation of the level of involvement, argument quality and the credibility of the source in a situation where the persuasion message is an advertising message. In order to check the relationship between the mentioned variables and their specific and combined impact on attitudes, we conducted a three-way analysis of variance (shown in Table 1.)

Table 1: Results of a three-way analysis of variance on subjects attitudes, according to the experimental design

THE SOURCE OF VARIANCE	sum of squares	DF	average square	F	P
Main effects	362,447	3	120,816	6,171	0,000
Personal relevance	347,598	1	347,598	17,75	0,000
Argument quality	0,147	1	0,147	0,007	0,931
Source credibility	16,750	1	16,750	0,856	0,358
Two-way interactions	75,907	3	25,302	1,292	0,278
Personal relevance					
× Argument quality	31,471	1	31,471	1,607	0,206
Personal relevance					
× Source credibility	40,094	1	40,094	2,048	0,154
Argument quality					
× Source credibility	1,373	1	1,373	0,070	0,791
Three-way interactions	39,847	1	39,847	2,035	0,155
PR × Argument quality					
× Credibility	39,847	1	39,847	2,035	0,155

Three-way analysis of variance (high/low involvement, strong/weak message and credible/not credible source)

shows the attitudes of subjects after the experimental manipulation. ANOVA points to only one main effect the influence of the level of personal relevance on the attitude expression, where highly involved subjects have a generally more positive attitude than the ones with low involvement. None of the other experimental manipulations lead to a statistically significant effect on the expression of attitudes.

The correlation analysis of the of the expression of attitudes towards the product and the behavioral intention of subjects has proved to be statistically significant ($r = 0,63, p < 0,001$), which bring us to an assumption that subjects, in this experiment, while expressing their behavioral intention indirectly expressed their attitudes. If we except this possible explanation of subjects purchase intentions as an indicator of their attitudes it is possible to view the results through the Elaboration Likelihood Model.

Table 2: Results of a three-way analysis of variance on subjects behavioral intentions, according to the experimental design

THE SOURCE OF VARIANCE	sum of squares	DF	average square	F	P
Main effects	57,972	3	19,324	8,622	0,000
Personal relevance	45,788	1	45,788	20,430	0,000
Argument quality	1,376	1	1,376	0,614	0,434
Source credibility	11,753	1	11,753	5,244	0,023
Two-way interactions	25,983	3	8,661	3,864	0,010
Personal relevance × Argument quality	11,477	1	11,477	5,121	0,025
Personal relevance × Source credibility	11,840	1	11,840	5,283	0,022
Argument quality × Source credibility	1,654	1	1,654	0,738	0,391
Three-way interactions	1,454	1	1,454	0,649	0,421
PR × Argument quality × Credibility	1,454	1	1,454	0,649	0,421

The three-way ANOVA in Table 2 shows a statistically significant main effect of the personal relevance level (which is not surprising, considering there is such a main effect on attitudes as well), and a main effect of source credibility. As in the former case of attitude there is no main effect of the argument quality level which is quite surprising, but can be partially explained with the specific situation (that advertising is).

More interesting are the two statistically significant interactions. It is clear from Table 2. that the effect of the personal relevance and argument quality interaction has proven to be statistically significant ($p = 0,025$). This means that in the low personal relevance situation, the subjects that were exposed to a "weak" message demonstrate a stronger behavioral intention ($M = 3,17$) than the group with the "strong" message ($M = 2,84$) even though this difference is not statistically significant ($p = 0,259$). In the high involvement situation the results are reversed subjects that listened to a "weak" message demonstrate a significantly weaker behavioral intention ($M = 3,59$) than the ones that were exposed to a "strong" message ($M = 4,19$), ($p = 0,045$).

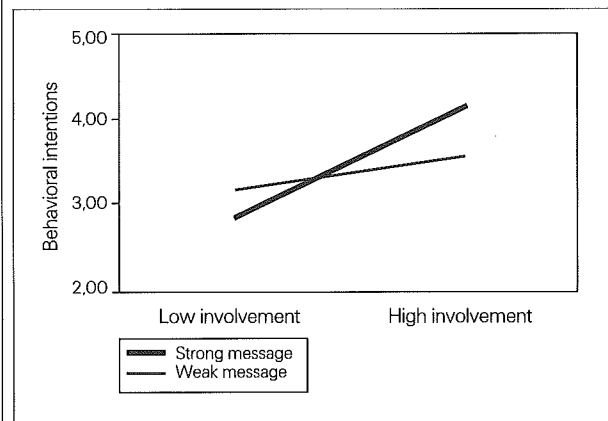
The fact that the interaction of these two variables was statistically significant ($p = 0,025$) is in agreement with the

basic assumptions of the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Based on the persuasion influence of the argument quality shown, the route to persuasion can be determined. If in our analysis we comply with the elements offered by the model, we can conclude that there was a stronger persuasive influence in high elaboration conditions than in low elaboration conditions.

Table 3: Behavioral intentions according to the level of personal relevance and argument quality

	HIGH ARGUMENT QUALITY			LOW ARGUMENT QUALITY			P
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	
High personal relevance	4,19	1,453	58	3,59	1,530	59	0,045
Low personal relevance	2,84	1,436	58	3,17	1,666	58	0,259

Figure 1: Behavioral intentions according to the level of personal relevance and argument quality

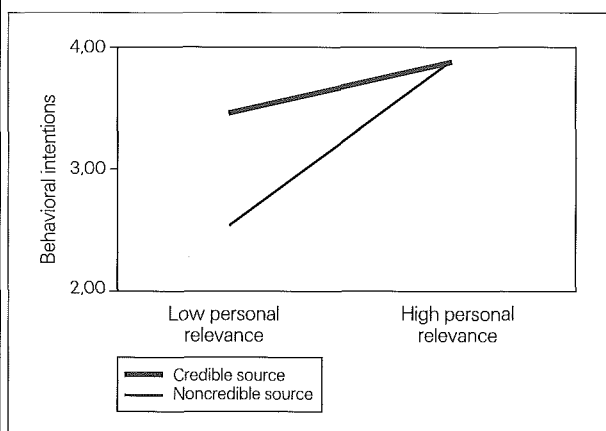


According to the ELM subjects should, in high elaboration conditions, distinguish better between high and low quality arguments (what is an indicator of the central route to persuasion). The interaction shown in Table 3. and Figure 1. proves that subjects in high involvement conditions distinguish different levels of argument quality, while in low involvement conditions that doesn't happen. This distinction of two different levels of argument quality (in high involvement situation), points to a conclusion that the central route to persuasion was active, which proves one aspect of the model right. We can conclude that high motivation insures a careful argument analysis of the message. If, on the other hand motivation for cognitive analysis doesn't exist, subjects will be under the same influence of the message regardless of the quality level.

Table 4: Behavioral intentions according to the level of personal relevance and source credibility

	HIGH SOURCE CREDIBILITY			LOW SOURCE CREDIBILITY			P
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	
High personal relevance	3,88	1,570	57	3,90	1,469	60	0,935
Low personal relevance	3,47	1,592	58	2,55	1,391	58	0,001

Figure 2: Behavioral intentions according to the level of personal relevance and source credibility



The effects of interaction of personal relevance and source credibility on behavioral intentions (Table 4. and Figure 2.) have also proven statistically significant ($p = 0,022$). The difference in the expressed behavioral intentions among the group with high personal relevance and a noncredible source ($M = 3,90$) and the group that was exposed to a credible source ($M = 3,88$) is practically non-existent and is not statistically significant ($p = 0,935$). In low involvement conditions the situation is different, the subjects that were exposed to a credible source ($M = 3,47$) show a statistically stronger behavioral intention ($p = 0,001$) than the ones that were exposed to a noncredible source ($M = 2,55$). This also proves the model right and enables us to determine the route to persuasion. According to the model, the explanation lies in a stronger persuasion influence in low elaboration conditions and a weaker one in high elaboration conditions. It can be concluded that in low elaboration conditions, the subjects were under the greater influence of source credibility, which points to peripheral route of persuasion.

The present study suggests that, although the informational content of an advertisement may be the most important determinant of product attitudes under some circumstances, in other circumstances such non-content manipulations as the credibility of the product endorsers may be even more important. Indirectly, this study has shown that when advertisement concerned a product of low involvement, the credibility status of the product endorsers was a very important determinant of attitudes about the product. When the advertisement concerned a product of high involvement, however, the credibility status of the endorser had small effects on attitudes, but the clarity of the information about the product contained in the message was a powerful determinant of product evaluations. These data clearly suggest that it would be inappropriate for social and consumer researchers to overemphasize the influence of issue-relevant arguments or product-relevant attributes and ignore the role of peripheral cues. Each type of attitudinal influence occurs in some instances, and the level of personal involvement with an issue or product appears to be one determinant of which type of persuasion occurs.

It is also probable that the promotional persuasive communication is different from other types of persuasive communication and has its specific determinants. Its most probable that assumptions of some authors (McKenzie, Lutz and Belch, 1993. Lord, Lee and Sauer, 1995) that promotional persuasion is "lower" on the elaboration continuum are correct.

The acceptance of our hypotheses about the combined influence of two different routes to persuasion, like some former research in the area of marketing communications, explain in part specific aspects of the way the consumer reacts to promotional persuasive communications. The results of this study show that the effects of persuasion in an advertising context cannot be clarified merely through the peripheral route to persuasion. As previous work has shown (Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann, 1986; Lord, Lee and Sauer, 1995) the attitude towards a certain product is directly under the influence of consumers evaluation of message arguments, combined with certain peripheral and context cues. The logical implication of these findings is a need to create messages that ensure positive perception of argument quality even when there isn't a big chance for detailed central processing. Also, it is important not to ignore peripheral elements of the message even in high elaboration conditions, since they have a certain effect along the whole elaboration continuum.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the present study has provided support for the view that different features of an advertisement may be more or less effective, depending upon a persons involvement with it. Under conditions of low involvement, peripheral cues are more important than issue-relevant argumentation, but under high involvement, the opposite is true. The realization that independent variables may have different effects, depending on the level of personal relevance on a message, may provide some insight into the conflicting pattern of results. The answer could be that attitude effects could be arranged on a continuum, depending on the elaboration likelihood of the particular persuasion situation. Quite different antecedents and consequents may characterize these two routes.

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