Central and Peripheral Routes to Persuasion: Application to Advertising

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The goal of advertising is to influence people’s behavior. This may involve convincing a person to purchase a particular product, but it may involve also convincing a person to vote for a particular candidate or to change a very important personal behavior (for example, a public-service message against smoking). In many important respects, then, we may view the psychology of advertising as the psychology of influence or persuasion. Given the strong parallels between the psychology of persuasion and the psychology of advertising, it is not surprising that the theories that have been proposed by researchers working within each domain are quite similar. Nevertheless, within each field a large number of theoretical approaches are vying for attention. For example, it is not uncommon for textbooks on the psychology of persuasion to describe from ten to twenty unique theories of attitude change (Insko 1967; Kiesler, Collins, and Miller 1969; Petty and Cacioppo 1981a; Smith 1982). Most of these theoretical approaches have been used to account for a variety of advertising phenomena as well (Engel and Blackwell 1982; Kassarjian 1982; Sandage, Fryburger, and Rotzoll 1979).

In a review of the many approaches to attitude change, we suggested that even though the different theories of persuasion have different terminologies, postulates, underlying motives, and particular effects that they specialize in explaining, the various approaches to persuasion can be thought of as emphasizing one of two distinct routes to attitude change (Petty and Cacioppo 1981a). One, called the central route, views attitude change as resulting from a diligent consideration of information that is central to what people feel are the true merits of the advocacy. The theoretical approaches that fall under this route have emphasized factors such as the comprehension, learning, and retention of issue-relevant information (Eagly 1974; McGuire 1969; Miller and Campbell 1959); the nature of a person’s idiosyncratic cognitive responses to issue-relevant information (Brock 1967; Greenwald 1968; Petty, Ostrom, and Brock 1981; Wright 1980); and the manner in which a person combines and integrates issue-relevant information into an overall evaluative reaction (Anderson 1971; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Wyer 1974).
In contrast to this focus on the information that is central to an evaluation of the merits of an advocacy, a second group of theoretical approaches to persuasion has developed that emphasizes a more peripheral route to attitude change. Under this second view, attitudes change because the attitude object has been associated with either positive or negative cues or the person uses a simple decision rule to evaluate a communication (for example, the more arguments the better). These cues and decision rules may shape attitudes or allow a person to decide what attitudinal position to adopt without the need for engaging in any extensive issue-relevant thinking. The approaches that fall under the peripheral route have emphasized factors such as whether or not the advocacy falls within a person's latitude of acceptance or rejection (Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall 1965), whether or not some transient situational utility is associated with adopting a particular attitude (Schlenker 1980), and whether or not the advocacy is associated with basic cues such as food (for example, Janis, Kaye, and Kirschen 1965) and pain (for example, Zanna, Kiesler, and Pilkonis 1970) or more-secondary cues such as credible (for example, Kelman and Hovland 1953), attractive (for example, Mills and Harvey 1972), and powerful (for example, Kelman 1961) sources. These variables can influence attitudes whether or not any information relevant to the merits of the issue are presented or considered (Maddux and Rogers 1980; Norman 1976; Staats and Staats 1958).1

Unfortunately, none of the unique theories of persuasion yet has provided a comprehensive view of attitude change. For example, cognitive response theory, an exemplar of the central-route approach, makes the assumption that people usually are interested in thinking about and elaborating incoming information or self-generating issue-relevant thoughts on a topic (compare chapter 5). Yet, as Miller and his colleagues (1976) have noted, “It may be irrational to scrutinize the plethora of counterattitudinal messages received daily. To the extent that one possesses only a limited amount of information-processing time and capacity, such scrutiny would disengage the thought processes from the exigencies of daily life” (p. 623). Clearly, a general framework for understanding attitude change must consider that attitudes do not always change in a thoughtful manner. A general framework for persuasion should specify the variables that increase as well as reduce the likelihood that extensive cognitive activity will accompany attitude change. A framework also should specify the consequences of thoughtful and nonthoughtful attitude changes.

Our goal in this chapter is to describe briefly our elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of attitude change (Petty and Cacioppo 1981a) and to note its applications to advertising communications. The basic tenet of the ELM is that different methods of inducing persuasion may work best, depending upon whether the elaboration likelihood of the communication situation (that is, the probability of message or issue-relevant thought occurring) is high or low. When the elaboration likelihood is high, the central route to persuasion should be particularly effective, but when the elaboration likelihood is low, the peripheral route should be better. In the first part of this chapter, we discuss the antecedents of the two routes to persuasion and present some recent empirical support for the distinction between the two routes. In the remainder of the chapter, we address the consequences of the two routes to persuasion, and we consider the direct implications of the two routes for advertising communications.

Description of the Two Routes to Persuasion

Motivation and Ability to Think

Figure 1-1 presents an abbreviated diagram of the ELM, specifying the two routes to persuasion [see Petty and Cacioppo in press (a), for further details]. The model begins by posing the question of whether or not a person is motivated to think about the communication to which he or she is exposed. As we noted earlier, it does not make sense for a person to think about every communication that is received. Several variables have been shown to affect a person's motivation to think about a message. For example, we have found that messages on personally relevant issues elicit more scrutiny than messages with few personal implications (Petty and Cacioppo 1979b). As an issue becomes more personally involving, it becomes more important to form a reasoned and veridical opinion. The greater motivation to think about a message when personal relevance is high results in people being better able to distinguish cogent from specious arguments for high-than low-involvement messages.

Just as some messages typically may evoke more thought than others, we also have found that some people usually are more motivated to think about messages than are other people. In a series of studies on the need for cognition (Cacioppo and Petty 1982), we have found that consistent individual differences exist in the propensity of people to engage in and enjoy effortful thinking. Some people tend to find tasks requiring extensive cognitive activity to be fun, whereas others prefer to avoid them. We have found that people who are high in their need for cognition are motivated to scrutinize persuasive messages more carefully than people who are low in their need for cognition, and they therefore show greater differentiation of strong from weak message arguments (Cacioppo and Petty in press). Other variables that have been shown to affect a person's motivation to think about a persuasive message include the use of rhetorical questions in the framing of the message arguments (Petty, Cacioppo, and Heesacker 1981), the number of people presenting the message arguments (Harkins and Petty...
message is accompanied by distracting stimuli, the ability to think about the message is decreased and people are less able to differentiate strong from weak arguments (Petty, Wells, and Brock 1976). On the other hand, as the message is repeated a moderate number of times, people have a greater opportunity to think about the arguments presented and to show a greater differentiation of cogent from specious arguments (Cacioppo and Petty 1979, 1980a). Other variables that affect a person's general ability to think about a message include factors such as the medium of message presentation (Chaiken and Eagly 1976), the complexity of the message (Regan and Cheng 1973), the amount of prior information and experience with the issue (Cacioppo and Petty 1980b; Wood 1982), and others.

Determinants of Favorable and Unfavorable Thoughts

When a person is both motivated and able to think about a persuasive communication, it becomes important to understand the nature of the cognitive responses generated. Most research has focused on two kinds of cognitive responses: favorable, or positive, thoughts (pro-arguments) and unfavorable, or negative, thoughts (counterarguments) (see Cacioppo, Harkins, and Petty 1981). Knowing that a person has the motivation and ability to think about a message does not allow a determination of what kind of cognitive responses will be elicited. The variables affecting motivation and ability to think that we have mentioned already, like the personal relevance of the issue, tend to do so in a fairly objective manner. Under these conditions, the most important determinant of the nature of the cognitive responses elicited resides in the quality of the arguments presented in the communication. Arguments that point to desirable consequences for the message recipient or significant others tend to elicit primarily favorable thoughts, whereas arguments that point to undesirable consequences for the message recipient or significant others (even though the arguments are worded to favor the advocacy) tend to elicit primarily unfavorable thoughts. The more the desirable consequences are elaborated upon (as motivated, for example, by high personal relevance or enabled by message repetition), the more favorable connections the person may make to his or her own life (Krugman 1965) and the more persuasion that will result. Similarly, the more undesirable consequences are elaborated upon, the more negative connections the person may make to his or her life, and the less persuasive the message will be. People may even make so many negative connections to their own lives that they shift in a direction opposite to that advocated in the message (boomerang).

Sometimes the arguments contained in a message may be quite ambiguous, or the message may contain no arguments that can be elaborated.
to generate a particular kind of cognitive response, an ability to manipulate the various kinds of cognitive responses primarily by affecting motivation, for example, to the extent that Persuasion (Ghiselli, 1984). Other factors have been shown to be important in the persuasion process, such as the attractiveness of the communicator and the attractiveness of the message. In general, the communicator's attractiveness is more important than the content of the message, although the content of the message can still be important in some contexts.

In another study, we found that an attitude-based approach to persuasion was more effective than a message-based approach. The attitude-based approach involved presenting the attitude of the communicator to the message, while the message-based approach involved presenting the message itself. The attitude-based approach was more effective because it helped the communicator to better understand and more accurately interpret the message.

These findings have important implications for the study of persuasion. They suggest that the most effective approaches to persuasion involve a combination of both attitude and message characteristics. Further research is needed to better understand the relative importance of these factors in different contexts.

In summary, the factors that influence persuasion are complex and multifaceted. Both attitude and message characteristics play important roles in determining the effectiveness of persuasive messages. Understanding these factors can help us to design more effective persuasion strategies and to improve our ability to influence others.
Evidence for the Two Routes to Persuasion

Our discussion of the central and peripheral routes to persuasion suggests that under certain circumstances, attitudes will be formed and changed depending primarily upon the manner in which a person evaluates the issue-relevant information presented but that at other times, attitudes will be formed and changed without any extensive cognitive work. Before proceeding to our discussion of the consequences of the two routes to persuasion and the implications of each for advertising communications, it is important to document the proposition that the two kinds of persuasions exist. In order to provide an appropriate test of the two routes, it is important to construct two kinds of persuasion contexts: one in which the elaboration likelihood is high (that is, a person is both highly motivated and able to engage in issue-relevant thought) and one in which the elaboration likelihood is low (that is, either motivation or ability to think is absent or substantially reduced). In the experiments we describe next, the ability to think was held constant at a high level across the experimental conditions (for example, the messages and issues employed were easy to understand, no extraneous distractions were present, and so on). Motivation to think was manipulated by varying the personal relevance of the opinion issue. Following the procedure of Apsler and Sears (1968), subjects in the high- and low-relevance conditions were exposed to the same experimental stimuli, but subjects in the high-relevance conditions were led to believe that the issue under consideration would likely have direct personal consequences for them, whereas subjects in the low-relevance conditions were led to believe that the issue had few personal consequences. Given that all subjects have the ability to think about the attitude issue and message, subjects in the high-relevance conditions should follow the central route to persuasion, and subjects in the low-relevance conditions should follow the peripheral route.

Source Cues versus Message Processing

In one test of the central/peripheral framework, we asked college students to listen to a message on headphones that advocated that seniors be required to pass a comprehensive exam in their major area as a prerequisite to graduation (see Petty, Cacioppo, and Goldman 1981). Three variables were manipulated in the study: (1) personal relevance—the speaker advocated that for half of the subjects the policy should begin in the next year, thereby affecting all of the students personally, and for the other half, that the policy should take effect in ten years, thereby affecting no current students; (2) message arguments—for half of the subjects the message contained eight arguments that were pretested in order to ensure that they were cogent and compelling (strong arguments), and for the other half the message contained eight arguments that were pretested to insure that if thought about, college students would find them specious (weak arguments); and (3) source expertise—for half of the subjects the source was described as a professor of education at Princeton University (expert source), and for the other half the source was described as a junior at a local high school (nonexpert source). Following exposure to the communication, the students reported their attitudes on the senior comprehensive-exam proposal.

The results of this study are graphed in figure 1-2. On the one hand, when the students thought that the exam proposal had little relevance to them, their postcommunication attitudes were influenced significantly only by the expertise of the message source; the quality of the issue-relevant information presented had no effect. On the other hand, when the students thought that the exam proposal had direct consequences for them, their attitudes were affected significantly only by the quality of the issue-relevant information presented; the source-expertise manipulation had no effect. In sum, under high-relevance conditions, subjects exerted the cognitive effort required to evaluate the issue-relevant arguments presented, and their attitudes were a function of this information processing (central route). Under low-relevance conditions, attitudes were determined by the salient source-expertise cue but were unaffected by argument quality (peripheral route).

Message Cues versus Message Processing

In the preceding study, attitudes in response to a high-relevance communication were affected primarily by message factors, and attitudes in response to a low-relevance communication were affected primarily by source factors. It is important to note, however, that the central/peripheral distinction is not between message and source factors. As we noted earlier, the central/peripheral distinction has to do with the extent to which issue-relevant thought determines attitudes rather than reliance on salient positive and negative cues or simple decision rules. Thus, according to the ELM, some message factors like the quality of the message arguments should have a greater impact on persuasion when motivation and ability to think are high, but other message factors like the mere number of message arguments presented could have a greater impact on persuasion when motivation and/or ability to think are low. In order for the quality of message arguments to have an impact on persuasion, the arguments must be thought about, but the mere number of message arguments can have an impact on persuasion without any extensive issue-relevant thinking if people employ the simple but reasonable decision rule: The more arguments in favor of something, the better it must be.
In an attempt to compare the effects of message cues versus message processing under high- and low-involvement conditions, we again exposed college students to a message advocating that seniors be required to pass a comprehensive exam in their major as a requirement for graduation. Personal relevance was manipulated in this study by telling half of the students that the proposal was scheduled to take effect at their university the following year, and the other half were told that the proposal was scheduled to take effect at a distant university the following year. Two aspects of the message that the students read were manipulated. First, half of the subjects read a message containing nine arguments in favor of the proposal, and half read a message containing three such arguments. In addition, for half of the subjects the arguments were cogent and compelling, whereas for half the arguments were weak and specious. Three arguments were printed on each page of the written communication that the students received, and each argument was elaborated in a distinct paragraph. Subjects in the nine-arguments conditions therefore read three pages of material, whereas subjects in the three-arguments conditions read one page that contained three arguments randomly selected from the nine arguments possible. After reading the message, the students were asked to provide their own attitudes on the comprehensive-exam proposal.

The data are graphed in figure 1-3. As expected, on the one hand, when the issue had high relevance, subjects' attitudes were affected by the quality of the message arguments only; the number of arguments presented had no effect (central route). On the other hand, when the issue was of low relevance, attitudes were affected by the mere number of arguments presented but not by their quality (peripheral route). Thus, under low involvement, the effect of increasing the number of arguments presented from three to nine was to increase persuasion whether the arguments added were strong or weak. Under high involvement, however, increasing the number of arguments increased agreement when the arguments were strong but reduced agreement when the arguments were weak.

Consequences of the Two Routes to Persuasion

The research we have reviewed clearly indicates that different factors have an impact on persuasion under high- and low-personal-involvement conditions and suggests that the distinction between the central and peripheral routes to persuasion has some validity. In addition, other research suggests two very important consequences of the two routes to persuasion. (1) Attitude changes that occur via the central route may persist longer than attitude changes that occur via the peripheral route, and (2) attitudes formed via the central route may predict subsequent behavior better than attitudes formed via the peripheral route.
Evidence that the two routes differ in the temporal stability of the attitude changes they produce comes from a study of anticipatory attitude shifts by Cialdini et al. (1976). In the relevant conditions of this study, college students were led to believe that soon they were going to discuss either a personally involving or uninvolving issue with another student who took a position opposite to their own. The major result of this study was that students who were about to engage in a discussion with an opponent on a high-involvement issue showed attitude polarization in anticipation of the discussion, but students who were about to discuss a low-involvement issue showed anticipatory moderation. In addition, the high-involvement group showed significantly more issue-relevant cognitive activity (as assessed by thought listing) in preparation for the discussion.

An interesting feature of this study was that after the subjects' initial anticipatory attitude shifts were monitored, all of the subjects were told that they would not be engaging in a discussion on the issue after all. They were told that all they would have to do was to fill out a final attitude scale. On this second measure of attitudes, taken after the expectation of discussion was canceled, the researchers obtained an intriguing result. The subjects who initially had polarized remained polarized relative to controls, but the subjects who initially had moderated were no longer any more moderate than controls. Thus, the subjects who had not engaged in any extensive issue-relevant thought in connection with their attitude shifts returned to their original attitude positions, but the subjects who did think about the issue prior to the anticipated discussion retained their new attitudes. These data suggest that to the extent that attitude changes are bolstered by issue-relevant cognitive activity, the changes produced are longer lasting than if such activity is absent. When an attitude change is based on an extensive foundation of issue-relevant beliefs, and when these beliefs are rehearsed, the attitude change is likely to persist because the issue-relevant beliefs are likely to remain salient (especially if they are self-generated) (see Slamecka and Graf 1978). Furthermore, even if a few of the favorable thoughts elicited at the time of message exposure are forgotten, others are likely to remain. Conversely, attitude changes that result from one prominent cue (for example, an attractive source) or one simple inference (for example, if there are so many arguments it must be good) are much more vulnerable to forgetting. These changes are likely to endure only if the person has been exposed to the persuasive message many times, rendering the cue or inference relatively permanent. Even then, however, such attitude changes likely would be highly susceptible to counterpropaganda because the person has so little on which to base a positive or negative opinion. Thus, the new attitude would be difficult to defend if severely challenged (see also Chaiken 1980; Cook and Flay 1978; McGuire 1964).

Data from Petty & Cacioppo, 1982.
Note: Top panel: Persuasion as a function of the interaction of recipient involvement and the number of message arguments used. Bottom panel: Persuasion as a function of the interaction of recipient involvement and the quality of message arguments.

Figure 1-3. Persuasion as a Function of Recipient Involvement and Number of Message Arguments
As we noted earlier, research also suggests that attitudes formed or changed via the central route may be more predictive of behavior than attitudes formed or changed via the peripheral route. In one study, for example, Sivacek and Crano (1982) explored the relationship between attitudes and behavior for two groups of people. The attitudes of interest in their study concerned an impending Michigan statewide referendum to raise the legal drinking age from nineteen to twenty-one. The two groups of people studied were those who would be affected personally by the proposal (that is, they would not be twenty-one by the time the new law went into effect if passed) and those who would not be affected personally. Even though both groups expressed equally strong attitudes against the proposal to raise the drinking age, more people who would be affected personally by the proposal agreed to engage in behaviors consistent with their negative attitudes than people who would not be affected personally. If we can assume that the attitudes of people who would be affected personally by the proposal were formed via the central route (extensive issue-relevant thought), whereas the attitudes of those who would not be affected were formed via the peripheral route (identifying with the opinions of their friends), then the results of Sivacek and Crano are consistent with the view that the central route produces attitudes that are more consistent with behaviors than those produced by the peripheral route. This may be because attitudes formed via the central route are more salient in memory and thus people are more able to act upon them, or it may be that people hold these attitudes with more confidence and thus are more willing to act on them (see also Fazio and Zanna 1981).

Implications of the Two Routes to Persuasion for Advertising Communications

Empirical Evidence

In order to provide an initial test of the applicability of the two routes to persuasion for advertising communications, we sought to replicate our basic research using mock magazine advertisements as stimuli. In our first experiment (Petty and Cacioppo 1981b), we presented college students with a booklet containing six magazine advertisements. Five of the ads were for real but relatively unfamiliar products (for example, Lux cigarettes), and one of the ads was for a fictitious product (Vilance shampoo). Three variables were manipulated with respect to the bogu product. First, preceding each ad in the booklet was a brief description of the purpose of the advertisement. All subjects read the same descriptions for the real ads, but the description for the bogus shampoo ad was varied to create two different personal-relevance conditions. In the low-involvement condition, the description stated that the company intended to market the shampoo in European countries only but that it had distributed its materials to universities throughout the United States in order to have them evaluated. In the high-involvement condition, the description stated that the students' university had been chosen for research purposes because the shampoo would be test marketed soon in their local community. Thus, low-involvement subjects were led to believe that it was unlikely that they would ever be able to purchase the product, whereas high-involvement subjects were led to believe that they would be able to purchase the product soon.

Four different versions of the Vilance shampoo ad were prepared. Each ad looked similar in that it pictured a man and woman in their early twenties giving the reasons why they liked Vilance shampoo. The two variables manipulated in the ad were the attractiveness of the couple featured in the ad and the cogency of their reasons for liking the shampoo. In the high-attractive ads, a photograph of a couple that had been rated previously as extremely attractive was used, and in the low-attractive ads a photograph of a couple that had been rated previously as somewhat unattractive was employed. An extremely unattractive stimulus was not used since these typically do not appear in advertisements. In the strong-arguments version of the ad, the text that accompanied the photograph presented arguments for the shampoo that had been rated previously as compelling and persuasive (for example, Vilance contains minerals that strengthen each hair shaft so it helps to prevent split ends). The weak-arguments text presented reasons that had been rated previously as unpersuasive (for example, Vilance has a down-to-earth brown color that makes us feel natural).

Following exposure to the entire advertising booklet, the subjects responded to a variety of questions about the ads. The crucial measure of attitude consisted of the average of subjects' ratings of Vilance shampoo on a series of semantic differential scales. It is not surprising that an analysis of this measure revealed that the subjects liked the product significantly more when the ads contained strong rather than weak arguments and that they liked the product significantly more when the ads depicted an attractive rather than an unattractive couple. Of greater interest, however, was a significant argument-quality-by-involvement interaction. This interaction revealed that the quality or cogency of the arguments presented in the ad had a much greater impact on attitudes toward the advertised product when the ad was of high rather than low personal relevance (central route). The source-attractiveness-by-involvement interaction was not significant, however, indicating that contrary to expectations, the source cue was not more important for the low- than the high-relevance ad.

We can find a variety of possible explanations for the failure to find evidence for the peripheral route to persuasion in this study (for example,
the involvement and attractiveness manipulations may have been too weak, but in retrospect we have found one explanation to be the most compelling. Specifically, we suspect that in addition to serving as a peripheral cue, the physical appearance of the models in the ad may have been viewed as important product-relevant information. For example, for the particular product employed (shampoo), the attractiveness of the models (especially their hair) may have served as persuasive visual testimony for the product's effectiveness. Alternatively, it may have been that for the particular consumer segment tested (college students), the physical appearance of product users is a particularly salient dimension for product evaluation. To the extent that either explanation is correct, it serves as an important reminder that just as features of a persuasive message (for example, the number of arguments) may serve as powerful peripheral cues under low-personal-relevance conditions, features of the message source (for example, attractiveness) may serve as cogent purchase-relevant arguments for certain kinds of products or people.

In order to provide a more-sensitive test of the two routes to persuasion with advertising communications, we conducted a conceptual replication of our initial study, making several important changes (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann 1982). University undergraduates again were asked to examine a booklet containing a variety of advertisements. This time, twelve ads were in the booklets, and one was for a fictitious new product, Adze disposable razors. Before beginning to look through the ad booklet, we informed subjects that at the end of the study we would ask them to select a modest gift. Subjects in the high-involvement group were told that they would be able to select from a variety of disposable-razor products, rendering our bogus razor ad highly involving. Subjects in the low-involvement group were told that they would be able to select from a variety of toothpaste brands (one ad for toothpaste was included in the ad booklet).

We constructed four different versions of the ad for Adze disposable razors. Each ad presented an artist's design of the product, the pictures of a man and woman who endorsed the product, and six statements about the product. In the famous-endorser ads, the headline of the ad read “Professional athletes agree: Until you try new Adze disposable razors you'll never know what a really close shave is.” In addition, the ad featured the pictures of two well-known and -liked golf and tennis celebrities (see figure 1-4). In the non-famous-endorser ads, the headline read “Bakersfield, California, agrees . . .” This ad featured pictures of ordinary citizens. It is important to note that unlike our initial study in which the physical appearance of the endorsers might have served as important product-relevant information, it is likely that for most people, the celebrity status of the endorsers would be irrelevant to an evaluation of the merits of a disposable razor. Yet, celebrity status still could serve as a positive peripheral cue. Similar to the shampoo study, the strong-arguments version of the Adze ad contained statements that had been rated previously as compelling (for example, “handle is tapered and ribbed to prevent slipping”), whereas the weak-arguments version of the ad contained statements that had been rated as unpersuasive (for example, “designed with the bathroom in mind”).

After perusing the entire ad booklet, the subjects responded to a variety of questions about the advertised products. Attitudes toward Adze razors were assessed by having subjects respond to three semantic differential

**PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES AGREE**

Until you try new Adze disposable razors you'll never know what a "really close shave" is.

- Scientifically Designed
- New advanced honing method creates unsurpassed sharpness.
- Special chemically formulated coating eliminates nicks and cuts and prevents rusting.
- Handle is tapered and ribbed to prevent slipping.
- In direct comparison tests the ADZE blade gave twice as many close shaves as its nearest competitor.
- Unique angle placement of the blade provides the smoothest shave possible.

**GET THE ADZE DIFFERENCE!**

Note: Celebrity photos are blocked out for proprietary reasons.

**Figure 1-4. Mock Advertisement for ADZE Disposable Razors**
scales that were averaged to form a general index of attitude. The results of the study are presented in figure 1-5 and provide strong support for the two routes to persuasion. When subjects anticipated making an imminent deci-

![Graph showing product attitudes as a function of recipient involvement and celebrity status of the product endorser.](image)

Data from Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1982.
Note: Top panel: Product attitudes as a function of the interaction of recipient involvement and celebrity status of the product endorser. Bottom panel: Product attitudes as a function of the interaction of recipient involvement and the quality of message arguments.

Figure 1-5. Product Attitudes as a Function of Recipient Involvement and Celebrity Endorser

sion about the product class (high involvement), the quality of the product-relevant information provided in the ad had a stronger impact on attitudes than when no decision was imminent (low involvement). Under low involve-
ment, the nature of the endorsers (famous or not) had a significant effect on attitudes toward the product, but this manipulation had no impact under high involvement. Thus, different kinds of information-processing activities occurred under high and low involvement as expected by the ELM (see figure 1-1). In addition to the attitude measures, we asked subjects to rate the likelihood of their purchasing Adze disposable razors the next time they needed a product of this nature. Attitudes toward Adze razors proved to be a better predictor of behavioral (purchase) intentions under high 
($r = .59$) than under low-involvement conditions ($r = .36$). Thus, as ex-
pected by the ELM, attitudes change via the central route were more predic-
tive of behavior than attitudes changed via the peripheral route.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter outlined two distinct routes to persuasion. The central route occurs when a person is both motivated and able to think about the merits of the advocacy presented. Depending upon whether the advocacy elicits primarily favorable or unfavorable thoughts, either persuasion, resistance, or boomerang may occur. Attitude changes induced via this route tend to be relatively permanent and predictive of subsequent behavior. When a person is either not motivated or able to evaluate the merits of an advocacy, then he or she may follow a second route to persuasion. Under this peripheral route, it is not assumed that the message recipient will undertake the consider-
able cognitive effort required to evaluate the merits of the advocated position. Instead, people's attitudes may be affected by positive and negative cues or simple decision rules or heuristics that allow them to evaluate the advocacy quickly. As we noted earlier, the accumulated research on persuasion has identified a large number of such cues and heuristics that can influence attitude change (see McGuire 1969; Cialdini, Petty, and Cacioppo 1981). These peripheral changes, however, tend to be relatively temporary and not highly predictive of subsequent behavior.

How can the central/peripheral framework be applied in a particular advertising situation? Consider an advertisement for cigarettes that depicts a man and a woman on horseback, riding through majestic mountain ter-

rain. At the bottom of the ad is the headline, "20 REASONS WHY CALBOROS ARE BEST," along with a list of twenty statements. Will at-
titude changes induced because of this ad occur via the central or the peripheral route? Our framework suggests that in evaluating or designing an ad for a particular product, it is extremely important to know what in-
formation dimensions are crucial for people who desire to evaluate the true merits or implications of the product (in this case, cigarettes). On the one hand, to smokers over fifty, the most important information may relate to the health aspects of the brand (for example, tar content). For this group, an effective ad would likely have to present considerable information about the medical consequences of the brand if it were to be effective in inducing influence via the central route. If the twenty statements listed in the ad presented cogent information about the health aspects of Calboros over competing brands, favorable thoughts may be rehearsed, and a relatively permanent change in attitude that had behavioral (that is, purchase) implications might result. On the other hand, for teenage smokers, who may be more concerned with impressing their peers than with their health, the major reason why they smoke may relate to the image of the particular brand (for example, tough man, independent woman) (see Chassin et al. 1981). For this group, the presentation of the rugged outdoor images might provide important product-relevant information that would elicit numerous favorable thoughts and enduring attitude changes with behavioral consequences. It is interesting that for the nonsmokers over fifty, the majestic scenery might serve as a peripheral cue inducing momentary liking for the brand and that for the teenage nonsmokers, the twenty statements might lead to momentary positive evaluations of the brand because of the simple belief that there are many arguments in favor of it. In neither case would these favorable attitudes have behavioral implications.

Although we have focused on the role of personal involvement with an issue or product in this chapter, as we noted earlier, there are a variety of determinants of the route to persuasion. The central route is the more difficult to produce because the message recipient first must be motivated and able to think about the issue or product-relevant information provided. An advertisement can be constructed so as to maximize the likelihood of thinking (for example, emphasizing personal relevance, increasing the number of message sources; see Petty and Cacioppo, in press (b)), but some uncontrollable factors in the persuasion environment (for example, distraction) may render one's efforts useless by reducing the elaboration likelihood. In addition, even if a message recipient is motivated and able to think about the merits of the issue or product, the message must elicit primarily favorable thoughts rather than neutral thoughts or counterarguments. Thus, the message should contain cogent arguments or should employ some technique to bias thinking in the favorable direction (for example, using arguments consistent with a person's self-schema; see Cacioppo et al. 1982). If a change can be produced via the central route, the benefits are clear—the attitude change will tend to persist and will be predictive of subsequent behavior.

Since the central route to persuasion is rather difficult, the peripheral route sometimes may be an effective advertising strategy. Since the peripheral route induces only a temporary change, however, it will be necessary to remind the recipient constantly of the cue or decision rule upon which he or she based the new attitude. Lutz (1979) provides the example of a person who drives Hertz rental cars not because the person has thought about the attributes of the company but only because he has been reminded constantly that a sports star endorses the company. If the favorable attitude about Hertz had been based on a full consideration of the positive features of the company, the favorable attitude likely would persist on its own. Since the favorable attitude is based on a positive peripheral cue, however, the favorable attitude persists only so long as the cue remains memorable (accomplished through advertising repetition). Such continually repeated positive cues may give a person sufficient confidence to act on the basis of the attitude and to try the advertised product. It is interesting that once the person has tried the product, it may become more personally involving and may make the person more likely to think about the content of future advertisements about the product. In this manner, a peripheral change can lead to a central one.

Note

1. It is important to note that the various theoretical approaches to attitude change and the variables whose effects they try to explain may not fall clearly under one or the other route in all circumstances. For example, the theoretical process of self-perception (Bem 1967) might lead to a simple inference (peripheral route) under some conditions or to extended issue-relevant thinking in others (compare Petty and Cacioppo 1983). In addition, we note that the distinction we have made between the central and the peripheral routes to attitude change has much in common with the recent psychological distinctions between "deep" versus "shallow" processing (Craik and Lockhart 1972), "controlled" versus "automatic" processing (Schneider and Shiffrin 1977), "systematic" versus "heuristic" processing (Chaiken 1980), "thoughtful" versus "scripted" or "mindless" processing (Abelson 1976; Langer et al. 1978), and earlier formulations on different kinds of persuasion (for example, Kelman 1961).