

Chapter 2: Persuasion and Effective Communication

Introductory Note



2.1 Introductory Note

We live in **a world of persuasion**. It is useless nowadays getting people to do what we want them to. **Various tactics are being used by persuaders to change the attitudes of receivers**. Seeing what works, in what circumstances, with what kinds of people, will be useful as you prepare to become a persuader.

This part will include:

- 1- **Definition** of persuasion.
- 2- **Process** of persuasion.
- 3- **Attitudes**, its formation, and the component approach to the study of attitude change which makes use of the communication model.
- 4- The **persuasive communication model**.

Achieve
desired action

Persuasion

2.2 Persuasion



The act of persuasion is **as old as man**. In **Ancient Greece**, persuasion was the main **means of achieving power and winning in the courts**.

Aristotle was the **first to study persuasion in depth**. He **linked communication with persuasion**. He identified communication as **all available means to reach persuasion**. Aristotle focused on three ways to reach persuasion:

- 1- The use of evidence in rational discussion.
- 2- The use of personal characteristics.
- 3- The use of emotions.

Definition of Persuasion



2.3 Definition of Persuasion

There are **many definitions of persuasion**. Some emphasized on internal motive of the audience more than using logic. **Birembeck and Howell** said "*Persuasion is the conscious attempt to modify thought and action by manipulating the motives of men towards predetermined ends*".

Fotheringham affirmed "*Persuasion is that body of effects in receivers that has been caused by persuader's message*".

Scheidel began more nearer to the type of persuasion we are familiar to, he defined persuasion as: "The activity in which the speaker and the listener are conjoined and in which the speaker consciously attempts to influence the behavior of the listener by transmitting audible and visible symbolic."

Central to this definition is the notions of conscious intent, message transmission and behavioral change.

It also **includes sender and receiver** which **make the components of definition** resembling the components of communication.

Persuasion, from this point of view, depends upon two main aspects:

- 1- Communication.
- 2- Intending planning of persuader to affect audience.

Depending on previous clarification, we can define persuasion as: "**The intended use of communication to form a desired response from receivers to their social environment**".

Elements of Persuasion

2.3.1 Elements of Persuasion

We can underline five elements of persuasion:



- 1- The **invention or discovery** of evidence and argument, and their
- 2- **Organization**,
- 3- **Artistic stylizing**,
- 4- **Memorization**, and
- 5- **Skillful delivery**.

Process of Persuasion

2.4 Process of Persuasion



Models

2.4.1 Models of The Persuasive Process

The foregoing theories of the way in which communication content influences individual conduct, **have led numerous attempts to capitalize on these conceptualizations** for the purpose of deliberately manipulating human behavior by communicated messages.

In attempting to describe the nature of these formulations, **two things will be made clear**:

- 1- These models of the persuasive process are the **extension and utilization of the contemporary theories** of communication.
- 2- These models are **roughly formulated**. There are a number of other models of the persuasion process that could be formulated instead.

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The first of these two conceptualizations is called the **psychodynamic model of the persuasion process**. The essence of the idea is that an effective persuasive message is said to be one which has properties capable of altering the psychological functioning of the individual in such a way, that he will respond overly with modes of behavior, recommended by the communicator. It has been assumed that effective persuasion is the change of the internal psychological structure of the individual, so that the psychodynamic relationship between the latent internal process and manifest overt behavior, will lead to acts, intended by the source of the communication.

Extensive use has been made of persuasive messages aimed at individual attitudes, under the assumption that there is a close relationship between a person's attitudinal structure and his behavior in social situations, see Figure 2.1.

In simple graphic terms, the psychodynamic model of the persuasive process would be as follow :



Figure 2.1: Psychodynamic Model

The psychodynamic model rests upon an extensive theoretical as well as an empirical base. Important theories of motivation, perception, learning and even psychoanalysis have suggested ways in which, attitudes, fears, self-conceptions, reinforcement, and many other variables, are related to persuasion.

The psychodynamic model of the persuasion process are attempts to use the theory for practical purposes, this mode has by no means been the only one, that has been tried. A somewhat more complicated alternative stems from a combination of the social relationship perspective and the cultural norm theory. For the lack of a better term, we will refer to this as the sociocultural model of the persuasion process.

Social and cultural variables have been widely recognized by communication researchers and other social scientists, as playing an important part in determining the way, in which people adopt new ideas and things. However, sociocultural variables have been used as a basis for appeals in persuasive communication.

The sociocultural variables from which the individual derives interpretation of reality as well as being significant forms of social control are important sources determining the direction of the individual's attitude.

Asch & Sheriff show how the influence of norms plays a powerful role in guiding, defining and modifying the behavior of the individual, somewhat independently of the state of his internal predisposition. Sociological studies have supported this generalization. The work of **Lohman and Reilzes, Merton, Kit, Mead, De Fleur and Westic, Minared and Newcomb**, indicate the way in which such variable as organizational membership, work roles, reference groups, cultural norms, and primary group norms can play a part in channeling overt action, in ways that are, to some extent uninfluenced by internal psychological predispositions. It must be recognized, however, that the behavioral patterns of the individual can not be interpreted on the basis of psychological predispositions. It must be recognized, however, that the behavioral patterns of the individual can not be interpreted on the basis of psychological factors only, especially when the individual is acting within special social setting. Reference must be made to the variables that surround the action, in order to predict, explain and manipulate such a behavior effectively.

The **sociocultural factors** existing in an individual setting are important determiners of the direction the individual's behavior that will take. This behavior can be contrary to that intended since he may find certain social and cultural constraints, which will make him compelled to conform under condition. This situation would cause the individual a social and psychological conflict in following the behavior prescribed by the communicator. Represented schematically, such a model of the persuasive process is Figure 2.2.

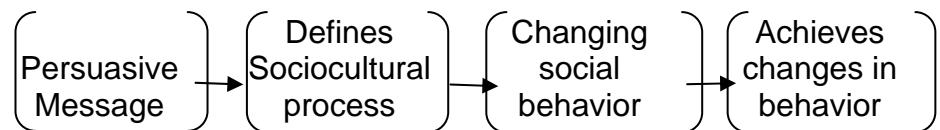


Figure 2.2: Sociocultural Model

These **two concepts** suggest that the **persuasive messages presented via the mass media** may provide the appearance of consensus with respect to a given object, or goal of persuasion.

The communicator can also show how the non-adopter is a deviant and a non-conformist. He may also show simultaneously, the way in which social rewards, group integration, and social approval, are bestowed upon the individual for obeying the communicator's goal.

There are undoubtedly **numerous ways** in which **persuasion process could be conceptualized**. The **psychodynamic and the sociocultural strategies**, however, seem to be rather clear links to the attitudes and their formation.

Definition of
Attitude



2.5 Definition of Attitude

The concept of “attitude” has been variously **defined by social scientists** so that there has been a good deal of ambiguity regarding the concept. But, perhaps, the most acceptable is that of **Rokeach**:

“An attitude is a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner.”

This definition of attitude specifies at least five factors or meets five conditions:

1. An attitude is relatively enduring over time
 2. An attitude is an organization of beliefs
 3. An attitude is organized bound an object or a situation
 4. An attitude is a set of interrelated predisposition to respond
 5. An attitude to a preferential response
- 1. An attitude is relatively enduring over time:** The concept of attitude is reserved for enduring persistent organizations of predispositions round a central belief. Attitudes are formed by past experiences and are learned responses to particular objects, things or processes.
- 2. An Attitude is an organization of beliefs:** It represents a cluster or syndrome of two or more interrelated beliefs. A belief is any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious inferred from what a person says or does. Each belief has three components: a cognitive component (person's knowledge), an affective, component (capable of, leads to some action when suitably activated).
- 3. An attitude is organized bound an object or a situation:** An attitude object may be concrete or abstract while an attitude situation is a dynamic event around which a person organizes a set of interrelated beliefs about how to behave.
- 4. An attitude is a set of interrelated predisposition to respond:** A response may be either a verbal expression or a non-verbal behavior, an attitude is an “agenda for action” that is, it specifies the response a person will make to a given object within a given situation.
- 5. An attitude leads to a preferential response:** An attitude predisposes one to respond in a preferential manner to individuals or groups who agree with or oppose us with respect to that particular attitude.

Many persons tend to use the terms attitude and opinion interchangeably as if there were no distinction between them. Opinion is the overt expression (verbal or non-verbal) of an attitude which is only internal to the individual. Thus when we measure opinions, we only infer that they refer to an internal attitude of the individual.

Formation of
Attitude



2.6 Formation of Attitude

One of the most important matters to be discussed is **how attitudes are formed**. More than ever before it is now necessary to know why people hold the views they do. In other words, how their attitudes have been formed? First, let us consider **how attitudes arise and where do their origins lie**. One can trace three sources:

- 1- In the **child rearing experience of the first five or six years** of life from the parent-child relationship.
- 2- By **association between individuals or the formal and informal groups** met with in later life.
- 3- From **unique and isolated experiences** or similar experiences repeated throughout life.

But those three sources must be **considered within the framework of society and its culture** or way of life to which the individual belongs. In the *earlier years a parent tries to plant this culture into the child and this process is known as mediated social-cultural influence*. **Later on**, the process becomes **self-incubated** and this is known as direct social-cultural influence.

Functions of
Attitudes



2.7 Functions of Attitudes

This is a point that has been subject to a great deal of arguments, and consequently contradictions. One of the main questions asked is this "**does an attitude possess drive-producing properties or do motives come from sources other than the attitude itself?**" To answer this question one must develop a more comprehensive formulation of the functions of an attitude. A certain line of thinkers, **Lasswell, Formm, Maslow and others believe that attitudes serve mainly irrational, ego-defensive functions**. Another group of thinkers, students of culture and sociology went further to say that attitudes have **an adjustive function**, meaning by this the adjustment of primitive and modern man to their specific cultures and subcultures. This gives attitudes positive functions which were formulated by **Katz** as follows:

1. Instrumental
adjustive
function

- 1- The **instrumental adjustive function** involves such values as security, achievement, competence, success and loyalty in group. It is served when people strive to maximize the rewards and to minimize the penalties of their external environment.

2. Ego-
defensive
function

- 2- The **ego-defensive function**: in which a person protects himself from acknowledging the basic truth about himself or the harsh realities in his external world. It may be reflected in positive values as, honor, chivalry, racial purity or the extensive condemnation of such negative values as lust, intemperance.

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| 3. Value expressive function

4. Knowledge function | 3- The value expressive function : in which the individual derives satisfactions from expressing attitudes appropriate to his personal values and his concept of himself. This function is central to doctrines of ego psychology which stress the importance of self-expression, self-development and self-realization.

4- The knowledge function : based upon the individual's need to give adequate structure to his universe. It refers to a person's central values concerning truth, understanding and the search of meaning, also serving self-expression, self-development and self-realization. |
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Determinant of Attitude Formation, Arousal and Change in Relation to Type of Function

2.7.1 Determinants of Attitude Formation, Arousal and Change in Relation to Type of Function

Function	Origin and dynamics	Arousal conditions	Change conditions
Adjustment	Utility of attitudinal object in need satisfaction maximizing external rewards and minimizing punishments	1- Activation of needs. 2- Salience of need satisfaction.	1- Need deprivation. 2- Creation of new needs of aspiration. 3- Shifting rewards and punishments. 4- Emphasis on new and better paths to need satisfaction.
Ego defense	Protecting against internal conflicts and external dangers	1- Posing of threats. 2- Appeals to hatred and repressed impulses. 3- Rise in frustration. 4- Use of authoritarian suggestion.	1- Removal of threats. 2- Catharsis. 3- Development of self-insight.
Value expression	Maintaining self-identity-enhancing favorable self-expression and self-determination.	1- Salience of cues associated with values. 2- Appeals to individuals to reassert self-image	1- Some degree of dissatisfaction with self. 2- Greater appropriateness of new attitude for the self. 3- Control of all environmental support to undermine old values.

Knowledge	Need for understanding meaningful cognitive organization and consistency and clarity	1- Reinstatement of cues associated with old problem or of old problem itself.	1- Ambiguity created by knowledge of change in environment. 2- More meaningful information about problems
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Measuring Attitude



1. Judgment methods



2. Method of summated ratings

2.8 Measuring Attitudes

Attitude measurement is a process whereby one assesses an individual's response to a set of social objects of situations. This is done by observing a sample of behavior from an attitude universe. Each behavioral element in the attitude universe in the response to a particular situation or object that evokes the response together with a specified set of response categories is called an item. The set of behavior comprising an attitude is called an attitude universe. There are several methods available for measuring attitudes among them.

3. Scalogram analysis

1. Judgment methods: There are two major aspects of this method. Firstly, each item is scaled to give its degree of favorableness towards the issue. Secondly, the respondents must be scored on the basis of their responses to the items.

2. The method of summated ratings: Techniques similar to techniques used in the mental-testing field. In this method, five categories of responses are provided for each item: strongly disapprove, with scores 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, respectively. An individual's scale score is the sum of his scores on the items.

3. Scalogram analysis: In 1944 Guttmann proposed a nonmetric method for scaling monotone attitude items. In a Guttmann scale, the items have a special cumulative property. For example, a person who responds positively to the third item on the scale is almost sure to have responded positively to the first and second items.

The basic idea of the scalogram is that items can be arranged in an order so that an individual who agrees with, or responds positively to, any particular item also responds positively to all items of lower value order. The rank order of the items is the scale of items; the scale of persons is very similar, people being arranged in order according to the highest rank order of items checked, which is equivalent to the number of positive responses in a perfect scale.

Conclusion



2.8.1 Conclusion

Attitudes can be **formed toward “objects” and “situations”**, and in many cases the two are not compatible which creates the problem of correspondence.

Persuaders are always trying to appeal to attitudes that we hold or values that we have. Though not clearly linked to behavioral change, attitudes and opinions are important to persuaders. Whether attitudes affect behavior or not, persuaders think that they do and build their messages accordingly.

Persuasive Communication



The Persuasive Communication Model



Factors Related to The Communication Process

A. Factors related to the source

2.9 Persuasive Communication

The question that rises here is: "**how can we effectively communicate and reach persuasion?**"

We can identify persuasive communication as "The communication process where the **communicator uses his tactics to affect a group** of target audience attitudes and their behavior."

2.9.1 The Persuasive Communication Model

Carrel Hovland and his colleagues were the first to make a persuasive communication model. This model **depends upon three sets of factors** in order to reach the intended attitudes and behavior. These factors are:

1. Factors Related to The Communication Process

These factors include the three main key factors in the communication process which are:

A. **Factors related to the source:** They include:

- Source specialization
- Source credibility
- Source status
- Audience love to the source

The **source plays the key role in the persuasive communication process**. He can easily transfer his ideas when he is specialized in the topic he is talking about. **David Berlo** said that the **communication skills** such as talking, writing, reading, listening, thinking and level of knowledge **are variables behind the success of communication process**.

Source
Credibility

Source Credibility

Is the experience and trustworthiness that receivers give to the source. Many communication researches demonstrated that an individual response to new ideas and information depended, at least in part on “**who said it**”: social scientists, point out the characteristics of a message source enhance his communication effectiveness. Though **Hovland & others** calculated that **source credibility** whether high or low **do not affect the amount of information transferred to the audience**, yet *the high credible source is more effective in changing attitudes than low credibility sources.*

Other factors such as the **sources demographic characteristics** and to what extent do they match the audience, also the audience love to the source affect the process. This why sometimes, actors are chosen for certain persuasive messages.

B. Factors
related to
message

B. Factors related to the message: Hovland pointed out some **factors** that must be **included in the message in order to be effective**. He focused on factors such as; **the way ideas, evidence are arranged, the organization of the arguments used in support of the position advocated**. In addition to the meaning contained there in, the organization of the message may vary along many dimensions.

Also the message can present the favorable arguments that the source is advocating or it can recognize the opposing positions as well. If both sides are presented, it has to be decided which argument should precede the other, should a conclusion be presented or should it be left to the receivers to draw their own conclusion, what kind of appeals should be used. Such questions have generated interesting studies on the role of the message component in changing attitudes. The answers will be discussed in detail in the chapter dealing with written communication.

C. Factors
related to
audience

C. Factors related to the audience: Individuals vary greatly in their personal psychological organization. This will be discussed later, but this model focuses on variables in the audience that affect their readiness to be persuaded. **The model figured out personality characteristics and other predisposition factors** that enable communicators to predict which type of persons or audience members will respond to new information or emotions appeals. These characteristics are:

1. An
individual's
readiness

1- **An individual's readiness** to accept a favorable or unfavorable position on the particular topic that is being discussed. This category deals with personalities who show anxiety from deviating from accepted norms.

2. An
individual's
susceptibility

2- **An individual's susceptibility** to particular types of arguments and persuasive appeals. This category refers to the predisposition factor which takes into account that audience are exposed to different types of communication that makes them respond to some appeals and neglect others.

3. An individual's overall level of susceptibility	3- An individual's overall level of susceptibility to any form of persuasion or social influence. This category includes those personality characteristics of people , who are most resistant to all forms of persuasion, as well as those who are moderately responsive and those who are highly persuasible.
Personality factors	A number of personality factors have been suggested as affecting persuasibility.
a) Overt Hostility	a) Overt Hostility: People who display overt aggressiveness or overt anti-social behavior are considered very difficult to react to any form of persuasion.
b) Social Withdrawal	b) Social Withdrawal: People under this category have a tendency to remain aloof with a marked preference for seclusive activities. They are considered to be resistant to any form of persuasion.
c) Richness of Fantasy	c) Richness of Fantasy: It is believed that people with a rich fantasy tend to be more receptive to persuasive communication.
d) Self Esteem	d) Self Esteem: Men with low self esteem are more responsive to persuasive communication than others. These persons are passive dependant and can adopt at least temporarily, whatever ideas are being promoted.
e) Other Directness	e) Other Directness: This refers to people with others directed. They are likely to be influenced by an educational or promotional campaign designed to change any type of belief or attitude. However, their change is likely to be short lived if exposed to counter propaganda.
f) Sex Differences	f) Sex Differences: It is assumed that women in impersonal matters are more persuasible than men. Thus, women are more responsive to attitudes change than men in matters related to political or social issues.
Factors Related to Cognitive and Psychological Reaction	2. Factors Related to Cognitive and Psychological Reaction These set of factors indicates the status of reaction and feedback either in the inner perception or an overt behavior. It is the middle stage that leads to types of effect including attention, understanding and persuasion.
Factors related to Effect on the Receiver	3. Factors Related to Effect on The Receiver These factors are the goal of the persuasive communication . It is what we call the K.A.P. scale where we know to what extent did we affected our audience. Did we reach the "K" goal; " K " refers to knowledge .



This simply notifies that we affected the receiver's knowledge by giving him information that might help him to form an opinion on the issue we are talking about. The second point on the scale is **forming or changing attitudes**. This is where the “A” stands. The third on the scale is the “P” that refers to **practice** which means succeeding in changing the receiver's behavior and helping him to adopt our desired behavior.

The Persuasive Communication Model

Factors related to source: Source specialization Source credibility Source status Audience love to the source	Attention Understanding	Knowledge
Factors related to message: Arrangement of ideas Organization of arguments One-side or both sided Stating conclusion	Emotional acceptance	Attitudes
Factors related to audience: Audience characteristics Hostility Social withdrawal Richness of fantasy Self-esteem	Persuasion	Practice

There are **many barriers to persuasive communication** such as **language, defense mechanism, misinterpretation, inconsistency with beliefs educational barrier, status barrier and lack of trust**. How to overcome these barriers? We are going to discuss in the next chapters concerning communication skills.