ATTITUDES AND PERSUASION

I. One of the most consistently important topics in consumer research has been the study of attitudes and attitude change.

A. Attitude - a predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way; an individual's affective reaction to, or overall evaluation of, an object, person, action, or concept.

B. Attitudes are measured with scales like good-bad, like-dislike, favorable-unfavorable.

C. Attitudes have been important for so long in consumer research partly because they have been used as an important criterion for effectiveness:
   1. Product concept tests
   2. Ad effects - pretest, posttest
   3. Prediction of behavior
   4. Basis for segmentation

Attitudes have been used to measure effectiveness because they are easier to measure than sales and are closer to sales than memory measures.

II. A Multi-attribute View of Attitudes

A. Components - there are several components which enter into a multi-attribute view of attitudes
   1. Cognitive - beliefs
   2. Affective - feelings, like-dislike (attitude)
   3. Behavior - intentions

In the multi-attribute view, these components are related in a causal way:

beliefs $\rightarrow$ attitudes $\rightarrow$ intentions $\rightarrow$ behavior.

B. More specific multi-attribute models
   1. The basic ideas are that
      a. Consumers react to how well products deliver on different benefits or attributes and
      b. Consumers also value or weight those benefits or attributes differently.
      c. That is, consumers appear to think of products in terms of attribute beliefs or ratings and attribute importances.
   2. Then, we model consumers' attitudes using the following general formula:

      \[ \text{Attitude} = E \times \text{Beliefs} \times \text{Importances} \]

C. Uses of this approach
   1. Diagnosis based on profiles of beliefs and importances can suggest change strategies
      a. One can compare beliefs relative to other brands
b. Seeing how consumers rate importances can suggest benefit segmentation strategies if consumers differ in those ratings

c. Taurus – importance of safety versus other attributes is crucial

2. Tracking studies can assess specific campaign objectives (e.g., did our ads change consumers’ beliefs about our reliability)

III. Attitudes and Behavior

A. Research on the relationship between attitude and behavior has often shown mixed results. Some studies show strong correlations and others are weak. There are many factors that influence the strength of the relationship:

1. Congruence of the attitude and behavior measured
   a. Measuring attitude and behavior at the same level of specificity can increase the relationship (i.e., the attitude measure should correspond to the type of behavior you are trying to predict)
   b. Attitude toward the object vs. attitude toward the act (attitude toward the act is usually more correspondent)
   c. Multiple observation vs. single observation measures (attitude toward the object or more general measures will typically predict the overall pattern of behavior better than any single behavior)

2. Involvement (greater correspondence for high involvement)

3. Method of formation (attitudes formed via experience show greater correspondence than those formed via communication)

4. Self-monitoring (low self-monitors show more correspondence than high; high self-monitors adjust behavior to fit the situation, low self-monitors do not)

5. Normative influences can affect the degree of relationship

B. Behavioral intentions predict behaviors best if they are
   1. Congruent
   2. Short intervening time between intentions and behavior (unforeseen events)
   3. Degree of control of behavior is high (e.g., not dieting)
   4. These models (of attitudes, intentions) assume linear sense of time, idea of free will - these assumptions may not be as true in other cultures
ATTITUDE CHANGE

I. Attitude change as an issue

A. One of the most important things marketers try to do is change consumers' attitudes.
   1. We would like to always go with existing consumer needs and reinforce existing attitudes, but this is not always possible.
   2. Consumers' attitudes and beliefs are sometime very hard to change.
      i. Ease of change decreases from beliefs to needs to attitudes to behavioral intentions to behaviors
      ii. Change is easier under low involvement, but less enduring

B. There are many approaches to attitude change. I will try to organize the approaches within a unifying framework developed by Cacioppo and Petty.

II. The Elaboration Likelihood Model - ELM

A. Routes to persuasion - Cacioppo and Petty argue that there are two main routes to persuasion
   1. Central route - consumers process message arguments and base their responses upon diligent message processing.
   2. Peripheral route - consumers do not process the message arguments carefully, but instead base their responses on some peripheral cue, such as the source, humor, music, etc.
   3. The central route leads to more enduring change which is predictive of behavior. The peripheral route is more temporary in its effects.

B. When will each route be used?
   1. Elaboration likelihood depends upon motivation and ability to process.
   2. Elaboration likelihood is high only if both motivation and ability to process are high.
   3. If elaboration likelihood is high, then the central route is used.
   4. Factors affecting motivation to process
      a. Involvement
      b. Need for cognition
      c. Number of sources
   5. Factors affecting ability to process
      a. Distraction
      b. Repetition
      c. Time of day (optimal time of day is generally afternoon/evening for young, morning for the elderly)

C. How do we measure reactions to ads within this framework?
   1. Attitudes toward the ad
   2. Cognitive responses - reactions to the ad matter, not simply what you can recall; you try measure what went through the consumer's mind as he or she viewed the commercial. You instruct the subject to list the thoughts that went through their mind while they were watching the commercial.
You can then code these thoughts into categories, e.g., counterarguments, support arguments, source derogation, source positive, etc. (e.g., Research International's Cognitive Response Analysis)

D. Generally, then, we can characterize whether central or peripheral routes will be used. However, we need to further examine what we know about details of these routes. We will consider message factors, source factors, and other issues.

III. Factors related to the Central Route

A. Message Factors (just a sample)
   1. Fear appeals
      a. Protection motivation
         i. Major components considered in this approach are perceptions of severity of & vulnerability to the possible consequences [an issue for the young - e.g., AIDS and condom use, drinking and driving] (threat appraisal), and perceptions of coping efficacy & self efficacy (coping appraisal). Coping efficacy refers to whether there is a good, specific option for avoiding the feared outcome, and self efficacy refers to the consumer’s perception of how likely it is that they could successfully take this option.
         ii. All components must be high for fear appeal to work.
      b. Therefore, one needs
         i. Source credibility to convince consumers of the severity, vulnerability, and efficacy
         ii. Immediate action steps to relieve threat that are clear with respect to how to carry them out.
         iii. Such appeals work better for low anxiety, high self-confidence; otherwise the consumer may avoid processing the appeal because it is too threatening
      c. Ethical issues
         i. Exploiting fear -raising anxiety and biasing attention- e.g., guns for women, personal safety products, medicines
         ii. Strategies for societal issues - e.g., drinking and driving, drugs, smoking

2. Multi-attribute approach - change beliefs, importances, add new attributes
3. One-sided vs. two-sided arguments (provides arguments to refute opposition)
   a. Two-sided better if audience is intelligent, initially negative
   b. One-sided better if audience initially favorable, unfamiliar with the issue
   c. Two-sided can lead to increased perceptions of credibility

B. Situational Factors
   1. Involvement
      a. High involvement increases EL, so strength of arguments matters
      b. Low involvement decreases EL, source and other peripheral cues matter
c. Can try to increase involvement (e.g., Leatherman tool print ads)

IV. Factors related to the Peripheral Route

A. Message Factors
   1. Humor is a complex message factor. It has aspects related to both the central and peripheral routes. Humor can
      a. Increase attention, at least initially
      b. Wear out faster
      c. Act as a distractor and hinder comprehension
      d. Increase credibility
      e. Increase source and ad liking

      Most of these implicate the peripheral route.

B. Situational Factors
   1. Distraction
      a. Distraction decreases EL, leads to less message processing
      b. This decreases the normally dominant response
         i. Distraction increases persuasion if responses normally negative
         ii. Distraction decreases persuasion if responses normally positive

C. Source Factors
   1. Source credibility has two aspects
      a. Expertise (competence, trustworthiness)
      b. Likability (attractiveness, similarity) - ratings of celebrities
      c. Because of these two different facets, credibility also has complex effects. For example, credibility as expertise can serve to either increase or decrease elaboration likelihood, depending on the consumers' knowledge and involvement.
      d. Generally, high credibility leads to increased persuasion.
   2. Celebrities as sources
      a. Can lead to increased attention
      b. Can be expert if there is compatibility with product (this can lead to central route)
      c. Attractiveness - usually a peripheral cue, but perhaps not for fashion, cosmetics
      d. McCracken view (JCR, 12/89, 310-321)
         i. Celebrities have meanings that they bring from their roles – that is, they symbolize a particular set of meanings (e.g., Cher, Jordan, Magic); stars bring these meanings to ads
         ii. Endorsements succeed when these meanings fit the product
      e. Risk of embarrassment with celebrities (e.g., sports figures, multiple endorsements by the same actress in India)

D. Other Factors
   1. Attitude toward the ad - plays a greater role relative to attitude toward the brand under low elaboration likelihood (e.g., low involvement); policy issue - kids
2. Role of feelings (Burke and Edell, JMR, 2/89, 69-83)
   a. Feelings can be generated by ads - feelings vs. description of ad itself;
      Moore and Edell find warm, upbeat, negative feelings; positive
      feelings are not the opposite of negative, but can coexist.
   b. Can affect attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand
   c. Can be peripheral or central (the latter where the product's focus is on
      either maintaining good feelings or controlling negative feelings).
   d. Feelings are retrievable