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Central route of persuasion examples

The central route to persuasion is a persuasion strategy that relies on facts and details to convince someone. For example, a car advertisement emphasizes the car's towing capacity is using the central route to persuasion. The opposite is the peripheral route, which relies on emotion and external cues rather than facts to persuade people. When a person is watching television, they will likely be exposed to a variety of commercials that try to sell products. When a viewer is motivated and capable, the central route will be activated. They will pay attention to the key points and assess the strength and quality of those points. If the message is convincing it will lead to long-lasting attitude change. The notion of central route persuasion comes from the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion originally devised by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). The Elaboration Likelihood Model includes two routes to persuasion: the central and the peripheral. The central route involves the recipient engaging in the critical analysis of the message's content, while the peripheral route involves very little cognitive processing. The central route involves the recipient engaging in deliberative analysis of the key points presented. This requires cognitive effort and the motivation to process the message content.

In the case of Petty and Cacioppo, the central route results "...from a person's careful and thoughtful consideration of the true merits of the information presented..." (1986, p. 125). The peripheral route results from "...some simple cue in the persuasion context (e.g., an attractive source) that induces change without necessitating scrutiny of the true merits of the information presented" (p. 125). (See my article on the types of persuasion to explore forms of persuasive rhetoric like ethos, pathos, and logos). While car commercials undoubtedly appeal to the peripheral route elements, like highlighting towing capacity and warranty, a person that really knows a lot about cars is watching Monday Night Football. During the seemingly infinite number of commercials, about half of them are about the newest model of truck from a particular company. The commercial contains information about the engine size, towing capacity, warranty, and strength of the truck's frame to carry such items as a large elephant or one of the competitor's smaller trucks. The car enthusiast is paying careful attention to the information and comparing it with the information they have in their expansive knowledge base about trucks of all makes and models. Afterwards, they conclude that the new model is in fact superior to other brands. Ultimately, they decide that if they purchase a truck for their husband's next birthday, that will be the one. A group of college students are streaming one of their favorite sci-fi shows. Because they didn't buy a subscription, they get to see a commercial every 5 and-a-half minutes. One ad that keeps appearing is about the newest phone offered by a well-known brand. The ad says that their latest model comes with a super high mega-pixel count on all 12 cameras. The phone also includes the latest version of the best graphics card on the market and a gigabyte count for the storage in the triple-digits. The screen is super wide and the phone ultra-light. As each commercial airs, the group is busy tossing about different facts about their own phones and how this new model compares. Some agree that the new model is quite impressive and worth checking online for a deep discount the next time they need to make a purchase.

Determinants of central vs. peripheral route

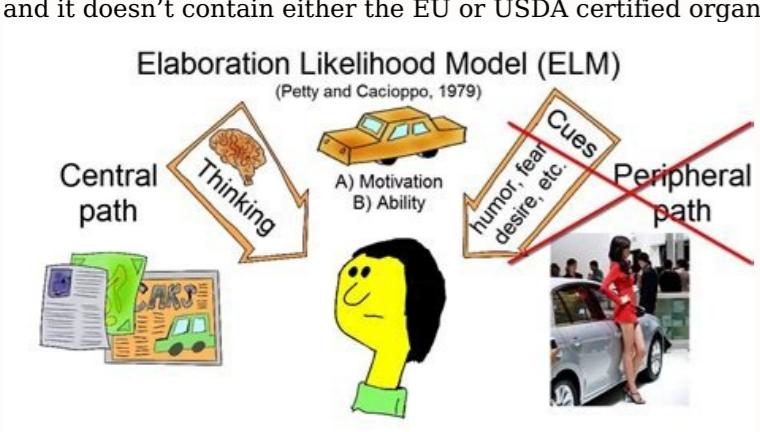
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central route <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issue is important Recipient is focused on the message Message is easy to process Recipient is in a sad mood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peripheral route <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issue is of no importance Distractors are present (e.g., noise) The message is difficult to process Recipient is in a good mood
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In this example, there's a lot of central route processing happening. There is an upcoming election for governor and the airways are full of ads. Each candidate also has a dedicated staff calling every household they can, usually in the evening around dinnertime. Each caller has a well-thought-out script that includes the candidate's views on a variety of issues. The script also includes numerous statistics that support the candidate's position. One resident being called is well-versed on many of those same issues. Based on their knowledge, many of the "facts" being presented in the script are skewed. There are certain details that are being omitted and the resident starts to present their own set of statistics that are contradictory to the candidate's. In the end, the resident is not impressed and is now even less likely to vote for that candidate. Central route processing doesn't always lead to agreeing with the message. Wearing a seat belt is a smart move. If an accident happens, being buckled-up can prevent you from having serious injuries. In fact, many states require all passengers to wear their seat-belt and if a baby is on board, they need to be properly placed in a baby-seat. The matter is serious enough to warrant the government producing a public service campaign encouraging people to wear their seat-belts, even if they're just making a quick run to the local supermarket. The PSA includes a lot of statistics on seat-belt use and benefits. It states how many fatalities occur for those that do, and those that do not wear their seat-belts.

The difference is staggering. This is the kind of PSA that will be processed via the central route because it has strong arguments to support its case for buckling-up. Dr. Otieno is watching television with her family one Saturday night. She is a general practitioner that specializes in family medicine. During one of the shows, a commercial keeps airing from a pharmaceutical company about their new prescription medication for arthritis. Arthritis is a common ailment she sees in her practice, so she pays careful attention. The advertisement includes a lot of factual information about the effectiveness of the medication, the dosage levels, and a very interesting animation that shows how the medication affects the joints. Dr. Otieno is fully impressed. The information presented in the ad is quite consistent with her experience and knowledge of arthritis. And then, the ad quietly and quickly begins to describe the various side-effects that may occur. Many of them are common in similar medications, except for one, which was not mentioned orally but presented in small type at the bottom of the ad.



This raises a red flag for the good doctor and she concludes that perhaps this particular medication will not be appropriate for her patients. Michael is doing his weekly shopping run. He's the kind of shopper that likes to save money where he can, and always inspects the labels. He reads the nutritional and ingredients information carefully on every product he buys. Today he is especially interested in blackberry jam. It's part of his morning breakfast so he picks up the store's brand version and begins reading. The label says "100% fruit flavored" with organically grown berries. However, upon further inspection it appears that the jam is only made from 10% real berries. He shakes his head and wonders what the other 90% is made from. As he continues to study the packaging it seems that there isn't any other information about how the berries are grown and it doesn't contain either the EU or USDA certified organic label. Michael is unimpressed and puts the jar back on the shelf.

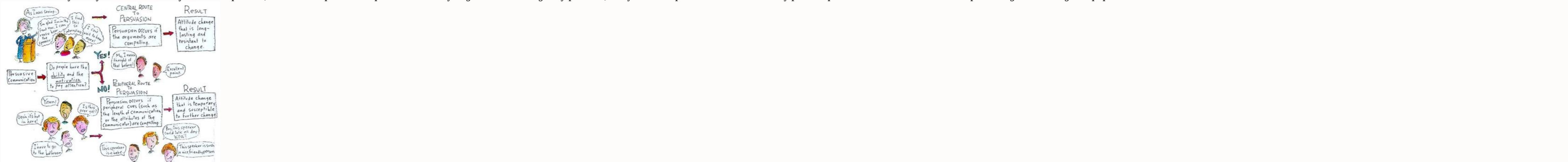


It's time to purchase a new set of sheets for the kids' beds. They have grown out of their space rockets and princess sheets, so it's time for something more mature. As the nanny is browsing through the linens department, she is paying particular attention to thread-counts and if the sheets are hypoallergenic. Unfortunately, there isn't enough information on the labels to really give her the information she needs. Luckily, a store employee comes by and begins to give her all of the data she is looking for.

LESSON SUMMARY



She seems to really know her stuff. She even knows that the label "hypoallergenic" doesn't mean it has passed any inspections because the FDA doesn't require companies to substantiate that claim. The nanny agrees with the information the salesperson has provided and lets her take her directly to a brand that will meet her requirements. In this example, central route processing leads to a sale. There are over 1 million charities in the US (not counting schools and religious organizations). One night after dinner, a family receives a phone call from a local charity. The caller has a soothing voice and explains the mission of the charity and the people they serve. Since the family always takes community service important, the caller is placed on speaker...and they begin to ask a few gently-phrased, but yet direct questions. Can the charity provide proof of its 501C3 status? What percentage of the targeted population benefits?



How many people has the charity helped over the last five years? What percentage of donations go to overhead costs such as paying staff salaries?

The caller is unphased and provides an answer supported by statistics to each and every question. The family is impressed and agrees to make a donation later by accessing the charity's website. Being informed makes central route processing easy. A newlywed couple is shopping for their first home. They have decided to work with two real estate agents so they can get different perspectives. As it turns out, both agents have chosen to show the same house. The first agent introduces the home and explains that it used to be owned by a local celebrity. They used to have a lot of social gatherings around the pool and the interior was designed by one of the most famous companies in town. This one is using the peripheral route. The other agent introduces the home and explains that the builder is well-known for using quality materials. The roof is guaranteed for 20 years and has seismic and hurricane resistant expansion joints. The hardwood floors are made from real wood, and the kitchen countertops are imported marble. This second sales pitch is clearly going to be processed via the central route. A salesperson is delivering a presentation on their company's new high-school STEAM program. It has been designed based on the latest innovations in technology and science. The program includes experiential activities in robotics, drones, and green electricity. The salesperson is adept at explaining the program's educational objectives and how they fit with the state's curriculum guidelines. There is also plenty of supporting documentation on student outcomes that provide evidence of the program's effectiveness. The group of science teachers are listening intently, many of whom are taking detailed notes and occasionally exchanging remarks amongst themselves.

They each have extensive experience teaching STEAM and are highly motivated to select a program they think will be best-suited for their students. The ELM proposed by Petty & Cacioppo has been an incredibly influential theory in psychology. It has implications in advertising and marketing, health promotion, public service announcements, and consumer preferences, just to name a few. The model identifies a central route to persuasion that involves the message recipient carefully analyzing the strength and quality of the information presented. If the recipient is motivated and capable of processing the message content, they will only be persuaded based on the quality of the content.

They are unlikely to be persuaded by slick advertising or attractive models. However, if persuaded, that effect is likely to be long-lasting and can only be challenged by equally strong arguments. References DiClemente, R. J., Crosby, R. A., & Kegler, M. (Eds.). (2003). Emerging theories in health promotion practice and research (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, John Wiley & Sons. Kitchen, P., Kerr, G., Schultz, D., McColl, R., & Pals, H. (2014). The elaboration likelihood model: Review, critique and research agenda. European Journal of Marketing, 48(11/12), 2033-2050. Petty, R.E. and Cacioppo, J.T. (1986). The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion. Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 19, 123-205. 08160214-2 Yang, S. (2015).

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