

# Advantages and limitations of the elm theory applying it to consumers perception ...

[People](#)



People in general and consumers in particular are very naïve. They accept things without questions and trust too easily. There are also people who would argue and have very strong opinions and would to their best that they are correct and others are not. People can also be obstinate who stand by only what they believe in.

Such people have opinions based on what they think is true and cannot be influenced easily. There are people who do not know how to convince. They may have some wonderful and useful information to say but they do not know how to express their feeling or communicate their message.

There are also people who know how to balance between what they believe in and what they should not. Such people judge a message based on their belief if they feel it is worthwhile they accept it else they look for other significant information. The very existence of the various kinds of people gives rise to the theory of persuasion.

The need for persuasion would not be there if consumers were not susceptible. The need for persuasion would not arise without arguments and honesty.

Messages therefore need to have certain values that will enable people to adopt it. Messages need to make consumers listen, to believe and to accept. So the message needs to make consumers believe and this very message may make people change their attitudes on the subject.

Persuasive messages can be communicated by newspapers, speeches, internet, blogs, advertisements, flyers, banners, posters, billboards,

televisions, or any such communicative technique that makes consumers look up and take notice.

Due to this very reason Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo created the Elaboration Likelihood Model or the ELM Model which was a model based on persuasion. The ELM model explains how the message of persuasion changes the perception and attitude of a person who receives it.

The model explained that “ a message was transmitted and received through one of two routes of persuasion: the central route and the peripheral route” (Moore, 2001).

#### Central route

The Central route requires a lot of thought and a lot of elaboration. Such processes entail cautious analysis of a communication technique that is persuasive. Under such circumstances people’s individual cognitive reactions to the communication determines the result which is nothing but the route and importance of the change involved.

So if the thoughts are favourable than the messages will be agreed to and if it is not favourable the message will be rejected (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

#### Peripheral route

The Peripheral route does not involve much elaboration or thought, it is therefore not channelised. In such a route the persuasive argument is very weak focusing on messages that is indirectly connected to message subject itself. Decision here will be based on the indirect and familiar influences.

Therefore such routes emphasize situations whether to view projected drops within a person's available choice for approval or dismissal (Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall, 1965).

Factors that influence

Consumers are easily influenced by two factors which are motivation or the great need for wanting to deal with the message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979).

Motivational factor will include a person's personal opinion of the message that is showed and the desire to think and realise. The second factor is ability which is nothing but the capability of evaluating a message critically (Petty, Wells, & Brock, 1976).

The route that is adopted is based on detailed elaboration of these above mentioned factors. This factor takes into account time, pressure, distractions of arguments that are required to be scrutinized.

There are other factors such as attitudes, contextual matters which have elaboration of messages as high, low and moderate. Some recent changes to the model include taking into account factors such as confidence, trust which gives rise to the metacognitive environment that happen in conditions that have a higher rate of elaboration (Petty, Briñol, & Tormala, 2002).

Limitations

Some of the limitations of the ELM Model are as follows,

- Some of the initial models were complex, prediction factor was lesser and the usage itself was not that practical.
- The theory of ELM model cannot be called a scientific model.

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- The theory also cannot be tested for doubtfulness when checking for strong and weak arguments.
- There still are many other different theories that synthesize the aspect of persuasion.

According to Perloff, R. M (2003), there are two main limitations they are as follows,

- People think a lot of messages and these thoughts are sometimes overridden by communications that are persuasive, which causes any decision to be made more by “ mental shortcuts”.
- Failed to explain as to how and why messages can influence people and how these people can change their minds, thoughts and attitudes.

According to Gotlieb and Swan (1990), consumers also tend towards price saving as a motivation to deal with the message, but there is not much evidence that justifies the level of motivation. The paper also explains that the ELM Model does not sufficiently predict the argument effects of a message.

According to Cole, Ettenson, Reinke, and Schrader (1990), all the three experiments that were based on the ELM model gave “ conflicting results”. These possibilities can be explained in the following points,

- Product cues depended on individual consumers, advertisements, and the circumstances. It was found that these factors were changed for the experiment to get the expected results. It was therefore found that

consumers tended to respond to advertisements that were robust and should be able to handle small changes.

- Some ads such as billboards give away very little information as compared to other advertisement techniques. The ELM model was therefore does not correctly specify what is a central and what is a peripheral route (Bitner and Obermiller (1985).
- The route need to be continuous rather than discontinuous. Manipulations tend to be involvements and therefore may not give the expected results although actual methods used by Petty, R, Cacioppo, J. I and Schumann, D (1983) in their experiment.

### Conclusion

From the above detailed explanation it can be seen that advertisers have basically two choices to make, firstly the central route and secondly the peripheral route to persuade their consumers. Central route uses greater elaboration and produces positive change in attitude.

The peripheral route requires a low level of elaboration and gets a quick response although there is a small change in attitude.

Many have found that the Elaboration Likelihood Model although scientific has been difficult if compared to the traditional scientific standards.

The model restricts itself only with explaining the two different routes for persuasions and the best situation for each of them. Although many have found that the model cannot be used to determine doubt and any internal stability.

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Although the ELM Model is reasonably accurate on attitude change and its achievements along with the any difficulty in making a great change in attitude. Although this can not be applied for all situations, but still provides a very beneficial framework in the long run.

Consumers can be easily persuaded by communication if they pay even more attention to the content of the advertisement other than the advertisements credibility or attractiveness or any other factors that would tend to sway the attitude and opinion of the consumer (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1981).

Whereas a study done by Yang, Hung, Sung and Farn (2006) found that according to the ELM model consumers that had “ high involvement” but “ low anxiety” used the central route and consumers that had “ low involvement” but “ high anxiety” used the peripheral route.

Any company that deals with organic products can easily benefit from this model provided it follows the routes laid done by the ELM model. The different persuasive messages that are publicized in different ways such as billboards, newspapers, internet, blogs all need to be changed and modified to the group of consumers that needs to be targeted.

This modification will help the business improve its sales and aim at consumers from different walks of life. Some consumers may not like something but if the product is advertised properly than it is very easy persuade the consumer to buy the product.