

## Research Article

# Developing the Contribution of Information Processing Activities in Forming Persuasion

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**Abstract.**

Research on persuasion or attitude change has been approached through single-process models. The focus of this research is to explain more clearly that persuasion only occurs through a process that is directly caused by social influence. However, the use of this approach produced contradictory results. On the one hand, social influence increases persuasion, but other research finds the opposite. This article discusses the possibility of using a dual-process model approach, which is expected to address the inconsistency of social influence on persuasion in single-process models. Dual process models are proposed to be able to provide new explanations regarding the possibility of multiple effects of social influence variables on persuasion by including information processing activity variables. Through the dual process model approach, it is possible to explain that a certain effect can be caused by different processes and that a certain variable can work differently and in different situations. Social influence has different mechanisms for determining persuasion, which can act as a simple cue when the thinking level is low and can have more than one role (multiple roles) when information processing activities are at a high thinking level.

**Keywords:** elaboration likelihood models, information processing, persuasion, social influence

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## 1. BACKGROUND

Persuasion is trying to make a change in attitude by slanting information and evidence, whereas if a change in attitude is due to information and facts provided objectively, then it is called education[1]. In their statement, Petty & Brinol [2] wrote that “the most common target of persuasion in the psychological literature is a person’s attitude”. Attitudes are general judgments about other people, places, objects, and issues. Attitude is the primary object in research on influence because attitude is considered to have a direct influence on decision-making and action. Everything will follow the principle of the influence-attitude relationship: a person will decide to buy a product that he likes the most, enter the university that he likes the most, and choose the leader he feels he likes the most [2].

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The annual review written by Wood [3] leads to the understanding that by using the perspective of social influence, knowledge is obtained that attitudes do not only occur due to individual factors (e.g., the ability to think and knowledge about the topic at hand), but also due to factors originating from social phenomena because, in principle, attitudes will emerge and be embedded in social interactions. The concept of social influence [4] consists of authority, social proof, liking, commitment, scarcity, and reciprocity. Naturally, social influence does not only show cognitive adjustments within individuals but also structural adjustments within social groups [5].

Wood [3] writes that there is an interface between social influence and persuasion. It was found in research that social influence affects the intention to adhere to groups [6]. Wood [3], in his annual review of psychology, examines the development of theory and research on social influence and shows that social influence has a significant role in discussions about attitude structure, attitude-behavior relations, and intergroup attitudes. In the review he wrote, Wood placed the variables of majority and minority group influence as the main dimensions of social influence. Cialdini and Goldstein [4] also explained in their annual review (social influence: compliance and conformity) that apart from the numerical variables of majorities versus minorities, there is another variable, namely authority, which is also the center of attention of social psychology researchers in explaining social influence and decision-making in influence contexts. Reinforced by Petty and Brinol [7], authority can be related to source credibility, namely the variable that gets the largest portion in the persuasion research area.

Bagozzi and Lee [6], in their research, also found that decision-making is determined by various sources of social influence. Someone can make decisions without thinking twice because of the effect of obedience on authority figures. People tend to think that what an authority figure or expert says is the truth. This includes situations when people are more interested and decide to choose a restaurant because the number of vehicles parked there is full or higher than in other restaurants. This is related to the general notion that the popularity of a place is social proof of the quality of what is in it [7].

So far, research on the influence of social influence on persuasion has used a single-process model approach, which argues that there is only one process that directly affects persuasion. However, through this approach, the results were inconsistent; in one study, it was found that high source credibility increased persuasion, but the results of other studies did the opposite [8]. This article discusses the possibility of using a dual process model approach, which offers a new explanation regarding the possibility of multiple effects of the social influence variable on persuasion by including the information processing activity variable. Through this dual process model approach,

it is possible to explain that a certain effect can be caused by different processes and that a certain variable can work differently and in different situations [2].

In accordance with previous research, Brinol & Petty [8] concluded that source credibility has different mechanisms for determining persuasion, which can act as a simple cue when the level of thinking is low and can have more than one role (multiple roles) when processing information at a high level of thinking. At the level of high thought conditions, the function of the source credibility variable is determined by timing [8,9] or ordinal position [10]. If information about source credibility is presented before a persuasive message, what happens is valence bias or thought favorability, whereas if it is placed after a persuasive message, what will happen is thought confidence.

Some of the mechanisms that occur in the source credibility variable are seen to also work in the persuasion process that occurs in the group majority and minority variables. It was found that when the level of thinking that occurs is very low, suggestions or messages brought by the majority group cause an increase in attitude change through the low-effort acceptance process (where the majority group acts as a positive cue to validity), but when the level of thinking is very high, the majority group can create a positive bias, which results in more favorable thought and higher persuasion. Conversely, minority groups tend to increase resistance because the presence of minority groups results in a negative bias in the minds of message recipients [7, 8].

## 2. METHOD

The method used in this study is narrative review, by collecting various sources and data related to the research topic [11]. The sources used are previous national and international journals and news in the media that present data or exposure related to information processing activities in forming persuasion. The identified literature is then collected and analyzed to bring out dominant and related themes. The presentation of data is then carried out narratively, forming a unity of information that can show key aspects of the topic of discussion. This method of narrative assessment offers solutions that pay attention to all elements that build the narrative. The weakness of this study is the tendency that may result from the dominant narrative that appears in the literature under study [12].

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW & DISCUSSION

### 3.1. The Elaboration Likelihood Model

Research on persuasion has the longest history in social psychology [13]. The most recent theory of persuasion was introduced by Richard E. Petty and John Caciopo in 1981 and was named the elaboration likelihood model [7, 10,11]. The theory of ELM was developed in Richard E. Petty's dissertation while studying at Ohio State University in the mid-1970s. In his dissertation, Petty raised the problem of why some changes in attitude can last a long time while others only last a short time. Petty speculates that if a change in attitude is caused by a condition that is fully considered (for example, after listening to a strong argument from a source), then it will bring up a persistent consideration; otherwise, if the change in attitude occurs because of only cursory thinking (little thinking) (e.g., attitudes based on first impressions), then the resulting considerations are temporary and then lost (transitory) [13].

Petty's theory of ELM was inspired by the opinion of Tony Greenwald, who first put forward the cognitive response to persuasion approach [13]. Greenwald [14] states that the basic tenet of cognitive response is that the cognitive response elicited by persuasion communication is the most important mediator of attitude change. The cognitive response approach postulates that when a person receives persuasive communication, he will try to connect the new information with existing documents in his cognition. The cognitive response approach focuses more on the high-elaboration mechanisms through which persuasion may or may not occur (rejected). This argument was used by Petty to answer the challenge of his dissertation supervisor (Tim Brock) so that he could find a more general theory of attitude change rather than just focusing on the hypothesis of attitude persistence [13].

There are four core ideas in ELM [13]. First, ELM believes in the fact that changes in attitudes or considerations can occur at high or low levels of thinking; Petty calls it an elaboration continuum that moves from low to high. Second, ELM argues that there are specific processes of change that occur along a continuum (for example, changing attitudes through classical conditioning does not require a high level of thinking and working at the low end of the continuum, whereas cognitive response requires thinking at a high level and working at the upper end of the continuum). The persuasion process can occur at the lower end of the continuum, so persuasion is said to follow the peripheral route, whereas when the persuasion process occurs at the upper end of the continuum, persuasion occurs because it follows the central route.

Third, it postulates how important the level of thinking is behind the consideration or formation of attitudes. Because the size of the level of thinking that is behind the

attitude will determine how strong the consequences that arise later will be. Fourth, when the level of thinking is at the lower end of the continuum, the variable will act as a simple cue, and the attitude will have a direction according to the variable. However, when a person is at the top (high) end of the continuum, then there will be three ways in which variables affect judgment, which can act as arguments, affect thought valence, and influence the structure of people's thinking so that they can become more confident in their thoughts [13].

### 3.2. The Extent of Thinking and Information Processing Activities

According to the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) approach, information processing activities are related to the extent of thinking used by individuals to process information in the persuasion process [1, 13]. There are two categories of thinking levels used in information processing activities: high or low [1, 13]. The high level of thinking produces a high level of information processing activity, referred to as high thinking process, high effort processing, or central route processing, while the low level is categorized as low thinking process, low effort processing, or peripheral route processing (1,10,11,12,13). Especially in the high thinking process category, it is also necessary to study metacognitive processes related to the role of thought confidence as a mediator of persuasion and resistance [16].

If information processing occurs in peripheral route processing, the attitude change may occur through a simple cue-to-persuasion mechanism. Whereas in central route processing, individuals carefully examine the strength of the reasons or arguments in the message; if the arguments are strong, persuasion occurs; if the arguments are weak, resistance occurs [15]. Persuasion or changes in attitude resulting from the high thinking process will have stronger and longer-lasting consequences (persistence), while those caused by the low thinking process will result in a weak and short-lived outcome [7, 10, 13, 14].

Factors originating from individual differences and situations can influence the extent of thinking; in this case, they are categorized as factors related to motivation and the ability to think and examine carefully issues or information received by individuals [1, 13]. The range of high and low motivation and ability to assess and research carefully on attitude objects (people, issues, positions, objects, regulations, and changes) can be seen as the elaboration likelihood continuum [1]. The higher the individual's motivation and ability to assess the central merits of the attitude object, the greater the possibility of the individual, with all his might, carefully scrutinizing all information relevant to the

object. So, when the elaboration likelihood is very high (central route), the individual will evaluate the information related to the object based on the knowledge he has acquired and has strong reasons for having a certain attitude. If the elaboration likelihood is low (peripheral route), the individual's desire to carefully examine the attitude object decreases, so that persuasion or attitude change occurs only because of a weak process and does not involve efforts to assess or research information related to the attitude object [1].

The most important variable that can influence individual motivation to think about or scrutinize messages is perceived personal relevance [1, 13]. High personal relevance results in an increase in the level of thinking and information processing activity in the message received. Information is categorized as having high personal relevance if it is related and has a direct effect on individual interests [1, 13]. Besides personal relevance, other variables that can influence individual motivation to think include extrovert-introvert personality, the need for cognition [17], psychological consistency, emotion, and attitude accessibility. Meanwhile, the ability factors include message repetition, distraction, time limitation, and mastery of knowledge and experience [15].

## 4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article is to discuss the idea of employing a dual-process model method to address the inconsistency of social effect on persuasion in single-process models. By incorporating information processing activity characteristics, dual process models are proposed to provide novel explanations for the possibility of multiple impacts of social influence variables on persuasion. The dual process model approach helps explain how a specific impact can be created by distinct processes and how a specific variable might behave differently and in different contexts. When information processing activities are at their peak, social influence has numerous methods for deciding persuasion, which can operate as a simple signal when the thinking level is low and can have more than one role (multiple roles) when information processing activities are at their peak.

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