9.13: Elaboration Likelihood Model of Targeting

The Maslow Targeting approach to persuasion is an attempt to focus on the specific needs of the audience. The Elaboration Likelihood Model describes two routes for this targeting.

Two "Routes" to Persuasion

The work of Petty and Cacioppo\(^1\) suggest that a person has two routes to persuasion:

**Central Route:** Where the receiver of the persuasive message is actively involved in the process by analyzing and really considering the arguments and ideas of the message. Here the person looks to the validity and accuracy of an argument to make a decision.

**Peripheral Route:** Where persuasion takes place on cognitions other than the inherent strength of the argument. They may agree with the argument, because they like the source of the argument, as they may be thought of as an expert, or the listener may just feel comfortable with their looks. Celebrities endorsing products or services are appealing to the Peripheral Route. When an argument is complicated and the listener lacks either the ability or motivation to analyze it, he or she will look for a Peripheral Route to make their decision.

There is a difference in the routes that each listener selects. Research indicates that attitudes which are changed through the central route to persuasion will have different effects from attitudes changed via the peripheral route.

Individuals who change their attitude using the Central Route are more actively involved in the persuasion process than those who choose the Peripheral Route. The result then is that these new attitudes will be stronger and less resistant to change in the future.

Petty and Cacioppo explain that:
“Attitude changes that result mostly from processing issue-relevant arguments (central route) will show greater temporal persistence, greater prediction of behavior, and greater resistance to counter persuasion than attitude changes that result mostly from peripheral cues”\(^2\)

If you want to make an attitude change that is more significant in influencing the behavior of that person, more resistant to change, and will actually last longer, you want them to make their decision using the Central Route.

But as you can guess, we cannot know which route our audience will be taking. This research at least lets us know that we need to make clear, well-organized arguments or else our audience will look for Peripheral cues to make their decision.\(^3\)

Reference

