

values
yielding
attention
attitude
testimonials
behaviour
beliefs
comprehension
health
communication
persuasion
advertisements

Persuasive Texts

ONLY STUDY GUIDE FOR TEX3701

Prof E O Saal

DEPARTMENT OF AFRIKAANS AND THEORY OF LITERATURE

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA
PRETORIA

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Please activate your myUnisa and myLife e-mail addresses and ensure that you have regular access to the myUnisa module site TEX3701/S1 OR TEX3701/S2, depending on which semester you are registered in, and your group site.

Note: This is an **online module**; the study material for your module is therefore available on myUnisa. However, in order to support you with your studies, you will also receive certain study material in printed format.

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Dear Student

This document provides insight into the information presented on myUnisa, the University's official online "learning management system". If at all possible, we encourage you to set up your myLife account at <https://my.unisa.ac.za/portal> and join the online learning environment.

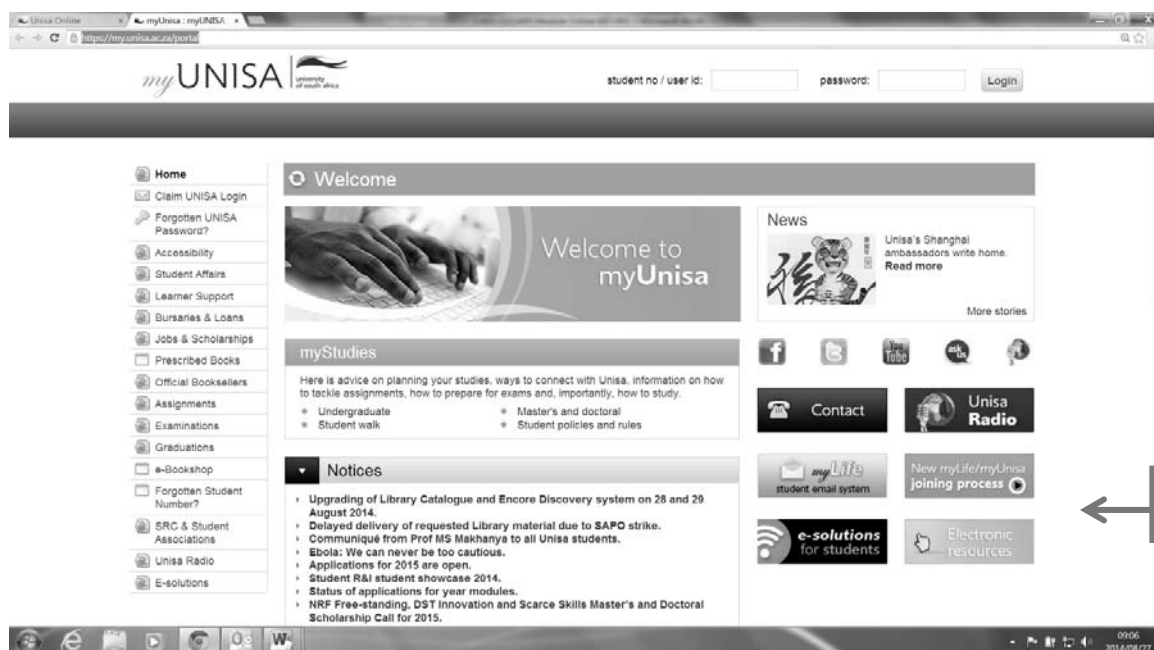


Figure 1: myUnisa portal

This document includes the following information:

- the welcome message on the home page p (vi)
- frequently asked questions (FAQs) p (ix)
- learning units pp 1–112

Information intended to help you start your online studies is available in different places (including this document) such as the Unisa brochures, YouTube videos AND under Learning Units: "Things to know before commencing with your studies", and "Getting started with my studies on myUnisa". To ensure that you do not miss vital information, go to the relevant section after you have read the welcome message below.

Before commencing your studies, familiarise yourself with myUnisa and how it functions.

We look forward to witnessing your progress at a personal and professional level during the year and wish you a prosperous and fruitful year of study with us.

Your lecturer

Prof EO Saal

Course supervisor: TEX3701

Welcome message on the home page

The screenshot shows the myUNISA interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the myUNISA logo, the University of South Africa name, and several dropdown menus: 'My Workspace', 'ARH111G-09-Y1', 'TEX3701-15-Master', and 'More Sites'. A 'Logout' button is also present. Below this is a 'View Site As:' dropdown menu. On the left, a sidebar menu lists various site features like Home, Announcements, Learning Units, Discussions, Additional Resources, Gradebook, Schedule, Statistics, Site Info, and Home. The main content area is titled 'Welcome Message' and contains an 'Edit Message' button. The message itself features a word cloud with terms like 'values', 'beginning', 'attitude', 'behaviour', 'beliefs', 'health', 'communication', 'advertisements', and 'persuasion'. Below the word cloud, it says 'MOD01 FOR TEX3701' and 'Persuasive Texts'. The message is in Afrikaans and English, welcoming students to the module on Persuasive texts (TEX3701).

Figure 2: myUnisa welcome home page

Welcome to the module on *Persuasive texts* (TEX3701). I hope that you will find this module interesting, meaningful and enriching.

The TEX3701 module is offered by the Department of Afrikaans and Theory of Literature and is intended for students pursuing a career in the communication industry. It is a semester module that carries 12 credits towards your qualification.

This module introduces you to the persuasion process from a communication perspective. The fundamental objective of this module is to equip you with the necessary knowledge and skills to analyse, evaluate and write two major types of persuasive texts, namely advertisements and texts for health campaigns. In this module you will get in-depth insight into the various theories and models of persuasion and the various persuasion strategies that you can use to enhance the effectiveness of a persuasive text. You should be able to apply your knowledge and skills in the design, evaluation and writing of persuasive texts.

We will use the myUnisa module website (for students who can go online), supported by a study guide for students who cannot go online on a regular basis, to guide you through the various sections. The study guide contains all the printable material that is on the module website.

For this module there is no prescribed book, but we make use of e-reserves. The following chapters from the book *The Sage handbook of persuasion: developments in theory and practice* (2012) by James Price Dillard and Lijiang Shen are available as e-reserves:

- Chapter 2: *The effects of message features: Content, structure, and style* – Lijiang Shen and Elisabeth Bigsby

- Chapter 9: *The Elaboration Likelihood Model* – Daniel J O’Keefe
- Chapter 12: *Fear appeals* – Paul A Mongeau
- Chapter 17: *Persuasive strategies in health campaigns* – Charles K Atkin and Charles T Salmon

(Refer to learning unit 0 below on how to access your e-reserves.)

Apart from the hard copy, an electronic version of the study guide is also available under the **Additional Resources** option on myUnisa. You can download it onto a computer or mobile device for use when you cannot connect with myUnisa and when you do not have the printed study guide at hand.

This module is offered in parallel in English and Afrikaans. English students only need to access the learning material that is available in English, while Afrikaans students only need to access the learning material available in Afrikaans. The learning units under the **Learning Units** option on myUnisa are also offered in parallel in English and Afrikaans. When you access a learning unit under the **Learning Units** tool you will have the option between Afrikaans and English. You can then choose your language preference and proceed to the learning unit.

You will have a pleasant start to your studies in this module if you first consult the **Getting started letter**, which you can access at the following site:

<http://www.unisa.ac.za/default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=22379>.

You might also find it helpful to watch the following videos relating to studying online:

- [my Studies @ Unisa \(1\)](#)
- [my Studies @ Unisa \(2\): What does it mean to be an ODL student at Unisa?](#)
- [Get connected before you start to register on myUnisa](#)

Do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail or by paying me a **pre-arranged visit** at my office at the Muckleneuk Campus in Pretoria.

My contact details are as follows:

<p>Prof EO Saal Office number: Theo van Wijk Building 10-80 Telephone number: +27 (0)12 429 6737 E-mail address: saaleo@unisa.ac.za</p>
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Your next steps

Before you do anything else, we strongly advise you to go to **Learning unit 0** on myUnisa now and read through “**Getting started with my studies on myUnisa**”.

After you have worked through this section, you should select the **Discussion Forum** option (in the menu bar on the left), go to *Forum 1: Student Lounge* and **introduce yourself** to your fellow students.

It is a pleasure to have you as a student, and I would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success with your studies.

Prof EO Saal

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Category: Outcomes and assessment criteria

FAQ: What are the outcomes and assessment criteria for this module?

Outcomes	Assessment criteria
Understand the theories and models of persuasion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the concept “persuasion”. • Distinguish between persuasive texts and informative texts. • Identify the various persuasive strategies to overcome readers’ resistance to persuasive texts. • Describe the two routes to persuasion. • Explain the persuasive function of rhetorical style figures in the persuasion process.
Determine the effectiveness of various persuasive strategies used in advertisement texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the various strategies used in advertisements to attract and maintain readers’ attention. • Discuss the strategies that document designers can use to influence the reader’s decision to evaluate the arguments in a persuasive text. • Distinguish between “viewpoint” and “supporting arguments”. • Identify the relevant arguments in the text. • Distinguish between strong and weak arguments. • Distinguish between various argument types and identify when to use which argument type. • Explain how visual images can function as arguments.
Determine the effectiveness of the various persuasive strategies used in health campaign texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish between advertisements and health campaigns. • Identify the persuasive strategies used frequently in health campaign texts.
Plan and write an effective persuasive text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and explain the different steps in designing a health campaign. • Identify the different phases in designing a health campaign text. • Make informed decisions on relevant persuasive strategies to enhance the persuasive power of the text. • Predict the possible success or failure of a persuasive text. • Conduct pretesting of a persuasive text.

Category: Student support

FAQ: Whom should I contact regarding academic enquiries?

All queries about the *content* of this module (TEX3701) should be directed to your lecturer:

Prof EO Saal
012 429 6737 / +27 12 429 6737
e-mail: saaleo@unisa.ac.za

Please refer to Tutorial Letter 101 for more information.

FAQ: Whom should I contact regarding administrative queries?

For enquiries about assignments (procedures, receipt and return, marks), student administration, Despatch (study material), exam timetables, exam enquiries and finances (student accounts) which you cannot solve via myUnisa, refer to *my Studies @ Unisa*. (Please refer to Tutorial Letter 101 for more information.)

LEARNING UNIT 0

Getting started with my studies on myUnisa

In this learning unit we will provide you with important information on myUnisa, the official online learning management system of Unisa. We will follow the question-answer model to make it easier for you to find answers to the questions you may have.

0.1 myUnisa as online learning environment

In this section we focus on the most frequently asked questions about online study. Read the answers to each question carefully, so that you can familiarise yourself with how the online learning environment (myUnisa) works. If you do not read this section carefully, you will **not** know how to approach your online studies or where to find your study material.

(i) Where do I begin?

As a registered Unisa student you will have access to the myUnisa learning portal.

Example 1: myUnisa portal home page

From here you can access various online resources to assist you in your studies. You first need to set up your myLife account at <https://my.unisa.ac.za/portal> in order to join the online learning environment (i.e. myUnisa).

Familiarise yourself with the *my Studies @ Unisa* brochure and other guidelines.

You might also find it helpful to access the following links relating to studying online:

- *my Studies @ Unisa (1)*

- *my Studies @ Unisa (2): What does it mean to be an ODL student at Unisa?*
- *Get connected before you start to register on myUnisa*

Once you have registered and have your myUnisa login details, you will have access to the module sites of all the modules you have registered for.

You can use various navigation options to navigate the module sites you have enrolled for. These options are displayed on the left-hand side of the screen of all the sites. Click on the specific navigation option, and it will open the page containing the information you are looking for. The first page you will see when opening any site is the home page.

Example 2: Home page of module site (“module site”)

Remember, from the “home page”, your lecturers are just a click away!

We have already mentioned that students who have regular access to myUnisa can get access to all their study material on myUnisa by accessing the “module site” for TEX3701.

After you have registered on myUnisa, please go to the module site for TEX3701 and read the welcome message on the home page. Please note that this module is offered parallel in English and Afrikaans. Under the **Learning units** option language options will be available: English students need to choose the English language option to access the learning units in English, while Afrikaans students need to choose the Afrikaans language option to access the learning units in Afrikaans.

(ii) How will this module be offered?

This module will be offered as an online module. This means that all the study material for the module TEX3701 will be available on myUnisa. You just need to go to the myUnisa module site for TEX3701 and your learning material will be available immediately under the option **Learning Units**.

If you have studied at Unisa previously, studying online may prove to be a challenge because it represents a different approach. However, studying online can be a significantly improved learning experience and can be more enriching, depending on a number of factors.

For students who do not have regular access to myUnisa, we have developed this **study guide** in printed format (i.e. the document you are reading right now) which contains basically the same information as the information that is available on myUnisa. This study guide has been developed to support those students who do not have regular access to myUnisa. (**Note:** This study guide is also available on myUnisa under the **Additional Resources** option. Please download this study guide from myUnisa if you do not receive the print copy in the post soon after registration.)

Does this mean that students who do not have regular access to myUnisa do not need to register for myUnisa? No, all students need to register for myUnisa.

It is important even for those students who do not have regular access to myUnisa to register for myUnisa. All students will have to access myUnisa on occasion to download certain learning material, such as the document “Attitudes and behaviour” which has been uploaded under the **Additional Resources** option and the e-reserves for this module.

(iii) What happens if I cannot study online?

Although Unisa is rapidly offering an increasing number of modules online, it has not lost sight of the fact that many students do not have a suitable device to access the internet for study purposes or cannot afford the expense of going online. The study guide that you have received in printed format (i.e. the document you are reading right now) contains basically the same learning content as the learning content that is available on myUnisa (for those students who have regular access to myUnisa).

However, we expect our students to access the module site for TEX3701 on myUnisa sporadically to access certain learning material that you need to study in order to answer Assignments 01 and 02 effectively.

(iv) Which study material is only available on myUnisa?

The following study material is **only** available on myUnisa and you will have to download it from myUnisa:

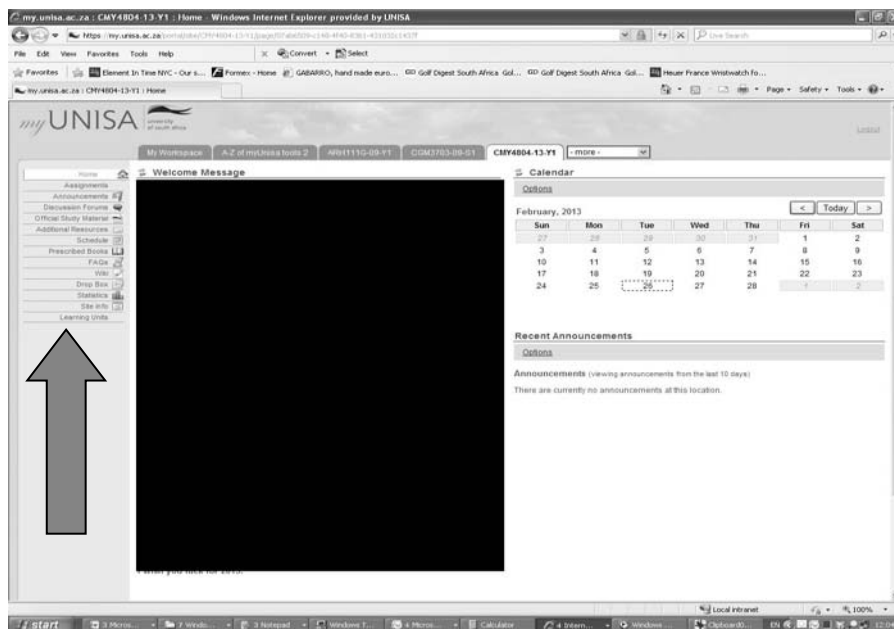
- A document entitled “Attitudes and behaviour” has been uploaded under the **Additional Resources** option. You must familiarise yourself with the content of this document. In learning unit 2 we will refer you to this document to give you a better understanding of the concepts *beliefs*, *values*, *attitudes* and *behaviour change* and how they relate to one another.
- Four chapters of the *SAGE handbook of persuasion: Developments in theory and practice* (2012) have been uploaded as e-reserves. These chapters form an integral part of the learning units – some of the learning units have in fact been based on these chapters. You will have to access the module site for TEX3701 on myUnisa in order to download these e-reserves and study these chapters. (See the discussion in Section 0.3 below on how to access the e-reserves that have been uploaded.)

(v) **What is myUnisa?**

myUnisa was created to serve as a digital classroom and study space where you can engage with your studies, your lecturer and your fellow students. myUnisa makes it possible for you to use a digital device like a laptop, a tablet or even a smartphone to receive instructions and guidance, get access to sources and resources, listen to a podcast, interact with your lecturer/s and other students etc.

(vi) **How does myUnisa work? (myUnisa options)**

In this brief overview we refer to the functions of myUnisa that you may require on a regular basis. Down the left-hand side of your myUnisa module site you will find a series of options which are indicated by a green arrow in the graphic below. These options are known as “buttons” because you can click on each of them to select and open the option that the button represents. These buttons start with **Home**, **Assignments** etc from the top down.



We will discuss here only those myUnisa options which will be used for the module TEX301.

When you click on the myUnisa options there may, or may not be, a definition of the option at the top of the page is opened, for example **Discussion Forums**, **FAQs**, **Wiki** etc are defined while **Additional Resources** is not defined.

Each myUnisa option has its own function and we give a brief overview of some of them below. You can open only one option at a time and will have to learn how to move from one tool to the other and how to move from one element within an option to another element within the same option. Moving around in myUnisa is known as “navigating”.

The myUnisa site for some modules may include a longer list of options than for others. The activation of options depends on how the lecturer responsible for the module and other role-players envisaged the flow of information and how they intended you to be exposed to the learning experience. The absence of an option on a module site is therefore not an indication that myUnisa is not working as it should.

Now follows a brief overview of some of the myUnisa options, how some of them are related to one another and how they will be useful to you.

- **Home**

Here you will find a welcome message from your lecturer/s. We, the lecturers, may use this space to alert you to something important that you should take note of. We have already indicated that we will give you information on where the English-speaking students should access their learning units and where the Afrikaans students should access their learning units. Because we assume you will probably visit **Home** for news, we may post a message here to inform you of a new announcement that we have placed under **Announcements** or to another option where an important development has occurred.

- **Announcements**

While general announcements may be made under **Home**, you must pay regular visits to **Announcements** to make sure you do not miss an important bit of information. This can relate to a wide range of matters, for example module specific arrangements about assignments, resources, etc. If you have registered yourself correctly on myUnisa you will receive an email or SMS notification every time your lecturer posts a new announcement. Always check the list of previous announcements to make sure that you have not missed any important notices.

- **Discussion Forums**

This is a valuable and safe space where you can interact with fellow students about topics relating to the module that you have enrolled for. Either the lecturer or you can create a discussion about a topic.

Inside the **Discussion Forums** option (when you are online) at the top left of the webpage, there are several **Forums** where you will be asked to discuss ideas and post your views on a particular topic. As part of this space, you will also have a Forum where you can talk with your fellow students on a more social level.

We may request you to participate in a discussion forum *before* you commence your studies. We have created the **Student Lounge** where students can introduce themselves to their fellow students and familiarise themselves with how the discussion forum tools work. (Please read the **netiquette rules** for participation in the discussion forums that have been uploaded under **Additional Resources**. “Netiquette” is simply “net etiquette.” This refers to the way in which you should behave when you communicate on myUnisa and more specifically on discussion forums. Netiquette outlines simple, polite online discussion behaviours that participants in an online discussion expect from one another.)

- **Learning units** (previously known as study units)

Within the digital space known as **Learning Units** you will find a collection of topics which together comprise the syllabus for the module TEX3701. You will find learning units 1 to 9 here which you have to study before you can answer Assignments 01 and 02. (Please note that the learning units are parallel in English and Afrikaans – that is

there are nine learning units in English (for the English students) and nine learning units in Afrikaans (for the Afrikaans students). If you are studying TEX3701 through the medium of English, you have to access the nine English learning units only. Afrikaans students will access only the Afrikaans learning units. The English and Afrikaans learning units are exactly the same in terms of content.)

The pages containing the **Learning Units** of your module may contain website addresses where you can find more information and links to YouTube videos, **Additional Resources** etc. When you are busy working within **Learning Units** click on “Next” at the bottom of the page to move on to the next section or click on “Table of Contents” to move quickly to another learning unit.

In the learning units you will also be referred to the relevant e-reserves for this module or to **Additional Resources** to access certain information.

- **Official Study Material**

This is a space where printable study matter is kept in pdf format. You will find the following material here:

- **Tutorial Letter 101** which contains your Assignments 01 and 02 and administrative and tuition-related information. (You will also receive Tutorial Letter 101 in the post on registration.)
- Copies of **previous exam papers**. Please note that we have revised the content of this module since 2016, so not all the questions in past exam papers before 2016 are relevant for the revised module.

- **Additional Resources**

Your lecturer will identify resources that may contribute to your understanding of module contents and store these resources here. You will find the following information under **Additional Resources**:

- The document “Attitudes and behaviour” which we refer to in learning unit 2 is uploaded under **Additional Resources**.
- The study guide, which you should receive in the post upon registration, is also uploaded under **Additional Resources**.
- Other material that is not in the study guide.

You should investigate this function after you have registered for a module and during the course of the semester you can go there again to see if new resources have been added. We will alert you to new additions by means of a notice on **Announcements** or on the **Home** page.

- **Prescribed Books**

This option contains a list of the e-reserves available for this module.

Some chapters from the book *The Sage handbook of persuasion: Developments in theory and practice* (2012) by James Price Dillard and Lijiang Shen are available as

e-reserves. See section 0.3 below regarding which chapters are available as e-reserves and how to access your e-reserves.

- **Blogs**

A **Blog** is basically like a page in a diary where you record your own experiences. The difference is that what you enter as a blog post deals with a particular topic. All of the topics that you write about in blogs on a myUnisa module page will deal with aspects of your studies and will help you achieve the outcomes of the module. If a module does not allow you to use the blogs function, it means the lecturer/s did not activate it because they did not believe blogging would help you achieve the module outcomes. We may assess and grade your blog posts but if this is the case, we will inform about it.

(We will provide you with instructions on how to set up a blog under **Additional Resources** when we use the blog tool in the assignments. We will not be using the **Blog** tool as an assessment tool this year.)

- **Submission of assignments**

We prefer that you submit your assignments via myUnisa. We also expect you to submit assignments that you have completed on mark-reading sheets in a digital format via myUnisa. You may **not** submit assignments by fax, e-mail or the **Drop Box**.

For detailed information on assignments, please refer to the *my Studies @ Unisa* information brochure. An electronic copy is available on the Unisa website.

To submit an assignment via myUnisa:

- Go to myUnisa (<http://www.unisa.ac.za>).
- Log in with your student number and password.
- Select the module.
- Click on “Assignments” in the menu on the left-hand side of the screen.
- Click on the assignment number you wish to submit.
- Follow the instructions.

(vii) What are the benefits of learning online?

In an online environment you can study *anytime, anywhere* and at a *pace* that suits your individual learning style. Remember, though, that you still have to meet the deadlines for assignment submissions.

(viii) What internet skills are useful for online learning?

The most successful students tend to have the following skills:

- familiarity with their *web browser*
- familiarity with an e-mail program (including attaching documents and opening *attachments*)
- some familiarity with web-based interactions, for example social networks, “learning management systems”

- familiarity with word processing (MS Word)
- experience in successful internet searches, using a variety of *browsers* and search engines

(ix) How important is attitude in succeeding in my studies and in an online learning environment?

Your attitude is very important in achieving success.

We know that you are interested in *Persuasive texts* (TEX3701), otherwise you would not have enrolled for this module. We encourage you to develop a **positive attitude** towards your studies and the online learning environment. To achieve this, there are a number of things to bear in mind.

TIME is important for a distance education student. You must be in control of your time and manage it effectively. Draw up a study programme at the beginning of the semester. This requires discipline, but will ensure that you:

- have sufficient time to work through all the relevant study material
- are able to submit the relevant tasks and assignments on the due dates
- have sufficient time for revision and preparing for the assignments and examination

We encourage you to follow the guidelines below:

- Do NOT fall behind your work schedule.
- Work regularly and consistently.
- Make sure that you understand the work as you go along.
- Do NOT give up on difficult work; rather seek help as soon as possible.

We hope that this information will make your studies easier, and that you will do well.

(x) How should I approach my online learning?

We all have different learning styles and preferences. However, consider the following pointers/guidelines:

- Allocate time to work through each learning unit and do the activities.
- Allow extra time for work that seems difficult or with which you know you have a problem.
- When you compile a study plan, allow time for personal responsibilities (e.g. family responsibilities, work obligations, social obligations, leave).
- Make use of your most productive time for study (e.g. late evening after the children have gone to bed or early morning before the rest of the family wake up).
- Remember that it is more effective to study for one hour on a regular basis (e.g. every day) than for 10 consecutive hours every two weeks. Decide **now** how many hours you are going to spend on your studies per week. We recommend that you put one to two hours aside each day.
- Keep a record of your progress. It will be gratifying to see what you have accomplished, and it will inspire you if you fall behind. Be prepared for disruptions to

your study programme due to unforeseen circumstances. You should monitor your progress so that you can catch up immediately if you fall behind. Remember that it is easier to catch up one week's lost hours than an entire month's.

0.2 Study material

Here we will answer questions about the content of the different tutorial letters and where to find them.

(i) Where do you find your study material?

If you are in a position to access the internet on a regular basis, you can engage with your study materials on myUnisa and participate in online activities. However, for those students who cannot go online regularly we have developed this study guide in printed format (the printed document you are reading right now) which contains basically the same learning material which other students will find on myUnisa.

After registration you will receive the following study material (in print) from the University:

- this **study guide** (which includes the learning units 1–9)
- **Tutorial letter TEX3701/101** which includes the assignments (01 and 02)
- a **follow-up tutorial letter** (Tutorial Letter 201) which you will receive during the semester and which will contain feedback on the two assignments and advice for exam preparation

Please note:

The above tutorial matter may not all be available when you register. Unisa will send the outstanding material to you as soon as it becomes available. You can also download the tutorial letters from myUnisa.

For students who have regular access to myUnisa, all the study material is available on myUnisa:

- The study guide is uploaded under **Additional Resources**.
- Tutorial Letter 101 with Assignments 01 and 02 is uploaded under **Official Study Material**.
- Learning units 1 to 9 which comprise the learning material for this module are available under the **Learning Units** option.

(ii) What information do the tutorial letters contain?

The **study guide** (in print) – the document you are reading right now – contains learning units 1 to 9. Learning unit 1 gives an overview of the module, while learning units 2 to 9 comprise the learning material that you need to study in order to answer Assignments 01 and 02 and to prepare for the exam.

In the **tutorial letter TEX3701/101** (i.e. **Tutorial Letter 101**) you will find the assignments and assessment criteria and instructions on the preparation and submission of the assignments. This tutorial letter also provides all the information you

require about the study material and administrative matters (such as the contact details of administrative departments). Please note the closing dates for Assignments 01 and 02 which you will find in Tutorial Letter 101.

The **follow-up tutorial letter TEX3701/201** contains feedback on Assignments 01 and 02. Tutorial Letter 201 will be available in April (for semester 1 students) and in September (for semester 2 students). This letter will be made available in print to students, so you should receive it in the post. It will also be uploaded under **Official study material** when it becomes available.

Right from the start, we would like to point out that you must read **all the tutorial letters** you receive during the semester, as they will contain important and sometimes urgent information.

Make sure that you work through the tutorial letters **before** you continue with Learning Units 2 to 9 or the assessment tasks.

0.3 Electronic reserves (e-reserves)

There are no prescribed books for this module. We make use of e-reserves which form an integral part of the learning content. Some of the learning units (such as learning units 3, 8 and 9) make extensively use of the e-reserves, and require students to access the e-reserves on a regular basis. We want to encourage you to download the chapters that have been uploaded as e-reserves and study them carefully.

(i) Which e-Reserves are available?

The following four chapters from the book *The Sage handbook of persuasion: Developments in theory and practice* (2012) by James Price Dillard and Lijiang Shen are available as e-reserves:

- Chapter 2: *The effects of message features: Content, structure, and style* – Lijiang Shen and Elisabeth Bigsby
- Chapter 9: *The Elaboration Likelihood Model* – Daniel J O’Keefe
- Chapter 12: *Fear appeals* – Paul A Mongeau
- Chapter 17: *Persuasive strategies in health campaigns* – Charles K Atkin and Charles T Salmon

(ii) Where do I find my e-reserves?

To access the e-reserves you need to do the following:

- Go to the Unisa homepage.
- Click on “Library”.
- Click on “Find e-reserves”.
- The window “Course code search” opens. Type in the module code “TEX3701” and click submit.
- Click on “TEX3701 e-reserves”.

In the learning units that are available on myUnisa (or alternatively in this study guide) you will be referred to these chapters which are uploaded as e-reserves.

Please note that there are no prescribed books or recommended books for TEX3701. Please refer to Tutorial Letter 101 for more information.

0.4 Assignments

(i) Where will I find my assignments?

The assignments for TEX3701 are included in Tutorial Letter 101. You should receive this tutorial letter in the post on registration.

Please note that Tutorial Letter 101 is also uploaded under **Official Study Material** on myUnisa. Please download it from myUnisa if it is delayed in the post.

(ii) How many assignments should I submit for this module?

You should submit **two** assignments: Assignment 01 and Assignment 02.

Assignment 01 is a multiple-choice assignment which consists of 20 multiple-choice questions. You have to answer these questions on a mark-reading sheet. Assignment 01 counts 10% of your final mark for the module. It focuses on learning units 2 and 3.

Assignment 02 consists of various types of short questions. This assignment counts 15% of your final mark for the module. It focuses on learning units 4 to 9. You have to answer all the questions.

Please note that we have set different assignments for semester 1 and 2. Make sure that you answer the correct assignments for the semester for which you are registered. Please refer to Tutorial Letter 101 for more information.

(iii) Are the assignments compulsory?

You have to submit at least one assignment (either Assignment 01 or Assignment 02) to be admitted to the exam. To earn a good semester mark it is important to submit both assignments. The assignments are also designed as essential preparation for the exam. Please refer to Tutorial Letter 101 for more information.

(iv) Which part of the work is the most important?

The study material which is available on myUnisa under **Learning Units** (alternatively in this study guide) comprises nine learning units.

- Learning unit 1 gives an overview of the learning units.
- Learning units 2 and 3 give an overview of the theories and models of persuasion.
- Learning units 4 to 7 focus on how to design effective advertisements.
- Learning units 8 and 9 focus on how to design effective health campaign texts.

Learning units 2 to 9 are compulsory study material. The learning units are supported by additional resources that are uploaded under **Additional Resources** and the e-reserves.

In the exam you have to answer all the questions.

Please refer to Tutorial Letter 101 for more information.

You are now ready to read learning unit 1 but please first read Tutorial Letter 101 to familiarise yourself with what we expect of you in Assignments 01 and 02 and when the due dates are for the assignments. Tutorial Letter 101 is also uploaded under “Official study material”.

LEARNING UNIT 1

Overview of the module

The main purpose of this module, *Persuasive texts* (TEX3701), is to equip you with the necessary knowledge and skills to design, analyse, evaluate and write two major types of persuasive texts, namely advertisements and text for health campaigns. The skills we teach in this module are not language-specific. You can apply the principles of persuasion to any language in which you are proficient.

Persuasive texts are very important societal texts. In everyday life people commonly try to persuade others either to do something or to stop doing something. For example, people try to convince others to buy a certain brand of car, or to change an unhealthy practice (e.g. to stop smoking). But, of course, successfully persuading others does not happen just by talking to people or by bombarding them with messages. In this module we will attempt to answer the following questions among others: What actually happens in people's minds during the process of persuasion? What can writers do to improve the persuasive power of their texts? How do writers determine relevant arguments for the target group? What is a relevant argument? Which text features can writers manipulate to enhance the persuasive power of their texts? How do writers design persuasive texts?

In this module we will look at persuasion from a communication perspective. The content of this module relies heavily on research done in other disciplines such as social and cognitive psychology, research on advertising strategies and marketing.

The module consists of the following three parts:

- Topic 1: *Theoretical background to the persuasion process* (learning units 2 & 3)
- Topic 2: *Designing effective advertisements* (learning units 4–7)
- Topic 3: *Designing effective health campaign texts* (learning units 8 & 9)

Before we give a quick overview of the various topics, first do the following activity which will help you to activate your prior knowledge about persuasion.

Activity 1.1

Search in a magazine of your choice for an advertisement that attracts your attention. Why did you select this particular advertisement? List the things that attract your attention in this advertisement. Keep this advertisement at hand, because we will return to it again in our discussion below. Compare your list with our discussion below and see if we discuss some of the things you have listed in this module.

We will now give a quick overview of the different topics.

1.1 Topic 1: Theoretical background to the persuasion process

We provide a theoretical background to the persuasion process in learning units 2 and 3.

In **learning unit 2** we look at what we understand by **persuasion** by focusing in particular on written persuasive texts. We try to distinguish between informative and persuasive texts. What makes a text a persuasive text? We look in particular at three key elements of persuasive texts, namely persuasive texts as an “intentional effort”, the reader’s “measure of freedom” and the influence on the reader’s “attitude”.

Readers are bombarded with persuasive texts on a daily basis and this has made them very distrustful of persuasive texts. Can you identify any strategies that copywriters could develop to hide the persuasive intent of their message? Since readers are continually confronted with persuasive texts, they develop their own theories about the persuasion process. In learning unit 2 we look at how document designers continually develop new persuasive strategies to counter readers’ resistance.

In **learning unit 3** we turn our attention to two models of information processing, namely the *Information-Processing Model* and the *Elaboration Likelihood Model*. We try to answer the following question:

How does the way the reader processes information influence the success of a persuasive text?

When readers attend to advertisements, they do not necessarily read the advertisement from start to end. Some readers read only the headline, some readers will look only at the visual images, while other readers will read the whole persuasive text and evaluate the merits of the arguments. Which factors influence readers’ decision to devote some time to a persuasive text and process the information in it? Why is it that readers are sometimes persuaded just by who the sender of the message is rather than the arguments in the text? What makes some persuasive texts more interesting than others for a reader? We deal with these questions in learning unit 3.

1.2 Topic 2: Designing effective advertisements

We discuss how to design effective advertisements in learning units 4 to 7. In topic 2 we apply the theories and models of persuasion that you were exposed to in learning units 2 and 3 to advertisements.

In **learning unit 4** we focus on those persuasive strategies that copywriters employ to attract the reader’s attention.

It is estimated that the average person sees more than 100 advertisements every day – on billboards, TV, newspapers, magazines and the internet. Researchers have estimated that we remember only between seven and 10 advertisements. Research has further shown that the average reader spends about 12 seconds on most advertisements. That is all the time the copywriter has in which to shout out: “We’ve got something for you”. The copywriter also has to get the reader’s attention in a way that is relevant to the sales message.

Copywriters manipulate the following text features of the advertisement to increase the probability of the reader paying attention to the advertisement:

- the content
- the structure

- the style
- the visual images

Look again at advertisement the selected and determine if you are attracted to as a result of the way the content, structural or style elements are presented or is it mainly because of the visual image? In learning unit 4 we will look at each of these text features and discuss the persuasive strategies that copywriters use to increase the reader's attention to the advertisement.

In **learning unit 5** we turn our attention to the various strategies that copywriters use to motivate the reader to evaluate the arguments in the text and to make it easier for the reader to do so. The two central questions we try to answer in this learning unit are:

- How can the copywriter manipulate the content, structure and style of the advertisement to increase the reader's motivation to look at the arguments critically?
- How can the copywriter manipulate the content, structure and style of the advertisement to make it easier for the reader to scrutinise the arguments?

Can you think of ways that the copywriter of an advertisement can manipulate the content, structure and style of an advertisement to make it easier for the reader to evaluate the arguments? Think, for example, of how the arguments are presented or structured. Take another look at the advertisement you selected above and see if you can identify those elements in the advertisement that make it easier for you to understand the text.

In **learning unit 6** we focus on persuasive strategies that the copywriter can employ to enhance the acceptance of the advocated position (i.e. the propagated point of view). The quality of the arguments plays a decisive role in getting the reader to accept the propagated point of view. In this learning unit we look at how the quality of the argument influences the reader's decision to accept the point of view.

Do you know what a "strong argument" is? In learning unit 6 we try to answer the following questions:

- How do copywriters identify the relevant arguments for their target audience?
- What is a "strong argument"?
- Which different types of arguments can we identify?

Would you regard the arguments in the advertisement you selected as relevant? Why do you regard the arguments as relevant (or not)? Would you say the arguments presented in your selected advertisement are convincing? Why? Why not?

In **learning unit 7** we discuss how readers sometimes resort to certain peripheral cues and heuristics to decide whether or not they will accept the viewpoint. Not all readers process information centrally, in other words not all readers evaluate the merits of the arguments in a persuasive text. Some readers are not motivated or able to evaluate the arguments in a text. In such cases, readers will resort to the application of heuristics or peripheral cues to process the information, in other words they will follow what is called the peripheral route of information processing (according to the *Elaboration Likelihood Model*). The peripheral cues that we discuss include the *credibility of the source* (i.e. an

expert and/or trustworthy source), *the attractiveness* (likeability) *of the source* and *attractive pictures*. Look again at the advertisement you selected and see if your advertisement uses an attractive or credible source or an attractive picture to enhance its persuasive power. Which of the following did you find most convincing (if they occur in the advertisement): *the arguments*, *the type of source* or *the attractive picture*?

1.3 Topic 3: Designing effective health campaign texts

We discuss how we design effective health campaign texts in learning units 8 and 9.

In **learning unit 8** we turn our attention to health campaign texts and discuss the various theories and models of behaviour change, in particular the *Integrative Model of Behaviour Prediction* (IM). We try to answer the following questions:

- What are health campaigns?
- What is the difference between advertisements and health campaigns?
- What are the determinants (or predictors) of behaviour?
- What role can culture play in shaping our beliefs?
- How should one go about in planning a public health campaign?

Do you have any experience or knowledge of health campaigns? What do you think the function of health campaign texts (e.g. a brochure on stop smoking) is? Do you think health campaign texts alone can persuade readers to change their behaviour?

In the last learning unit (**learning unit 9**) we look at additional persuasive strategies that the campaign designer can use to enhance the persuasive effectiveness of health campaign texts. Try to find a brochure on a health topic and decide whether the brochure attracts your attention. Will you read the brochure? Why? Why not? Do you find the information in the brochure relevant? Do the arguments in the brochure convince you to accept the advocated position? Does the brochure focus on the desirable or undesirable consequences of a particular behaviour? Can you identify any strategies that the designer uses to persuade the reader to accept the advocated position?

We conclude this learning unit by providing some guidelines on how to design and write a health-related campaign text.

1.4 The value of the learning activities

Each of the learning units includes a number of activities that you need to do in order to fully grasp the learning content. These activities allow you to reflect on the learning content and reinforce the learning that you have done. The activities are an integral part of the learning process and you should regard them as such.

We have designed these activities to give you an opportunity to apply the knowledge you have acquired in the learning units. Some of the activities also serve as a self-assessment to determine how well you have understood the information in the learning unit.

We encourage you to discuss some of these activities in the discussion forum and to compare your ideas and opinions with those of your fellow students. By participating in the discussion forum you will develop new insights and skills that you can apply in the

communication industry. By engaging with your fellow students in the discussion forum you can clarify and broaden your understanding of challenging concepts and themes.

We will also discuss some of the activities during the course of the semester. We will upload the answers or discussions under **Additional Resources**. We will only make such discussions available if it is evident that students have made an effort to discuss some of the activities in the discussion forum.

You are now ready to study learning unit 2.

LEARNING UNIT 2

What are persuasive texts?

2.1 Introduction

In this learning unit we will look at what we understand by persuasion by focusing on written persuasive texts (especially advertisements and health communication texts).

Persuasive communication can also take place via the spoken word (such as radio commercials) and audiovisual media (such as television and internet advertisements).

Do you think that persuasion via the written word and the spoken word uses the same persuasive strategies? Of course NOT. Different media require different techniques, and the techniques that work for persuasive texts do not necessarily apply to the other media. **For example:** in audiovisual media, the moving image is obviously of great importance, while in persuasive texts the way the message is crafted is vital. The processing of oral communication and written texts also differs in various respects. Our focus will be primarily on the written persuasive text, and in particular those message features that enhance the persuasive appeal of advertisements and health communication campaign texts.

2.2 A definition of “persuasive texts”

We are bombarded everyday with persuasive texts. But what do we understand by persuasive texts? Which of the following text types would you regard as persuasive texts and why?

- (i) a news report on the state of the nation address
- (ii) an advertisement about the new Hyundai i20
- (iii) a brochure on safe sex
- (iv) a magazine article on healthy foods
- (v) an online article on how to become successful in business

In this section we will look at what we understand by “persuasive texts” and what the difference is between an informative text (such as news articles) and persuasive texts (such as advertisements or health communication brochures). We will therefore not answer the above questions now, but you will be able to determine if your answers were correct by the end of this discussion.

Consider the following scenarios and determine which of them use the art of persuasion.

<p>Scenario 1: Mother to child: “If you do not eat your vegetables, I will take away your cell phone.”</p>
<p>Scenario 2: Prison warden telling prisoners that they must not leave jail while serving a jail term.</p>
<p>Scenario 3: Mother telling her daughter that Purity foods have the best nutritional value for children and they have been trusted by mothers for years.</p>

We will return to these scenarios during the course of the discussion.

Defining “persuasive texts”

Persuasive texts are defined in persuasion literature as follows:

An **intentional effort** at influencing a reader’s **attitude** through communication in a situation in which the reader has **some measure of freedom** (cf. O’Keefe 2002: 5; Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 14).

There are three key elements in this definition that we need to discuss more closely:

2.2.1 Persuasive texts as an “intentional effort”

The main goal of persuasive texts is to influence readers’ attitudes and ultimately their behaviour. Persuasive texts are written with the **intention** to persuade the reader of a certain viewpoint. However, not all persuasive texts are successful in persuading the reader. For example, not all advertisements lead to increased sales, nor do all fund-raising letters elicit donations. Does this mean that such texts are not persuasive texts? By contrast, some informative texts (such as news reports) could unintentionally change our attitude towards an issue or object. For example, in the case of a newspaper article on the plight of street children, the journalist’s aim might merely be to inform his or her readers of the facts of these children’s everyday lives. But once we know just how hard life is for these children, our attitude towards them may well change – from seeing them as a nuisance and a menace to having empathy with them. In short, a newspaper article that was intended only to convey information may alter our attitude. Does this mean that an informative text could be seen as a persuasive text? When do we regard a text as persuasive and when as informative?

The writer’s intention determines the goal of a text

The **writer’s intention** is the only distinguishing factor between informative, instructive and persuasive texts: what goal does the writer have in mind when he or she writes the text? When the writer’s intention is to **persuade the reader**, we regard the text as a persuasive text, irrespective of whether or not the text succeeds in its goal of persuading the reader. For example, an advertisement is seen as persuasive text, because the

writer's intention is not only to convey information but ultimately to get the reader to buy the product or use the service that is advertised. When the writer's intention is to inform, for example a magazine article on eating healthy, then we regard the text as an informative text.

Look at the following scenario and decide whether it is a persuasive text or an informative text:

Suppose an organisation that looks after street children sends you a leaflet. This leaflet describes the misery of these children's existence, and asks you for financial help.

In this scenario the writers of the leaflet provide you with facts (information) with the express purpose of changing your attitude towards these children, which causes you to respond in the way they want you to respond (i.e. by donating money to their organisation). Although the text might not succeed in its persuasive goal (you do not change your attitude or send money), you will still be better informed about these children's circumstances.

Intentional effort (on the writer's part) is therefore used as a criterion to distinguish between persuasive texts (e.g. the leaflet on street children) and informative texts (e.g. the newspaper article) – although both may lead to changes in the reader's attitude. The close relationship between the two types of texts lies in the fact that the sender first has to provide readers with the facts of a situation/object before he or she can change readers' attitude towards the situation/object. In the case of persuasive texts, writers try to change their readers' attitudes (and ultimately behaviours) by providing the reader with information.

2.2.2 Persuasive texts and the “freedom of choice”

According to our definition of persuasive texts, persuasion and persuasive texts must leave readers “some measure of freedom” with regard to their attitude. Persuasive texts aim at influencing readers' attitudes because the writers of these texts doubt whether people who have the freedom to make choices would have the desired attitude or behave in the desired way without the writer's persuasive effort. On the other hand, telling prisoners that they must not leave jail while serving a jail term would obviously not be persuasion, simply because the prisoners have no choice in the matter. A situation where someone is threatened or forced to do something does not count as persuasion, because it does not allow the receiver some degree of freedom.

2.2.3 Persuasive texts and the influence on the reader's attitude (and ultimately behaviour)

The goal of persuasive texts is to influence/change the reader's attitude with the ultimate aim of changing his or her behaviour. For example, health campaigns inform people about the danger of contracting AIDS, not only in order to create a negative attitude towards contracting AIDS but also to encourage people to change their sexual behaviour. Advertising copywriters try to create a positive attitude towards a product, obviously so that people will buy it.

What then is the difference between attitude and behaviour? Does a change in attitude always result in a change in behaviour? Which factors influence attitude? These are some of the questions we will answer in this section.

The link between “attitudes” and “beliefs”

Before you do the reading exercise below, let us briefly discuss the concepts “*attitude*” and “*beliefs*” by way of examples. First, give your opinion about smoking. Do you think it is a good thing or a bad thing? Or don’t you have an opinion about smoking?

Your evaluation of smoking as good or bad will obviously be informed by your current beliefs about smoking. Your evaluation of smoking as good or bad reflects your **attitude** towards smoking. You can therefore have a positive or negative attitude towards smoking depending on your evaluation of smoking. You could also have a neutral attitude towards smoking if you do not know enough about smoking to make a decision about whether it is good or bad. **An attitude** is therefore an evaluation of an **object** (such as smoking). This “object” can be anything from a concrete person to an abstract idea. For example:

- a person (e.g. a politician)
- certain behaviours (e.g. smoking, driving under the influence of alcohol)
- an institution (e.g. a religious denomination)
- a product (e.g. a brand of washing powder)
- a policy (e.g. a firearms control policy)

But your attitude towards an object is also influenced by other factors such as the **beliefs** on which your attitude is based. Think about the beliefs you could have about smoking, for example:

- Smoking causes lung cancer.
- Smoking is bad for your concentration.
- Smoking gives you bad breath.
- Smoking causes heart diseases.
- Smoking helps to keep you slim.
- Smoking calms your nerves etc.

(Include your own beliefs here.)

Do your beliefs about smoking accurately reflect your attitude? If you believe, for example, that smoking is bad for your health, then you will probably have a negative attitude towards it. Our beliefs about something inform our attitude towards an object.

As you can gather from the discussion above, changing existing attitudes or creating a new attitude in the reader by way of a persuasive text is a complex process and various determinants play a role in the process. The literature on persuasion makes a distinction between a reader’s beliefs, attitudes and values and each of these can be the target of persuasive texts. Furthermore, the link between attitude and behaviour is also not such a straightforward one. Although our attitude forms the basis for our behaviour, it is not the only determinant of our behaviour.

Read the document on “Attitudes and behaviour”

To understand this somewhat complex process of how “attitudes” work, read through the document entitled “Attitudes and behaviour” which we have uploaded under **Additional Resources** on myUnisa. Keep the following questions in mind while reading through it and try to answer them:

Questions:

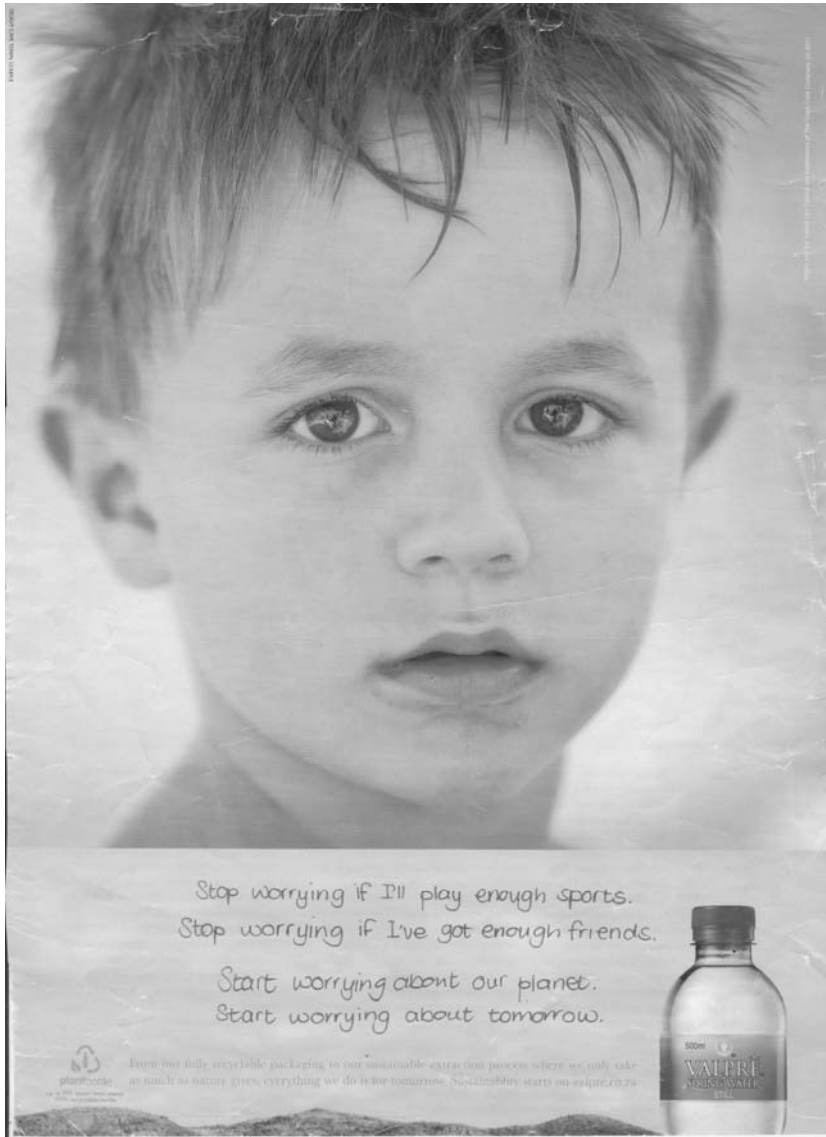
- (i) What do we understand by the concept “attitude”?
- (vi) Which three classes of information shape our attitudes?
- (vii) How do cognitive beliefs influence our attitude towards an object?
- (viii) How does emotion (i.e. beliefs based on affective information) influence our attitude towards an object?
- (ix) How do values form the criteria for evaluating beliefs?
- (x) If all cultures have the same values, what does differ between cultures?
- (xi) What other determinant besides attitude could influence behaviour and how does it influence behaviour?

(You can discuss these questions in the discussion forum with your fellow students.)

Activity 2.1

You have now read the document on “Attitudes and behaviour” and should be familiar with the concepts “attitudes”, “beliefs”, “values”, “emotion” and “behaviour” as well as how these are interlinked. See if you can apply what you have learned thus far by answering the following questions on the advert for Valpré spring water. Before you answer the questions, first give your attitude about Valpré spring water. Do you have a positive, negative or neutral attitude towards Valpré? On what beliefs and values (if any) is your attitude based?

Study the advert below for Valpré spring water and try to apply what you have learnt about the persuasion process thus far. For the sake of legibility the body copy (content) of the advert is repeated here:



(Adapted from: *woman&home*, October 2012)

From our fully recyclable packaging to our sustainable extraction process where we only take as much as nature gives, everything we do is for tomorrow. Sustainability starts on valpre.co.za

- (a) Which value does this advert appeal to?
- (b) Which seemingly incorrect belief about Valpré is addressed indirectly in this advert?
- (c) Do you think emotion could play a role in influencing the reader's attitude about Valpré?
- (d) Did the advert influence your attitude towards Valpré spring water? Refer to whether the advert had any influence on your beliefs (or lack thereof) about Valpré.

(You are welcome to discuss these questions in the discussion forum.)

2.3 Persuasive texts and readers' resistance

Readers are confronted or rather bombarded with persuasive texts on a daily basis and this has led them to become very distrustful of persuasive texts. Can you identify any strategies that copywriters could develop to hide the persuasive intent of their message?

Since readers are continually confronted with persuasive texts, they develop their own theories about the persuasion process. These theories not only enable readers to identify the persuasive tactics writers use in their texts, they also form the basis of reader resistance to these tactics. Text writers are aware of this fact and continually have to develop new persuasive strategies to counter the reader's resistance.

Use of testimonials

One technique that is sometimes used to counter readers' resistance to persuasive texts is the use of testimonials. Hoeken (1998: 23) provides the following example. If a washing powder already washes clothes "whiter than white", how can it be improved? To counter this line of argument (i.e. resistance to the claims made by advertisements for soap powders), text designers reverted to the "testimonial". Instead of using the product manufacturer to testify to the excellent qualities of a washing powder, they used a person "off the street" – usually someone who seemed very sceptical of the product at first, but who was completely "converted" to its use after trying it out just once or twice. However, as soon as readers became aware that the person off the street was no other than a highly-paid actress, the advertising text lost its appeal. To counter this resistance, ordinary people off the street were used in washing powder advertisements. To strengthen the persuasive effect, a variety of persons were used, just in case readers reverted to the rule of thumb strategy of evaluating the text (in this case, "If so many ordinary people like me testify to the excellent qualities of the product, then it must be good"). This last example also illustrates that strategies for writing effective persuasive texts often change, and indeed must change, if they are to respond to the way readers react to persuasion strategies over time. A complicating factor is that little research has been done to determine whether people with different cultural backgrounds react to a persuasive text in the same way. Most research has been conducted within the framework of Western culture.

Persuasive texts disguised as informative texts

Another technique that has been developed to overcome reader resistance or reactance to persuasive texts is to hide the nature of a persuasive text. An example of this is an "advertorial" – an advertisement that is presented as an informative text such as a newspaper article. The advertorial specifically tries to hide the writer's persuasive intention.

The reason why persuasive texts are sometimes disguised as informative texts is that readers' reactions to informative texts differ from their reactions to persuasive texts. When confronted with an informative text, readers expect the writer to obey a general principle of communication, this being that the writer's message should be *clear, honest, efficient* and *relevant*. In the case of persuasive texts, however, readers have reason to doubt whether writers will obey this principle. Readers quickly learn that the main goal of a persuasive text is to try to change their existing attitudes and behaviours, and readers know that writers of these texts often do not provide counterarguments to the views they advocate: that they give only partial information or that they overemphasise the strengths

of their views. This may lead to reactance: this is the reader's reaction not to accept the text at face value, but to actively look for ways to discredit the information contained in the text (cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 16).

To reflect

Search on the internet for a graphic illustration (e.g. a diagram) of the relation between *attitude* and *behaviour* which includes some of the following determinants:

(cognitive) beliefs, emotions, values, social norms and behavioural intention

(You can use the terms listed above as keywords to try to find a diagram that depicts the various relations among the determinants.)

2.4 To summarise

In this learning unit we provided a definition for *persuasive texts* and identified three key elements in the definition of persuasive texts. Can you recall what the three key elements are? We have discussed in detail the relation between *values*, *beliefs*, *attitudes* and *behaviour*. We concluded our discussion with some strategies that document designers use to counter readers' resistance to persuasive texts.

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LEARNING UNIT 3

How does persuasion work?

3.1 Introduction

Readers do not read all persuasive texts that they are exposed to. It is estimated that the average American reader is exposed to nearly 3 000 advertisements per day. It is therefore impossible to attend to all the advertisements. It is further estimated that only one in six people read advertisements in print (cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 62).

When readers attend to advertisements they do not necessarily read the advertisement from front to back. Some readers read only the headline, some readers look only at the visual images, while other readers read the whole persuasive text and evaluate the merits of the arguments. Which factors influence the readers' decision to devote some time to a persuasive text and process the information in the text? Why is it that readers are sometimes persuaded just by who the sender of the message is rather than the arguments in the text? What is that makes some persuasive texts more interesting than others for a reader? We answer these questions as well as the main question listed below in this learning unit.

In this learning unit we will answer the following main question pertaining to persuasive texts:

- How does the way the reader processes information influence the success of a persuasive text?

Which factors, do you think, influence persuasive outcomes?

To answer the main question posed above, we will now turn our discussion to two persuasion models, namely McGuire's (1972) "Information Processing Paradigm" and Petty and Cacioppo's (1981) *Elaboration Likelihood Model*.

3.2 How do readers process persuasive texts?

According to **McGuire's Information-Processing Paradigm** (1972: 116), a text will produce a persuasive effect only if the reader

- (i) attends to the text
- (ii) comprehends (understands) the arguments (i.e. whatever information is presented in the text to enable the reader to evaluate an issue)
- (iii) yields to (accepts) what he/she has understood

In short: the ACY-model

This model is also known as the "ACY-model": *Attention*, *Comprehension* (understanding), *Yielding* (acceptance). In this model, the three parts of the persuasion process follow one another, and the ultimate success of a text in persuading a reader will be determined by how successful the text was in initiating and supporting the

intermediate processes in the reader. For example, if the reader does not pay attention to a text, he or she cannot comprehend that text. If the information provided is too difficult to understand, the reader will not accept it. Even if readers understand the arguments, it is still uncertain whether they will yield to (accept) them.

However, recent research indicates that comprehension is not always required for persuasion to take place. For example, a reader may not quite understand a text, but undergo a change of attitude simply because the text encouraged him or her to think about the issue that the text addresses. In the next section we shall discuss each of the three steps.

3.2.1 Which factors influence attention?

When you are exposed to a persuasive text, which topics attract your attention? Why do you think these topics attract your attention? Which of the following advertised products would attract your attention, and why?

Product	Yes	No	Don't know	Why
Cars				
Beauty-related products (jewellery, perfumes, etc)				
Life/funeral policies				
Household-related products (fridges, furniture, etc)				
Cigarettes/alcohol				
Health-related products				
Outdoor-related products (such as camping equipment)				
Sport-related products (performance-enhancing drugs, energy drinks, etc)				

Why do readers pay attention to persuasive texts?

We are bombarded daily by numerous kinds of persuasive texts, and it is therefore no surprise that readers often deliberately avoid persuasive communication. **Why, then, do people in fact pay attention to and read a persuasive text?** This is an important question. (Our discussion that follows is based on Hoeken, Hornikx and Hustinx 2009: 62–67.)

A partial answer to the question is given by the hypothesis that reading a text is a form of exploratory behaviour. The drive behind such explorative behaviour is **curiosity**. Two factors influence curiosity: “deprivation” and “interest”.

(i) Curiosity because of “knowledge deprivation”

Curiosity because of “deprivation” refers to the phenomenon where readers actively search for relevant information if they do not possess that knowledge. For example, if you know that an election has taken place, but do not know the results, the uncertainty about the results will lead to curiosity. To satisfy your curiosity, you will search for the relevant information. Curiosity because of deprivation is directed towards getting rid of an unpleasant feeling, namely the feeling of uncertainty.

(ii) Curiosity because of interest

Curiosity because of interest refers to the need **to learn something new**. It is often stated that, given a choice, readers will read only the more interesting texts. This raises the question: What makes a text interesting? Two factors seem to be involved:

- whether or not the reader finds the text newsworthy
- the degree to which the information is related to the reader’s existing (prior) knowledge

Which topics arouse the reader’s interest?

• **Topics that contain new information**

For a text to be interesting, it has to contain new information; that is, the content should not already be known to the reader. But this is not the only prerequisite, because readers do not read all texts that contain new information. The new information must also be related to topics which they personally find interesting and about which they already know a good deal.

Hoeken (1995: 37) notes that it may seem contradictory that readers are only interested in topics they already know a lot about. This is because our existing/prior knowledge (i.e. what we know) helps us to integrate/understand new information (i.e. what we do not know).

• **Topics that are universally interesting**

Besides the personal preferences certain readers have for certain topics, other topics are universally interesting, for example *death*, *sex*, *violence* and *wealth*. These arouse the reader’s interest because of the sheer emotional impact they have on the reader.

• **Topics with a personal relevance**

Reader’s interest will be aroused if the story has personal relevance for the reader, for example a story about a robbery in one’s suburb in contrast to a story about a robbery in a village in Uganda.

- **Topics with a surprise element**

Topics that contain an element of surprise also arouse the reader's interest. Stories with an element of surprise deviate from what we know and expect to be the norm, for example a headline such as "Dog bites man" is a much less attention-attracting headline than "Man bites dog".

Readers want to read surprise texts because they want to resolve the mismatch between the surprising information and their prior knowledge. An advertisement for life insurance with the caption: *How your family can get on better without you* is an example of the surprise element because, obviously, people/breadwinners believe that their families will suffer without them. This caption stimulates the reader's interest, and he or she will then start reading the text.

- **Topics that support existing views**

Readers also seem to avoid information that contradicts their evaluation of a topic. On the other hand, they actively seek information on a topic that confirms their evaluations.

In short:

Persuasive texts are seen as interesting when they contain new information. This new information should be related to the reader's prior knowledge, have some personal relevance for the reader and should surprise the reader.

The question of how the **content, structure, style** and **visual images** of a text can contribute to whether or not the reader will pay attention to a persuasive text is discussed in learning unit 4.

3.2.2 Which factors influence comprehension?

Which factors influence the ease or difficulty of comprehending a persuasive text?

Why do you think some readers will find the following text on the all-new Isuzu easy to understand while others may find it difficult? Which readers do you think will find the information easy and which readers will have difficulty processing the information?

The all-new Isuzu

The all-new petrol range Isuzu is available with a 16 valve 2.4 l engine delivering no less than 85 kW and 280 Nm of torque. The new 4WD and an all-new suspension and chassis design provides for improved ride quality and handling.

(Adapted from: *go!*, May 2013)

Compare your answers with our discussion below.

To answer the question of *which factors influence the ease or difficulty of comprehending a persuasive text*, we have to look at the comprehension process itself. For this, we will follow the discussion by Hoeken (1995: 28–31).

Text comprehension involves the construction of a mental representation of the content of a text. To achieve this, three processing subsystems play a crucial role:

- the perceptual system
- the analytical system
- the conceptual system

By making an effort to follow the somewhat theoretical discussion on these three subsystems, you will get a good understanding of the mental processes that underscore comprehension.

(i) The perceptual system

The perceptual system is responsible for the visual processing of the text, that is, the transformation of visual patterns into letters and words. This system depends, among other things, on the layout characteristics of a text (e.g. legibility, typography).

(ii) The analytical system

The analytical system works at the sentence level. It consists of analysing individual words, the syntactic structure of the sentence and its meaning. Several factors can influence the success with which these processes are carried out. Correct word recognition will be determined by factors such as whether or not the reader already knows the word, and whether it is preceded in the text by a related word (e.g. “wife” will be recognised faster when preceded by “man” than by “tan”).

The complexity of the syntactic structure influences how easy it is to process a sentence syntactically. Building up a meaningful representation requires the reader to know what the individual words in a sentence mean and how they relate syntactically to each other in a sentence. Syntactic parsing and the semantic composition of a sentence go hand in hand, because the syntactic structure partially determines the meaning of a sentence.

(iii) The conceptual system

The conceptual system produces a coherent mental representation of the content of a text. This representation contains much more information than that provided by the individual meanings of the sentences in the text. It also contains inferences that are not evoked by the input text, but which are based on the reader's existing (world) knowledge. When it comes to comprehending a text, this type of knowledge is a more significant factor than lexical difficulty. However, it is also more problematical in terms of document design, since prior knowledge may differ for each individual reader.

Schemata function as a mental scaffold

What is the content of this prior knowledge and how is this knowledge structured and accessed while the reader is trying to comprehend a text?

Schema theorists hold that this knowledge does not consist of lists of information. Instead, it is organised in the form of schemata consisting of slots filled with information and linked to each other by specific relations. A schema functions as a “mental scaffold” that structures and relates information. A person's schemata develop and become more elaborate as his or her knowledge of a topic increases. Comprehension is therefore a

process of filling in the slots of a schema on a certain topic. Depending on what the schema looks like, the reader decides what information is important (this being the information that fills in a slot in the schema). The schema helps the reader to relate the pieces of information to each other. This is important for comprehension, since the reader's goal is a coherent representation of the text's meaning. Information that does not fit into the schema is discarded as irrelevant.

Schemata include anything from a schema of eating in a restaurant to playing a game of chess. These schemata define the normal parts of activities or situations. Once activated, they guide the interpretation of a text and the construction of a coherent mental representation of it. For example, people who are knowledgeable about cars have slots that indicate what the parts of a car are, how each functions and for what purpose. When reading an advertisement for the all-new Isuzu (see activity above), these people activate their schematically organised knowledge of cars and are able to interpret and understand the information provided in the advert – by relating it to their existing, schematically organised knowledge. People who do not have this prior knowledge will understand very little of the text about the all-new Isuzu.

Prior knowledge could ease comprehension

Readers who are knowledgeable about the topic of a text read faster and remember more of the content of a text than readers who do not have this prior knowledge. When no prior knowledge is available, readers have to make extra cognitive effort to comprehend a text. They have to make the distinction, all by themselves, between what is, and what is not, important information; they also have to relate the different bits of information to each other. To achieve this they have to rely exclusively on the text itself. On the other hand, the more prior knowledge a reader has, the less he or she has to rely on the text to construct a coherent mental representation of that text.

The question of how text features such as **choice of content, structure** and **style** can help the reader to construct a coherent mental representation of a text (i.e. to comprehend the text) is an important one for writers of persuasive texts and is discussed in detail in learning unit 5.

3.2.3 Which factors influence yielding (acceptance)?

We have already alluded to the fact that readers who attend to a persuasive text do not necessarily evaluate the arguments in the text. Some readers will be more motivated than others to scrutinise the arguments in a persuasive text in order to determine the merits of the arguments, while other (less motivated) readers will rather focus on the non-argumentative characteristics in the text to process the information such as attractive visual images and who the sender is.

According to Petty and Cacioppo's (1981) **Elaboration Likelihood Model** (ELM), yielding (acceptance of the viewpoint) is possible along two routes of persuasion:

- (i) the central route – that is scrutinising the arguments in a persuasive text
- (ii) the peripheral route – that is relying on the non-argumentative characteristics of a persuasive text (e.g. the expertise or likeability of the writer, the reactions of other people to the message, the number of arguments in the text)

(A similar dual-process model has been developed by Eagly & Chaiken [1993], referred to as the **Heuristic-Systematic Model** [HSM]. Eagly and Chaiken [1993] refer to the peripheral route of information processing as “heuristic processing”, and the central route as “systematic processing”. Given the similarities between the two persuasion models, we will focus on only the ELM here.)

Let me not get ahead of myself and tell the “story” of persuasion all by myself. I believe it is best if you discover the fascinating “world” of persuasion by yourself.

(i) Explore the two routes to persuasion

First do the following activity to familiarise yourself with the two routes to persuasion.

Activity 3.1

Read **chapter 9** on **The Elaboration Likelihood Model** by Daniel O’Keefe that has been uploaded as an e-reserve. You have to read only the following sections in the chapter:

- “Elaboration”
- “Elaboration and the two routes to persuasion”
- “The central route”
- “The peripheral route”
- “The two routes illustrated”
- “Consequences of the route to persuasion”

Now answer the following questions:

Questions

- (a) What is the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM)?
- (b) What is meant by “elaboration”?
- (c) What is meant by “high elaboration” and “low elaboration”?
- (d) Which two factors influence the amount of “elaboration” that readers undertake?
- (e) Which two factors influence motivation to scrutinise the arguments?
- (f) Which two factors influence ability to scrutinise the arguments?
- (g) What is meant by “level of involvement” and “need for cognition”?
- (h) Which are the two routes to persuasion and how do they work?
- (i) Which are more likely to have persuasive success: weak or strong arguments? Why?
- (j) What are “heuristics”?
- (k) Which three peripheral cues can be identified and which heuristics are activated by these “peripheral cues”?
- (l) Under which conditions (i.e. high or low involvement) do peripheral cues have more influence on persuasive outcomes?
- (m) What are the consequences of the central and peripheral route respectively for attitude change?

(You are welcome to discuss these questions with your fellow students in the discussion forum.)

If you are able to answer all these questions, you have a good grasp of how the yielding process works.

Schematic representation of the two routes to persuasion

Search the internet for a relevant schematic presentation of the two routes to persuasion. Check whether the selected graphic presentation includes those factors that influence the amount of “elaboration”.

In the next section I provide a short reflection on the two routes to persuasion and will touch on some of the questions posed above.

(ii) Reflection on the two routes to persuasion

After reading the chapter on the “Elaboration Likelihood Model” and answering the questions, you should demonstrate the following insights:

- (a) The ELM is a dual-process model of yielding which posits that there are two possible routes that can lead to yielding:
- Yielding as a result of scrutinising the arguments in a persuasive text (i.e. any information that enables the reader to evaluate the issue/topic) – this is the **central route** to influencing a person's attitude.
 - Yielding as a result of the non-argumentative characteristics of a text (i.e. peripheral cues/heuristics) – this is the **peripheral route** to influencing someone's attitude. Peripheral cues include *pretty pictures, a likeable or an expert source that delivers the message, the number of arguments given and the consensus among people about the message.*
- (b) Whether a reader will follow the central or peripheral route depends on two factors:
- his or her ability to scrutinise the arguments
 - the motivation to scrutinise the arguments

Ability is influenced by the following:

- the reader's degree of prior knowledge of the topic
- the reader's skill in distinguishing between valid and invalid argumentation
- the degree of distraction experienced by the reader

Motivation is determined by the following:

- The reader's level of personal involvement in the topic (i.e. people tend to scrutinise the arguments in a text if the topic/issue has important consequences for them).
- The reader's level of need for cognition (i.e. some readers simply enjoy the cognitive effort involved in scrutinising arguments in texts, while others do not).

- (c) High-involvement readers (i.e. readers who have the ability and motivation to evaluate the arguments) are more influenced by the quality of the arguments than low-involvement readers (i.e. readers who lack the motivation and/or ability to

scrutinise the arguments). Low-involvement readers are more susceptible to peripheral cues.

- (d) The differences between the two routes to yielding (i.e. central route or peripheral route) have important consequences for the stability of the resulting attitude. Attitudes based on the scrutiny of the arguments persist longer over time, are better indicators of resultant behaviours, and will be less open to counterpersuasion than those based on peripheral processes.
- (e) The two routes to persuasion represent different points on the “elaboration” continuum, but this does not imply that the two routes cannot complement each other. **For example:** readers will be much more convinced if a text with a number of strong arguments about a product is also supported by the fact that a number of customers were satisfied with the product or that an expert endorses the quality of the product. Peripheral cues can also bias central processing. If the information in a text about a product's qualities is inconclusive, but the text states that the information comes from an expert, readers will respond more favourably to the product than if the same inconclusive information is ascribed to an unreliable source or to no source at all. People may also scrutinise only one of a number of arguments (typical of the central route), lose interest, and then look at the pictures or the attractiveness of the source (typical of the peripheral route) and yield to the message.

(iii) Systematic representation of the two routes to persuasion

Hoeken, Hornikx and Hustinx (2009: 71) provide the following graphic representation to depict the dual processes that occur when a persuasive text succeeds through the central and peripheral route:

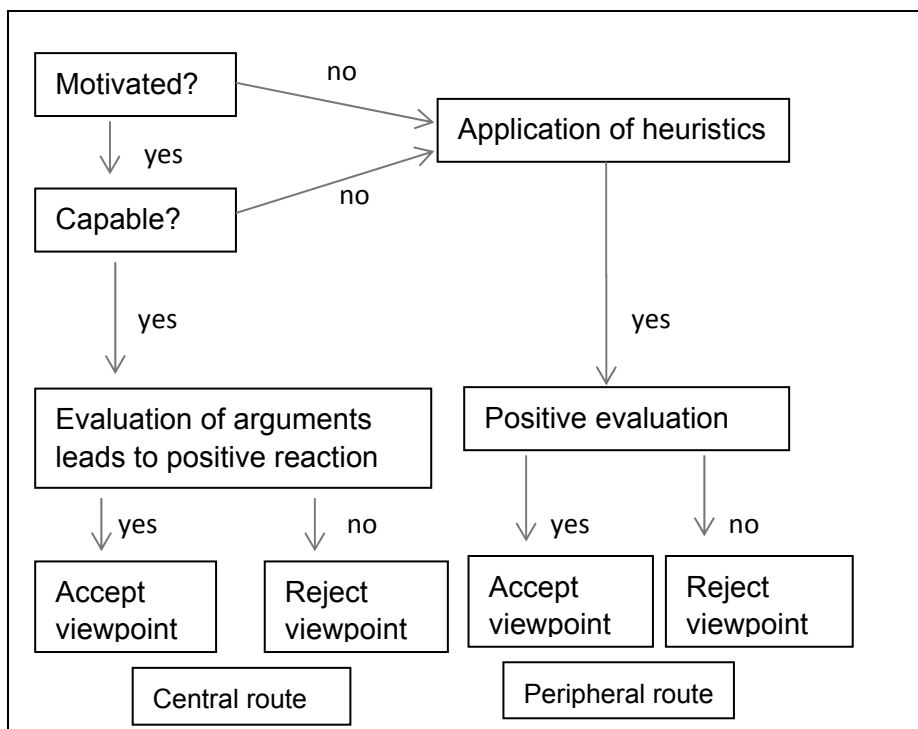


Figure 3.1: The ELM

(Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 71)

How does your chosen representation of the two routes compare to this one?

(iv) A third route to persuasion?

Some researchers have argued that, besides the central and peripheral processing, a third route to persuasion should be considered, namely **experiential processing** (cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 84). We have already touched on this in the document on “Attitudes and behaviour” in learning unit 2 where we indicated that attitudes could also be based on feelings/emotions.

What is experiential processing?

What does experiential processing mean? It simply means that the reader translates the feeling that he or she sometimes has about an object into an attitude towards the object, for example someone’s positive attitude towards a Honda motorbike because his dad used to ride one. The focus here is not on an appreciation of the positive product features (in the form of arguments or peripheral cues) but on an appreciation of the advertisement itself. The processing of a message could evoke a pleasant experience or feeling which could result in a positive attitude towards the product.

Can you think of adverts that evoke a pleasant feeling when you watch or read them? Why do you find these adverts so enjoyable and fun to watch or read?

Rhetorical figures in advertisements

It is not uncommon to find rhetorical figures in advertisements such as *humour, puns, metaphors, paradox, rhetorical questions, hyperbole* and *riddles*. The use of these rhetorical figures requires the reader to decipher the advert and the successful interpretation of the rhetorical figure could evoke pleasant feelings towards the advertised product. The enjoyment therefore lies in the successful decoding of the rhetorical figure used in the persuasive text (cf. Hoeken, Swanepoel, Saal & Jansen 2009: 54–57). Think of the use of puns (i.e. the use of a word or expression with different interpretations) in advertisements and the enjoyment one experiences in discovering the relevant interpretation. See if you can decode the pun in the following headline of an advertisement that sells Nike running shoes:

Headline of advert: *Always on the run*

(Hint: There are three possible interpretations for the pun “on the run”. Which one do you think is relevant to the advertisement for the Nike running shoes? You are welcome to discuss the various interpretations of the headline “Always on the run” with your fellow students in the discussion forum.)

Many adverts use humour to sell their products. Tellis (2004: 161) argues that humour is an effective strategy because:

- It tends to relax people.
- It puts people in a pleasant mood, because it arouses feelings of surprise and entertainment. This makes it easier for the reader to accept the message.
- It can reduce the reader's resistance to scrutinising the arguments.

The opposite could also happen, namely that the reader is not able to decode the rhetorical figure, for example the pun or the humour. If the reader cannot solve the rhetorical figure, it ceases to be enjoyable or funny and negative feelings towards the product are evoked.

The association principle

Another strategy that is commonly used in advertising to arouse positive feelings towards the advertised brand is association. In some advertisements arguments are absent, with the focus being on associating the product or brand with enjoyment or pleasant feelings, for example some car advertisements that include only an image of a sexy model or cigarette advertisements that are associated with relaxation and good times (Perloff 2003: 285). This positive appreciation of the product could, in turn, translate into a positive evaluation of the product (i.e. a positive attitude towards the product).

Activity 3.2

Identify whether readers would follow a central, peripheral or experiential route to persuasion when exposed to the following persuasive texts. Justify your answer.

- (a) An advertisement describing the product features of a new hair product.
- (b) An advertisement where a dentist recommends the new *Sensodyne* toothpaste.
- (c) A memorandum to staff convincing them to make use of the recycle bins placed at strategic points.
- (d) An advertisement for the new *Apple* computer.
- (e) An advertisement with the headline “4 000 people use *Antistax* for painful legs: Shouldn’t you also?”
- (f) An advertisement for the new *Fatburn* diet with before and after pictures.
- (g) An advertisement for “*Adjust 4 sleep* adjustable beds” with the headline “If you haven’t been sleeping well, it’s time to wake up”.

3.3 To summarise

You should now be familiar with McGuire’s information processing model. Can you list the three parts of the persuasion process he identified for persuasion? We first tried to answer the question of *why people read and attend to persuasive texts*. Secondly, we looked at the comprehension process and in particular the three subsystems, the perceptual system, the analytical system and the conceptual system. Thirdly, we gave considerable attention to the dual process model of yielding, namely the ELM. Can you identify the two routes to persuasion? The discussion concludes with some exploratory remarks on a third route to persuasion.

3.4 References

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LEARNING UNIT 4

Designing effective advertisements (1): How to attract and maintain attention

4.1 Introduction

In learning unit 3 we introduced you to two message processing theories, namely the ACY-model of information processing and the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM). Readers who follow the central route of persuasion first have to **attend** to the persuasive text, then **comprehend** the arguments in the text before they will yield to or accept the viewpoint. We have, however, indicated that readers do not always follow these steps successively; they can skip the comprehension part of the process and accept the viewpoint based on peripheral cues/heuristics.

Overview of the learning units to follow

In this learning unit and learning units 5, 6 and 7 we will apply the ACY-model and ELM to a specific type of persuasive text, namely **print advertisements**. In this learning unit we will focus on the attention strategies the copywriter uses to attract the reader's attention. In learning unit 5 we will look at how the content of advertisements influences the reader's decision to scrutinise the arguments (or not). In learning unit 6 we will focus on how copywriters provide relevant arguments or peripheral cues to positively influence the reader to accept the advocated viewpoint in the advertisement. In learning unit 7 the focus is on the role peripheral cues and heuristics can play in the yielding process.

In learning units 8 and 9 we will turn our attention to **health campaign texts**. We will focus in learning unit 8 on the determinants of health behaviour and in learning unit 9 on some additional persuasive strategies to enhance message effectiveness. The discussion that follows for print advertisements is also relevant to health campaign texts, and should not be ignored when designing effective health campaign texts.

Attention devices used in print advertisements

Let's now focus on what you can expect in this learning unit. As mentioned earlier, in this learning unit we will explore the attention devices/strategies that can be used in print advertisements to attract the attention of readers. It is estimated that the average person sees more than 100 advertisements every day – on billboards, TV, newspapers, magazines and the internet. Researchers have estimated that only between seven and 10 advertisements are remembered. Research has further shown that the average reader spends about 12 seconds on most advertisements. That's all the time the copywriter has in which to shout out: "We've got something for you". The copywriter also needs to get the reader's attention in a way that is relevant to the sales message (cf. Crompton 1979: 55).

Copywriters manipulate the following text features of the advertisement to increase the probability that the reader will pay attention to the advertisement:

- the content

- the structure
- the style
- the visual images

We will look at each of these text features and discuss the persuasive strategies that the copywriter can employ to increase the reader's attention to the advertisement.

4.2 How to manipulate content to increase readers' attention

The topic of a text in itself can determine whether or not the reader will find the text interesting. To determine whether or not a text contains interesting information, the reader has to at least read a heading (if there is one), or read the first few sentences. It is therefore important that the first few sentences of a text are interesting enough to grab the reader's attention.

Activity 4.1

Study the following headlines followed by the first sentence of the body copy and decide which of the headlines attract your attention and why.

Headline 1

My son became a pilot at 10.

My 10 year old son, Khwezi, has always wanted to fly aeroplanes.

(Old Mutual savings plan)

Headline 2:

It's hard setting trends when no one can keep up.

The new C-Class coupé

Driving the new Mercedes Benz C-Class is certain to attract a few admirers, which is to be expected considering its irresistible looks.

(Mercedes Benz C-Class)

Headline 3:

This dishwasher has seen 7 weddings, 19 christenings and 184 birthdays ... but no technician

With an expected working life of between 15 and 20 years, your Miele dishwasher will clean up after all the major celebrations in your life for the next generation.

(Miele dishwasher)

Headline 4:

“It’s all right, we’ve got protection – and I promise I’ll still love you in the morning!”

Cats can now cuddle with confidence due to Intervet’s new intranasal vaccine against sniffles.

(Nobivac Bb intranasal (for cats))

Headline 5:

How your family can get on better without you

Say something awful happened and you died suddenly. How prepared would your children be to go on living?

(Hollard Direct Solutions Life policy)

Our discussion below is mainly based on Hoeken (1998, 2005) and Hoeken, Hornikx and Hustinx (2009).

4.2.1 Individual interest

It is of course difficult for us to determine which headlines you liked. You might have liked all five headlines because all the topics have personal relevance for you. Readers are attracted to topics that interest them. Readers’ interest will be aroused if the story has personal relevance for them. We have already indicated in learning unit 3, section 3.2.1, that individual interest refers to whether the reader finds the topic newsworthy enough and the degree to which the information is related to the reader’s prior (existing) knowledge.

Readers tend to be interested in topics that support their existing attitude

You learned in learning unit 3, section 3.2.1, that readers tend to be more interested in topics or information that supports their existing attitude, and may be inclined to ignore or dismiss topics or information which contradicts it. This is called the **selective attention effect**. Consider the following example: if you already have a funeral plan, you may not be interested in an advertisement for the **People’s Funeral Plan**. On the basis of shared knowledge, you will argue that the advertisement does not contain any news and thus it is not worth your while reading it.

A simple message

Copywriters have to devise persuasive strategies to get the reader to pay attention to adverts which they normally would have dismissed. You must remember that the message in advertisements has always one of the following premises:

- Product X has Y characteristics.
- Use of product X will result in Y.

Copywriters are constantly searching for creative and intelligent ways to present their simple messages in adverts. If you think about products such as cars, fragrances, cigarettes, jewellery, etc the different brands have basically the same characteristics. The claims that pertain to the characteristics of cars, for example, are much the same for the different car brands. *The question is:* What do copywriters do to differentiate their brand from a similar other product? How do you attract the consumer's attention when your product is not that different from other similar brands?

In the next sections we will look at some of the attention-getting strategies that copywriters employ to get readers to pay attention to their advert.

4.2.2 Readers and the noncommitment zone

The reader's "noncommitment zone" refers to an area where the reader feels, to a certain extent, neutral about a point of view (cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 94–96). The headline should not reveal upfront what the advert is about; therefore it is not such a good idea to include the product name in the headline. Headlines should prompt the reader to read the advert to find out what it is all about. Look again at the headlines above and determine which headlines you felt neutral about, and why.

To illustrate the noncommitment zone

To illustrate how copywriters choose a viewpoint that is as divergent from the reader's point of view as possible, but does not actually fall into their rejection zone (i.e. in the reader's noncommitment zone), let's consider headline 5 above: **"How your family can get on better without you"**. Why do you think this headline has the potential to fall into the reader's noncommitment zone?

A headline such as **"How your family can get on better without you"** cleverly tries to fall into the reader's noncommitment area/zone. A headline such as **"We've got just the right policy for you"** could easily fall into the reader's rejection zone, because the advert claims upfront that they know exactly what the right policy is for the reader. This could offend readers and result in rejection of the claim.

The headline **"How your family can get on better without you"** makes no explicit reference to life insurance policies. Instead, we have a surprise element in the headline. This unusual idea that children are better off when their parent(s) die(s) can entice the reader into reading further in order to make sense of the mismatch between the surprising information and their prior knowledge.

The first two sentences below the headline **"How your family can get on better without you"** (i.e. *"Say something awful happened and you died suddenly. How prepared would your children be to go on living?"*) put the reader right in the limelight. The reader is confronted with a nasty dilemma or problem, to say the least. These two sentences immediately attract the reader's interest in the topic. The action/activity described in these two sentences is also intense. Words such as "awful", "died suddenly" and "go on living" intensify the meaning of "being prepared" and also highlight the sense of urgency. The direct contrast between "died suddenly" and "go on living" highlights the importance of providing for those who are going to live on. The word "children" also adds another dimension. A word such as "family" can be rather distant, but the word "children"

immediately brings the whole issue closer to the heart. This is simply because, if we are parents, we are very protective of our children and want to give them the best in life.

4.2.3 The surprise element

Why do you think headline 1 above (“**My son became a pilot at 10**”) has the potential to grab the reader’s attention? You’re right. The thought of a 10 year-old pilot is, to say the least, unusual and unexpected. It surprises the reader because we do not expect pilots to be so young. The headline provides information that deviates from what we know and expect to be the norm. In the case of such violations of our expectations (i.e. surprise elements) the reader will want to read the advertisement to resolve the mismatch between the surprising information and the reader’s prior knowledge.

Can you figure out what product is advertised just by reading headline 1? I have copied the advert below to illustrate how cleverly the advert was designed to grab and maintain the reader’s attention:



"My 10 year old son, Khwezi, has always wanted to fly aeroplanes. Old Mutual let him spend a day in the cockpit with real pilots to experience his dream job, 15 years before it happens. I have peace of mind knowing that he will have the means to make his dream come true no matter what happens to me. I'm glad I started saving and have life cover in place to help secure his future."

We all have dreams. The only way of making them real is by planning for them. Contact your Old Mutual Financial Adviser or your broker or call **0860 60 60 65**. To receive an illustrative premium quick quote, visit www.oldmutualquote.co.za. Let us join you through every stage of your life journey, from today.

Naledi Khumalo – Old Mutual Customer

WE'RE WITH YOU FROM TODAY

Old Mutual is a Licensed Financial Services Provider.

DO GREAT THINGS



OLDMUTUAL

Open Rubric
100170003B Naledi Print 285x210.indd 1



2015/07/10 3:32 PM

(Adapted from: *go!*, January 2014)

4.2.4 The “seducing agents”

Why do you think headline 4 above (“**It’s all right, we’ve got protection – and I promise I’ll still love you in the morning!**”) has the potential to grab the reader’s

attention? The headline not only has a surprise element, but uses one of the “seducing agents”. Can you identify the “seducing agent” in this headline?

What are “seducing agents”?

“Seducing agents” refer to those topics that are universally interesting: topics such as *sex, death, power, money and violence*. There is also the “puppy factor”: anything featuring babies, young children or animals attract attention. Advertisers sometimes use these topics even though there is no connection with the subject of the advertisement (cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 99–101).

Sex as a “seducing agent”

The headline “**It's all right, we've got protection**” automatically evokes sexual connotations in the reader's mind. The first sentence of the body copy (*Cats can now cuddle with confidence due to Intervet's new intranasal vaccine against sniffles*) refers to cats and the reader is taken by surprise by the linking of “we've got protection” with “cats”. It immediately attracts the reader's attention, because the reader knows that, obviously, cats do not practise sexual protection. The first sentence of the body copy explains the kind of protection: *Cats can now cuddle with confidence due to Intervet's new intranasal vaccine against sniffles*. The “protection” referred to is a new intranasal vaccine against sniffles.

There is no connection between the sexual connotations evoked by the headline and the new intranasal vaccine. In this advertisement the headline's sexual connotation is used solely to attract the reader's attention. This type of topic is used to seduce the reader into reading the advertisement. This phenomenon is known as the **seductive detail effect** (cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 100). The risk here – from the advertiser's point of view — is that the reader will only remember this unimportant detail (sex, death, power, etc), while forgetting the rest of the message (the important part of the advertisement).

Appeal to common human needs

If it is not possible to use topics which have a universal interest value to attract the reader's attention, then another possibility is to link the text to common human needs and fears. Janssen et al (1996: 157) mention the following common human needs, all of which advertisements often appeal to:

- **Desire.** Readers are interested in obtaining (extraordinary) value for their hard-earned money. The following advertisement implies that by buying this product you can bargain on getting much more value for your money:

With an expected working life of between 15 and 20 years, your Miele dishwasher will clean up after all the major celebrations in your life for the next generation.

- **Status.** Most people like being placed in a higher category than other people, either on the basis of their income, education or character. The following Mercedes-Benz advertisement implies a positive change in your status:

Driving the new Mercedes Benz C-Class is certain to attract a few admirers, which is to be expected considering its irresistible looks.

Activity 4.2

Determine which content strategy is used in the following headlines to get the reader's attention. (**Please note:** one headline could include two or more strategies.)

Headline 1

Yet another example of a car manufacturer blatantly using sex to sell a product

(first three sentences of body copy): *4 wheel drive. 4 wheel steering. 6 speed transmission.*

(Mitsubishi 300GT)

Headline 2

Mothers lock away your sons!

(first three sentences): *Boys will be boys. Especially when the girls are wearing Tropitone Body beautiful. It not only protects your skin from the damaging effects of the sun but it also gives your skin a beautiful golden shimmer.*

(Tropitone Body Beautiful SPF 15 and SPF 30 lotions)

Headline 3

Exclusive offer to Gold Status clients

(ABSA Gold Credit card)

Headline 4

All those who haven't tried Mitchum, please don't raise your hands.

(first two sentences): *Mitchum is the ultimate anti-perspirant. Its long-lasting, dermatologically tested formula beats others hands down.*

(Mitchum anti-perspirant)

4.3 How to manipulate text structure to attract attention

Structure refers to the way the information in a persuasive text has been organised. Why do you think the following headline has the potential to grab the reader's attention? See if you can identify the structural feature that is used in the following advertisement.

Toothpaste that helps repair sensitive teeth.

No wonder dentists recommend it.

The occasional twinge you get when you drink something cold means a specific area of the tooth is vulnerable.

Now you can help repair that area with a new kind of toothpaste.

*New **Sensodyne Repair and Protect** seeks out and helps repair sensitive areas using the same minerals teeth are made out of.*

(Adapted from: *Fair Lady*, October 2012)

4.3.1 Problem-solution structure

The attention given to a text depends primarily on the topic chosen. In deciding whether or not to read a text, readers have to identify the topic. As long as they do not know what the topic of the text is, they may well explore the text until they find out (Hoeken 1995: 42). Given the exploratory nature of this reading habit, the question is: when should the topic be introduced to the reader? The chances are that if the reader recognises the topic, he or she will not read the text any further. Thus, delaying the introduction of the topic may increase the amount of attention the reader gives to the text.

How stating the problem can attract attention

A simple way to attract the reader's attention is to use the **problem-solution structure**. In the heading or first sentence a problem is sketched – a problem that the target reader can easily recognise and identify with. The problem-solution structure begins by describing an **undesirable situation** (the problem), and then suggests a possible solution. In advertisements the main aim is to convince the reader that they have a need for the product or service. This is often done in two steps. First the advertiser tries to convince the reader that he or she has a problem. This is usually done by pointing out that the reader is being wronged, is missing out on a benefit or is very worried about something. Secondly, the product or service is offered in such a way that the reader is convinced that accepting the offer will solve or remove the problem. The description of the problem attracts the reader's attention, because the reader becomes curious about the proposed solution. For the reader to get to the solution to the problem he/she has to read the advert to find out the solution. Research by Hoeken and Goor (quoted in Hoeken 1998: 159) indicates that the problem-solution structure causes readers to devote attention to information they are not really interested in.

To illustrate:

Have another look at how the following advertisement already introduces the problem in the headline and the first sentence:

Toothpaste that helps repair sensitive teeth.

No wonder dentists recommend it.

The occasional twinge you get when you drink something cold means a specific area of the tooth is vulnerable.

Now you can help repair that area with a new kind of toothpaste.

*New **Sensodyne Repair and Protect** seeks out and helps repair sensitive areas using the same minerals teeth are made out of.*

(Adapted from: *Fair Lady*, October 2012)

First, the reader is confronted with a problem: “*the occasional twinge when you drink something cold*”. Then the solution to the problem follows in the next sentence: “*a new kind of toothpaste, **Sensodyne***”. The proposed solution is usually followed by supporting arguments why this product is the better solution to the problem: **Sensodyne uses the same minerals that teeth are made of.**

4.3.2 End-means structure

A second text structure that copywriters can use to attract attention to the advert is the **end-means structure**. The end-means structure focuses on a **desirable situation** (i.e. the goal). (*Remember:* the problem-solution structure focuses on an undesirable situation i.e. the problem). The end-means structure works on the same principle as the problem-solution structure. Readers become interested in the goal and then have to read the advert to find the means to achieve the goal.

Activity 4.3

Read the following headline and first few sentences of the body copy and identify the **goal** and the **means** to achieve the goal. Why does this advert has the potential to grab the reader’s attention?

Bronzed and beautiful

Holiday skin, all year round

There’s something special about holiday skin. Just look through your holiday photographs and notice how everybody looks more healthy and radiant than usual. Perhaps it’s because we’re a nation addicted to the outdoors, always after that holiday look, but we’re well aware of the dangers of sun tanning, especially under the harsh African sun.

*That’s why **Johnson’s Holiday skin** is the ideal, safe alternative to give you a bronzed holiday glow.*

(Adapted from: *Shape*, January 2007)

(You are welcome to discuss this activity with your fellow students in the discussion forum.)

4.4 How to manipulate style to attract readers' attention

The concept of **style** is not easy to describe. Burger and De Jong (quoted in Hoeken 1998: 165) define **style** as the choice a writer makes, from possible formulations, in order to shape his or her thoughts. This choice refers to the writer's use of words, sentences and structure, a choice which is co-determined by the topic, goal, audience and genre. A copywriter can use various style features to try to attract the reader's attention to the advert.

4.4.1 Style violations

Readers have specific expectations of what kind of language behaviour is appropriate in what circumstances. If copywriters violate these style norms the reader can respond either favourably or unfavourably to these violations. Readers will most probably perceive an advertisement for a funeral policy that includes jokes about funerals as inappropriate. There is sometimes a fine line between what an acceptable style violation is and what is not.

Look at the following headline and explain why this style violation could be seen as an "artful" or "clever" style deviation that could attract the reader's attention:

"Performance"

One part can change the outcome

BMW original parts

In a complicated chain of parts designed to work perfectly together, it just takes one unoriginal part to compromise the entire machine.

Don't take chances. Insist on original BMW parts, because without genuine parts, it's simply not BMW anymore.

(Adapted from: *woman&home*, February 2015)

Did you spot the style violation in the headline?

4.4.2 Use of the word "new"

The copywriter can awaken the reader's curiosity by the style he or she uses in the title and the opening paragraph. The copywriter can draw the reader's attention to the fact that the text contains new information. This can be done explicitly by using the word "new" in the headline, for example: *Finally a **new** air freshener that looks as pretty as it smells.*

4.4.3 Use of rhetorical questions

A slightly more subtle way of showing readers that the text contains new information is to use a rhetorical question. A rhetorical question is in fact not a “real” question, but a statement that is posed as a question, for example: *Who doesn't want to feel great during summer holidays?* (The implied statement is: *Everyone wants to feel great during summer holidays.*)

In many advertisements “real” questions (i.e. not rhetorical questions) are used in headlines to attract the reader’s attention, for example: *Going on holiday? Is your first aid kit stocked?*

The problem with questions is that when readers read a question, they involuntarily try to answer it. If the reader knows or thinks he/she knows the answer to the question, the reader will not be motivated to read any further. If the reader, however, does not know the answer to the question, it could make him or her curious to find the answer, and the best way to do that is to read the text.

4.4.4 Use of rhymes and catchy slogans

Rhymes or catchy slogans that are easy to remember are sometimes used in advertisements to grab the reader’s attention, for example the headline: *Kair for your hair.*

The name of the product *Kair* is cleverly included in this rhyming headline.

Rhymes and catchy slogans can be effective as attention devices because they can be seen as an “artful deviation” of readers’ expectations (cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 183).

4.5 How to use visual images to attract readers’ attention

Visual images communicate to us. But the problem is that images and the meaning they portray cannot be analysed in the same way that language can be analysed. The question that arises is: how do visual images differ from language and other modes of communication? According to Messaris (1997: x) one of the fundamental characteristics that distinguishes visual images from other modes of communication is **iconicity**.

Visual images as iconic signs

Iconic signs are characterised by some form of similarity or analogy between the sign and its object. This means that, in some culturally relevant respect, the sign strikes us as similar to its object. For instance, a photograph of a woman is an iconic representation of the real-life woman. The similarity may range from shared physical properties (e.g. a toy car representing a real car) to a remote similarity (a broomstick can represent a horse, because both can be straddled). In the same way the similarity may depend on convention: a circle with a curve drawn inside it may represent a smiling face or a happy person.

Visual images come with emotional associations

As far as the persuasion process is concerned iconicity has certain implications for the use of images. Messaris (1997: xiii) gives the following example to illustrate the

implications of iconicity: when we look at the real world that surrounds us, the things that we see do not register in our brains as neutral, value-free data. On the contrary, each visual feature, from a facial expression to the overall physical appearance of people and places, comes with a whole range of emotional associations. The fact that images can reproduce the appearance of something in reality also means that they can evoke a variety of emotional responses in us. Iconicity thus gives advertisers access to a broad spectrum of emotional responses, such as sexual desire for an attractive model or pity for an abandoned child.

Visual images can be manipulated to attract attention

Iconicity does not entail an exact match between how something appears in a picture and how that same thing appears in reality. Many pictures have visual characteristics that, superficially, are quite different from the real-life object or place depicted in that picture. Visual images can therefore be manipulated to attract the reader's attention and to evoke specific emotional responses.

Messaris (1997) identifies several visual-image techniques that advertisers can use to attract readers' attention. We will focus here on the following three techniques: *violating reality*, *images of children and animals* and *sexuality*.

4.5.1 Violating reality

Click on the following link <http://www.bestadsontv.com/ad/65133/YR-South-Africa-Land-Rover-Herds-Wetlands> and explain why this Land Rover advert attracts the reader's attention.

You will have noticed that the visual image attracts the reader's attention because it is unexpected and unfamiliar. We simply do not expect to see a herd of springboks in the shape of a Land Rover! Can you identify the claim the advert is making about Land Rover?

The printed medium's very essence is its ability to reproduce the look of reality, and one of the surest ways of attracting the reader's attention is to violate that reality. According to Shepard (quoted in Messaris 1997: 7) the human perceptual system is finely tuned to pay special attention to unfamiliar objects when these differ only slightly from our expectations.

4.5.2 Images of children and animals

Click on the following link <http://www.bestadsontv.com/ad/59327/Gautrain-By-car-BY-train-Baby> and explain why the visual image grabs the reader's attention.

The “puppy factor”

A visual image that invites the reader to respond to weakness is a very common advertising practice: images of children or animals will probably evoke a nurturing response (the so-called “puppy factor” we discussed earlier in 4.2.4). Lorenz (quoted in Messaris 1997: 41) claims that human beings appear to be “genetically designed” to experience a nurturing tendency in response to certain specific facial features that are typical of young children.

Childlike features

Pictures of children or young animals are not the only advertising images that use juvenile characteristics as part of their appeal. Geofmann (quoted in Messaris 1997: 41) found that the portrayal of women (the way women pose) in advertisements includes a variety of gestures that could be described as childlike – gestures such as lowering the eyes or head, playfully lying on the floor, sulky mouths etc.

4.5.3 “Sex sells”

The technique of using sexy models (men and women) to advertise a product has a long history in advertising. As an attracting device, sexuality is a very common and frequently used technique in advertising. In most cases, the use of a sexy model has nothing to do with the advertised product, but is solely used for the purpose of attracting the reader's attention (i.e. the **seductive detail effect** we referred to earlier in section 4.2.4).

Activity 4.4

- (a) Can you correctly match the attention strategy with the text feature (content, structure, style and visual image) in the following table? **Note:** some strategies might apply to more than one text feature.

Attention strategy	Text feature			
	Content	Structure	Style	Visual image
Problem-solution structure				
Surprise element				
Use of the seductive detail effect				
Use of the puppy factor				
Use of questions				
Appeal to status				
Violating style norms				
Violating reality				
Use of rhetorical figures such as metaphors				
Use of the end-means structure				

How did you score?

Rating scale:

- 1–4: I cannot identify the various attention strategies.
 5–6: I can identify some of the attention strategies.
 7–8: I can identify most of the attention strategies.
 9–10: I identified all the various attention strategies correctly.

- (b) Study the following advert and identify the attention strategies that it uses. Explain why these strategies could be effective in attracting the reader's attention.

KING JAMES 33161

There's a time to be bold. And a time to be cautious.

Investments

www.sanlaminvestments.com

Sanlam Life Insurance is an Authorised Financial Services Provider.

If there's one thing we can learn from the Titanic, it's that boldness and success don't always go hand in hand. When it comes to investing, we don't believe in a blanket approach either. We weigh up the pros and cons, methodically scrutinise the details and, above all, utilise one of the most widely ignored skills in modern investing - the power of restraint. Because knowing when to be bold, and when to be cautious, makes all the difference. And that's what makes us Wealthsmiths™.

Sanlam
Wealthsmiths

(Adapted from: *Getaway*, June 2015)

4.6 To summarise

You should now be familiar with the various attention strategies that are used in advertisements to attract the reader's attention. For the various text features, namely content, structure, style and visual images, specific attention strategies are used. In some cases attention strategies apply to more than one text feature, for example "seducing agents" (such as sex) could be used for both the content and the visual image. In the next learning unit we will explore how the content, structure and style can be manipulated to make it easier for the reader to scrutinise the arguments in the advert.

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LEARNING UNIT 5

Designing effective advertisements (2): How to improve text comprehension

5.1 Introduction

In the previous learning unit we introduced you to the various persuasive strategies a copywriter can use to attract the reader's attention to a persuasive text. In this learning unit we will focus on how the copywriter can manipulate the content, structure and style to construct a coherent mental presentation of the text. We will look at each of these features separately and illustrate how the copywriter can motivate the reader to evaluate the arguments in the text and make it easier for him or her to do so.

5.2 How to manipulate content to influence readers' decision to evaluate arguments

There are two ways in which the content of advertisements influences the reader's decision to scrutinise the arguments (or not):

- The content may increase the reader's motivation to look at the arguments critically.
- The content may make it easier for the reader to scrutinise the arguments.

5.2.1 How content can increase readers' motivation to evaluate the arguments

Look at the following two scenarios and determine whether you would be inclined to consider the merits of the product (i.e. evaluate the arguments):

Scenario 1:

You are in the market to buy a new car. You are contemplating buying the new Ford Ecosport or the new Renault Clio. You came across advertisements for the new Ford Ecosport and the new Renault Clio in a magazine of your choice. Would you scrutinise the arguments in the two advertisements? Why? Why not?

Scenario 2:

You come across advertisements for the soft drinks Coca Cola and Pepsi-Cola in a magazine of your choice. Would you scrutinise the arguments in the advertisement? Why? Why not?

High-involvement products vs low-involvement products

You will probably be more inclined to attend to the arguments presented in scenario 1 than to the arguments in scenario 2. Why do you think this is the case?

According to the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM), people process information differently under high and low involvement. Products such as a car, the correct clothes, computers or the best life cover which are personally important to us and expensive, are referred to as high-involvement products. The higher involvement strongly depends on the price of the product: the more expensive, the more involved the reader is likely to be. When you are in the market for a high-involved product the consequences of your choice are very important, and so you will invest more time in making the correct choice. For high-involvement purchases, you are more likely to consider the merits of the product, that is to scrutinise the arguments. The high cost involved in buying either of these items makes it important to make the right choice. High-involvement products require considerable thought and are, of course, of high personal concern to you, and therefore you would be more inclined to evaluate the arguments in the text (cf. Perloff 2003: 293).

Then there are products where your involvement is quite low. Low-involvement products include soft drinks, towels, toilet paper, toothpaste etc. The effect of the wrong choice of toothpaste is obviously negligible, but choosing the wrong car or buying the wrong house may have very serious consequences for the buyer. Low-involvement products do not require much thought and energy, and are of little personal concern to you (cf. Perloff 2003: 280).

The reader and the noncommitment zone

It is not only high-involvement products that might motivate the reader to attend to the arguments in the text, but also viewpoints that fall in the noncommitment zone. We have illustrated in the previous learning unit how the use of a headline that falls in the reader's noncommitment zone can attract the reader's attention to the advert. Similarly, viewpoints that fall in the reader's noncommitment zone could also motivate him or her to look critically at the arguments in the text.

Readers regard viewpoints that fall in their acceptance area as a confirmation of their world image, and do not bother scrutinising the arguments any further. On the other hand, readers who are confronted by what they firmly believe is an incorrect viewpoint – which then falls in their area of rejection – also do not scrutinise the arguments nor do they generate counterarguments. The chance of scrutinising arguments increases if the viewpoint falls in the reader's noncommitment area. Readers see a viewpoint that falls within their noncommitment area as potentially correct and will be more inclined to scrutinise the arguments to confirm this.

5.2.2 How content can ease comprehension

If a reader finds himself or herself in a high-involved condition, the reader is more likely to process the information centrally. In other words, he or she will probably scrutinise the arguments.

Readers' prior knowledge of the topic

The readers' prior knowledge of a topic could ease the comprehension of the text. Readers who are knowledgeable about the topic of a text read faster and remember

more of the content than readers who do not have this prior knowledge. When no prior knowledge is available, readers have to make extra cognitive effort to comprehend a text. They have to make the distinction, all by themselves, between what is, and what is not, important information; they also have to relate the different bits of information to each other. Prior knowledge makes it easier for the reader to construct a coherent mental representation of the text.

The way the arguments are presented in the text

How the arguments are presented can also make it much easier for the reader to scrutinise the arguments. A reader who has difficulty following the logic of the argument or comprehending the arguments will lose interest in the advertisement. Arguments should be presented in such a way that the reader will easily comprehend them.

When we refer to persuasion that involves the use of argumentation, we refer to the following two elements: a **viewpoint** and **argument(s)**.

What is a viewpoint?	What is an argument?
"Viewpoint" is used here to refer to the claim that is made about the advertised product.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="662 857 1273 929">– An argument is a statement that is used in support of a viewpoint. <li data-bbox="662 940 1273 1048">– Arguments can also be in the form of evidence: anecdotal evidence, statistical evidence or authoritative evidence.

Activity 5.1

Look at the following advert for *Uri-Kleer* and identify the **two viewpoints** and the **supporting arguments** for these two viewpoints. Would you say the presentation of the viewpoints and arguments makes it easier for the reader to evaluate the arguments?



Bladder infection? Painful? Uncomfortable?

60% of all women will suffer from a urinary tract infection at least once in their lifetime...

The distressing pain and discomfort of a lower urinary tract infection (UTI) is all too familiar to many women. Most lower urinary tract infections are caused by the bacteria, *Escherichia coli*, which occurs naturally in the digestive tract and vagina.

When bacteria move up the urinary tract unchecked and attach to the lining of the bladder, they start to multiply causing inflammation. Hence the reason you experience persistent pain, discomfort, intense burning sensation when urinating as well as the urge to urinate more frequently but passing only small volumes of urine.

URI-Kleer contains UTI-Rose™ a unique, standardized extract of *Hibiscus sabdariffa* (Roselle) flowers that are high in proanthocyanidins (PAC's), which help to prevent the bacteria from adhering to the walls of the lower urinary tract.



Uri-Kleer
Your natural answer
to bladder infections

Available at all leading pharmacies

UriKleer 6 Vegecaps; Each capsule contains: UTIRose™ 200mg.
CoMed Health (Pty) Ltd. 313 Kuit street, Waltho, Pretoria 0184
Tel: (012) 813 9400 www.comedhealth.co.za

(Adapted from: *Goodhousekeeping*, March 2014)

(You can use the discussion forum to compare your answers with those of the other students.)

Some hints

Did you see the first viewpoint refers to what the product can do for the consumer? (This is clearly indicated on the package and directly under the product name *Uri-Kleer*.) The second viewpoint focuses on the susceptibility of women to bladder infections. (This is clearly indicated in the headline.)

The first two paragraphs illuminate the problem, namely why women are susceptible to urinary tract infections. The third paragraph focuses on why the product could be effective for bladder infections.

5.3 How to manipulate structure to influence readers' decision to evaluate arguments

The copywriter can use structural elements to (i) increase the reader's motivation to read the text, and (ii) make it easier for the reader to evaluate the arguments in the text.

5.3.1 How structure can motivate readers to evaluate the arguments

We have already indicated in the previous learning unit that the problem-solution structure and the end-means structure can be used to attract the reader's attention. Similarly, these structures can increase the reader's **consequence-involvement**, that is the reader's belief that the topic of the text may have important consequences for them personally (e.g. that they may become rich, or seriously ill). To emphasise consequence-involvement two important text structures are used: the problem-solution structure and the end-means structure. Emphasising the undesirable or desirable consequences in the problem-solution structure or the end-means structure respectively can increase readers' motivation to scrutinise the advertisement. If readers perceive the situation as (possibly) relevant, their consequence-involvement increases and they will be interested to find out what the solution is for the proposed problem or what the means are for the desired goal. To find the solution or the means, readers will have to read the text.

5.3.2 How structure can ease comprehension

Can you think of any structural techniques that copywriters use to make it easier for the reader to evaluate the arguments?

The structure of a text relates its information elements to each other and orders them hierarchically. A well-chosen text structure helps the reader build a coherent representation of the contents of a text. Structure may influence the reader's decision to scrutinise the arguments (or not) in several ways.

Use of appropriate "signposts"

Spooren and his colleagues (quoted in Hoeken 1998: 161) indicated that writers should never underestimate the importance of good structure as far as the reader's ability to understand the text is concerned.

The reader can, for instance, be helped by signposts that summarise the content:

- Headings and subheadings give an indication of topics and subtopics.

- Logical connectives indicate how the content of sentences or parts of the text should be linked. The conjunction *because*, for instance, indicates that the clause following it will state the cause, while the clause preceding it will state the result.

Consider the following text where some conjunctions have been omitted and try to rewrite it using the conjunctions *because*, *and*, *if* and *than*:

*The **Secure** Savings Solution works a lot harder. Other similar savings plans do not work that hard. You don't pay commissions in the case of the **Secure** Savings Solution. Your plan also includes valuable automatic cover against death and disability. An accident that leaves you permanently disabled, we'll continue to pay your monthly premiums. Your acceptance is guaranteed. We will send your policy with full details. We will send a 30 day money back guarantee.*

The quality of the reader's mental schema

The use of structural signals and signposts helps the reader to remember more of the text. Remembering information is, however, only one aspect of text comprehension. A second aspect is the quality of the mental model or schema the reader is constructing. A good mental schema (model) will enable the reader to anticipate the consequences of his or her actions.

The answer to the above exercise on conjunctions:

*The Secure Savings Solution works a lot harder than similar savings plans **because** you don't pay commissions. Your plan also includes valuable automatic cover against death and disability. **If** an accident leaves you permanently disabled, we'll continue to pay your monthly premiums. Your acceptance is guaranteed, **and** we will send your policy with full details, **and** a 30 day money back guarantee.*

How did you do? Were you able to connect the sentences in a logical manner? Do you see that the conjunctions connect consecutive sentences in a logical manner? Which one of the two text versions helps you to form a better coherent mental representation of the text?

5.4 How to manipulate style to influence readers' decision to evaluate arguments

Style can be employed in two ways to influence readers' decision to evaluate the arguments (or not) in the text: First, certain style choices increase the reader's motivation to "read on", and secondly, they make it easier for the reader to scrutinise the arguments.

5.4.1 How style choices can motivate readers to evaluate the arguments

Copywriters could use any of the following three style features to enhance readers' motivation to evaluate the arguments in the text: (i) the self-referencing technique, (ii) the direct address, and (iii) rhetorical questions.

(i) The self-referencing technique

Compare the following two text versions and determine which activates your prior knowledge and experience more effectively:

Text 1

You know the feeling. Those first sniffles, the itchy throat in the mornings and that strange ache in your joints – all indications that you’re going to spend a few days in bed. Usually, as luck would have it, over a weekend or on a public holiday. That’s why you need *Benylin First Defense* – an immune system booster from the *Benylin* family.

Text 2

One of the first signs of a cold is the sniffles and an itchy throat. The result being that one is going to spend a few days in bed. This usually happens over a weekend or a public holiday. That’s why *Benylin First Defense* is the best solution – an immune system booster from the *Benylin* family.

We alluded earlier to the fact that prior knowledge plays a major role in whether or not the reader scrutinises the arguments. The reader’s ability to judge the desirability and probability of consequences is mainly based on prior knowledge and experience. However, readers may not use their prior knowledge when reading the arguments. An effective strategy for activating such prior knowledge is self-referencing. **Self-referencing** means readers try to match the information given in the text to their personal knowledge and experience. Moreover, since they have been addressed directly, readers will apply the information to themselves.

Which one of text 1 or text 2 above makes use of self-referencing? Why do you say so? Can you see that text 1 alluded more to the reader’s personal experiences of catching a cold?

Self-referencing is a very good strategy because the mental structure containing information on personal experiences is the most elaborate memory structure in the human mind. Self-referencing therefore increases the probability that the reader will scrutinise the arguments. Self-referencing is thus a strategy based on activating the reader’s personal experiences (cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 109–110).

(ii) The use of the direct address

When the reader is addressed directly (by using the word “you”), he or she experiences the information as more relevant. If an advertiser has identified the target group so accurately that he knows that these target readers will be interested in the product or service, he can use the direct address. The technique of addressing the reader directly is often combined with using a (rhetorical) question. Return to texts 1 and 2 above and determine which of text 1 or text 2 makes use of the direct address method? Text 1 uses the second person pronoun **you**, thereby addressing the reader directly, and it points out

those feelings the reader probably can identify with when he or she comes down with a cold. In text 2, however, the reader does not address the reader directly, but use a more generic reference, namely **one**. In text 1 above the copywriter uses both the self-referencing technique and the direct address to motivate the reader to attend to the arguments in the text.

(iii) The use of the rhetorical question

The rhetorical question can function both to attract the reader's attention (see learning unit 4) and to motivate the reader to evaluate the arguments in the text. Consider, for example, a rhetorical question such as: *Can you afford **not** to call us today?* This is not a real question: the writer is not interested in the reader's answer. The question could, in fact, also be formulated as a model statement: *You cannot afford **not** to call us today.*

The advantage of using rhetorical questions is that they encourage the reader to form an opinion. Statements do not. Note, however, that if a rhetorical question precedes the arguments, readers base their evaluation of these arguments on their own knowledge and opinions. They are therefore no longer open to argumentation. However, if the rhetorical question follows the arguments, readers answer the question while keeping in mind the arguments they have just read. A rhetorical question such as *Can you afford not to call us today?* is normally used in life policies/funeral policies and is placed at the end of the advertisement, that is, after all the arguments have been put forward (Cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 106–110.)

5.4.2 How style choices could ease comprehension

The use of concrete language rather than abstract language can make it easier for the reader to evaluate the arguments in a text.

Concrete language vs abstract language

Concrete language is language that refers to objects that can be perceived with the senses. The phrase “a strong, well-built man” evokes a concrete image; the phrase “a strong argument” does not. Lexical concreteness refers to the use of adjectives, action verbs and perceptible details which describe an observable event. Abstract language allows for greater inferences and more interpretation than concrete language (Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 114).

The “Dual Coding Theory”

This difference in language usage has consequences for the way in which the reader processes information. According to Paivio (quoted in Hoeken 1998: 168) information is stored in the memory in two different ways: visually and verbally. This is called the “**Dual Coding Theory**”. However, not all information can be stored visually: concrete information such as “a strong, well-built man” can be stored visually, but not “a strong argument”. Concrete information is therefore easier to process and easier to remember.

Concrete language makes it easier to evaluate results

A second advantage of concrete language is that it makes it easier for the reader to evaluate results, and to concretise the advantages and disadvantages of using the

product. The advertiser describes concrete situations to emphasise the desirability of the outcome.

Imaginary and concrete writing enables readers to scrutinise the arguments more carefully. However, there is no guarantee that these techniques will help to make the text more persuasive. Indeed, imaginary or concrete language tends to reveal the weaknesses or falsity of an argument more clearly. It will become clear if the arguments are weak or false, and the text will therefore fail as a persuasive text.

Activity 5.2

See if you can match the persuasive elements below with the correct text feature (content, structure and style) by ticking the correct box. A further distinction is made between (i) those strategies that could **motivate** the reader to evaluate the arguments in the text and (ii) those strategies that could make it **easier** for the reader to evaluate the arguments in the text (i.e. ease comprehension).

Persuasive elements	Enhance motivation to evaluate arguments			Ease comprehension		
	Content	Structure	Style	Content	Structure	Style
Focus on high-involvement products						
End-means structure						
Concrete language						
Signposts						
Problem-solution structure						
Reader's prior knowledge						
Rhetorical questions						
Presentation of arguments						
Self-referencing technique						
Direct address method						

How did you do? If you scored less than 70% (i.e. 7/10) then you need to study the learning unit again.

5.5 To summarise

You should now be familiar with the various content, structural and style elements that can be used to motivate readers to evaluate the arguments in the text and to make it

easier for them to comprehend the text. In the next learning unit we will look at how the content, structure, style and visual image can be manipulated to enhance the acceptance of the advocated viewpoint.

5.6 References

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LEARNING UNIT 6

Designing effective advertisements (3): How the quality of the arguments influence yielding

6.1 Introduction

In the two previous learning units we looked at various message strategies that copywriters employ to influence readers' decision to attend to the text and to enhance their motivation and capacity to evaluate the arguments in the text. If the reader has attended to the text, and comprehended the arguments in the text, then the central route of information processing will lead him or her to accept the advocated position. In acceptance of the propagated point of view the quality of the arguments play a decisive role. In this learning unit we will look at how the quality of the argument influences the reader's decision to accept the point of view.

6.2 How to manipulate content to enhance yielding

In learning unit 2 we discussed the relation between "beliefs" and "attitude". Can you recall the discussion? How do we change readers' attitudes? If you cannot recall the discussion on "beliefs" and "attitudes", I suggest that you study the document on "Attitudes and behaviour" (uploaded under **Additional Resources**) again. In this section we will answer the following questions:

- How do copywriters identify relevant arguments?
- What is a strong argument?
- What are the different types of arguments?

6.2.1 How to identify relevant arguments

Many advertisements (and other persuasive texts) try to influence the behaviour of the reader, for example *buy the new Ponds flawless radiance prevention cream*. The viewpoint is often supported by arguments that focus on the positive consequence(s) of the intended behaviour: *The new Ponds cream will not only prevent dark spots, but also tones your skin, leaving it flawless and radiant*. Hoeken, Hornikx and Hustinx (2009: 122) claim that persuasive texts often use a specific kind of argument, namely **pragmatic argumentation**. Pragmatic argumentation refers to the weighing of pros and cons, that is argumentation based on the advantages and/or disadvantages of a particular behaviour or product. Pragmatic argumentation is also based on causality: acceptance of the proposed viewpoint will lead to certain consequences.

Activity 6.1

Study the following advert and identify (i) the claim/viewpoint of the advert (i.e. which behaviour does the advert try to change?) and (ii) the arguments in support of the viewpoint. Would you say that these arguments focus on the positive or negative consequences of the intended behaviour? Which value is appealed to in this advert? Do

you think this value is relevant for the target group (i.e. adult women)? Would you be persuaded by these arguments? Why? Why not? (You can use the discussion forum to discuss the answers to these questions.)

With a name like Polyethylene Terephthalate, expect it to be sophisticated.

Beverage plastic bottles are made from Polyethylene Terephthalate or PET, a very smart material.

Because it's 100% recyclable, when done being a bottle, it's not actually done.

We recycle PET into fibre for insulation, pillows, duvets, geo-textiles and, back into PET packaging.

But these highly specialised processes are useless if the bottles are buried in landfill.

Don't throw bottles away; please recycle them. It's the proper thing to do.

Plastic bottles are not trash. For more information on PET plastic recycling, visit www.petco.co.za. Find us on Twitter & Facebook: 1isPET

petco
PET plastic recycling South Africa

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(Adapted from: *women&home*, December 2012)

Targeting primary beliefs

The advert above attempts to persuade readers to recycle beverage plastic bottles, that is to change their behaviour. If you accepted the viewpoint, then it could shape or change your attitude. In learning unit 2 we indicated that attitude change can be brought about by influencing the beliefs that underlie that attitude. These beliefs relate to the probability and desirability of the consequences associated with accepting the viewpoint in question. What underlying belief about recycling does the advert in activity 6.1 try to change?

According to Ajzen and Fishbein (quoted in Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 123) attitudes are based on five to nine beliefs. Relevant arguments are those arguments that are directed towards shaping or changing primary beliefs.

How does the document designer identify the primary beliefs of the target reader? The best way to identify the target group's primary beliefs is of course by way of a preliminary investigation in which the document designer determines how the target reader perceives the advantages and disadvantages of a particular behaviour or product. However, this is not always possible. The second best way to identify relevant arguments is to use the target group's value system to determine which of the advantages or disadvantages will impress them most. Different people find different values more important than others. Say you want to buy a car. The following factors, among others, could be important: the price and the safety features. Say, for argument's sake, that the car is both cheaper and safer than its competitors, and that both features (price and safety) are equal in weight. In this case, those who regard the value "saving money" as important will buy the car for this reason (i.e. it is not too expensive). On the other hand, those who regard the value "safety" as important will buy the car for this reason (it is a car with lots of safety features) (cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 124–125). Copywriters can therefore use the position that the value occupies in the target group's value system to identify which arguments function as relevant arguments for the target readers.

Reflection on activity 6.1

Let us return to the advert in activity 6.1. We can see that the copywriter is trying to change the underlying belief that recycling has no value or that recycling is not useful. In the advert the focus is on the positive consequences (i.e. the advantages) of recycling plastic bottles: plastic bottles are recycled into fibre for insulation, pillows, duvets, geotextiles and PET packaging. The copywriter uses the value "a clean world" to identify the relevant arguments, in this case by focusing on the added advantages of recycling.

6.2.2 What is a strong argument?

It is not only the relevance of the argument that plays an important role in the persuasive process, but also (and especially) the **quality** of the argument. Readers who process the information centrally (i.e. who evaluate the merits of the arguments) are influenced by the quality of the arguments. What then is a strong or weak argument?

The *desirability* and *probability* of a consequence

Hoeken, Hornikx and Hustinx (2009: 125) identify the following two criteria for determining the quality of an argument, that is whether it is strong or weak:

- Is the consequence **desirable**?
- Will a particular choice in all **probability** lead to a particular consequence?

The first question deals with the **desirability** of the consequence, while the second question deals with the **probability** that the consequence will indeed occur. To persuade critical readers to accept an argument, the advertiser will have to emphasise that the choice he or she is urging on them will, in all *probability*, lead to the *desirable* consequences (i.e. a strong argument). A strong pro-argument indicates that the propagated behaviour will in all probability lead to a desirable consequence. A strong counter-argument indicates that the proposed behaviour will in all probability lead to an undesirable consequence.

To illustrate: The claim “*The Hollard Life Solution will provide your family with financial security when you die*” indicates a desirable consequence, namely providing for your family when you die. A critical reader might however question the probability of the consequence, that is whether *Hollard Life Solution* will indeed be able to meet the reader’s financial needs. For the reader to become convinced, further arguments/evidence are required to support the probability claim. The quality of the arguments depends then on how **probable** it is that the desired consequence (e.g. financial security) will indeed occur.

It is much easier for readers to determine the desirability of a consequence than to determine the probability of a consequence. The desirability of a consequence is easier to determine because readers relate it to the values they support. It is therefore not surprising that more evidence/arguments are provided in support of probability claims than for desirability claims (Cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 126–127).

6.2.3 How to support desirability and probability claims

It is not only the quality of the argument that impacts on the persuasiveness of the message but also the type of evidence in support of the advocated position (i.e. the viewpoint). Various argument types and techniques are employed in support of claims relating to the desirability and probability of a consequence. We will look briefly at some of these techniques and argument types below.

(i) Hard sell vs soft sell

Many advertisements make use of a hard-sell or soft-sell strategy to describe and emphasise the desirable consequences of buying the product. A **hard-sell strategy** relates to the characteristics or features of the product, while a **soft-sell strategy** relates to claims about the image acquired by using the product.

Activity 6.2

Find in magazines two advertisements that use soft-sell advertising. Do you think the soft-sell strategy is an effective strategy in these advertisements? Why do you say so?

Different use of arguments

Hard-sell and soft-sell advertising also differ in their use of arguments. In hard-sell advertisements arguments are provided in the form of the product features. In soft-sell advertisements there is usually an absence of verbal information. The focus in soft-sell

advertisements is on the visual image, the aim being to present the image the reader will acquire if he or she uses the advertised product. A soft-sell message allows for different interpretations and works via suggestion and association. Soft-sell messages require the receiver to develop his or her own positive interpretation of the message, and in so doing enhancing the persuasive effect of the advertisement (Tellis 2004: 120).

High-self monitors vs low-self monitors

According to Snyder and De Bono (quoted in Hoeken 1998: 132) the effectiveness of these different argument strategies (i.e. hard sell vs soft sell) depends on a certain reader characteristic: **self-monitoring**. High self-monitors are strongly aware of how other people see them; low self-monitors are less sensitive to the image their behaviour evokes in others. High self-monitors are very susceptible to ego claims. High self-monitors adopt attitudes for social-adjustive purposes, to help them fit in social situations (Perloff 2003: 297). Low self-monitors are more sensitive to claims about the features of the product.

Why soft-sell advertising?

If cigarettes are to be advertised using a hard-sell technique, the advertisement may have to contain information on the nicotine and tar content, the taste etc. These claims, which refer to the characteristics of the product, are so similar for different brands that it would be difficult to persuade the reader to buy a specific brand. Most cigarette firms do not practise hard selling.

Many clothes, jewellery or perfume advertisements do not mention the quality of the product, but the image acquired by using the product. Motor cars are praised not only for their low petrol consumption and spacious interior, but also for the image they convey. In the case of alcoholic drinks, the advertisements tend to dwell not on taste, but on the ambience that is somehow created by drinking this particular brand of beer, wine etc. It is clear: if we want to present ourselves as people of the world, we need to buy the right clothing, shoes, motor car, liquor, perfume and watches.

Guidelines on when to use hard sell or soft sell

The advertiser can pose the following questions when deciding whether to emphasise the features of a product (i.e. hard sell) or the image it conveys (i.e. soft sell).

- *On the basis of its features, how well can the product be distinguished from its competitors?*

The differences between motor cars, jeans or perfumes in the same price category are relatively insignificant. It is therefore fairly difficult to distinguish a product from its competitors. In these cases, it is the image that distinguishes a product from its competitors. It is not surprising therefore that in those product categories where the competitors do not differ significantly, image claims are used to recommend the product.

- *How visual is the product?*

Soft sell is about an image constructed by the outside world – an image based on the use of a particular product. This is why there is so much soft-sell advertising for

visual products such as motor cars and clothes, and much less for products such as washing powders and ointments (which are obviously not visual products).

(ii) Use of fear appeals

Advertisements (and other persuasive texts) do not always describe only the desirable consequences of the propagated behaviour; they also point to the undesirable consequences of not performing a certain behaviour. We refer to this strategy where the undesirable consequences are highlighted as the *fear appeal*, for example the warnings on cigarette packs: *Smoking can kill you*. Can you identify the fear appeal in the following advert about the Hollard Life Solution?

Say something awful happened and you died suddenly. How prepared would your children be to go on living?

Take the next minute or two to consider what they'll have to go through without you. Apart from the emotional devastation of losing a parent, they'll also be losing the regular income that helps to keep them clothed, fed, housed, healthy and properly educated.

Which means that unless you're well prepared for it, your children could find themselves in serious financial difficulties. So it's up to you to make sure that if you're gone, they'll have the money to help them go on.

*Fortunately, by taking out the **Hollard Life Solution**, you can make sure your family will be a lot better off than if you hadn't prepared at all.*

(Adapted from: *Sunday Times*, 2001-01-01)

Fear appeals are usually found in advertisements that advertise life and/or funeral policies. In most of these advertisements, a direct or indirect appeal is made to the reader's fear of death, loss of income or possible lower standard of living.

Fear appeals work via emotion

The persuasive power of fear appeals work via the emotions (and, of course, in other ways too). The fear appears to become more intense if the reader is more inclined to yield to the propagated opinion. Fear appeals not only state what will happen to the reader, but also what will happen to those who are dear to them (e.g. their children). The idea of your child being homeless, hungry, without education and so on simply because you did not provide for them in the event of your death obviously evokes fear in parents. Fear is an extremely unpleasant emotion and one that people want to rid themselves of if at all possible. In the above advertisement about the Hollard Life Solution, the solution is provided: take out the *Hollard Life Solution*, and your fear about your child's future will disappear.

A danger of using fear appeals is that they may evoke so much fear that people will simply not read the text, or may trivialise it by telling themselves that the threatened consequence will not happen to them. Strong fear appeals are also less persuasive if the proposed solution is so difficult to put into effect that the reader simply cannot imagine himself or herself demonstrating such behaviour. (In learning unit 9 we will elaborate more on how fear appeals work in health campaign messages.)

(iii) Authoritative evidence

Authoritative evidence is used to support both the desirability and probability consequences of the propagated behaviour. Authoritative evidence relates to a credible source that propagates the viewpoint, for example:

The internationally recognised insurance broker, Mike Steyn, concludes, after a thorough analysis of the Hollard Life Solution policy, that the Hollard Life Solution policy can indeed provide adequate financial security when a parent dies.

Studies on source credibility

Studies on source credibility reveal that the manipulation of the expertise of the source can influence the reader's attitude (cf. Wilson & Sherell 1993). The question readers ask here is: does the sender/writer know what he or she is talking about? Does the writer have experience, does the writer have the qualifications or has he or she shown competence in the particular field? Studies found that the inclusion of authoritative evidence has a positive effect on the acceptance of the viewpoint.

(iv) Anecdotal or statistical evidence?

Anecdotal and statistical evidence are mostly used in support of viewpoints that relate to the probability of a consequence, that is claims about how probable it is that a particular consequence will indeed occur. For example:

Viewpoint: *Hollard Life Solution* can provide financial security for the family when a parent dies.

Anecdotal evidence: Peter Smith took out a *Hollard Life Solution* policy in 2008. At that time his two children were in grade 8. Peter died in 2012. With no other regular income than the money from the life policy Peter's two children were able to complete their university studies and still have money left to provide for their daily needs. They are now working in the broadcasting industry.

Statistical evidence: A survey conducted among 2 500 family members of *Hollard Life Solution* policyholders found that 97.7% of the respondents rated the life policy as "very effective" in terms of providing financial security when a loved one dies.

Anecdotal evidence and the vividness effect

Anecdotal evidence such as that above can make it easier for the reader to evaluate the desirability and probability of the consequences. It evokes a more concrete image than the abstract statistics – this is called the **vividness effect**. Such examples are more concrete, interesting and colourful than statistics. Moreover, readers' attention is captured much more easily by this sort of concrete example and they find it easier to remember.

Statistical evidence to illustrate the general nature of the consequence

On the other hand, statistics often provide more information on the extent/size of a problem and give the reader a better idea of the general nature of the consequences. A fund-raising letter for, say, the elderly will therefore usually contain both: a concrete example of someone struggling to make ends meet on an inadequate pension (i.e. the consequences are real), combined with statistics to indicate the extent of the problem.

Which is more persuasive: Anecdotal or statistical evidence?

Experiments have been conducted to determine the answer to this question. So far, the findings have proved to be inconclusive. Reinard (quoted in Hoeken 1998: 133) discusses a number of experiments in which the persuasiveness of stories and anecdotes is contrasted with the persuasiveness of statistical material. Reinard concludes that anecdotes are often more persuasive than statistics. A possible reason for this is that people tend to identify with the people in anecdotes, while “cold” statistics leave them just that – cold.

Hoeken, Hornikx and Hustinx (2009: 142) conclude (after an examination of several relevant effect studies) that statistical evidence is, under certain conditions, more persuasive than anecdotal evidence. Statistical evidence is more persuasive than anecdotal evidence when viewpoints about the probability of a consequence have a general nature (such as *The Hollard Life Solution* that can provide financial security for the family when a parent dies). In the case of viewpoints that are more specific in nature (such as the *Hollard Life Solution* provides Peter Smith's children with financial security), anecdotal evidence is more persuasive than statistical evidence, provided that the example in the text is strongly comparable with the reader's experience.

Activity 6.3

Read **chapter 2: The effects of message features: content, structure, and style** by Lijiang Shen and Elisabeth Bigsby which has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Also read the section on “**Type of evidence**” in chapter 2: The effects of message features: content, structure, and style by Lijiang Shen and Elisabeth Bigsby. The chapter has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Answer the following questions:

- (a) Which four types of evidences are identified? Provide a brief description of each type.
- (b) What do the findings reveal about the persuasiveness of the four types of evidence? Would you say the findings are inconclusive?

6.3 How to manipulate structure to enhance yielding

Closely related to the types of arguments presented in support of a viewpoint, is the question on **how** these arguments should be presented or structured. The relevant questions here are:

- Is there a more effective way to structure the arguments? If so, what is the most effective ordering of arguments?
- Should the conclusion be made explicit?

Activity 6.4

Read **chapter 2: The effects of message features: content, structure, and style** by Lijiang Shen and Elisabeth Bigsby which has been uploaded as an e-reserve, and in particular the section on “**Message structure**” which includes the following subsections: “**Climax versus Anticlimax**”, “**Conclusion explicitness**” and “**Potential moderators**”.

Answer the following questions:

- (a) What is meant by a “climax structure” and an “anti-climax structure”?
- (b) What do the findings reveal about the persuasiveness of the climax and the anti-climax structure?
- (c) When is it more advantageous to use the anticlimax order in messages?
- (d) What three reasons are provided for why messages with implicit conclusions could be more persuasive?
- (e) What do the findings reveal about the persuasiveness of messages with implicit versus explicit conclusions?
- (f) Under which conditions would messages with explicit conclusions be more persuasive?

(Use the discussion forum to discuss these questions with your fellow students.)

6.4 How to manipulate style to enhance yielding

Style, that is the choice a writer makes from different formulations to express his or her idea, can also influence the yielding process to some extent. One way style influences yielding is by violating the reader’s language expectations.

Style violations and source credibility

If the style the writer chooses deviates from what readers expect, style will play a role in the yielding process. The credibility of the source would therefore be susceptible to style violations. Since the credibility of the source plays an important role in the reader’s decision whether or not to scrutinise the arguments, differences in style may well influence yielding.

The relationship between a suitable style and the credibility of the source is quite complex. On the one hand, the appropriateness of the style influences the image of the source; on the other hand, the image of the source influences the appropriateness of the style. Burgoon (quoted in Hoeken 1998: 172) demonstrated this fact by manipulating the style and the credibility of the source. He chose two styles: “intensive language use” and “non-intensive language use”. (**Intensity** is the extent to which the language use indicates the source’s neutrality.)

The results indicated that the credible source had more persuasive force when he used intense language; the less credible source was more persuasive when he used less intense language. In this case, the less credible source was a salesperson. Respondents expected him to use intense language, and when he did not, this unexpected behaviour was a pleasant surprise which increased his credibility with the respondents.

6.5 How visual images can function as argument

Visual images can be used to illustrate both the desirability and probability of a consequence.

Visual images to illustrate the probability of a consequence

If readers doubt that a particular consequence is probable, visual images can play an important role in enhancing the probability that a particular choice will have a particular consequence. Examples of such cases are “before” and “after” visual images. Nobody doubts the desirability of the consequence (e.g. losing weight), but the probability that a particular consequence (e.g. losing weight) will occur may well be a matter of some doubt. By using before and after images, the advertiser is trying to provide photographic proof that the product, in at least one instance, had the desired consequence. Visual images can be used as arguments to provide photographic proof that product X will in all probability lead to consequence Y.

In many advertisements the advertised product is juxtaposed with another visual image (e.g. a sexy model with beautiful long hair) illustrating how product X (e.g. a brand of conditioner) will in all probability result in consequence Y (e.g. beautiful soft, shiny hair). The juxtapositioning of two visual images in advertisements can express the following visual propositions:

- *causality* (i.e. product X will result in Y)
- *contrasts* (e.g. the “before” and “after” advertisements)
- *analogy* (i.e. where two different visual images are linked to each other because of certain properties they have both in common)

In the case of these visual propositions, the reader has to play a more active role in the construction of meaning, because the intended meaning has to be inferred from the visual images (cf. Messaris 1997: 182).

Visual images to illustrate the desirability of a consequence

Visual images are also used to show the desirability of a particular consequence. Visual images of holiday resorts, cars, furniture, clothes, houses etc provide photographic proof of the product's visual attractiveness (i.e. its desirability). Readers can now see how beautiful a particular resort, car, house etc is, and this can enhance the possibility of their yielding to the point of view (cf. Hoeken 1998: 181–182).

Activity 6.5

See if you can correctly match the yielding strategy with the text feature (content, structure, style and visual image) in the following table. Note: some strategies could apply to more than one text feature:

Yielding strategy	Text feature			
	Content	Structure	Style	Visual image
Anticlimax order				
Use of photographic proof				
Statistical evidence				
Anecdotal evidence				
Climax order				
Fear appeal				
Violating language expectations				
Hard sell vs soft sell				
Authoritative evidence				
Conclusion explicitness				

How did you do? If you scored less than 70% (i.e. 7/10) then you need to study the learning unit again.

6.6 To summarise

In this learning unit we have given an overview of the persuasive techniques that can be employed in advertisements to enhance yielding to (acceptance of) the advocated point of view. We have identified several content-related strategies that are used to enhance the persuasive effect of the message, such as hard sell versus soft sell, the fear appeal technique, and anecdotal and statistical evidence. Closely aligned to these content-related features is the structure of the message's arguments and the style violations and their influence on the acceptance of the viewpoint. We have concluded our discussion by looking at how visual images serve as argument by providing visual support for the claim in the advertised message. In the next learning unit we will discuss how readers who are not motivated to evaluate the arguments in a persuasive text, can use heuristics (rules of thumb) and peripheral cues to process information in a persuasive text.

6.7 References

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LEARNING UNIT 7

Designing effective advertisements (4): How heuristics influence yielding

7.1 Introduction

In learning units 4 to 6 we discussed how document designers can manipulate the content, structure, style and visual images to enhance the persuasive effectiveness of advertisements for readers who are motivated and capable of evaluating the arguments in the text. The discussion in learning units 4 to 6 focuses on those readers who process the information centrally (according to the ELM) or systematically (according to the Heuristic-Systematic model). But not all readers process information centrally, that is not all readers evaluate the merits of the arguments in a persuasive text. Some readers are not motivated or able to evaluate the arguments in a text. In such cases, readers resort to the application of heuristics or peripheral cues to process the information, in other words readers follow the peripheral route of information processing (according to the ELM) or heuristic processing (according to the Heuristic-Systematic Model).

7.2 The application of heuristics

We have already referred to the two routes of information processing, namely the central route and the peripheral route of information processing (see learning unit 3). The focus in this learning unit is on the peripheral route of information processing. To refresh your memory, do the following reading activity.

Activity 7.1

Read **chapter 9: The Elaboration Likelihood Model** which has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Read the sections on “**The peripheral route**” and the “**The two routes illustrated**” again and answer the following questions:

- (a) What is meant by the term “heuristics”?
- (b) Identify three peripheral cues and give examples of the heuristic rules activated by these peripheral cues.
- (c) Under what conditions do readers tend to use heuristics to process information?
- (d) What are the consequences for persuasion when persuasion occurs via the peripheral route of information processing?

(You can discuss these questions in the discussion forum.)

7.2.1 The credibility heuristic

In many situations readers have neither the motivation nor the capacity to scrutinise the arguments. They therefore often resort to the peripheral route and use heuristics to process the information in the text, for example: “if an expert says *Panado* is good for pain, then it must be good”. To be able to access **heuristics** (also called “**rules of thumb**”), that is simple rules which do not require much cognitive effort, there has to be a

peripheral cue in the text, and the most important peripheral cue is found in the characteristics of the source, in other words: how credible and sympathetic or likeable are those who put forward the arguments.

One characteristic of the source/sender that has received considerable attention in the literature is the credibility of the source. The credibility of the source (as a peripheral cue) activates heuristics such as “statements by credible sources can be trusted”. Are credible sources indeed more persuasive than non-credible sources? In a meta-analysis conducted by Wilson and Sherrell (1993) they concluded that high-credibility sources are indeed more persuasive than low-credibility sources (see also the extensive review of source credibility studies by Pornpitakpan 2004). What makes a source “credible”? Two factors determine the credibility of the source: the **source’s expertise** and **trustworthiness**.

(i) **The source’s expertise**

It is not uncommon to find experts being used in advertisements to advertise a particular product. Think of the doctor who recommends *Panado* as the number 1 pain killer or the dog breeder who recommends *Pedigree* as the best dog food on the market. Who knows better than a dentist which toothpaste we should buy?

Expertise the result of knowledge or experience

The source’s expertise is the result of *knowledge* or *experience* gained through training or his/her profession. An expert is subject-dependent: an expert is only perceived as an expert when he or she makes claims which relates to his or her field of expertise. A dentist who makes claims about a new computer program will probably not be perceived as credible because the claim does not relate to his or her field of expertise. The question readers ask here is: does the writer know what he or she is talking about? Does the writer have experience? Does the writer have the qualifications or has he or she shown competence in the particular field? As far as the persuasive effect is concerned, the reader needs to believe that the sender knows better because the sender was educated in the particular field, is more intelligent or simply has a higher social status than the reader. This may not necessarily be true, but the reader only has to believe it for the message to achieve its intended persuasive effect.

It is not uncommon for experts to be more persuasive and more frequently used, especially in the case of complicated products or services about which the reader does not have much knowledge. Readers tend to trust the expert’s opinion and may express a heuristic such as “experts know what they are talking about and what is best”.

The “person in the street”

Advertisements also invoke the **typical consumer** or the “**person in the street**” to advertise their products, for example the 23-year-old bride-to-be who lost 15 kilograms in two weeks and impressed everyone at the wedding with her thin waist; the 42-year-old housewife who was convinced that the newly formulated washing powder meant she no longer needed fabric softener, thus saving R25 per month; the pimply-faced teenager who was too afraid to leave the house and is now surrounded by youngsters of the opposite sex, all vying for his or her attention.

The “person in the street” obtains his or her expertise on the basis of experience – in this case, using the product. Moreover, the importance of the witness lies in the extent to which the reader recognises himself or herself in the witness. The more the reader identifies with the person, the more the reader will become convinced that the product will work for him or her. In other words, reasoning takes place on the basis of analogy: what happened to this consumer could happen to me. The heuristic activated by invoking the “person in the street” as a witness could be expressed as “if it works for her or him, it could also work for me.” The success of the “person in the street” witness depends on whether the reader perceives the source as honest and trustworthy. The “person in the street” witness will lose all credibility if it becomes known to the reader that the person has been paid to advocate these claims about the product. (Cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 158–163.)

(ii) The source’s trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is just as important an attribute as alleged expertise. The writer will be regarded as trustworthy on the grounds that he or she has certain qualities. The trustworthy sender

- is known as an honourable and honest person
- does not want to persuade at all costs
- is neither paid for the message nor has a personal interest in it
- sticks to his/her conviction, even if it does not meet with general approval

A sender's reputation is clearly very important. Just one lie can harm the source’s credibility for the rest of his or her career – as many politicians have found out to their cost. And senders who want to persuade at all costs are not often successful. They give the impression that they will use any means to get their way – even lying or misrepresentation.

Readers also do not trust senders who have a vested interest in the viewpoint they advocate, simply because readers doubt their objectivity. An obvious example is the manufacturer who states that their brand of washing powder is better than that of their competitors – the manufacturer obviously stands to gain financially if the recipient accepts the proposition. That is why “expert testimonials” are so popular: an external, independent expert testifies to the qualities of the product – preferably wearing a white coat in an impressive laboratory with lots of gleaming glass bottles and awe-inspiring technology.

Consistency also plays a role in trustworthiness. A sender who has a different opinion every other day will lose credibility. If today you advocate dividing the company into three smaller units and tomorrow you want everything centralised, you will have to explain yourself. This does not mean that you can never adjust your viewpoint, but radically changing your opinion overnight will attract suspicion.

7.2.2 The attractiveness heuristic

The attractiveness or likeability of the source can also influence the receiver’s decision to accept the viewpoint. The peripheral cue “the source’s apparent attractiveness/likeability” could activate heuristics such as “people I like usually have correct opinions” or “statements by attractive people can be trusted”. Studies have found that attractive

sources are perceived as more sociable and intelligent than less attractive sources (cf. review of studies in Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 163–167).

The well-known source

An attractive source that is used frequently in advertisements is the **well-known source**, for example: George Clooney who endorses the new Nespresso machine or Usain Bolt who endorses the new Nike Air shoes. The heuristic activated by the use of well-known sources could be expressed as follows: “if a well-known source says so, then it must be right”.

The advantages of using a well-known source are the following:

- It is a real person and not an actor.
- The source is well known because of his or her expertise/skills in a certain field – the relation between the well-known person and the product is of relevance here (e.g. the athlete Usain Bolt who praises a certain brand of margarine). Usain Bolt will know what margarine is good for a healthy lifestyle because he, as a top athlete, obviously follows a healthy diet.
- Many well-known sources are seen as trustworthy and credible.
- Well-known sources will attract readers' attention, simply because many of them have become idols.

The most commonly used well-known sources in advertisements are celebrities to endorse the product. In many soft-sell advertisements celebrities are used to endorse the product. In advertisements that use celebrity endorsers we find very little verbal testimonials, from the celebrity, in support of the product. Celebrity endorsers operate as a visual peripheral cue, where an image of the celebrity is juxtaposed with the product (with no verbal information). The claim (which the reader has to infer) in these celebrity endorsed soft-sell advertisements is that if you use this product, you will be like celebrity X. The heuristic activated by the use of well-known source is usually “if a celebrity uses the product, then it must be good”.

The association between well-known sources and the product

The persuasive effectiveness of the well-known source depends primarily on the association between the well-known source and the product. Studies found that advertisements with well-known sources were more persuasive when there were some shared features between the well-known source and the product. How successful using the well-known source is depends on whether the reader perceives the association between the source and the product as a good match, that is the perceived image of the well-known source should match the intended image of the product. For example: to establish the image of the new Hilux 4x4 as a tough and “no nonsense” vehicle, it would be better to use the celebrity Jason Statham (from the *Transporter* movies) than say George Clooney. The perceived image of Jason Statham is likely to be that of a tough guy, someone who is a “no nonsense” guy (Cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 163–167).

7.2.3 The consensus heuristic

The consensus heuristic refers to the phenomenon of one's judgement being swayed by the mere mention of the number of people who have come to the same conclusion. We can express the heuristic as follows: "If a number of people find a product good, then the product must probably be good". Among those who recommend the product there must be some who have considered all the pros and cons, or who have experience of the product.

Different studies have shown that information based on the opinion held by a large number of people encourages others to accept this opinion. Consider, for instance, the advertisement for a Rihanna CD: "*50 000 000 Rihanna fans can't be wrong*" (cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 167–169).

7.2.4 The multiple argument heuristic

The multiple argument heuristic is based on the principle that the more arguments put forward in support of a viewpoint, the greater the possibility that the viewpoint is correct. We can express the heuristic as follows: "if there are so many arguments in favour of the viewpoint, then it must be correct". The heuristic works on the principle "length is strength" (Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 169). In advertising, this idea is used as follows: if there are more advantages to a product, the product is better. Think, for instance, of advertisements that boldly claim in the headline "*10 reasons why should buy product X*". Many studies have shown that readers are susceptible to the number of arguments put forward in support of a viewpoint.

7.3 Visual images as peripheral cues

Attractive images are used frequently in advertisements. Why do you think so many car advertisements include attractive men or women as an advertising strategy?

The conditioning process

In many advertisements attractive images are used that do not relate or relate only slightly to the advertised product. As far as the persuasive power of attractive visual images is concerned, it is not the relation of the images to the product that is of importance, but whether these images evoke positive emotions in the reader. Research has shown that readers who process the information peripherally are more persuaded by an attractive but irrelevant image than by an unattractive but irrelevant relevant image. The visual attractiveness of the images could work via a **process of conditioning**. The readers associate pleasant emotions with the product. Through frequent associations of the product with pleasant emotions, the reader forms a positive attitude towards the product. When readers see the product, these pleasant emotions are evoked on the basis of association that has been established previously.

The mere exposure effect

It is not uncommon to find only a visual image of the advertised product and no arguments in some advertisements. Images of only the product can, via the **mere exposure effect**, enhance persuasion. The mere exposure effect theory holds that you evaluate the products you recognise more positively than those you do not recognise. Readers are more likely to use the brand they are familiar with, especially in the case of expensive products. Preference or liking for certain products after repetitive exposure may be due to the effect of repetition. Repetitive exposure can lead to an increased

preference for the product, but repetition is only good up to a point. (Cf. Hoeken 1998: 182–183, Tellis 2004: 118.)

Activity 7.2

Identify the heuristic in the following advertisement. Which peripheral cue activates this heuristic? Do you think the heuristic would be successful in persuading the reader to accept the viewpoint?

“With Herbex, I lost 31 kg!”

BEFORE 89 kg AFTER 58 kg

SLIMMING SUCCESS 20 YEARS SLIMMING SUCCESS

“Life threw me a challenge and I took it on! With the help of Herbex, I feel energised and healthy - I have a new zest for life. It wasn't always easy to stay motivated on my weight-loss journey, but the discipline and focus paid off. As a result, I have reached more than just my goal weight; I am stronger, have more confidence, and bigger dreams too. I wouldn't have done it any other way.” *Bianca*

+27 83 425 1868 @herbex1 @herbexhealth

herbex
Get slim. Start today!

Western Herbal Medicine. Use according to the principles of this discipline. FOR BEST RESULTS, USE HERBEX DAILY FOR AT LEAST 3 MONTHS. To achieve and maintain your goal weight you must adjust your lifestyle. A kilojoule-controlled diet and a healthy exercise programme are essential.

herbex
WEIGHT-LOSS FORMULA
32 herbs
boosts metabolism
reduces appetite
cleanses and detoxifies
SLIMMERS
CONTAINS 60 TABLETS

(Adapted from: *Cosmopolitan*, March 2015)

7.4 To summarise

In this learning unit we have introduced you to the “power” of heuristics, in other words those simple rules which do not require much cognitive effort and which the reader can use to decide whether to agree with the advocated view. Heuristics are only effective if readers do not have the motivation and/or ability to engage in issue-relevant thinking. We have identified four heuristics. Can you name the four heuristics? We have also made a distinction between *heuristics* (also called rules of thumb) and *peripheral cues* such as the source’s perceived expertise and attractiveness/likeability.

7.5 References

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LEARNING UNIT 8

Designing effective health campaign texts (1): Determinants of behaviour

8.1 Introduction

In learning units 4 to 7 we introduced you to various persuasive strategies that are used to enhance the effectiveness of advertisement texts. Most of these persuasive strategies can easily be applied to other persuasion texts such as health campaign texts. In this learning unit (and learning unit 9) we will turn our attention to health campaign texts, which are seen as a very distinctive form of persuasive communication due to the very nature of the health topic (Atkin & Salmon 2012: 278).

In this learning unit we will look at some of the theories and models of behaviour change and the determinants of behaviour. In learning unit 9 we consider some additional persuasive strategies that can be employed to improve health campaign messages. Most health campaigns are media-based, which means that the persuasive message becomes their central aspect (Atkin & Salmon 2012: 286). Designing and developing effective health messages therefore becomes a key factor in these health communication campaigns. First we will define what is meant by health campaigns and how they differ from advertisements and then we will turn our attention to the various determinants of health behaviour and how to research these determinants.

8.2 What are health campaigns?

What are health campaigns? What do you think the goals of health campaigns are?

Multichannel mediated health messages

The goal of health campaigns is to persuade the public by means of multichannel mediated communication to do something (e.g. eat healthier foods, practise safer sex, exercise more regularly) or to stop doing something (stop smoking or engaging in unsafe sex practices). This means that health campaigns do not consist solely of written texts. Instead, a whole host of media is often used to get the message across: radio, TV, educational films and videos, group information or peer education sessions, posters, billboards, pamphlets and brochures are the most important communication channels used. Each of these channels requires specialist knowledge if it is to be used as an effective tool in the persuasion process. In this learning unit we will concentrate on written texts only, since our focus in this module is specifically on written texts used for persuasion.

Health campaigns and behaviour change

It should be clear that texts used in health campaigns fall firmly into the category of persuasive texts as defined earlier (see learning unit 2). To promote the health of the population it is important to ensure that the public adopts, or embraces, a specific lifestyle. For example, the government (or a nonprofit organisation) will try to influence

people not to smoke or use drugs, not to eat unhealthy foods, to use condoms and refrain from promiscuous sexual behaviour and to be scrupulous about personal hygiene.

Health campaigns are used to accomplish the following:

- to provide information and arguments in order to
- influence and/or persuade people to
- change their behaviour voluntarily, and
- to maintain the change in the long term

Health campaigns try to motivate people to minimise behaviour that is harmful to their health and encourage behaviour that is conducive to good health (Damoiseaux 1998a: 6). Health campaigns intentionally use communication to help people make the right decisions; here, the interest of the person who needs to be educated is of central importance. Some examples of health communication campaigns include the following:

- prevention and management of: AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, cholera, malaria, leprosy, diabetes, arthritis, cancer, drug addiction and other substance abuses, etc.
- advice on nutrition, dental care, childhood diseases, pregnancy problems, baby care, breast feeding, post-natal depression, smoking, dangers around the house, fire prevention, first aid, etc.
- advice on dealing with or caring for people who suffer from one of the problems or diseases mentioned above
- information on food irradiation, drugs, etc

Promotion versus prevention

The two fundamental approaches in health communication campaigns are the *promotion* of healthy behaviour (e.g. eating healthy food) and the *prevention* or *cessation* of unhealthy behaviour (e.g. stopping smoking). Prevention campaigns are directed towards changing or preventing an unhealthy behaviour, by highlighting its undesired consequences. Promotional campaigns, on the other hand, focus on the desirability of the healthy behaviour, that is the positive consequences of the proposed alternative behaviour.

Activity 8.1

Read **chapter 17: Persuasive strategies in health campaigns** by Charles K Atkin and Charles T Salmon which has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Read the section on “**Distinctive features of campaigns**”. Identify five distinctive features of health campaigns. How do you think health campaigns differ from advertisements?

(Use the discussion forum to discuss the difference between health campaigns and advertisements.)

8.3 Difference between health campaigns and advertisements

Which of the following features would you associate with advertisements and which with health campaigns? (**Note:** some of the features could apply to both advertisements and health campaigns.)

Feature	Advertisements	Health campaigns
Focus on product features		
Focus on behaviour change		
Making a profit		
Use of multiple persuasive strategies		
Focus on unhealthy segment of population		
Focus on prevention and/or promotion		
High quantity of diverse messages		
Serve a commercial interest		
In the public's interest		
Stronger focus on fear appeals		

Commercial interests versus the public's interest

The difference between advertisements and health campaign texts is that advertisements are obviously in the advertiser's interest – the advertiser being the shop, factory or service provider that wants you, the consumer, to use its products or services so that it can make a profit. However, campaign designers often use techniques borrowed from commercial advertising (Weiss & Tschirhart 1994: 83), while the task of designing, developing and writing the campaign is often the work of advertising agencies.

Health campaign texts are in the recipients' best interests. The issue here is not profit, but the public's health. The sender openly tries to persuade receivers to change their beliefs and attitudes in order to form new intentions and, consequently, change their behaviour. There is a definite directive element in these communications, although people are not forced to comply with the desired behaviour. We have already referred to the fact that the goal of health campaigns is to get people to change their behaviour **voluntarily**. This ties in with the definition of persuasion (discussed in learning unit 2), namely that the receiver must have a measure of freedom, otherwise it is coercion, not persuasion.

Diversity of messages and persuasive strategies

Health campaigns are also known for their diversity of messages (in one campaign). This diversity of messages allows for various persuasive strategies to be used, such as message framing, one-sided or two-sided messages and explicit or implicit conclusions.

Prevention campaigns are known for their use of fear appeals, which highlight the negative consequences of an unhealthy behaviour (cf. Atkin & Salmon 2012: 279, 285).

Information alone not enough to change behaviour

Originally it was thought that changing knowledge (cognitions) by providing information would automatically lead to people changing their behaviour. Educators and campaign specialists believed that if people just knew what to do and understood why they should do it, they would choose behaviour that led to good health. However, practical experience and empirical data obtained over the past decades have taught us that persuading people to change their behaviour is not that easy. We now know that although the transfer of knowledge is a prerequisite for changing people's behaviour, on its own it is not sufficient. Knowing that obesity leads to a number of health problems and that it increases the risk factor for a host of ailments is not sufficient, by itself, to change the eating patterns of people who are seriously overweight. The task of health education is not only to provide knowledge, but also to explain to people how they can apply this knowledge in their everyday lives. To do this, health education has to clearly explain the effective methods of reaching the desired result and (most importantly) indicate how the behaviour change can be maintained in the long term, preferably for life.

Behaviour change is a complex process and various factors can influence behaviour. We have already discussed in learning unit 2 how attitudes and social norms can function as direct determinants of behaviour. Several theories and models of behaviour change from the fields of social psychology, communication, marketing and public health have been developed to explain and predict possible determinants of behaviour. In the next section we will look at one such model: the *Integrative Model of Behavioural Prediction* (IM).

8.4 Determinants of health behaviour

In learning unit 2 we discussed some of the determinants of behaviour. Can you identify the two determinants of behaviour discussed in the document "Attitudes and behaviour" which is uploaded under **Additional Resources**?

A number of theories on behaviour change have been developed to explain and predict the possible determinants of behaviour.

Activity 8.2

Read the section on "**Key theoretical perspectives**" in **chapter 17: Persuasive strategies in health campaigns** by Charles K Atkin and Charles T Salmon. The chapter has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Answer the following questions:

- (a) Which four theories or models of behaviour change have been applied in health campaigns?
- (b) What are the predictors of behaviour according to the *Theory of Reasoned Action* (TRA)?
- (c) What is the difference between the *Theory of Reasoned Action* (TRA) and the *Theory of Planned Behaviour* (TPB)?
- (d) What are the two components of the *Health Belief Model* (HBM)?
- (e) Which behaviour change model integrates the HBM, TRA and TPB?

The Integrative Model of Behavioural Prediction (IM)

The *Integrative Model of Behavioural Prediction* (IM) developed by Fishbein (2000) integrates elements of the *Health Belief Model*, *Theory of Reasoned Action* and *Theory of Planned Behaviour* (cf. also Fishbein & Cappella 2006). The IM provides campaign designers with a set of possible determinants of a specific behaviour. Campaign designers then need to decide (by way of qualitative methods) which of the range of possible determinants of a behaviour dominate the target group's decision making about performing a certain behaviour (or not), and which of the determinants should thus be targeted in an intervention.

Study the following schematic presentation of the IM carefully and identify the three direct determinants of behavioural intention. We will discuss each of the three direct determinants of behavioural intention below.

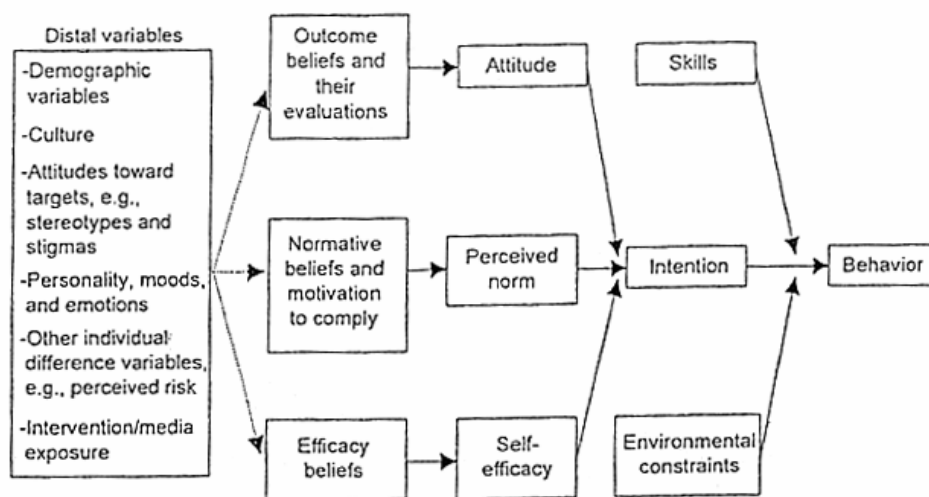


Figure 8.1: The IM

(Source: Fishbein & Yzer 2003)

8.4.1 Attitudes as determinant of behavioural intention

We discussed in detail in learning unit 2 how attitudes function as one of the determinants of behaviour. Can you still recall how we defined “attitudes”? We defined “attitude” as a person’s **evaluation** of a stimulus object (e.g. smoking), and this evaluation could be positive, negative or neutral.

Weighing up the pros and cons

Attitudes are based on beliefs we have about the positive and negative consequences of a certain behaviour. For example, you might have a positive attitude towards a certain brand of coffee, based on the following beliefs: it is strong, it is aromatic, it comes in a handy container and it is fairly expensive. You weigh up the importance of each belief to arrive at an attitude. The belief that something is expensive might normally mean that you will not buy it; however, in this case, the price does not outweigh the advantages.

We have already referred in learning unit 2 to how people’s actions are governed by a process of weighing up the pros and cons of a certain behaviour. Read the section on

“Attitudes and behaviour change” in the document “Attitudes and behaviour” which has been uploaded under **Additional Resources**. People tend to differ with regard to the pros and cons of certain behaviour, that is why some people smoke, for example, and others not. What is seen as an advantage by some will be regarded as a disadvantage by others. Suppose a health campaign wants to change a target audience’s attitude about condom use. The campaign designer will have to determine the relevant positive and negative consequences of using condoms for the intended target audience. To have a positive impact on the target audience’s use of condoms, the campaign designer will have to add more weight to the advantages (positive consequences) of using condoms than disadvantages (negative consequences).

Rewards and punishment

An important consideration in weighing up the **pros** and **cons** in the context of health campaigns is the aspect of “rewards” and “punishment”. The problem with health behaviour is that the benefits usually take a long time to realise, while the drawbacks are immediate. People have to give up short-term advantages in order to prevent long-term disadvantages. Let us take a change in eating habits as an example. Most people like eating rich, sweet food – the reward here is simply the taste or texture of these foodstuffs. Changing people’s behaviour (not eating fatty/sugary foods) takes away this pleasurable sensation. The rewards of this restraint will only be apparent over weeks or months, when your health starts to improve or you lose weight – and that reward might not be as concrete as food you would like to eat now. In the case of smoking, stopping this habit will improve the condition of your lungs, but this is not visible “from the outside”, as it were. Rewards for healthy behaviour are thus not always easily perceived. Sometimes the reward for healthy behaviour is a nonevent (e.g. the reward of healthy eating and exercising may be the absence of cardiovascular disease, diabetes or obesity). Long-term rewards, as opposed to short-term disadvantages, thus play an important role in weighing up the pros and cons of responsible behaviour.

Risk perception: severity and susceptibility

Weighing up the pros and cons in health behaviour is also dependent on how the target reader perceives the risky behaviour in terms of **severity** and **perceived susceptibility**.

Behaviour change is often motivated by the fear of unpleasant consequences. The motivation to change is directly influenced by two factors that determine the risk perception: *severity* and *susceptibility*. If you regularly eat more than you need, you may have to face the unpleasant consequence of becoming obese. Whether this risk will motivate you to change your eating pattern depends on whether you find this consequence sufficiently unpleasant (its severity) and whether you think it will indeed happen to you (not all people who eat a lot become fat – i.e. susceptibility).

When it comes to thinking about AIDS prevention, most people will see AIDS as being a particularly serious consequence of certain behaviour (since AIDS is at present incurable). However, some people will still not change their unsafe sexual behaviour (e.g. having unprotected sex) to safer practices (e.g. using a condom) in order to reduce their chances of contracting HIV, because they think they are not likely to catch the disease (i.e. they believe their susceptibility is low). They might not belong to the known risk groups – they are monogamous, they do not use drugs, they are not homosexual or they use the rule of thumb “bad things only happen to other people”.

The success of fear appeals or scare tactics is directly related to the concepts of *severity* and *susceptibility*. When people rate both severity and susceptibility low, even very scary fear appeals will have little or no effect in changing their behaviour. (We will discuss the factors *severity* and *susceptibility* in more detail as part of the fear appeal strategy in learning unit 9.)

8.4.2 Perceived norms as determinant of behavioural intention

Attitudes are not the only determinants of behaviour; social norms also determine behaviour. We have already referred in learning unit 2 to the influence of social norms on behaviour. By **social norms** we understand the opinions of other important people in the reader's social environment. Social norms refer to the pressure individuals experience to behave in a certain way, although it is not their personal preference to behave in that way; for instance, pressure to refrain from using drugs or foul language or to go to church.

Peer group pressure is an example of the influence of group norms on behaviour. In a survey of South African youth's behaviour (loveLife 2001: 17), 22% of sexually experienced youth said they had sex with their boyfriend or girlfriend simply because they were afraid of what their friends would say if they did not. This shows how membership of a group can influence the behaviour of individuals. Some cultures are much more group-oriented than others. In Western culture individual freedom is stressed, while in African contexts it is the group that is of paramount importance.

Although the norms of salient others (i.e. other people who are significant to you) often determine one's personal norms, it is not always the case, for example "My friends say one must *not* use condoms, but I use condoms".

8.4.3 Self-efficacy as determinant of behavioural intention

The notion of **self-efficacy expectancy**, a key concept of Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory is a very important concept here. By self-efficacy expectancy, Bandura means an individual's belief that he or she is capable of performing a certain task. When a person believes that he or she can perform the task well, that person does, in fact, perform that task more competently.

The IM also predicts that although one has a strong intention to perform the recommended behaviour (e.g. using condoms), two other factors could hamper this intention to perform the behaviour, namely not having the skills to do so and environmental factors (such as not having access to condoms).

8.4.4 Role of culture in shaping beliefs

How do you think culture can play a role in shaping beliefs?

Sensitivity to cultural differences

In Fishbein's *Integrative Model of Behavioural Prediction* (IM) cultural beliefs and practices are important, albeit distal variables which determine people's behaviours via the impact they have on their attitudes, social norms and subjective assessments of efficacy. Distal variables refer to those variables that do not influence behaviour directly, but only indirectly, that is via other variables such as attitude and social norms. Variables

such as attitudes, social norms and self-efficacy are seen as “proximal variables”, that is variables that influence behaviour more directly and is regarded as the direct cause of behaviour outcomes.

Cultural differences (e.g. African vs Western) have also been indicated as being of central importance in how people process and appreciate different forms of communication. In their analysis of studies on the effect of culturally adapted value appeals in advertisements, Hornikx and O’Keefe (2001; quoted in Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 210) found that culturally adapted value appeals were slightly more persuasive than those value appeals that were **not** culturally adapted. Attitudes towards culturally adapted value appeals were also found to be more positive than those value appeals that were not culturally adapted. These findings underscore the value of culture-sensitive messages. Sensitivity to such cultural differences is thus of central importance in designing effective health communication interventions. This is especially true of countries, such as South Africa and many others in Africa, which are characterised by cultural heterogeneity.

Fishbein maintains that we in fact have no need of an additional theory to tap into these cultural variables, because by tapping into the beliefs of specific audiences about their attitudes, social norms and self-efficacy beliefs, we are already assessing their culturally determined beliefs. By focusing on beliefs (cognitions) and behaviours, the IM therefore does not focus on what we call material culture (cultural objects, e.g. clothing, housing), but the critical culture-specific beliefs and practices that could either facilitate or hinder people’s health behaviours.

Cultural beliefs can shape personal and social norms

Core cultural beliefs and practices play a critical role in defining personal and social norms. Such core beliefs and practices are therefore also very difficult to change, and efforts to do so, for example with HIV/AIDS communication interventions, are often met with high levels of resistance. It is therefore generally accepted that in addressing such cultural variables, intervention designers should make an intensive study of the cultural background of their audiences and clearly determine which of these cultural factors facilitate health-promoting behaviours, which have no effect on these behaviours, and which act as barriers or are detrimental to people’s health. The latter should be targeted and changed, but from within the culturally defined group itself. Participatory methods are ideal in facilitating the process of, first, making people aware of how existing beliefs and practices have a negative impact on their health, and, secondly, motivating them to seek ways to change these. Outside, top-down interventions to try to change such beliefs and practices hardly ever work.

In both these stages of awareness and action, communication interventions can play an important role, especially then if they come from within culturally defined groups themselves and display cultural sensitivity. Getting the intervention audience to workshop the design of the media is one way in which such interventions can be developed.

Collectivist cultures versus individualist cultures

Research indicates that cultural differences are also significant in the way people communicate and process and understand health communication interventions. As Bartholomew, Parcel, Kok and Gottlieb (2001: 258) indicate:

Communication is very different between collectivist (high-context) cultures and individualist (low-context) cultures ... In collectivist cultures, communicators are more likely to focus on the perceiver of the information (rather than on themselves) and many communicate to please the receiver. In a more individualist culture, the best arguments are presented first in order to gain attention ... other aspects of communication may differ, including the structure of the argument, the use of words, and the standards to judge credibility. For instance, in high-context cultures the argument is presented climactically; starting with peripheral arguments and ending with the main argument in order not to offend and in order to gauge the response of the listener.

The task of a designer of a health communication intervention is therefore to create messages that match the communication expectations of the intervention audience.

Bartholomew et al (2001: 258) give the following summary of the major differences between individualist and collectivist cultures with regard to their communication preferences:

Individualist cultures	Collectivist cultures
Important attributes are expert knowledge, credibility, intelligence.	Important characteristics are family, age, gender, status in the group.
Anticlimactic argument style presents best arguments first to get attention.	Climactic argument style builds upon peripheral arguments in order not to offend the perceiver.
Emphasis is on what is said and on specificity and precision in word usage.	Intuition, ambiguity, generality, vagueness, and bland expressions are preferred.
Silence is negative, indicating hostility, rejection, disagreement, weakness, unwillingness, shyness, anxiety, lack of skill.	Emphasis is on the unspoken: too many words spoil their value. Silence is okay. Face-to-face contact is needed because of the importance of paralinguistic communication.
Inductive argument presents fact, fact, fact, conclusion.	Deductive argument is used: conclusion, supportive evidence.
The opinion of the in-group hierarchy is less important.	The opinion of the in-group hierarchy is very important.

Source: (Bartholomew et al 2001: 258)

Activity 8.3

- (a) Given the characteristics of collectivist and individualist cultures discussed above, to which type of cultural group do you belong? Support your answer by indicating

which of these communication characteristics are evident in the communication patterns of members of your cultural group.

- (b) Do members of your cultural group display characteristics of both cultural groups (i.e. collectivist and individualist cultures) in their communication with one another?
- (c) If you were tasked to design and develop a health campaign message about condom use, how would you use the IM to guide you to shape your message?

(In the discussion forum discuss the above questions and whether the distinction between collectivistic and individualistic cultures applies to your culture.)

8.5 Researching behavioural determinants

From our discussion so far, it is clear that, in order to change undesirable behaviour or motivate people to display the desired behaviour, the campaign designer has to know what beliefs underlie people's behaviour. Damoiseaux (1998b: 18) identifies four steps in a systematic approach to planning public health campaigns:

(i) Step 1: Identifying the health problem and target audience

What is the relation between the health problem and human behaviour? This implies that not all health problems are caused wholly by human behaviour. If behaviour is not a factor, health campaigns will be a waste of time and money. For instance, health campaigns would obviously not succeed in combating genetic disorders such as psoriasis or sickle cell anaemia. Nor would they be an effective means of tackling the respiratory disorders of people living in air-polluted areas near power stations. Nor will health campaigns solve the problem if the problem is a lack of basic services rather than a lack of information. There is little point launching a campaign trying to persuade people to wash their hands with soap and water after using the toilet (as was done in a South African cholera campaign) when these same people do not have access to either tap water or toilets (which is why they run the risk of contracting cholera in the first place). If people contract cholera because they use water from contaminated streams, the real solution is to provide them with clean tap water. The most a health campaign could do, in this case, would be to advise them to boil the water they use for drinking.

Identifying audience segments

When it has been established that there is indeed a relationship between the problem and human behaviour, it is also important to determine how strong this relationship is – the stronger the connection, the more chance a campaign has of alleviating the problem.

A health campaign should therefore identify (i) specific segments of the population whose health practices are at issue and (ii) the specific health behaviour that the campaign intends to influence (Atkin & Salmon 2012: 282). The health campaign designer should assess the situation “to determine the opportunities and barriers and to identify which behaviors would be performed by which people” (Atkin & Salmon 2012: 281). It is not effective to try to reach the broad public with a health campaign; specific segments of the population should rather be identified. Atkin and Salmon (2012: 282) argue that health campaigns should target “at risk” audiences that are receptive to the message and “ready to be influenced to perform the practice”.

Targeting health campaign messages at specific audience segments will allow the campaign designer to tailor the campaign message to the needs of the target audience, that is the designer is able to adapt the content, structure and style of the campaign message more effectively to the attributes and abilities of the intended audience (Atkin & Salmon 2012: 281).

To explore more

You can read more on the identification of audience segments in **chapter 17: Persuasive strategies in health campaigns** by Charles K Atkin and Charles T Salmon (uploaded as an e-reserve), in particular the sections on “**Identifying audience segments**” and “**Direct effects on focal audience segments**”. See if you can identify the two reasons, given by Atkin and Salmon (2012), why subdividing the public in terms of demographic features, predispositions, personality traits and social contexts can enhance campaign effectiveness.

(ii) Step 2: Analysing the determinants of behaviour

The important questions here are: what factors or determinants cause the undesired behaviour or prevent people from displaying the desired behaviour?

Use of qualitative methods to determine salient beliefs

Establishing which of the determinants in fact drive the behaviour of the specific intervention audience is usually determined by a qualitative method. The message designer can use the IM to guide a discussion in a focus group to determine the audience’s beliefs. Secondly, the designer can use the IM to construct a questionnaire to determine what salient (i.e. prominent or notable) beliefs the intended audience has about each of the variables (i.e. attitude, perceived norm and self-efficacy) and thus determine which of these to target in the campaign message.

Witte, Meyer and Martell (2001) provide a very useful way of going about belief selection. They propose that with regard to each theoretical variable one should distinguish between beliefs that support the behaviour (and thus should be strengthened), those that act as a barrier to performing the behaviour (and thus should be changed), and those that have to be added to the belief system of the audience (new information that has to be provided).

To illustrate

Suppose you have to design a health communication campaign for condom use. What kind of messages would you develop to convince those at risk of HIV infection to use condoms consistently when having sex, given their current beliefs? Depending on the findings of your qualitative experimental study in terms of the audience’s salient beliefs, as the message designer you can focus on either attitudes, perceived norms or self-efficacy, or a combination of them or all of them. If all these variables need to be addressed in the communication campaign, then you will first of all have to convince the target audience that there are more advantages to using condoms than disadvantages (i.e. influence their attitudes towards the use of condoms). Secondly, you will have to indicate that salient others also think that it is a good idea to consistently use condoms and create the same personal norm for members of the intervention audience. Where a social norm does not exist, a communication intervention will be required to establish a

social norm about condom use (i.e. influence social norms). Thirdly, you will have to convince the audience that they will be able to use condoms in an effective way (i.e. influence their subjective perceptions of their self-efficacy).

Any analysis of the determinants must include an indication of their relative importance and the extent to which health campaigns can change these determinants. Campaigns can be helpful in providing information that enables people to change their salient beliefs but they cannot change socioeconomic circumstances. If poor people have to pay for condoms, they will not use them – however much they might be convinced of their usefulness. Health campaigns only have a role to play when the determinants are related to patterns of thinking, incorrect beliefs, or attitudes that are open to external influence.

To explore more

Atkin and Salmon (2012: 282) argue that continuous formative evaluation of a health campaign could illuminate certain variables for key segments of the intended audiences. Read the section on “**Formative evaluation**” in **chapter 17: Persuasive strategies in health campaigns** by Charles K Atkin and Charles T Salmon. The chapter has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Identify the six variables that formative research could help us to understand better.

(iii) Step 3: How can the behaviour be influenced?

When it is clear that certain determinants are causing undesirable behaviour, the educator needs to check whether these determinants can be influenced (at all) by persuasive means. Behaviour based on religious beliefs is notoriously difficult to influence. Convincing a Jehovah's Witness to accept blood transfusions would involve that person giving up part of his or her faith – something people do not easily do. Persuasive intervention must preferably be aimed at cognitions that still fall within readers' acceptance or noncommitment zone. Interventions that differ too much from the reader's point of view will, in most cases, either be ignored or lead to a response of reactance.

(iv) Step 4: How can the persuasive intervention be evaluated?

To determine the effectiveness of health campaigns, all health promotion campaigns and other educational campaigns should be evaluated after they have run for a while or have ended. If errors in the campaign can be clearly identified, this obviously helps to prevent the same errors being made in future campaigns.

According to Weiss and Tschirhart (1994: 91), for campaigns to be successful they need to achieve four tasks:

- capture the attention of the right audience (i.e. the “attention” part of the ACY model)
- deliver a credible message that audiences understand (i.e. the comprehension/weighing part of the ACY model)
- deliver a message that influences the audience's beliefs or understanding (i.e. the yielding/acceptance part of the ACY model)
- create social contexts that help achieve the desired outcomes

According to Weiss & Tschirhart (1994: 92), “[F]ailure at the first two tasks is fatal”. However, if the third and/or fourth task is not completed, the campaign is not necessarily a failure. It may have succeeded in its goal of increasing awareness and knowledge about the problem. Governments use campaigns because they symbolise governmental concern and make this concern visible – even if specific campaigns, in themselves, do not actually deliver any significant results.

8.6 To summarise

You should now be familiar with the distinction between advertisements and health campaigns. Can you recall the main difference between advertisements and health campaigns? We have discussed how the IM as a behaviour change model can be used to determine the determinants of health behaviour. You should now be able to identify the three predictors of behavioural intention (i.e. attitude, perceived norms and self-efficacy) and the role that culture can play in shaping beliefs (such as outcome beliefs and normative beliefs). We concluded our discussion by emphasising the steps to be followed when planning a health campaign.

8.7 References

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LEARNING UNIT 9

Designing effective health campaign texts (2): More persuasive strategies

9.1 Introduction

In the previous learning unit we explored the determinants of health behaviour. It is important to know which determinants to target when you are designing a health campaign text. We have introduced you to the IM as a behaviour change theory that can inform health campaigns “because of its ability to identify the critical determinants of any given behaviour in any given population” (Yzer 2008: 50). The IM can indicate to the campaign designer *what* content should be included, but equally important is *how* the content should be delivered or designed. In this learning unit we will look closely at this *how* aspect of the message, by focusing on particular persuasive strategies that the campaign designer can employ to improve the effectiveness of the campaign text. In learning units 4 to 7 we discussed several persuasive strategies that are used in advertisements. Most of these strategies can be usefully applied to health campaign texts. In this learning unit we will explore additional persuasive strategies that are commonly used in message-based health interventions. We will conclude our discussion with some guidelines on how to plan and write a health-related persuasive text.

9.2 Frequent persuasive strategies in health campaign texts

Which of the following persuasive strategies that we discussed in learning units 4 to 7 do you think could also be used in health campaign texts?

Persuasive strategy	Yes	No	Why do you say so?
Use of the surprise element			
Use of “sex” as seducing agent			
Use of the problem-solution structure			
Use of rhetorical figures (such as metaphors, rhetorical questions)			
Images that violate reality			
Use of the “puppy factor”			
Use of the hard-sell technique			
Use of the self-referencing technique			
Use of signposts			
Use of the fear appeal technique			
Use of credible sources			
Use of anecdotal evidence			
Use of authoritative evidence			
Use of the end-means structure			

You will have noticed that most of the persuasive strategies discussed earlier in the context of advertisements also apply to health campaign texts. Now we will explore some of the other persuasive strategies that are frequently used in health communication. Most of the persuasive strategies we will refer to are discussed in detail in the following chapters which have been uploaded as e-reserves:

- Chapter 2: *The effects of message features: Content, structure and style* by Lijiang Shen and Elisabeth Bigsby
- Chapter 12: *Fear appeals* by Paul A Mongeau
- Chapter 17: *Persuasive strategies in health campaigns* by Charles K Atkin and Charles T Salmon

In the discussion that follows we will refer you back to these chapters. In this learning unit we expect you to study the relevant sections in these chapters by way of guiding questions we will ask on the various persuasive strategies. Let’s explore some additional persuasive strategies that can be used to enhance the effectiveness of health campaign messages.

9.2.1 Message framing

One of the strategic decisions a health message designer has to make is to decide whether he or she wants to emphasise the **undesirability** of the consequence associated with an unhealthy behaviour or the **desirability** of the consequence associated with the recommended healthy practice. This is called **message framing**. A designer can choose to emphasise either the “gains” that will follow from compliance with the advocated behaviour (i.e. *gain-framed messages*) or the “loss” that will follow from noncompliance with the advocated behaviour (i.e. *loss-framed messages*) (cf. Shen & Bigsby 2012: 28).

Which of the following messages can be described as *gain-framed message appeals* and which as *loss-framed message appeals*?

- (i) By stop smoking you will reduce your chances of lung cancer and increase your energy levels.
- (ii) By continuing to smoke your chances of lung cancer increase and you may experience breathing problems.
- (iii) If you do not use dental floss daily you will have bad breath.
- (iv) If you use dental floss daily, your breath will smell fresh.

Activity 9.1

- (1) Read the section on “**Message framing**” in **chapter 2: The effects of message features: content, structure and style** by Lijiang Shen and Elisabeth Bigsby. The chapter has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Do the following:
 - (a) Explain in your own words what you understand by “message framing”.
 - (b) What explanations are given for the claim that loss-framed messages could have a better persuasive impact?
 - (c) What explanations are given for the claim that gain-framed messages could have a persuasive impact?
 - (d) Under which conditions, according to Rothman and colleagues, are gain-framed messages and loss-framed messages effective?
 - (e) Does the *type of behaviour* (i.e. detection behaviour or prevention behaviour) have an effect on the persuasive effectiveness of gain-framed and loss-framed messages?
 - (f) According to the studies conducted by O’Keefe and Jensen which are more persuasive: *gain-framed messages* or *loss-framed messages*?

(Use the discussion forum to discuss the above questions with your fellow students.)

- (2) Read the sections on “**Incentive appeals**”, “**Negative appeals**”, “**Positive appeals**” and “**Multiple appeals**” in **chapter 17: Persuasive strategies in health campaigns** by Charles K Atkin and Charles T Salmon. The chapter has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Answer the following questions based on this chapter:
 - (a) Which are more frequent in health campaigns: *loss-framed messages* or *gain-framed messages*?

- (b) Which persuasive strategy is used frequently in loss-framed messages?
- (c) Complete the following table by providing two examples of incentives that could be used in loss-framed and gain-framed messages:

Type of incentive	Loss-framed messages – examples of negative incentive	Gain-framed messages – examples of positive incentive
Physical incentive	<i>shorter lifespan; loss of stamina</i>	<i>longer lifespan; more energy</i>
Social incentive		
Psychological incentive		
Economic incentive		
Legal incentive		

Reflection

After reading the two chapters, you should demonstrate the following insights:

- (i) Loss-framed messages dominate in health campaigns, with a particular focus on threats to physical health. A frequently used technique in health campaigns is the fear appeal technique.
- (ii) The quality of the argument in loss-framed and gain-framed messages depends on two criteria: the perceived probability that the consequence will indeed occur, and the degree of positive or negative valence of that consequence.
- (iii) Health campaigns can diversify by including various types of “incentives” in loss-framed and gain-framed messages, rather than just the negative physical appeals (in particular the fear appeals).
- (iv) Studies found no difference in persuasiveness between loss-framed and gain-framed messages. Whether you emphasise the positive consequences of complying with the targeted behaviour (e.g. a healthier life if you exercise regularly) or the negative consequences of not complying with the targeted behaviour (e.g. becoming overweight and more susceptible to heart diseases if you do not exercise regularly), it makes no difference to the overall persuasiveness of the health message.

9.2.2 Fear appeals

We have indicated in the discussion above that fear appeals are a popular persuasive strategy in loss-framed messages, that is in health messages that focus on the undesirable consequences associated with an unhealthy practice. What are fear appeals?

What are fear appeals?

Fear appeals are messages that evoke fear elicited by some threat that is perceived to be personally relevant (Mongeau 2012: 185). A fear appeal claims that harm will befall the reader (or someone close/important to the reader) if the reader does not accept the advocated position, for example “smoking will kill you” or “if you do not take out the Hollard life policy, your children could find themselves without a proper home or meal” (cf. Hoeken, Hornikx & Hustinx 2009: 131).

Do fear appeals work in health campaigns?

To get an answer to this question, read the section on “**Do fear appeals work**” in **chapter 12: Fear appeals** by Paul A Mongeau. The chapter has been uploaded as an e-reserve.

Under which conditions do fear appeals work?

The use of fear appeals has often been criticised as they could evoke so much fear in people that they simply reject the message, or simply try to control their fear instead of trying to move towards the advocated position.

Witte (1992) developed the *Extended Parallel Processing Model* (EPPM) to explain why and under what conditions fear appeals maybe effective. Study the model below.

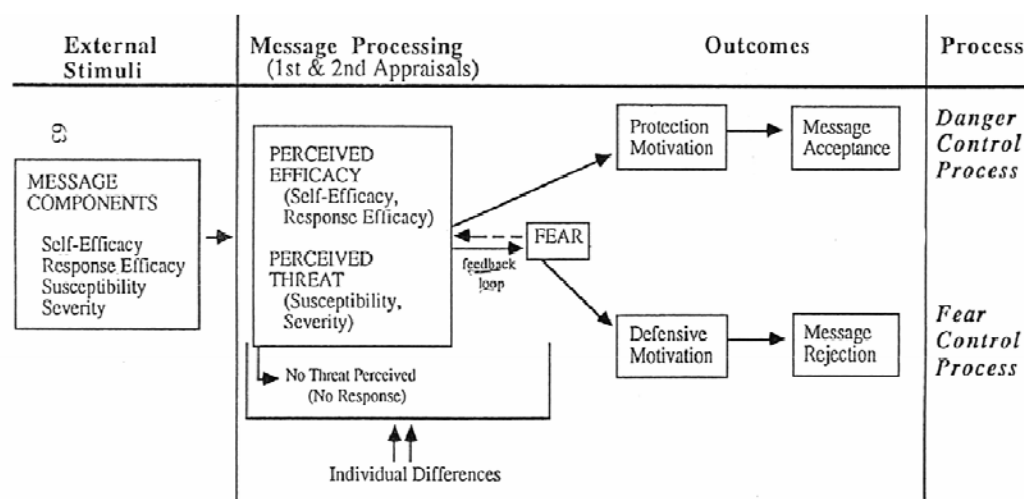


Figure 9.1: The EPPM

Source: (Witte 1998)

Activity 9.2

After you have studied the EPPM in figure 1.3, read the sections on “**Defining fear, threat, and fear appeals**”, “**Parallel Response Model**”, “**Fear control**”, “**Danger control**” and “**Extended Parallel Processing Model**” in **chapter 12: Fear appeals** by Paul A Mongeau. The chapter has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Answer the following questions:

- Which two components constitute a fear appeal?
- Which two factors constitute the threat component? Explain what is meant by each of the factors.

- (c) Which two factors constitute the coping component? Explain what is meant by each of the factors.
- (d) The EPPM predicts that readers can deal with a threat in one of two ways: **fear control** or **danger control**. What does it mean when readers deal with a threat according to the **fear control process**? What does it mean when readers deal with a threat according to the **danger control process**? Which of these two processes is likely to bring about attitude change?
- (e) Under what conditions is attitude change likely to occur?

(Use the discussion forum to compare your understanding of the fear appeal with that of other students.)

Reflection

After reading the chapter on **Fear appeals** you should demonstrate the following insights:

- (i) Fear appeals have a *threat component* and a *coping component*.
- (ii) The threat component consists of an assessment of the seriousness of the threat, that is the perceived *severity* (e.g. How serious would it be to contract HIV?) and the probability of being exposed to the threat, that is the perceived *susceptibility* (e.g. How probable is it that I could contract HIV?).
- (iii) The coping component has to do with readers' evaluation of the efficacy of the response to the threat which is recommended in the message (e.g. using condoms when having sex). This evaluation involves two factors: first, *response efficacy* represents the extent to which the recommended behaviour is efficient in preventing the negative consequences (e.g. How effective are condoms in preventing HIV infections?). Second, *self-efficacy* represents the extent to which the reader is capable of performing the recommended behaviour (e.g. Will I be able to use a condom?). The combination of these two factors result in the perceived efficacy of the recommended behaviour: whether or not it is effective and feasible.
- (iv) The EPPM predicts one of the following outcomes:
 - If the perceived threat is considered to be low (i.e. low severity and/or susceptibility), no fear is evoked and people will ignore the message and stick to their current behaviour.
 - If, however, the depiction of the negative consequences evokes fear (i.e. readers perceive the threat as both severe and likely to occur), it will motivate readers to look for ways to avoid it. Readers can then either engage in fear control or danger control, depending on their perception of the effectiveness of the recommended behaviour. If readers perceive the recommended behaviour to be effective in averting the negative consequences and they feel capable of performing the advocated behaviour to avert the potential negative outcomes, they will engage in danger control mode, resulting in acceptance of the message. If, however, the recommended behaviour is perceived to be ineffective, or if readers believe that they will not be able to perform it, they will engage in fear control, resulting in the rejection of the recommended behaviour. Fear

control processes include typical defensive avoidance behaviour, such as a denial that one is at risk, message avoidance and trying not to think about the issue, minimising or weakening the depicted negative consequences, etc.

9.2.3 Message sidedness

Most health campaigns make use of a one-sided message strategy where only one side of the “story” is disseminated. We have seen in the discussion above that health campaigns tend to focus mostly on the undesirable consequences associated with an unhealthy practice with very little acknowledgement of an opposing point of view. **Message sidedness** refers to whether a message contains a one-sided appeal or a two-sided appeal. *One-sided messages* refer to messages that include only arguments that support the writer’s view, while *two-sided messages* refer to the inclusion of both supportive arguments and arguments that support the opposition’s view. The advantage of two-sided messages is that they acknowledge counterarguments and then address these counterarguments in the hope of reducing the power of these counterarguments. When counterarguments are presented and refuted, we talk about *refutational two-sided messages*. If these counterarguments are presented but not refuted, we talk about *non-refutational two-sided messages* (cf. Shen & Bigsby 2012: 22).

Activity 9.3

- (a) Read the sections on “**Message sidedness**”, “**Potential Moderators**”, “**Audience favorability**” and “**Advertisement versus Non-advertisement**” in **chapter 2: The effects of message features: content, structure and style** by Lijiang Shen and Elisabeth Bigsby. The chapter has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Answer the following question:

Which are more effective: *one sided messages* or *two-sided messages*?

- (b) Read the section on “**One-sided versus Two-sided campaign messages**” in **chapter 17: Persuasive strategies in health campaigns** by Charles K Atkin and Charles T Salmon. The chapter has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Answer the following question:

What is the value of two-sided messages for health campaigns?

9.2.4 Metaphors

Many people see health campaign messages as dull and boring (cf. Atkin & Salmon 2012: 289). It is therefore important to employ stylistic devices that arouse interest in and attraction for the health topic in question. One way of stimulating readers to attend to health campaign texts is to use the **metaphor** as a stylistic device. We will regard similes and analogies as equivalent to the metaphor because there is not much difference in terms of their persuasive effectiveness (cf. Shen & Bigsby 2012: 27).

What then is a metaphor?

HIV has been described on occasion as “the Big Flu”. In this example two dissimilar objects are compared with each other, namely HIV and flu. Metaphors are figures of speech in which an implicit comparison is made between two dissimilar objects

(e.g. A is B) and the meanings that apply to one object are transferred to the other object (Shen & Bigsby 2012: 26).

Why can metaphors have an impact on persuasion?

Scholars believe that metaphors can be a powerful resource to effect persuasion. In learning unit 3 we referred to rhetorical figures such as “metaphors” impacting on persuasion via the route of experiential processing – that is the successful decoding of the metaphor could evoke pleasant feelings resulting in a positive attitude towards the object.

Explore more

Now read the section on “**Metaphor**” in **chapter 2: The effects of message features: content, structure and style** by Lijiang Shen and Elisabeth Bigsby. The chapter has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Do the following:

- (a) Identify the six reasons that scholars provide for the persuasive power of metaphors.
- (b) Which is more persuasive?
 - single metaphors or multiple metaphors
 - extended or non-extended metaphors
 - metaphors in the introduction position or later in the message

9.2.5 Credible sources

Health campaign messages can also use credible sources to arouse interest in the health topic and to enhance the quality of the arguments. The use of credible sources in health campaign messages transforms “dull” health messages into messages that are more interesting, attractive and entertaining. We have already explored the persuasive impact of credible sources in learning unit 7. In health campaign messages a variety of sources can be used to deliver the information or to give a testimonial or to demonstrate a particular behaviour (Atkin & Salmon 2012: 288).

Explore more

Read now the section on “**Message sources**” in **chapter 17: Persuasive strategies in health campaigns** by Charles K Atkin and Charles T Salmon. The chapter has been uploaded as an e-reserve. Answer the following questions:

- (a) What are the three key contributions of credible sources in the context of health campaigns?
- (b) Which eight types of sources are traditionally used in health campaign messages? Give an example of each source type.
- (c) What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of using sources in health campaign messages?

9.3 Guidelines for designing a health campaign text

Knowledge of the various persuasive strategies that can be used to enhance the persuasive impact of a health campaign text helps you to make informed decisions when planning and writing your own health-related persuasive text.

In this section we will take you through a step-by-step process for writing a persuasive text. Remember that this is not a foolproof recipe for every persuasive text, but an example to show you what considerations come into play when you make decisions about text features, and how these considerations can be used to create a sensible product.

When designing a persuasive text (such as a health campaign text), three phases can be identified: (i) the preparatory phase (i.e. the pre-writing phase), (ii) the actual writing phase, and (iii) the pretesting phase.

9.3.1 The preparatory phase

Imagine that you have been given the following commission:

You are newly appointed as a copywriter to an advertisement agency specialising in public information campaigns. The South African National Road Safety Council has commissioned this agency to design a campaign to promote the Council's mission: preventing or minimising traffic accidents and casualties in the interest of every South African citizen. The Easter weekend, which always involves far too many accidents and fatalities, is looming again and you have been asked to produce a brochure on road safety targeted at motorists who intend going away at Easter. The brochure must concentrate specifically on warning motorists to keep to the speed limit as a specific form of behaviour that can contribute to the goal of road safety.

The following steps can be identified in the preparatory phase:

(i) **Step 1: Define external restraints affecting the task**

Before you plan anything else, you should look at time, personnel, support and especially budget restraints. It is important to know whether you will need to do everything yourself, whether you have the support of other departments or personnel for graphics, testing, layout, etc, and whether there is enough money available for a 10-page full colour brochure or whether an A4 flyer in black and white is the only affordable option. Time restraints are also crucial and will dictate whether you will have time for preliminary research and pretesting. You should discuss this with your supervisor at the agency and with a representative of the organisation that is commissioning the brochure.

(ii) **Step 2: Define the function of the text**

In this specific case, the danger is that the function of the required text will be formulated as creating a positive attitude towards road safety in general. In the first place the attitude does not accurately predict what behaviour is necessary for reaching this goal. Secondly, it is an attitude few people will contest; every sane person prefers road safety to road chaos. Your definition of the brochure's function must therefore be more specific. Thirdly, you must indicate the target group in your function description: for example,

creating positive behavioural attitudes/intentions towards keeping to the speed limit in adult readers who are motorists.

(iii) Step 3: Analyse the topic

Why should people keep to the speed limit? You could look at statistics from insurance companies or the Road Safety Council to determine the role speed plays in causing traffic accidents. You could speak to traffic officers or departments at municipal level; you could interview traffic participants to form an extensive list of possible reasons or consequences. However, you must take care that you do not only speak to people who already have a positive attitude towards keeping to the speed limit – you might end up preaching to the converted. It might be a good idea to speak to people who were fined for speeding; to get their views on what made them behave as they did. Your inventory of possible consequences of keeping to the speed limit might look like the list below. Please try to add to this list.

If you keep to the speed limit, you

- will avoid a fine for speeding
- will have better control over your vehicle if there is an emergency
- might be late for an important appointment
- may arrive later at your holiday destination
- have to drive longer and may be more tired as a result
- cannot experience the full potential of your expensive motor car
- will spend unnecessary hours on the road
- will decrease the possibility of a serious accident
- cannot overtake a car driving a little slower than the limit
- are being a responsible citizen/road user
- will lessen your chances of death/serious injury if you are involved in an accident

This list functions as an inventory of beliefs that underlie people's attitude towards keeping to the speed limit. You can use this list later to select your content. You cannot use every possible argument; that would make your text too lengthy. You have to make a selection based on the characteristics of your target group. In this case your target group is specifically those people who are not convinced that keeping to the speed limit is necessary.

(iv) Step 4: Define your target group

We have already mentioned that the target group consists of drivers of motor vehicles who intend to go on holiday and who intend driving by car to their holiday destinations. What are the characteristics of this target group in terms of the following questions?

- (a) Do these beliefs about the consequences of performing or not performing the behaviour have personal relevance for the reader?
- (b) What prior knowledge does the reader have about the topic?
- (c) Does the reader have any existing beliefs about the topic and what do the acceptance zone, noncommitment zone and rejection zone surrounding these beliefs look like?
- (d) What are the primary or salient beliefs about the topic?

- (e) How does the reader see the source of the information?

The first three questions play an important role in Hoeken's model of persuasion, as explained in learning units 2 and 3. The fourth question is important when you select arguments (see the discussion in learning unit 6). The fifth question is relevant when readers follow the peripheral route to accepting the message: one of the most important peripheral cues is the acceptability of the source (see the discussion in learning unit 7).

To determine personal relevance

To answer these questions, you must speak to members of your target group. We used 10 subjects to answer our questions. To determine personal relevance (i.e. question (a)), test subjects were asked questions about the topic. For example: do they think a lot about the topic, how important is the topic to them, do they ever have heated arguments about the topic with others, do they get excited or cross about the topic, etc? It became clear that personal relevance was fairly low in this case; people did not really get excited or cross about the topic, except when it was taken to extreme proportions (driving in excess of 180 km/h made most subjects cross – and of course they got excited about the unwarranted speeding fines they had received ...)

To determine prior knowledge

To ascertain what prior knowledge subjects have about a topic (i.e. question (b)), you can test how many advantages and disadvantages of the behaviour people can name in an open-ended question. This will also give you an indication of beliefs that you should take into consideration in the next step. The more pros and cons people can name, the more prior knowledge they have of the topic. (You will probably be able to extend your inventory even further once you know the pros and cons named by the subjects.) According to some researchers, attitudes are based on three to five beliefs; thus subjects who can name three to five advantages and disadvantages have a fair amount of prior knowledge. In our group, most people could only name one advantage and one disadvantage, which indicates that prior knowledge was not very high. In such a case you could, alternatively, give subjects a questionnaire which lists the advantages and disadvantages from your list in step 3. You would then ask your subjects to assess the consequences in terms of the following three aspects: how important is the consequence, how (un)desirable is the consequence and how probable is it that the consequence will occur.

The rating for importance determines the primary beliefs. For example, a high rating for probability and (un)desirability implies that the belief is a primary belief that informs the attitude towards the behaviour. In this case, most of the consequences were rated low on probability: the chances of being caught and given a fine and the chances of a more serious accident were rated low.

To determine the acceptance, rejection and noncommitment zone of the target member

Testing the acceptance zone, noncommitment zone and rejection zone surrounding the beliefs (i.e. question (c)) can be done by making a list of graded statements about the desired behaviour. Examples of such statements are the following:

It is never acceptable to exceed the speed limit.

Speed limits are only imposed so that municipalities can make money out of you.

By asking your subjects to rate each of these statements on the following five-point scale, you can determine whether each statement is accepted, rejected or whether participants feel neutral about the topic:

Speed limits are only imposed to enrich municipalities.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 *Strongly agree*

To determine the primary beliefs

To establish what your target group's primary beliefs are about the desired behaviour (i.e. question (d)) you can simply ask your test subjects what advantages and disadvantages they see in the desired behaviour. You can find out what primary beliefs are relevant to the attitude by noting how many times a specific advantage or disadvantage is named and then choose the four or five that were named most often. When we analysed the response of the group of 10 subjects it became clear that their primary beliefs were the following:

To refrain from speeding

- fear of a fine (mentioned 7 times)
- dangerous; increases chance of an accident (6 times)
- against the law (3 times)

Decision to exceed speed limit

- time restraints (8 times)
- impatience to arrive at holiday destination (4 times)
- speeding not dangerous on calm roads (4 times)

In the interaction with the subjects it became clear that speeding was not always a conscious behaviour. Sometimes it just happened because the driver was not concentrating on the speedometer or was thinking about something else. There is not much a persuasive text can do to counter habitual behaviour that is not based on rationality.

Other beliefs were mentioned only once and can thus not be viewed as primary beliefs, for example the belief that speeding is not environmentally friendly because it produces more exhaust fumes.

The identified primary beliefs are very important in the persuasion process: to persuade readers, you will have to prove that these beliefs are incorrect or replace them with other, more compelling beliefs which, in turn, will become primary beliefs. To do this you can use the strategies set out in the document "Attitudes and behaviour" which has been uploaded under "Additional Resources". Identifying primary beliefs is a prerequisite for choosing suitable text content.

To determine how the source is perceived

Determining how the source is perceived (i.e. question (e)) entails rating the source by asking questions about the credibility, expertise and attractiveness of the source. In this case, the National Road Safety Council was seen as a credible and trustworthy source, but was also viewed as rather dull and formal. It might thus be a good idea to get a sports hero or actor (even a famous Formula 1 driver) to endorse the official viewpoint, thus invoking the heuristic: *if someone I admire agrees with this, it must be true*. In the case of the Formula 1 driver: If someone who can handle high speeds tells you that it is dangerous, it must be true.

Of course it is not always necessary to perform all the steps mentioned here. This will depend, to a large extent, on how homogeneous your target group is, your own experience, the type of topic, etc. The idea is to show you how to make decisions about the necessary text features and arguments by taking into account external restraints, analysing the topic, determining the function of the text and getting to know the beliefs and attitudes of your target group.

9.3.2 The writing phase

Having worked your way through the necessary preparatory steps you are now ready to make decisions on content, structure, style and illustrations. We have already mentioned some of these decisions when we described the preparatory steps. The information you acquire from this step-by-step process should help you to make informed decisions. The choices made about content, structure and style do not necessarily follow each other successively, but can happen simultaneously.

(i) Choosing content

When you write your campaign text, you will obviously need to express an opinion. The wording of the opinion is very important. If your opinion is too extreme, it will fall into readers' rejection zone. For instance, if you condemn speeding under all circumstances, the group of readers who occasionally exceed the speed limit (and they are your real target group) will immediately reject your point of view. It is usually best to choose the most positive statement that still falls within the noncommitment zone of the majority of readers. In this case it might be something like: Speeding is not a good idea except in real emergencies.

Two-sided messages

You could employ a two-sided message appeal where you present both supporting arguments and counterarguments for the recommended behaviour (i.e. not speeding) (and then refute those counterarguments). You could include counterarguments (e.g. speeding lets you gain time) and then show statistically that the supposed advantages (i.e. the time you gain) are really not that impressive: even on calm roads there can be calamities, the devastating effects of a collision are directly proportionate to the speed etc. In effect, these are the strategies we discussed in the document "Attitudes and behaviour", for example trying to find arguments that diminish the supposed advantages mentioned by your test subjects, add new disadvantages or find arguments that aggravate the existing disadvantages.

Multiple appeals

We indicated in the discussion of message framing (section 9.2.1) that it might be advantageous for designers to include a variety of appeals in campaign messages: a text must not only condemn behaviour such as speeding or smoking, but it must also show that there are realistic or enjoyable alternatives to the undesirable behaviour. In the road safety text under discussion you might suggest alternatives such as the following:

You have worked hard all year and now you can't wait for the beach, the waves, the forest ... You want to be there yesterday rather than today, so you get into the car and drive at maximum speed.

But why wait for your holiday to start only when you reach your destination? The car trip can be part of your holiday.

You can then follow up on this by mentioning the interesting places along the route, thus motivating people to see the car trip as a tour with nonexplored possibilities.

Using fear appeals

It is usually not necessary to stress the advantages – people remember these spontaneously. However, you should give attention to disadvantages and try to make them as plausible as possible. You could include a fear appeal by emphasising the undesirable consequences of not complying with the recommended behaviour, for example getting a hefty fine which could negatively impact on your holiday spending, a night spent in jail or the possibility of an accident due to speeding.

Use of credible sources

We have already suggested that you could include a famous F1 formula driver as a credible source to endorse the desirable behaviour, namely keeping to the speed limit. Celebrity sources can arouse interest in the campaign message and also improve the quality of the arguments.

Other content-related features that could be considered include anecdotal evidence to make your arguments more “colourful” and vivid, or statistical evidence to emphasise the extent of the problem.

(ii) Choosing structure

Which structural options could you consider?

Problem-solution structure vs end-means structure

The problem-solution structure has a proven track record when it comes to involving the reader in the text, especially where personal relevance is relatively low (as it was in this case). You could start with the question:

Why wait for your holiday to start only when you reach your destination?

You could also turn the problem around by using the end-means structure:

Wouldn't you like it if your holiday started a day earlier?

In the next part you would then explain that the trip itself could form part of a relaxing holiday experience. The choice of the problem-solution structure or end-means structure determines the global structure of the text. Once you have done this, you will have to make other small choices: on the sequence of arguments used and the place of other relevant information. You could close the brochure with a handful of tips for a successful and safe trip.

Strongest arguments first

You are advised to use your strongest arguments first; after that you can spend some time refuting counterarguments, and maybe close with a strong argument again. Never place your strongest arguments in the middle. They can be effective when placed at the end of the text, but you might have lost some readers by then so that they are not exposed to your best argument. You can get the best of both worlds by starting with the strongest argument and closing with the same argument again, by rephrasing it into a slogan and by emphasising it by typographical means:

Johannesburg–Durban: the holiday trip of a lifetime!

(iii) Choosing style and illustrations

Which style options could you consider?

Direct address and concrete language

Add to the relevance of the information to the readers by addressing them directly. Use concrete, warm language as if you are speaking to the person directly; avoid a formal, distance-creating writing style. Compare the following two examples:

You have worked hard all year and now you can't wait for the beach, the waves, the forest ... so you want to be there yesterday rather than today.

It is understandable that exhausted persons want to reach their holiday destination as soon as possible.

Which of these versions do you find more attractive?

Other style choices that can also be considered are the use of metaphors, the self-referencing technique and the rhetorical question.

Use of colour and illustrations

The use of colour and illustrations depends largely on the budget. It is expensive to reproduce colour photographs, but in most campaign texts colour photographs are indispensable. One photograph is far more effective than any amount of words at bringing home to people the horror of a speeding accident. In the same way, if you want to convince people to make stops along the route, you could include photographs of interesting stops: for example, Dullstroom's coffee shops and the Birds of Prey Centre, the Karoo National Park near Beaufort West, the Anglo-Zulu war battlefields in Northern KwaZulu-Natal, in other words, alternating natural and cultural attractions.

9.3.3 The pretesting phase

Congratulations! You have written the first draft of your very first campaign text. But before you have 20 000 copies printed, you might want to pretest the text to see whether it is well written and structured and has the intended effect on the target group.

Three ways of pretesting your text

There are three ways of pretesting a text. The first is a test the writer does himself (or herself) by using a text scheme for evaluating text quality. The second method entails expert testing: content specialists and/or communication specialists give their opinion of the text. The third method involves asking a selection of prospective readers from the target group to read the text and to comment on it. In this section we discuss only the third method, because it is one of the most effective methods of unearthing potential problems in the text.

The plus-minus method

The method that needs the least experimental planning and methodology is the plus-minus method. The reader is asked to read the text and to make a plus sign at sections or parts he or she finds positive, interesting or good, and to make a minus sign when he or she does not understand something or when an aspect of the text irritates him (or her). When the reader has finished reading and marking the text, the writer and/or the writer's assistants discuss the plus and minus signs with the reader in an individual interview and try to determine why the reader made them. Possible comments could include the following:

What a nice/horrible illustration!

I do not know what this word means.

I do not know what this has to do with it. They write as if I am in nursery school.

What gives them the right to tell me what to do?

I do not believe for a moment that this is true.

In practice, 15 to 20 prospective readers should be enough to trace the most obvious problems in the text. Choosing more is not always necessary but, depending on the scope of the text and on how homogeneous the target group is, you can increase this number. Remember, however, that interviewing, writing down and interpreting every single reaction is very time-consuming. Your readers' reactions and comments should now be used as input for rewriting the text, and may well result in extensive revision of the text in question.

9.4 To summarise

In this learning unit we have looked at the various persuasive strategies a campaign designer can employ when designing and writing a campaign text. Can you list all the persuasive strategies we have discussed in this learning unit? Some of the strategies we have discussed include *message sidedness*, *fear appeals*, *message framing* and *metaphors*. Knowledge of the different message strategies helps the campaign designer to make informed decisions when designing and writing a health campaign text. We

have concluded this learning unit with some practical tips on how to design, develop, write and pretest a campaign text.

9.5 References

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