

*Persuasive communication: The case of marketing**

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Abstract

Two of the goals of human communication are: to be understood and to be believed. In persuasive communication, both of these acts are fulfilled. Pragmatists have investigated the first goal and how it is carried out, while social psychologists have focused on the second goal. This paper attempts to shed new light on persuasion by reviewing work from both fields and sketching the outline of a model integrating such work. Relevance theory bridges communication and cognition and, as such, provides a solid foundation for further research on persuasion. Marketing communication offers a rich domain of investigation for this endeavor: we show that pragmatics can only benefit from an analysis of persuasive communication in an “optimized” context such as marketing.

1 Introduction

One of our goals, when we communicate, is to be understood. Another goal is to be believed: we try to affect our audiences’ beliefs, desires and actions. Persuasion is the communicative act that carries out both these goals – an audience that has been persuaded has understood an utterance, and believed its message¹. Accounting for the understanding aspect has typically been the work of pragmatic theorists, while explaining how attitudes change has been the focus of social psychologists. A plausible study of persuasion must bring the two fields together. Both disciplines have so far fallen short of providing satisfactory models of persuasion because they have failed to

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¹ I am aware of the different meanings of the word “message” in the three disciplines of pragmatics, social psychology and marketing. I have endeavored to use “message” in a pragmatic context to refer to the content of an utterance. When used in a social psychology context, it is roughly interchangeable with “stimulus.” In a marketing context, it refers mostly to an “advertising message.”

take each other's work into account. My principal aim in this paper is to begin to remedy this shortfall and to show how pragmatics and social psychology interact in persuasion. I will review work on persuasion in both disciplines and introduce the outline of an integrated model of persuasive communication, beginning with the speaker's intention to communicate and persuade, through to the hearer's potential attitude change. My second goal is to utilize this framework to look at a specific type of persuasive communication, marketing communication. I will show how and why both marketing and pragmatics can benefit from using marketing as a domain of investigation in studying communication.

2 Persuasion and Communication

2.1 Speech Act Theory and Perlocutionary Acts

2.1.0. Persuading someone is performing an act (roughly, that of affecting someone's beliefs or desires) using some form of communication, usually language. As such, persuasion constitutes a "speech act," an act performed in, or by speaking. The notion of speech act and the theory that was developed around it were first introduced by J.L. Austin in his *William James Lectures at Harvard* in 1955, and published in 1962 in his *How To Do Things With Words*. I will review Austin's work as it relates specifically to persuasion, as well as other work by speech act theorists, and pragmatists who have also looked at similar speech acts. I will show how and why persuasion, and related speech acts, turn out to be perplexing and somewhat frustrating for pragmatists.

2.1.1 Austin (1962). The verb "to persuade" is typically given as one of the first examples of perlocution by speech act theorists. Indeed, Austin (1962), when he develops speech act theory and introduces the term "perlocutionary act", uses the utterance "He persuaded me to shoot her" as his first example (Austin 1962: 102). Perlocutionary acts are the third in Austin's tri-partite nomenclature of speech acts. After locutionary acts, which are simply "saying something," and illocutionary acts, which are performed "in saying something," perlocutionary acts are performed "by saying something." Here is an example from the world of advertising:

- (i) **Locutionary act:** A young woman holds up a bottle of Coca Cola and shouts "Coke is the real thing" in front of a television camera.
- (ii) **Illocutionary act:** In shouting "Coke is the real thing," the young woman asserted that a product called "Coke" is the real thing.

- (iii) **Perlocutionary act:** By shouting “Coke is the real thing,” the young woman persuaded millions of television viewers around the world that drinking Coke is a worthwhile experience.

Austin specifies the effects of perlocutionary acts as “certain consequential effects upon the feeling, thoughts or acts of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons” (ibid.: 101). In other words the production of cognitive, affective or behavioral effects on an audience by a speaker’s utterance constitutes a perlocutionary act. Austin goes on to state that “it may be done with the design, intention or purpose of producing them (the effects)” (ibid.: 101), suggesting that the speaker’s intention to produce these effects is not necessary, in his view. To better understand Austin’s notion of perlocutionary act, we need to look more closely at how he distinguishes illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. Such a distinction cannot be made purely on the basis of effects resulting from the utterance, according to Austin, because illocutionary acts produce their own effects which are not perlocutionary in nature. The expected effects from illocutionary acts are the utterance’s “uptake” (i.e. “bringing about the understanding of the meaning and of the force of the locution”), “taking effect” (“bringing about states of affairs in the normal way”), and “inviting a response” (ibid.: 116-118). Clearly then, in Austin’s framework, all that is required for successful communication is the performance and identification of an illocutionary act – whereby the hearer will understand a speaker’s utterance, the normal states of affairs will be brought about, and appropriate responses will be ‘invited.’ Perlocutionary acts are peripheral to the study of communication proper. However, it is generally agreed that Austin fails to draw a consistent line between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, so the status of persuasion remains problematic in his framework.

2.1.2 Bach & Harnish (1979). Bach & Harnish (1979) review Austin’s work and use much of the basic speech act framework as the underpinnings of their own Speech Act Schema (SAS). In so doing, they refine some of Austin’s characterizations. They agree with Austin that perlocutionary acts may actually result in any number of related or unrelated effects on the audience, but, contrary to Austin, they exclude unintended perlocutionary effects from their framework (Bach & Harnish 1979: 17 & 81). Thus, for Bach & Harnish, perlocutionary acts can only be intentional and may only cause certain effects, namely “psychological states or intentional actions” (ibid.: 81). By restricting the range of perlocutionary effects, they are able to bring perlocutionary acts closer to the central concerns of theories of communication. Their schema posits layers of inferential reasoning (Ln), and shows how perlocutionary effects can result from each

layer. They actually use this feature of perlocutionary effects as an argument in favor of their schema – if psychological (perlocutionary) effects may result from each step of the schema, the schema must have psychological reality. Let's consider an example of how this would work:

Context: In the U.S., a television commercial features an elderly gentleman (played by a well-liked television star) speaking with an exaggerated British accent.

L1 (phonetic representation): The hearer identifies the speaker's utterance: "We make money the old-fashioned way: we EARN it."

Perlocutionary effect from L1: The speaker's accent instills confidence and respect in the audience.

L2 (sentence meaning): The hearer understands the speaker to mean: "We earn money in a traditional manner, by working hard."

Perlocutionary effect from L2: The use of the words "old fashioned" and "earn" suggest long-established, traditional principles and values.

L3 (proposition expressed): The hearer infers that the company makes money the old-fashioned way and earns it.

Perlocutionary effect from L3: By saying that the company makes money the old fashioned way and earns it, the speaker is causing the audience to understand the claim that the company makes money in a specific way.

L4 (speech act): The hearer takes the utterance to be this particular actor's testimony that his company makes money the old-fashioned way...

Perlocutionary effect from L4: By testifying that the company makes money in a responsible way, the actor is persuading the audience that it is so.

Ln: The hearer takes the utterance to be a commercial for an investment bank using a spokesperson to advise potential customers of its business practices.

Perlocutionary effect from Ln: By choosing such a well-liked actor to star in the commercial and having him persuade the audience of its responsible practices, the company causes some in the audience to invest their money with it.

Presumably, because there are no further perlocutionary intentions, this should be the end of the perlocutionary effects. But, how do we account then for further unintentional effects, such as the same actor never being able to appear on television again without the audience thinking: "He makes money the old-fashioned way, he EARNs it!"?

The issue here, since Bach & Harnish claim psychological reality for their speech act schema, is whether limiting the inferential process to those perlocutionary effects that

are intended by the communicator does indeed have any real validity, or is purely a classificatory convenience.

2.1.3 Gu (1993). Gu reviews Austin's (1962) account, as well as Bach & Harnish (1979) and Davis's (1980) discussions. He offers an interesting analysis of the standard speech act account of perlocutionary acts and its several key assumptions:

- (i) the "Multiplicity Thesis" according to which one perlocutionary act can have multiple effects on multiple persons,
- (ii) the "Infinity Thesis" allowing almost any type of effect to result from speech acts (see Bach & Harnish 1979)
- (iii) the "Causation Thesis" requiring S's² saying something to cause H being affected (see Austin 1962), and
- (iv) the "Intention Irrelevance Thesis" according to which intentionality (on S's part) is not relevant to classification as a perlocutionary act.

Gu's main objection to the standard speech act treatment of perlocutionary acts focuses on the nature of the relationship between the utterance and the perlocutionary effect. He attacks the Causation Thesis, and argues that perlocutionary effects cannot be said to be 'caused' by the utterance as there is no one-to-one causal relationship between an utterance type and its effects. This argument is certainly intuitively valid if one accepts that for a speaker's utterance to literally cause a cognitive effect in the hearer, the hearer would have to surrender control of his mind to the speaker at least for the duration of the effect taking place (e.g. either through brainwashing, or by conceiving of communication as a process that directly "feeds" the communicator's message into the hearer's cognitive system). The fact that this does not happen shows that there is a gap between understanding and believing. To replace the Causation Thesis, Gu suggests that an utterance might be said to "trigger" an act on the part of the hearer. His solution to the "impasse" of perlocutionary acts is simply to do away with them. He argues that once the Causation Thesis is abandoned in favor of a "triggering" analysis, the term "perlocutionary act" becomes meaningless and is nothing but a convenient, but erroneous way of aggregating an illocutionary act and its perlocutionary consequences. Instead, Gu suggests a transaction involving two separate acts – the speaker's and the hearer's. A satisfactory account of communication, according to Gu, must provide for

² Throughout this paper, "S" will represent the speaker, or communicator and "H" will represent the hearer, or the audience.

“non-communicative goals” of the sort that go beyond Grice’s communicative intention: “A intends the utterance of x to produce some effect in audience by means of the recognition of this intention” where “A” is the speaker (Grice 1989: 220). The following section will show some of the problems with Gu’s account.

2.1.4 Kurzon (1998). Kurzon reviews the traditional speech act theorists’ accounts, specifically those of Austin and Bach & Harnish, and brings in his own testing apparatus to help choose between them. These tests, one syntactic, the other semantic, are problematic at best, but I will review them briefly as they illustrate some of the inherent issues in the speech act account of persuasion rather well.

- Syntactic test: The syntactic form of a perlocutionary verb should reflect the agent/object relationship of the associated perlocutionary act. In other words, if Gu is right and perlocutionary acts involve two acts, this reality should be reflected in the syntactic form of a perlocutionary verb such as “to persuade,” which should therefore accept conjoined subjects. But this is clearly incorrect, as shown in Kurzon’s examples (Kurzon 1998: 576):

(1) S persuaded H to buy Snowy washing powder.

But not

(2) * S and H persuaded to buy Snowy washing powder

The syntactic form does not seem to corroborate Gu’s two-agent analysis. Whether or not one accepts the validity of a syntactic test in this case, the problem remains that we intuitively think of persuasion as something done to someone by someone else, rather than a dual-agent act.

- Semantic test A:
This test was proposed by Leech (1983). Inserting “try to” in front of the perlocutionary verb “implicates that the illocution failed to achieve its intended perlocutionary effect. But in the case of the illocutionary verb, this obvious kind of interpretation is not available” (Leech 1983: 204). Thus:

(3) Smith Barney tried to persuade me that they make money the old-fashioned way.

(4) Implicates: I am not persuaded that SB makes money the old-fashioned way (i.e. I understand what was communicated to me, but I am not persuaded.)

- (5) Smith Barney tried to inform me that they make money the old-fashioned way.
- (6) Implicates: I never saw or read their promotional material (i.e. failed communication).

This test does seem to capture, at least for these simple examples, the notion that a failed perlocutionary act is not necessarily a result of failed communication, whereas a failed illocutionary act is.

- Semantic test B:

Kurzon proposes a variation on the “try to” test, as follows:

- (7) *?Smith Barney persuaded me to open an account, but I forgot to do so and ended up opening one with Merrill Lynch.
- (8) Smith Barney persuaded me that they make money the old-fashioned way, but I still decided to open an account with Merrill Lynch.

This test seems to corroborate Bach & Harnish’s claim that different levels of persuasion can be generated from different stages of an inferential process. Once a specific level of persuasion has been attained, that belief cannot be negated by a simple act of “forgetting, ” although it could be by an act of “being persuaded otherwise.”

- (7’) ?Smith Barney persuaded me to open an account, but I was later persuaded otherwise.

Such examples, and similar ones offered by Kurzon, serve well to emphasize a major issue with perlocutionary acts, namely that it is difficult to decide whether their success should be contingent upon the hearer’s change of attitude or belief, and when such a change can be deemed to have taken effect. In other words, it seems that communicative interactions that perfectly align the speaker’s perlocutionary intention, the utterance and its intended effect on the hearer are the exceptions rather than the norm. This issue points to the need, as shown briefly by Kurzon, to better understand the psychological processes of persuasion in order to shed more light on its communicative aspects. I will look at this problem in the next section. Kurzon’s conclusion is that perlocutionary acts do not belong to the field of pragmatics which concerns itself, according to Leech (1983: 203), with “pragmatic force (which) has to do with goals rather than results.”

2.1.5 Hornsby (1994). Hornsby attempts to tackle the same issue as Kurzon, namely the difficulty of aligning a perlocutionary intention, an utterance and a perlocutionary effect into a single perlocutionary act. She offers an interesting distinction between speech acts and speech actions. In performing a speech “action”, according to Hornsby, the speaker may perform several acts (or Austin’s “things” as in “How to do things”) and produce different effects. Hornsby then introduces the concept of “reciprocity,” which “obtains between people, (when) they are such as to recognize one another’s speech as it is meant to be taken” (Hornsby 1994: 192). This concept obviously has much to do with the notion of communicative intention in pragmatics, as discussed below. Perlocutionary acts, according to Hornsby, are those acts that are performed within a speech action and whose consequences go beyond those secured by reciprocity. In other words, perlocutionary acts would only take place after the reciprocity has done its work – to “secure one another’s speech as it is meant to be taken.” Understanding precedes believing. This view, as we will see, is similar to Searle’s.

2.2 Persuasion and Cooperative Communication

2.2.1 Grice. The two key aspects of Grice’s work which are relevant to the study of persuasion are his theory of meaning, as discussed in his 1957 article “Meaning” (1989: 213), and his conversational theory based on the Cooperative Principle, as discussed in his William James Lectures (1989: 22).

Grice proposes the following characterization of A meaning something by x:

A must intend to induce by x a belief in an audience, and he must also intend his utterance to be recognized as so intended...the recognition is intended by A to play its part in inducing the belief, and if it does not do so something will have gone wrong...

Here, the recognition of the speaker’s intention is equivalent to Austin’s uptake, but the intention itself incorporates a reference to resulting perlocutionary effects. In fulfilling her communicative intention, the speaker has at the very least produced one perlocutionary effect – that of persuading her audience of what she says.

The other aspect of Grice’s theory that is relevant to the study of persuasion is the Cooperative Principle and its accompanying maxims. Grice’s characterization of a cooperative relationship between participants and of the recognition of a “common purpose” is particularly interesting in the context of persuasion. It is not difficult to imagine any number of communicative situations in which the participants could not be

characterized as cooperating with each other to achieve some purpose beyond understanding – either because there is no opportunity for cooperation, in cases of one-way communication, or because the relationship between the participants is less than cooperative, completely at odds or simply divergent on the issues at hand. In Strand Six of his Retrospective Epilogue (pp. 368-372), Grice addresses some of these issues and acknowledges that “we should recognize that within the dimension of voluntary exchanges... collaboration in achieving exchange of information or the institution of decisions may coexist with a high degree of reserve, hostility, and chicanery and with a high degree of diversity in the motivations underlying quite meager common objectives.” He goes on to suggest that such interactions “manifest rationality by simulation of the practices exhibited in the initial class” (i.e. cooperative exchanges). This clarification fails both in its characterization of how prevalent less-than-cooperative communication really is, and in its ability to offer a framework in which to analyze such communication and its “simulated practices.” In reality, as shown by Sperber (2000: 135), human reliance on communication is such that it leaves us “vulnerable to misinformation, deception and misguidance.” Diverging agendas between a communicator and her audience are not exceptional, they are part and parcel of human communication. A theory of communication based on the necessity of cooperation, in Grice’s sense, is bound to fail, even if it does offer “band aid” solutions to account for some cases of non-cooperation. Marketing communication, even emanating from the most honest and respectable firms, is a case at point. The marketer’s intention in communicating with her customers is to sell, whether it is her short-term goal, in the case of a media “blitz,” or her long-term goal, in the case of a “relationship marketing” campaign:

- (9) Take out a NW credit card before 10 July and travel the world.
- (10) We want to make a difference in your vacation planning. Tell us how you like to travel.

Consumers do not understand (9) as a cooperative message that entails “I’ll travel the world if I get their credit card,” nor do they really believe that the marketing manager who wrote (10) is all that interested in their travel plans. A theory of communication, and an adequate account of persuasion, must be able to systematically explain how such stimuli are understood and their persuasive intention fulfilled in spite of their insincerity.

2.2.2 Searle (1969). Searle (1969) questions Grice's early account of meaning, and specifically its reference to the intended perlocutionary effect of inducing a belief. His three objections (p. 46) are as follows:

- There are clear examples of illocutionary acts, such as greetings, that do not have any such perlocutionary effect,
- A speaker may "say something and mean it without in fact intending to produce that effect,"
- The speaker does not generally intend the hearer's reason for believing her utterance to be her own intention to get him to believe it (i.e. we all know that intending an audience to believe an utterance is not always sufficient to persuade that audience).

Searle goes on to show that the intended effect of the speaker's utterance is not to induce a belief or a response, but simply to induce recognition of that intention, an illocutionary effect. This removes the reference to perlocutionary effects from Grice's early definition of speaker meaning.

3 Persuasion and Relevance Theory

3.1 Two levels of intentions

A pragmatic theory based on Grice's view of understanding as intention-recognition is offered by Sperber & Wilson (1986, 1995). They distinguish two levels of speaker intention. The speaker's informative intention is to make certain assumptions manifest to the audience. The speaker's communicative intention is simply to have her informative intention recognized. When the hearer does indeed recognize the speaker's informative intention she recovers the speaker's meaning. Her recovery of the intended meaning is guided by the presumption of optimal relevance: the presumption that the utterance is at least relevant enough to be worth processing, and moreover the most relevant one the speaker could have used given her own abilities and preferences.

This framework offers the intuitively satisfying possibility that the communicative intention might be fulfilled (i.e. the informative intention recognized), without the informative intention being fulfilled (i.e. the assumptions the speaker intended to make manifest, are not being made manifest to the hearer). The informative intention is only fulfilled once these intended assumptions are manifest to the hearer (i.e. part of her cognitive environment). Understanding the speaker's meaning and accepting her beliefs or attitudes are two different processes, and the two-level intention framework offered by relevance theory clearly shows how the higher-level intention can be fulfilled

without the lower-level of intention being achieved. Understanding and believing are distinguishable in this way.

3.2 Efficient processing

Relevance theory appeals to the idea that cognitive resources are used in communication and cognitive benefits gained. On the production end, the speaker's willingness to expend cognitive effort in producing an utterance is based on her assumption that she will impart her meaning to the hearer. To ensure that this is the case, she should aim at optimal relevance, as seen above. On the recovery end, the hearer's willingness to expend processing effort depends on anticipation of a certain level of relevance to come, in the form of positive cognitive effects. However, the presumption of relevance is not always borne out as understanding proceeds. The speaker may have tried but failed to be optimally relevant, or she may, deceptively, have tried only to seem optimally relevant (for example, she may be lying). Communication works smoothly when optimal relevance is not only promised, but achieved; failures or deceptions may be costly at one or the other end. Sperber (1994) and Wilson (1999) describe three strategies of understanding. A "naïvely optimistic" hearer accepts the first level of understanding that provides sufficient relevance as the one intended by the speaker. A "cautiously optimistic" hearer is able to cope with cases where the speaker accidentally fails to provide sufficient relevance: the hearer recovers the speaker's intended meaning by thinking about what she might have intended to convey. A hearer using the "sophisticated understanding" strategy detects more than accidental mishaps, he is able to detect deception and to infer cognitive effects both from the deceptive utterance and from the act of deception itself. Whereas the ability to use these strategies clearly increases developmentally, each strategy also requires an incremental layer of processing effort as the number of representation levels required increases.

3.3 Ostensive vs. covert communication

Sperber & Wilson (1986, 1995) have shown that getting an audience to believe something may be accomplished in two different ways. The communicator may undertake an efficient, overt attempt to secure her audience's attention and make it mutually manifest that she intends to convey a particular piece of information. This is termed ostensive, or overt, communication. On the other hand, she may elect to put information across in a "covert" way, in which case she does not make her informative intention mutually manifest and leaves it up to the audience to either pick up on the

information, or not. Such information would not contribute to the optimal relevance of an utterance, but may be relevant nonetheless. The distinction between ostensive and covert communication is obviously crucial to the issue of persuasion. Let's examine an example:

After reviewing research suggesting that customers tend to be more loyal (i.e. shop more frequently and spend more) to retailers who greet them personally, the management of a large chain of department stores decides to require that all sales associates address charge card customers by their last names. There are two possible strategies:

- (i) **Ostensive Communication:** The policy is announced to customers as part of a new "customer appreciation" package. A letter from the CEO is sent to all charge card customers stating that: "At Smith's, we want you, our valued customers, to know how important you are to each and every one of us. To show this, we will always address you by name when you visit one of our stores."
- (ii) **Covert Communication:** No announcement is made to customers. In an internal memorandum to all sales associates, the CEO states the goal of the new policy: to make the customers feel valued without them recognizing that they are being treated in this way as a result of company policy. Associates should use customers' names, but under no circumstances should they comment on their reason for doing so.

Let's examine the ramifications of each strategy in this particular context:

- (i) Customers who read the letter may either like the new policy, or think that it is gimmicky. In either case, their expectations will probably be focused on better customer service at Smith's. On their next visit to the store, they will expect to hear their name and will either be impressed that the policy has actually been implemented, or disappointed in its failure. In short, the ostensive strategy focused their attention and created expectations that need to be met.
- (ii) No expectations are built. Customers may or may not notice that they are being addressed by their name. If they notice, it is hoped, as evidenced by the CEO's internal memorandum, that they will see it as a natural and spontaneous gesture, rather than intentional policy-based act.

The principal advantage of ostensive communication is to efficiently achieve effects through intention recognition. Limited cognitive resources can be put to work more efficiently if they are focused on a set of assumptions, via a presumption of relevance, rather than allowed to roam freely until they encounter these same assumptions by chance. In the example above, customers whose attention has not been focused on the new greetings policy may fail to notice it, or simply attribute it to individual salespeople without necessarily extending that positive motive to the store itself. On the other hand, ostensive communication creates expectations which need to be met – a communicator who draws her audience’s attention to specific information needs to “deliver,” or loses credibility. What she is expected to deliver is information that is “relevant” to her audience, in other words information that provides at least adequate cognitive effects, and moreover, as much in positive cognitive effects as is compatible with her own abilities and preferences. It is the presumption of optimal relevance that makes ostensive communication possible and successful. One of the advantages of covert communication, on the other hand, may be to avoid creating such expectations. It can best be used as a persuasive strategy in which the communicator’s persuasive intention remains hidden. But this comes at a price, as the audience may fail to focus on the intended information and to reap its benefits. The risk of failure is higher than with overt intentional communication. This strategy can also be helpful in cases where the communicator wants to dissociate herself from the message altogether – whether it be for political, social or other reasons. These two types of communication may also differ in the degree of persuasion in which they can result. We will examine this further in the paper.

4 Persuasion and Social Psychology

4.0 As I now move to a review of the work on persuasion by social psychologists, the focus shifts to the “believing” aspect of the “understanding-believing” poles of persuasion. As we have seen, pragmatic theory clearly points to a gap between understanding and believing – we will now look more closely at what social psychologists call the “attitude change” process that takes place as we come to believe an utterance.

4.1 Message-based persuasion models

4.1.0 Two important models fall under the category of message-based persuasion – they are also referred to as “dual process” theories as they posit two types of processing for persuasive messages.

4.1.1 *The Elaboration Likelihood Model.* Petty & Cacioppo (1986), in developing their elaboration likelihood model were the first to establish what has now become accepted in social psychology as the existence of two different paths to persuasion, or attitude change. Upon hearing a persuasive stimulus, the hearer can process it in two different ways. The central processing route makes use of cognitive resources to understand and elaborate a message’s argument. The peripheral route uses fewer or no cognitive resources and allows a range of automatic mechanisms to be activated and to affect the hearer’s attitudes. It is important to note that this model doesn’t make any claims about how the stimulus is “understood.” In addition to demonstrating the existence of these two very different cognitive mechanisms, Petty & Cacioppo made great strides in analyzing the conditions and variables that lead to one or the other “persuasion route,” and in showing the types of persuasive effects that can be expected from both. Elaboration likelihood, or the probability that a persuasive stimulus will be centrally processed, is higher when the hearer is highly motivated and has the ability to fully process the message. Motivation to process is a function of personal relevance of the message to the hearer, whereas ability to process depends mostly on the availability of cognitive resources, prior knowledge and message comprehensibility. When these factors are present, the hearer will most likely “elaborate” the message, and the resulting attitude change (either in favor of, or against the communicator’s intended argument) will be strong, long-lasting, resistant to counterargumentation and predictive of future behavior. On the other hand, when motivation and ability to process are low, the hearer will resort to less cognitively taxing learned mechanisms such as heuristics or attribution. Such mechanisms typically associate a given “cue” in the stimulus or the speaker with a conclusion that has proven valid in the past. Cues can be physical features of the communicator, phonetic, lexical or syntactic features of the stimulus or other characteristics of the persuasive attempt that are not relevant to the argument.

Let’s look at an example of each of the two types of processing:

- (i) An amateur of high performance cars (high motivation) reading an automotive magazine (high processing ability) will focus on particular performance statistics, compare them and retain some of the data for future use (argument elaboration).

This is an example of high motivation and high processing ability allowing effective persuasion via the central persuasion route.

- (ii) An occasional driver who is not in the market for a new car and thinks of cars purely as means of transportation (low motivation) will glance at an ad in a Sunday magazine (low processing ability) featuring a large family piling into a minivan (cue). When asked later about his knowledge of the vehicle, he may describe it as particularly appropriate for large families. This is an example of low motivation and low processing ability leading to peripheral processing (minivans are for large families).

While these examples may represent extreme instances of the two persuasion routes, most cases of persuasion typically fall somewhere between the two extremes. The persuasion routes are in effect the two ends of a continuum and persuasive stimuli may be processed partially via the central route while still producing peripheral effects.

4.1.2 The Heuristic Systematic Model. The heuristic systematic model (Chaiken, Liberman & Eagly 1989) is in many ways very similar to the elaboration likelihood model: it postulates two persuasion routes (systematic and heuristic), the “additivity” of the two processes, and motivation and processing ability as the two variables leading to one route or the other. The goal of the heuristic systematic model, however, is to offer a theory that goes beyond the field of persuasion: the authors conceive of “systematic processing as a comprehensive, analytic orientation in which perceivers access and scrutinize all informational input for its relevance and importance to their judgment tasks, and integrate all useful information in forming their judgments” (Chaiken et al. 1989: 212). This endeavor is obviously of interest to students of communication. Beyond the range of communication they aim to explain, the two theories diverge in other ways: their views of the less effortful persuasion route differ markedly and the degree of processing effort is specified more thoroughly in the heuristic systematic model.

As indicated by its name, the heuristic systematic model stipulates a narrower range of cognitive mechanisms in the less effortful route. While the elaboration likelihood model discusses the use of heuristics, it also includes attribution (see 4.2) as a peripheral mechanism and leaves the door open to a variety of other such automatic mechanisms. The heuristic systematic model limits that end of the processing spectrum to heuristics, but makes up for this limitation by including a fairly wide range of mechanisms under the heuristic label, some of which are intentional and deliberate. More importantly, the heuristic systematic model posits a trade-off principle between the cognitive effort and benefit of systematic vs. heuristic processing. Because, people are “economy-minded

souls,” there exists a “sufficiency principle” whereby an individual in a given persuasive context will only expend the cognitive effort necessary to obtain a desired level of confidence pertaining to the issue at hand. Once that level of sufficiency has been reached, no further cognitive effort will be expended. This has obvious links to notions of cost and benefit used in relevance theory. The principle explains why systematic processing will typically take precedence when the receiver of the persuasive attempt is highly motivated to hold a valid attitude toward the issue at hand. High motivation indicates high personal relevance of the issue at hand, which in turn translates into a high confidence threshold which can only be met via relatively effortful processing. Heuristic processing is not sufficient to reach the confidence threshold in situations demanding high confidence. Interestingly, in cases requiring a high confidence level, but where systematic processing is not possible because of physical limitation (e.g. low message comprehensibility), the persuasive impact of heuristics (i.e. the cognitive benefit) is heightened, or enhanced in order to allow the individual to reach her desired confidence level. Clearly the heuristic systematic model raises interesting issues for cognition and communication. The applicability of relevance beyond communication proper to cognition in general (Sperber & Wilson 1986, 1995) makes relevance theory a particularly well-suited framework to further explore these issues in a future project.

4.2 Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is based on the notion that we are motivated to attribute causality to events around us. Kelley (1967) suggested that an audience, in particular, attempts to explain why a communicator has expressed a particular set of assumptions. In doing so, the audience attributes causality either to the communicator, to the context of the utterance, or to external reality as represented in the utterance (Eagly & Chaiken 1993).

The audience makes such an attribution of causality by considering her perception of three variables:

- (i) consensus between the communicator and others responding to the same state of affairs,
- (ii) consistency in the communicator’s response to the same state of affairs at different times and to different audiences,
- (iii) distinctiveness from communicator’s response to other states of affairs.

Eagly & Chaiken (1993: 353) illustrate as follows:

In a particular review of *Psychology of Attitudes* (Eagly & Chaiken’s book), Professor Bargh asserts that it is a great book. The audience will evaluate

whether the review is in consensus with other reviews of the same book, whether the reviewer has made the same assertion under different circumstances, and whether he has been known to be critical of other books on the subject. If it is the case that other reviews have been favorable, that Professor Bargh has made similar comments to different audiences and that he has been known to be critical of other books on attitudes, the assertion may be attributed to the entity (i.e. a representation of reality) and the audience may be persuaded that the book is indeed great.

To the extent that the attitude change does not involve issue-relevant thinking (the book itself is not evaluated at any point in the process), it involves a peripheral rather than a central or systematic route. It is classified as such in the elaboration likelihood model. On the other hand, the process goes far beyond a simple decision rule in its complexity and does not qualify as heuristic in the heuristic systematic model.

Later, Kelley (1972) relaxed the formality and complexity of this causation analysis by proposing a simpler attribution process based on plausibility of possible causes and resembling a hypothesis-testing process. Eagly, Chaiken & Wood (1981) tested Kelley's analysis and proposed a "multiple plausible causes framework," along the same lines which attributes causality by running through a number of possible cues such as the communicators' attributes and intentions, and evaluating them for plausibility. They suggest that "the recipients construct a mini-theory of the communicator's behavior on the basis of (...) causally relevant cues" (Eagly & Chaiken 1993).

4.3 Persuasion Knowledge Model

Attribution theory has been the basis for an interesting, more recent development in persuasion research. Friestad & Wright (1994) propose a persuasion knowledge model that helps targets of persuasive attempts to "adaptively respond to these (...) attempts so as to achieve their own goals." The model is derived from work in attribution theory, including and modeled against Kelley's (1983) "perceived causal structures" framework. The idea behind the persuasion knowledge model is that once an audience member recognizes a persuasion attempt by attributing it to "goals and actions of (the) persuasion agent," she is then able to use her layperson's knowledge of how persuasion works (i.e. persuasion knowledge) to "cope" with such an attempt. The term "cope" is used by Friestad & Wright to indicate how a resourceful audience "contends or strives to pursue (its) own goals." While the persuasion knowledge model is developed in the context of consumer research to show how consumers cope with advertising, it is equally

applicable, as discussed by Friestad & Wright, to any other persuasive context. In this model's terminology, the communicator is the persuasion agent, the audience is the persuasion target and a persuasion attempt is the agent's persuasive behavior as perceived by the target. The target has at her disposal three knowledge structures (persuasion, agent and topic knowledge) that work together toward her "overriding goal (...) to maintain control over the outcome and thereby achieve whatever mix of goals is salient to (her)" (Friestad & Wright 1994: 3). Although not specifically defined or characterized as such by Friestad & Wright, persuasion knowledge, a "somewhat loose set of interrelated beliefs" is in effect a higher-order structure that captures recurrent patterns and tactics across a range of topics and agents and is constantly refined and revised. While the introduction of this higher-order knowledge structure in a theory of persuasion is the key proposal in Friestad & Wright's paper, the importance they give to "agent knowledge," a fairly unexplored area, is also a big step forward. Recognizing the importance of "attitudes toward the agent" (specifically the "perceived persuasion agent") is key in that, as we know from pragmatics, the audience's perception of the agent's intentions and trustworthiness plays a central role in any type of communication.

Once a target has identified a persuasion attempt and the agent's goals with the help of her persuasion knowledge, that knowledge enables her to allocate her own cognitive resources among the three knowledge structures (persuasion, topic and agent) to process the stimulus efficiently according to her own goal priorities. One of the functions of persuasion knowledge is then to "dispatch" the right resources, knowledge structure and cognitive processes to optimize processing of a persuasive attempt according to the target's own goals. This would be done along the lines of the elaboration likelihood or heuristic systematic models' dual processes. In other words, the motivation to process a persuasion attempt effortfully can be generated from a much wider spectrum of goals in the persuasion knowledge model than thought possible by either the elaboration likelihood or the heuristic systematic models. Both of these models posit "the desire to form or hold valid, accurate attitudes" (Chaiken et al. 1989: 214) as the source of motivation, but these attitudes are mostly described in terms of the message and the topic itself. The persuasion knowledge model, on the other hand, introduces attitude toward the agent and refining one's persuasion knowledge as motivation factors. This paves the way for a "rapprochement" with pragmatic theory where the agent's intentions are obviously crucial.

On the production end, a persuasion agent combines her persuasion knowledge with her topic and target knowledge to produce a persuasive attempt. Key to the adaptive nature of persuasion knowledge is the "change of meaning principle" whereby "when a person begins conceiving of an agent's action, heretofore not identified as having any

particular meaning, as a persuasion tactic a “change of meaning” will occur” (Friestad & Wright 1994: 13). In other words, once the agent’s persuasive intention has been recognized, a persuasive attempt will take on a different meaning for the target. Such “change of meaning” effects are detailed by Friestad & Wright: they range from “detachment effect” in which the target “disengages” herself from the context created by the persuasion attempt, to a change of focus effect in which the target’s attention moves away from her topic knowledge goal to persuasion knowledge itself. In the earlier example of the department store’s policy to use customers’ full names, a customer’s recognition of the persuasive intention and tactic (“encourage customers to spend more by greeting them personally”) will alter the meaning of a salesperson’s “warm” greeting. Clearly, “change of meaning” effects have much to do with the type of increased-order processing described by relevance theory in shifting from “naïve optimism” to “cautious optimism” to “sophisticated understanding.” This, again, will require further investigation. Interestingly, this “change of meaning” effect is the only discussion of the meaning conveyed by a stimulus in the social psychology literature I have reviewed.

Very recent work on the persuasion knowledge model (Campbell & Kirmani 2000) demonstrates more specifically the critical role played by the target’s perception of the agent’s persuasion motive in activating persuasion knowledge. Accessibility of persuasion motives (either during a persuasion attempt, or prior to it – in priming settings) enhances the efficient application of persuasion knowledge. As persuasion motives become less accessible, the cognitive capacity required to activate persuasion knowledge will increase. This study uses the target’s attribution of agent insincerity as a marker of persuasion knowledge application. The two variables (persuasion motive accessibility and cognitive capacity) are manipulated in a retail sales context. Accessible persuasion motives are a salesperson’s flattering remarks before a purchase decision, whereas the same remarks coming after the purchase decision represent a low level of the same variable. Cognitive capacity is manipulated by having subjects perform either the role of an actual customer, or that of a less busy observer. This study succeeds in showing that in at least some persuasive situations, identification of the agent’s persuasion motives will facilitate the activation of persuasion knowledge. In cases where persuasion motives are not readily accessible, greater cognitive resources will need to be devoted to the recovery of the persuasion motives. Given the critical importance of agent/speaker intentions in communication, this research will have some important ramifications in our overall framework of persuasive communication.

5 An integrated model of persuasive communication

5.1 Model outline

My goal is to offer a model of persuasive communication that addresses the critical issues raised by both pragmatists and social psychologists. I believe that a relevance theoretic approach to persuasion can help. More importantly, with its roots firmly in a cognitive framework, relevance theory is the right framework for an integrated cognitive model of communication that bridges the gap between pragmatics and social psychology.

The persuasion knowledge model also makes an important contribution to the single model of persuasion I am proposing. By showing the existence of a defense mechanism that allows the target of a persuasion attempt to assess the communicator's goals before any further processing, the persuasion knowledge model demonstrates that persuasion is not a one-sided affair produced by the agent onto the target. This is a critical point and, importantly for this integrated model, one that coincides remarkably well with Sperber's notion of a persuasion-counterpersuasion arms race (Sperber 2000). As seen earlier (section 2.2.1), Sperber shows how the possibilities of deception and manipulation are inherent to communication. He posits the existence of a "logico-rhetorical module" that in effect allows the target of a persuasion attempt to check the message for internal and external consistency. This module, according to Sperber, has evolved as an adaptation to the deceptive possibilities inherent in communication, along the lines of Machiavellian intelligence (Byrne & Whiten, 1988). Such an adaptive mechanism should in turn trigger the development of further defense-resistant communicative strategies and so on, leading to a "persuasion-counterpersuasion arms race." (Sperber 2000: 135) In short, Sperber's logico-rhetorical module and persuasion knowledge seem like very similar types of cognitive structures that carry out similar functions and fulfill similar goals.

Figures 1 and 2 summarize the overall model in flowchart format. Figure 1 shows the steps taken by the agent intending to produce a persuasive attempt and captures the two forms of communication available to her, as discussed in section 3.3: ostensive communication, in which she reveals her informative intention, and covert communication, with no revelation of informative intention. Figure 2 shows the different paths that can be followed by the hearer/target exposed to a persuasive stimulus: from the assessment of communicator's intention, to the identification of persuasive intention, the use of persuasion knowledge to select a processing route, to the processing of the stimulus and through to the eventual persuasive effects. The sequential

graphic format can obviously not be taken to reflect similar sequencing in the cognitive processes.

Figure 1
Integrated Model of Persuasive Communication
Production

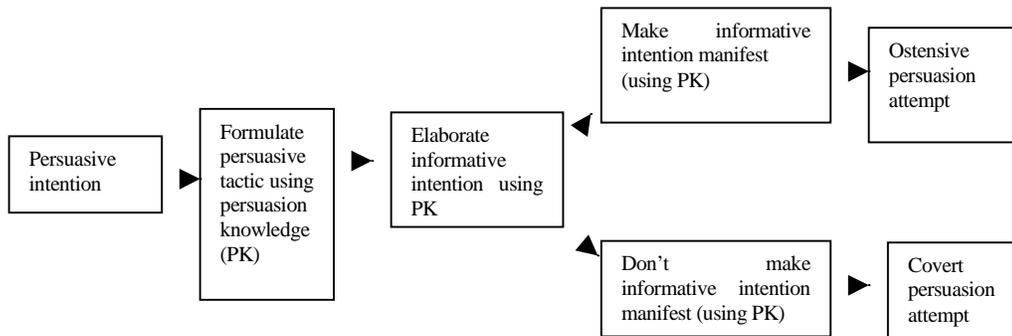
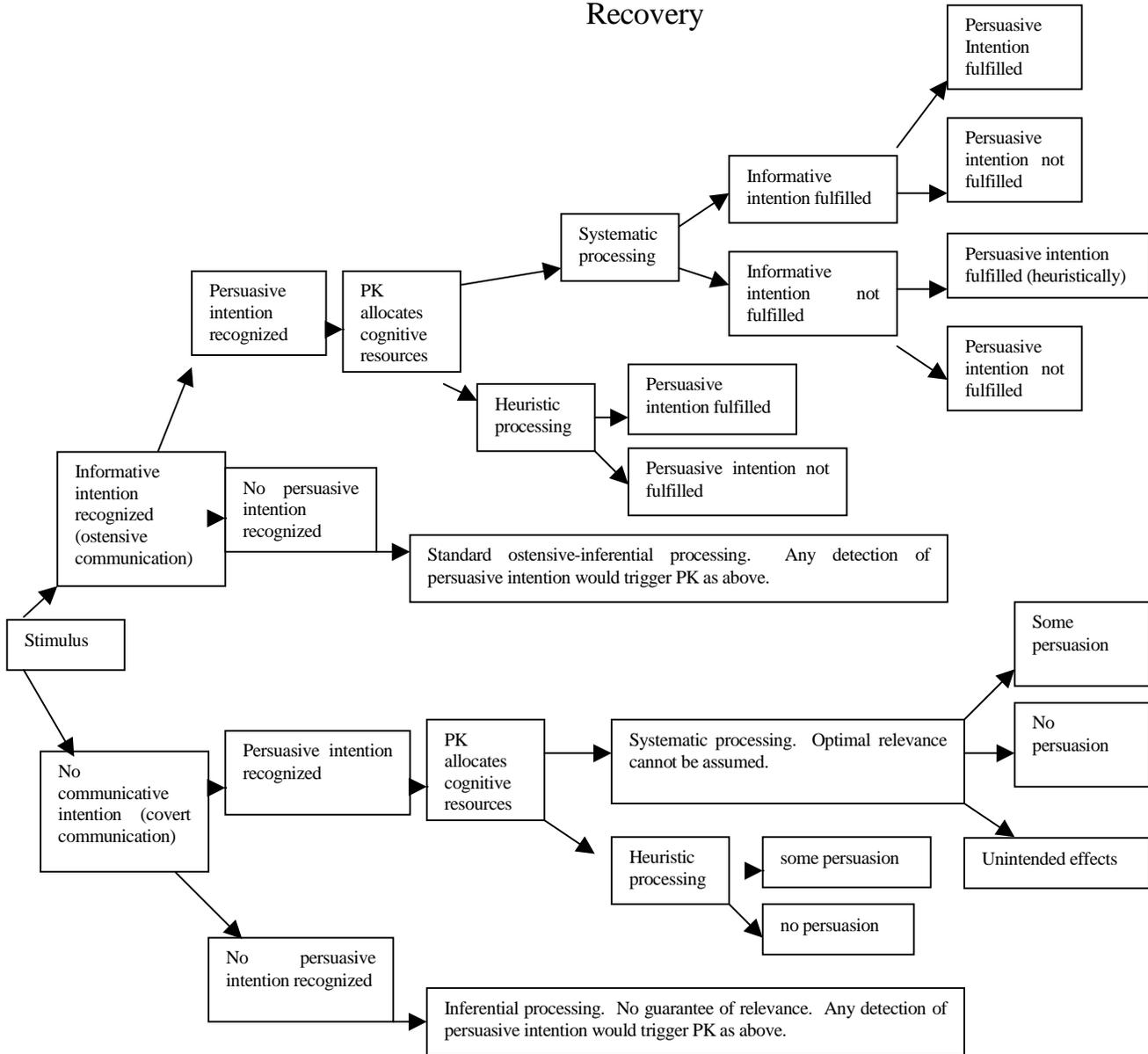


Figure 2
Integrated Model of Persuasive Communication
Recovery



5.2 Outstanding issues

I would now like to go back to the issues raised in the course of my review of the pragmatics and social psychology literature on persuasion and show how the model I have outlined answers these questions.

1. How do we draw the line between effects obtained in saying something and by saying something?

Relevance theory easily takes care of the illocutionary/perlocutionary divide. Illocutionary acts succeed when the hearer recognizes the speaker's informative intention. Perlocutionary effects, on the other hand, require the speaker's informative intention not only to be recognized but to be fulfilled, i.e. the hearer's cognitive environment to be modified by her acceptance of the intended assumptions (or formation of the intended attitudes). Some perlocutionary effects, however, are derived peripherally and may not involve fulfillment of the informative intention – they may include heuristic persuasion as well as puzzlement, bafflement, repugnancy or other such intended or unintended effects.

2. Should an account of persuasion limit itself to intentional persuasion? What is the role of intentionality in persuasive communication?

The issue of intentionality is addressed in much the same way: intentionality plays a critical role in communication of any kind – the speaker's informative intention has to be recognized if communication is to succeed. I will discuss the role of persuasive intention in the next section.

3. How do we account for persuasive effects that do not require full comprehension of the utterance (i.e. effects that are “generated” simply at a phonetic or lexical level)?

Because persuasion knowledge can be activated before the verbal comprehension process proper begins, that process can be bypassed for the sake of efficiency when the target detects a persuasion attempt which her persuasion knowledge allocates to heuristic processing. In such cases, the stimulus may undergo only heuristic-type phonetic or lexical processing.

4. How do we characterize the relationship between the utterance and the persuasive effects to avoid a pure “causation thesis” and its notion of “feeding” a stimulus into the hearer's cognitive system?

Clearly the range of “paths” that can be taken by a stimulus representing a persuasion attempt is so wide, the opportunities for the target to ignore the stimulus so varied, that it cannot be said that the stimulus causes a persuasive effect in the one-to-one fashion described above.

5. How do we avoid the “dual agent” account that suggests that both speaker and hearer are equally responsible for the act of persuasion?

As just discussed, the model I am proposing clearly answers Gu’s concern that an account of persuasion (or perlocutionary acts in general) must in some way allow for a sharing of responsibility between the speaker and the hearer. Both relevance theory’s distinction between the recognition and the fulfillment of the informative intention, and the persuasion knowledge model’s coping mechanism, “redress” the balance of responsibility between the agent and the target.

6. How do we avoid relying on cooperation in an environment that is clearly less than cooperative?

The issue of cooperation is particularly interesting in the context of persuasion. Here again, unless one construes persuasion as a process whereby the hearer cooperates with the speaker to allow her beliefs or attitudes to be transferred onto him, cooperation, in Grice’s sense, simply cannot be taken for granted. Rather, we need a communicative model that enables comprehension to take place using a “common currency” other than cooperation. That “common currency” is the notion of relevance and the presumption of optimal relevance. I have also shown how relevance theory allows information transfer to take place without a guarantee of relevance (in covert communication), (see section 3.2).

5.3 The role of persuasive intention

An important remaining issue in integrating a relevance theoretic account of communication with the persuasion knowledge model is, as discussed earlier, that of the “persuasion motive” recognition (Campbell & Kirmani 2000). Clearly, relevance theory posits two intentions on the part of the speaker – the informative intention, and the communicative intention. Do the speaker’s “persuasive motives” play a role in the communicative exchange, and if so, should they be differentiated from relevance theory’s existing two levels of intentions? If indeed the agent’s motive, or persuasive intention, is in effect part and parcel of the communicative exchange, does it get “singled out” by the hearer from the informative and communicative intentions, and how does its

recognition affect the comprehension of the persuasive exchange? I'll examine the role played by the persuasive intention in the production and recovery of persuasive attempts, and discuss its role in the defense mechanisms against "less than cooperative" communication.

Relevance theory offers a continuum from weak to strong communication reflecting the speaker's intended degree of manifestness of the assumptions she is communicating and how manifest she makes her informative intention (Sperber & Wilson, 1986, 1995: 59). In other words, the relative strengths of informative and communicative intentions in any utterance combine to determine that utterance's position on the continuum of weak to strong communication. It seems, at least intuitively, that there is not just a quantitative, but a qualitative difference in intended manifestness between, for example, a greeting and a strong persuasive attempt, that is not captured by the weak/strong communication continuum:

(11) Hi, how are things going for you?

(12) Vote Yes on Proposition 24. One day your children will thank you.

In a greeting, the speaker's informative intention is presumably, and roughly, to make her audience believe that she is pleased to see them, and wishes to follow certain social rules that govern the encounter of friendly acquaintances. In the political message, the communicator's informative intention is to make her audience believe that she wants them to cast a particular vote because it will affect their children's lives. But the communicator's intention goes beyond this. What she ultimately intends, her persuasive intention, is for her audience to actually believe that they must cast a certain vote. That persuasive intention is not purely communicative – it may be financial, or political or even altruistic – but it goes beyond the informative intention to alter the hearer's cognitive environment. Having the informative intention recognized, in persuasive communication, is purely a means to having it fulfilled: in other words, it is subordinate to the persuasive intention.

Moving to the "recovery" process by the hearer/target of the persuasion attempt, there seems to be evidence that the persuasive intention is recognized as a separate intention with specific effects on how the hearer processes the persuasive attempt. As noted above, the persuasion knowledge model posits that once the hearer has identified the speaker's use of a persuasive tactic, a "change of meaning" takes place, altering the way the message is processed. Here is an example:

Context: A television commercial in which a battery-operated toy rabbit is shown moving in circles and beating a drum, while other toys have ceased operating.

Stimulus: “Nothing outlasts the Energizer, it keeps going and going and going...”

Agent’s persuasive intention: for the audience to buy The Energizer battery.

Agent’s tactic: people who believe that nothing outlasts the Energizer, buy the Energizer.

Agent’s informative intention: to make it manifest to the audience that nothing outlasts the Energizer.

Agent’s communicative intention: to make it mutually manifest to the agent and the audience that the agent wants them to believe that nothing outlasts the Energizer.

Clearly, once the presence of a persuasive intention has been recognized (which can be automatic in the context of a television commercial), cognitive processing proceeds along a much different route than if no persuasive intention had been detected, regardless of whether the persuasive attempt is ostensive or cover (see figure 2). The persuasion knowledge model suggests that depending on the target’s goals in processing the persuasive stimulus, her cognitive resources will enable a more or less systematic vs. heuristic processing route. This may result in full systematic processing of the stimulus, or a less costly heuristic treatment, resulting respectively in the following two effects:

Systematic processing: The target recognizes a persuasion attempt and is motivated to systematically process the argument. She comes away believing that the Energizer is the longest-lasting battery on the market. Next time she needs a battery, she may buy one.

Peripheral processing: The target recognizes a persuasion attempt, but lacks the motivation to process it fully. But she is amused by the ad’s humor and will later recall that the Energizer has something to do with that funny pink bunny that makes fun of other television commercials. She may not even process the actual overt message of the ad. However next time she needs a battery, she may remember the bunny and buy an Energizer.

This account raises two questions: how do we account for the bypassing of a full inferential process unless we assume that the persuasion attempt is immediately and automatically recognized as incompatible with the target’s goals, and relegated to a peripheral, automatic, more cost-effective cognitive process? At what point is the recognition of a persuasive intention “matched” against the target’s own goals to check

for compatibility? I have tentatively answered these questions in the model I've outlined in figure 2, by putting the recognition of the presence of a persuasive intention at the front end of the process, immediately after the recovery of the presence of a communicative intention (or lack thereof).

Finally, if indeed holding valid attitudes and protecting oneself against misinformation is critical, as we believe it is, it should not be surprising that a persuasion detection mechanism has evolved. By the same token, it should hardly be surprising that the first step in that detection mechanism is to read the agent's intentions and that this detection mechanism becomes an increasingly automatic and efficient process. Its efficiency lies both in its own automaticity and in its ability to filter out unwanted persuasive attempts through the peripheral routes at low cognitive cost, as shown in figure 2.

6 Marketing Communication

6.1 A research agenda

'Marketing communication' is the term I am using, for convenience, to refer to any type of communicative acts between a firm and a number of constituencies, or audiences, with the purpose (either directly or indirectly) of selling the firm's product. These audiences range from existing customers, to potential customers, the public at large, the firm's competitors, shareholders, the financial markets, government or regulatory agencies, or entire industries. Most of my discussion will be centered, however, on the most common audience, a firm's customers and/or potential customers. Communication between a firm and its customers encompasses a range of media and types of communication: from advertising to Web sites, point-of-sale displays, packaging, public relations campaigns, phone greetings etc. I am limiting my scope to spoken and written language, but hope that the study can be easily expanded to non-verbal communication.

Whereas the fields of social psychology, consumer psychology and consumer behavior have a fairly rich history of cross-research, the same cannot be said about pragmatics and consumer psychology or consumer behavior. The dual-process models have been applied to persuasive marketing communication, mostly from the consumer behavior (attitude change) perspective, but no work to date has focused on the production or comprehension processes. Such work should follow naturally from further work integrating pragmatics and social psychology in studies of persuasive communication. Marketing communication certainly provides plenty of "real life examples" for the study of persuasive communication. But marketing also offers a particularly interesting field

of exploration: inasmuch as both the production and the recovery of communication can be “slowed down,” analyzed and evaluated against specific goals, more readily than in everyday conversation settings, marketing can be thought of as an “optimized” form of communication. Such research might, it seems, provide fresh evidence for pragmatics, specifically relevance theory, while at the same time offering the field of marketing some new insight into communication and persuasion. Some of this insight may be particularly interesting at a time when marketers have a whole new range of interactive media at their disposal enabling systematic, real-time, two-way communication with their audiences for the first time.

6.2 The issues

6.2.1 *Ostensive vs. covert marketing.* Among the critical issues for the study of marketing communication from a pragmatic perspective is the distinction between ostensive and covert communication and its effect on persuasion. Most types of marketing communication, specifically advertising, point of sale displays and such, are ostensive in the sense that their use of a particular medium in itself conveys the marketer’s intention to make her informative intention mutually manifest. Why advertise unless you want to make it manifest that you want to inform your audience of something related to your product? At the same time consumers, thanks to a fairly basic level of persuasion knowledge, assume both a persuasive and an informative intention on the part of advertisers. But, there may be stimuli that are partly ostensive and partly covert. An interesting research area would be to analyze specific samples of advertising for hybrid ostensive/covert stimuli and their effects on consumers (see Tanaka 1994, for discussion). There are of course plenty of opportunities for marketers to offer covert persuasive communication: product sponsorships in feature films are an increasingly common example. The lead character in a film driving a particular car is an example of covert communication. Interestingly however, as these tactics become more common, the audience’s persuasion knowledge detects them more readily and the tactic’s covertness will fade, i.e. the marketer’s persuasive intention will become manifest, the “change of meaning” described in the persuasion knowledge model will take effect. A similar process has taken place with “advertorials” or “infomercials.” It is indeed an “arms race” which takes place between a marketer’s persuasive intentions and consumers’ counterpersuasive defense mechanisms. The huge financial stakes and the availability of new media can only have the effect of speeding up the race.

6.2.2 Trust. The issue of trust comes up repeatedly in our study of persuasion. At the comprehension level, trust facilitates the inferential process as it allows for full benefit of the optimal relevance guarantee. Trust, as we have seen, affects the amount of processing expended by a hearer, and whether or not any “change of meaning” is to take place. At the attitude change level, trust also has an important role and we need a better understanding of it, specifically in the marketing environment. Attribution theory can probably shed greater light on this issue.

7 Conclusion

I have shown that there are clear indications in the pragmatics and social psychology literatures that both fields would benefit from closer links. Persuasion, as I have also shown, is a specific area of research that can be the catalyst for such a rapprochement. By offering the outline of a model of persuasion integrating theories from both disciplines, I hope to have set the stage for further work to help accomplish this goal.

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