How is Social Psychology Used in Advertising Research? A Theoretical Contribution

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Abstract

The purpose of this theoretical paper is to present the application of elaboration likelihood model (ELM) to investigate consumer attitude formation and change resulting in persuasion outcomes to current advertising research. Therefore, this paper presents an illustrative example on how can advertising firms could develop advertisements considering the attitude formation and change resulting in persuasion outcomes through the Elaboration Likelihood Model.

Keywords: Social Psychology, Advertising, Theoretical Contribution, Elaboration Likelihood Model
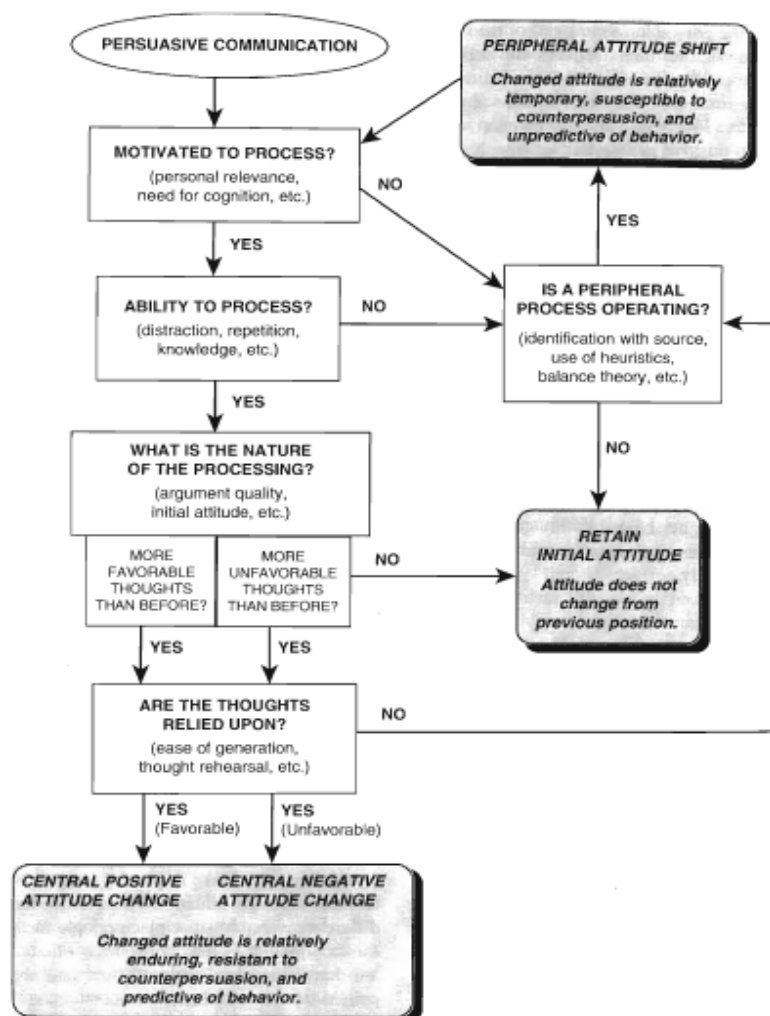
Introduction

The author reviewed several theoretical and empirical papers which applied the ELM in advertising context. Based on the literature, author presents the application of ELM to a Lipton tea advertisement. Further this application shows how can advertising firms could develop advertisements considering the attitude formation and change resulting in persuasion outcomes.

Overview of the Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) is a dual process theory of attitude formation and change resulting in persuasion outcomes (Petty & Cacioppo, 2012). Attitudes are formed and modified as individuals obtain and process information related to the type of information they receive, and the cognitive energy each decides to expend to process that information (Cyr, Head, Lim, & Stibe, 2018). This model was introduced to the academic literature by Petty and Cacioppo in 1981. The ELM provides an organizing framework for persuasion that is argued to be applicable to various source, message, recipient and context variables (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Persuasion refers to human communication that is devised to influence the autonomous actions and judgments of others (Cyr et al., 2018). The basic principle of the ELM is the presence of two routes to persuasion: the central and peripheral routes. These are anchored at two opposite points on a continuum, which represents the likelihood of cognitive effort being expended to process a message (Kitchen, Kerr, Schultz, McColl, & Pals, 2014).

There are two distinct routes to persuasion in ELM, the central route, designed for high elaborators and the peripheral route, designed for low elaborators (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The central route is accessed via an individual's thoughtful attention to the quality of the information and argumentation in a message. On the other hand, the peripheral route is a way to persuade individuals unlikely to scrutinize the message itself but instead turn to affective cues embedded at the message's periphery. These peripheral cues include but are not limited to the credibility of the source, the style of the production, and the entertaining bells and whistles folded into its structure, such as the inclusion of music or a colourful logo (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984). It is important to consider whether someone is likely to carefully attend to educational information or process it peripherally (Rucker & Petty, 2006). Figure 1 depicts the schematic representation of the ELM as a series of formal prepositions (Van Lange, Kruglanksi, & Higgins, 2011).

Figure 1: Elaboration Likelihood model schematic representation

Source: Van Lange, P., Kruglanksi, A., & Higgins, T. (2011). *Theories of social psychology: An introduction.*

Model application to an advertisement

The below Table 1 provides the summary of the research which applied ELM model in advertising context.

Table 1: Summary of the literature

| Source	Journal	Focus
Cho (1999)	Journal of Current Issues Research in Advertising	How advertising works on the WWW: Modified elaboration likelihood model
Karson and Korgaonkar (2001)	Journal of Current Issues Research in Advertising	An experimental investigation of internet advertising and the elaboration likelihood model
Dotson and Hyatt (2000)	Journal of Business Research	Religious symbols as peripheral cues in advertising: A replication of the elaboration likelihood model
Te'eni-Harari, Lampert, and Lehman-Wilzig (2007)	Journal of Advertising Research	Information processing of advertising among young people: The elaboration likelihood model as applied to youth
Lien (2001)	Proceedings of the National Science Council	Elaboration likelihood model in consumer research: A review
Kitchen et al. (2014)	European Journal of Marketing	The elaboration likelihood model: review, critique and research agenda
Sher and Lee (2009)	Social Behaviour Personality: an international journal	Consumer skepticism and online reviews: An elaboration likelihood model perspective
Oh and Jasper (2006)	Clothing Textiles Research Journal	Processing of apparel advertisements: application and extension of elaboration likelihood model
Cacioppo and Petty (1984)	ACR North American Advances	The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion
Morris, Woo, and Singh (2005)	Journal of Targeting, Measurement Analysis for Marketing	Elaboration Likelihood Model: A missing intrinsic emotional implication
Trampe, Stapel, Siero, and Mulder (2010)	Psychology & Marketing	Beauty as a tool: The effect of model attractiveness, product relevance, and elaboration likelihood on advertising effectiveness
Szczepanski (2006)	Doctor of Philosophy Thesis	General and special interest magazine advertising and the elaboration likelihood model: a comparative content analysis and investigation of the effects of differential route processing execution strategies
Schumann, Kotowski, Ahn, and Haugtvedt (2012)	Advertising theory	The elaboration likelihood model
Scholten (1996)	Journal of Business Research	Lost and found: the information-processing model of advertising effectiveness
Tang (2009)	Doctor of Philosophy Thesis	Destination websites as advertising: An application of Elaboration Likelihood Model
McAlister and Bargh (2016)	Young Consumers	Dissuasion: The elaboration likelihood model and young children
(Areni & Lutz, 1988)	ACR North American Advances	The role of argument quality in the elaboration likelihood model
Bitner and Obermiller (1985)	ACR North American Advances	The elaboration likelihood model: Limitations and extensions in marketing
Petty, Priester, and Brinol (2002)	psycnet.apa.org	Mass media attitude change: Implications of the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion
Yuan (2011)	Book Review	An experimental investigation of expanding elaboration likelihood model in advertising research

Park, Turner, and Pastore (2008)	Sport management review	Effective public service advertisements to attract volunteers for the Special Olympics: An elaboration likelihood perspective
Bhutada, Rollins, and Perri III (2017)	Health Communication	Impact of animated spokes-characters in print direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertising: An Elaboration Likelihood Model Approach
Jones, Shultz, and Chapman (2006)	International Journal of Selection Assessment	Recruiting through job advertisements: The effects of cognitive elaboration on decision making
Leong, Hew, Ooi, and Lin (2019)	Journal of Computer Information Systems	Do electronic word-of-mouth and elaboration likelihood model influence hotel booking
Lee and Koo (2016)	Psychology & Marketing	Can a celebrity serve as an issue-relevant argument in the elaboration likelihood model
Lammers (2000)	Psychological reports	Effects of deceptive packaging and product involvement on purchase intention: an elaboration likelihood model perspective
Robinson (2002)	researcharchive.lincoln.ac.nz	Examining advertorials: An application of the elaboration likelihood model
Schumann (1986)	ACR North American Advances	When Does Television Programming Affect Consumer Attitudes Towards an Advertised Product? Explaining Context Effects Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model
Hennessey and Anderson (1990)	ACR North American Advances	The interaction of peripheral cues and message arguments on cognitive responses to an advertisement
Yang (2015)	Electronic commerce research applications	An eye-tracking study of the Elaboration Likelihood Model in online shopping

Source: Developed by author

The ELM model was developed during the mass-media marketing communication days of the 1980s. Thus, it is possible the media environment and the way consumers' process advertising exposures may well have changed, possibly dramatically (Kitchen, 2013). Issues such as simultaneous media usage and insights from neuroscience raise additional concerns. Theories underpinning the marketing discipline have largely been left unexamined and, when tested, have a poor record of replication (Evanschitzky, Baumgarth, Hubbard, & Armstrong, 2007). Based on the above literature, this model been applied in various settings in advertising literature. However, very little research has applied this model to investigate the consumer attitude change for video advertisements.

Therefore, this paper presents the sample application of ELM to a Lipton tea advertisement as follows. The selected tea advertisement is 'New Lipton Magnificent Matcha Takes You Inside the Cup' which attracted reported viewers of over 3.4 million times as In 2016, Lipton Tea company released this new advertisement with two different video versions of 360-degree and standard (Shoot, 2016). When launching the product of Magnificent Matcha which is a tea product, both video versions took the viewer on a sensual journey of inside a cup of tea. Below Figure 2 shows visuals of some of the screenshots of the selected advertisement.

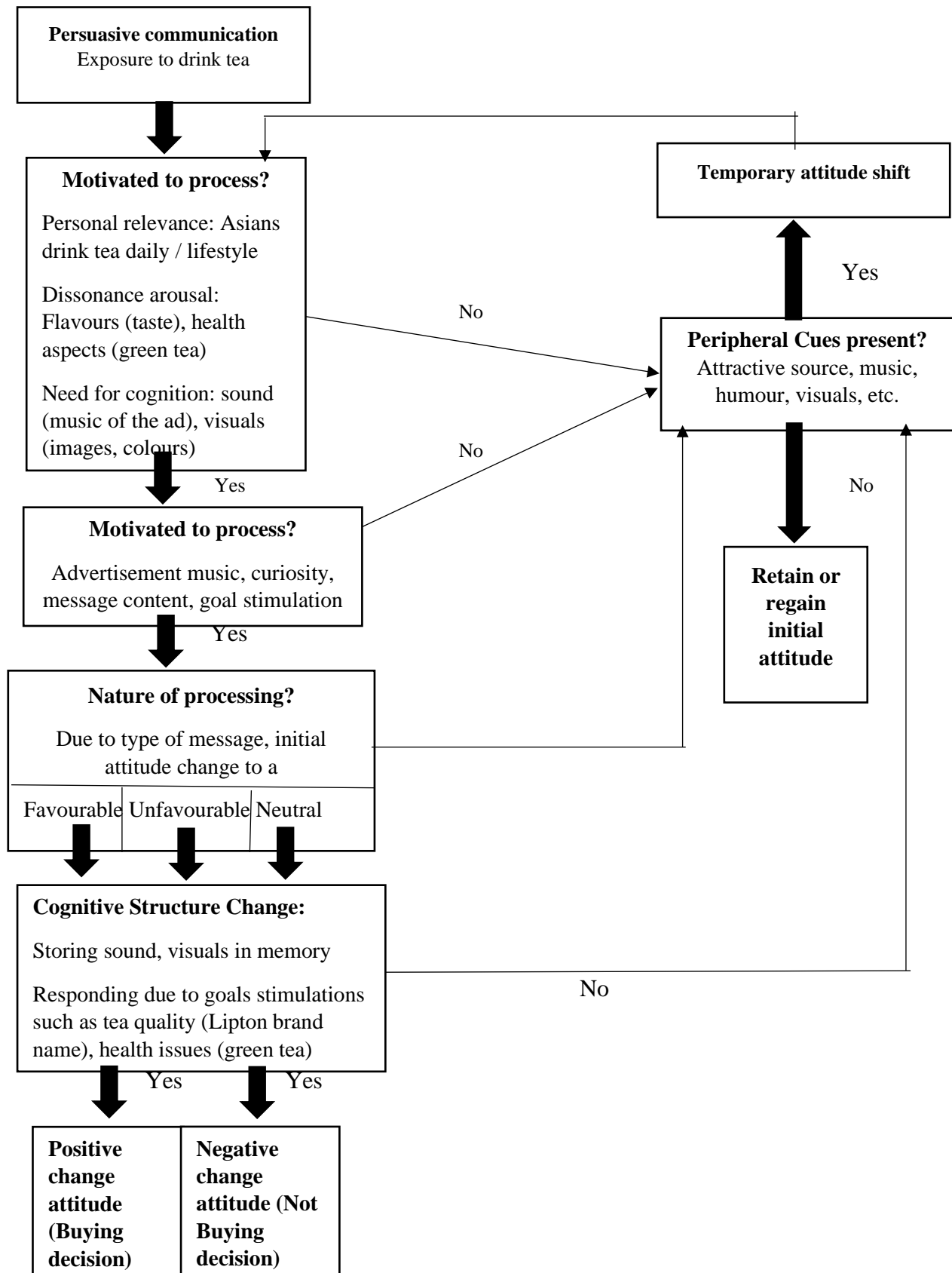Figure 2: Screenshots of the Lipton advertisement
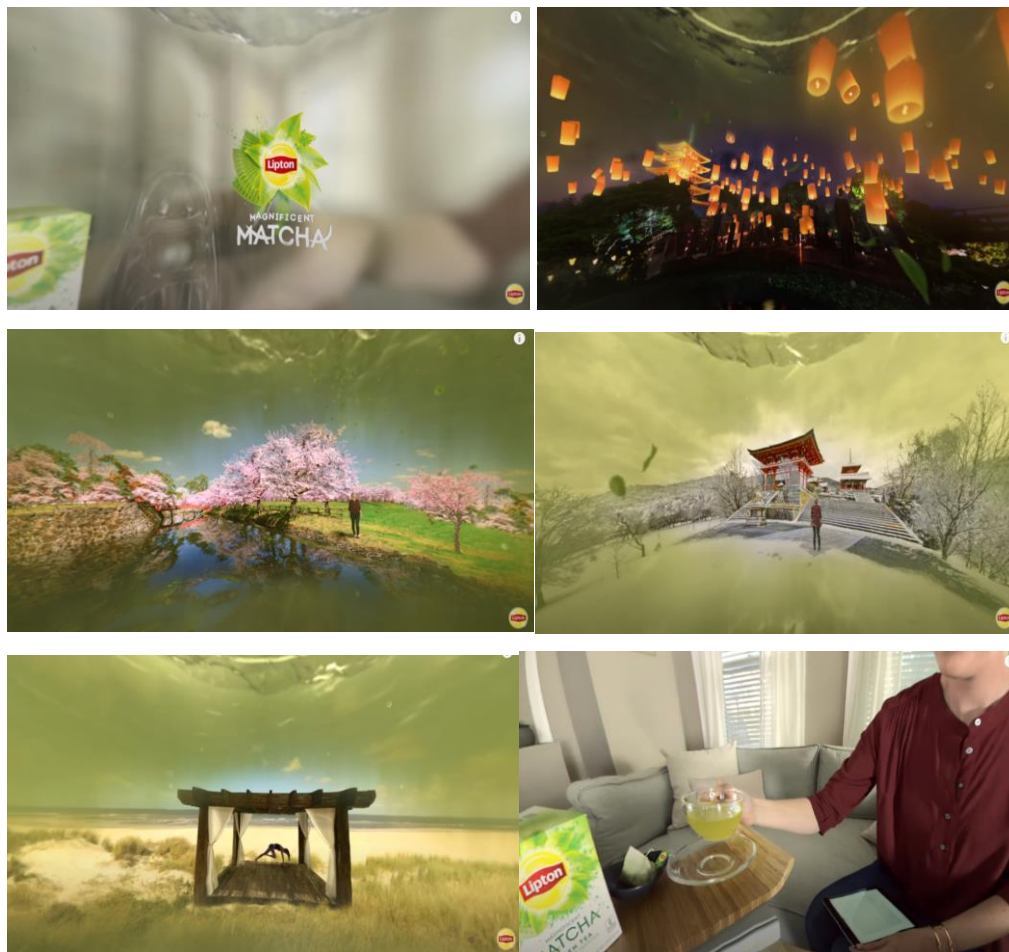
Source: Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Myri_gIqT4

The very first step in the information process in the ELM is persuasive communication according to Figure 1. When applying the video advertisement on Lipton tea, firstly the persuasive communication refers to exposure to drink tea. This will be motivated through personal relevance such as people who drink tea daily (example: Lifestyle of Asians). This can be further motivated through dissonance arousal such as tea taste (example: strawberry flavour, cinnamon flavour etc.) or through cognition activities such as memory (advertisement music, celebrities, visuals), goal stimulation (health goals activated such as green tea due to lower cholesterol etc.) Further, motivation to process is also activated through temporary attitude shift. This is done through existing peripheral cues of the advertisement such as bright colours, music, visuals, humour, attractive celebrities etc. If these peripheral cues are not working, then the consumer's attitude does not change through advertisement. If the consumer got motivated after the content of the advertisement, then they become likely to process further such as they seek more information about the product or

tend to seek more knowledge about the product (more content of the advertisement), they activate more goals (for example: quantity goals with how many tea bags per packet, quality goals through seeking the reputation of the brand name such as Lipton / Dilmah). This ability to process will then converts to a favourable thought, unfavourable though or neutral thought. If the consumer attitude is favourable, the cognitive structure will change such as the advertisement content will be stored in the memory, consumer will likely to buy the product as the ultimate response. Therefore, favourable thoughts lead to favourable consumer attitude change and unfavourable thoughts leads to negative attitude change. The below Figure 3 further, depicts the example application of ELM to Lipton tea advertisement as follows;

Figure 3: The example application of the ELM to Lipton tea advertisement

Persuasive communication
Exposure to drink tea

Motivated to process?

Personal relevance: Asians drink tea daily / lifestyle

Dissonance arousal: Flavours (taste), health aspects (green tea)

Need for cognition: sound (music of the ad), visuals (images, colours)

No

Temporary attitude shift

Yes

Peripheral Cues present?
Attractive source, music, humour, visuals, etc.

No

Yes

Motivated to process?

Advertisement music, curiosity, message content, goal stimulation

No

Yes

Retain or regain initial attitude

Nature of processing?

Due to type of message, initial attitude change to a

| Favourable | Unfavourable | Neutral |

No

Cognitive Structure Change:

Storing sound, visuals in memory

Responding due to goals stimulations such as tea quality (Lipton brand name), health issues (green tea)

Yes   Yes

Positive change attitude (Buying decision)

Negative change attitude (Not Buying decision)

Source: Developed by Author based on the source of Petty and Cacioppo (1983)

Therefore, above diagram provides an illustrative example on how to apply Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to investigate attitude formation and change resulting in persuasion outcomes in advertising context. As a result, future researchers can apply ELM to investigate different sub sections in advertising research, including change or formation of brand attitudes, enhancement of product image and consumer goal stimulation etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study contributes important findings to the current research. From a theoretical perspective, the application of a social psychology theory for advertising sector enables to gather more insights about social cognition stages of a human mindset such as attitude change, information retrieval, judgement, decision making, goal stimulation etc. From a practical perspective, findings of this study provide a solid foundation for the future advertising firms or agencies, marketers and salespeople on how to design effective advertisements in a way that change the consumer attitude.

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