

THE EFFECTS OF ATTITUDE FORMATION AND ARGUMENT QUANTITY ON PERSUASION

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ABSTRACT

The experiment was conducted to assess the susceptibility of direct- and indirect-experience attitudes to proattitudinal and counterattitudinal messages which varied with the number of arguments (either six or two). The results were consistent with Wu and Shaffer's (1987) findings. That is, participants with direct-experience attitudes agreed less to the counterattitudinal appeals, but agreed more to the proattitudinal messages than did those with indirect-experience attitudes. Furthermore, they were not influenced by the manipulation of argument quantity. For those with indirect-experience attitudes, when the appeals were counterattitudinal, the message with six arguments elicited more agreement than with two arguments; but when it was proattitudinal, the results were reversed. In general, the findings of this study are consistent with the predictions derived from Petty and Cacioppo's (1981, 1986) elaboration likelihood model. However, further examination of the data of cognitive and affective responses generated by subjects while receiving the communication indicated that a more comprehensive explanation of the obtained results should include the function of affect in the attitude change process.