

THE PERSUASIVENESS OF THE ARGUMENT BASIS, COMMUNICATOR'S STATUS AND MESSAGE PRESENTATION

MAN-LING CHANG and JEAW-MEI CHEN

National Chengchi University

ABSTRACT

The persuasive effects of argument basis (personal experience, survey vs. theory), the communicator's status (scholar vs. nonscholar), and message presentation (quantitative message vs. descriptive message) were investigated in the present study. "Source factor" in the past studies tended to be limited to the persons who communicate messages. But in reality, persuaders often present argument basis (the sources where the arguments came from) in their messages. This study therefore separated source factor into "communicator's status" and "argument basis". Also, experts in the past studies seemed to be synonymous with scholars with Ph. D. degrees, but not with persons who have rich experiences yet low academic degrees. Therefore, communicator's status in this experiment was manipulated as scholars vs. nonscholars based on their educational backgrounds, and personal experience was manipulated as one level of the variable "argument basis". The other two levels of this variable were "theory" and "survey". Communicators' arguments were often accompanied by numbers, so the numerical effects in the persuasive message were also examined. The results indicated that the scholar was more persuasive than the nonscholar, especially when their arguments were based on theory and presented with descriptive data. The nonscholar, however, if presented his message descriptively, personal experience was more persuasive than theory. If he based his arguments on theory, the quantitative message was more persuasive than the descriptive one. This study also found that subjects perceived the vividness of the three messages with different bases was significantly different, yet the persuasiveness of these messages was not found to be significantly different from one another.