Creating Resistance to Persisting Persuasive Attempts

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- Research has shown that an effective way to create resistance to a persuasive attempt is to stimulate individuals to generate counterarguments or to provide them with counterarguments against the persuasive message. In order to effectively implement this suggestion into a counterpersuasive strategy, it is important not only to incorporate effective counterarguments into a counterpersuasive communication, but also to make them salient while the audience is presented with the opponent’s message. However, organizations often find difficulty making their counterarguments salient during the presentation of the opponent’s claims. Furthermore, when organizations are unable to reach consumers as often as their opponents, the opponents’ claims naturally become more salient to the audience. If it were possible to somehow increase the salience of the counterarguments each time the audience is presented with the rival message, one should be able to strengthen resistance to that message each time the audience is presented with it.

- One way to increase the salience of the counterarguments is by creating a mnemonic link between the counterarguments and the target message. This link can be established by incorporating into the countermessage stimuli that are present in the target message (i.e., retrieval cues). As suggested by the encoding specificity principle (Tulving, 1983; Tulving & Schacter, 1990; Tulving & Thomson, 1973), such retrieval cues should bring into memory the counterarguments against the opponent’s claims with each successive presentation of those claims.

**METHOD**

- In 5 sessions participants viewed a variety of print advertisements.
- All participants initially saw a magazine ad promoting the environmental record of a chemical company, Zelotec. Previously, they had been informed that Zelotec was planning a move to Tempe, Arizona and was petitioning to build a chemical manufacturing plant there. Participants received subsequent information that differed by experimental condition.

**RESULTS**

- Overall, across sessions, only the mnemonic links condition was significantly different from the control condition.
- There was a significant linear effect of the repeated exposure in the mnemonic links condition, but not in the other two conditions.

**DEPENDENT VARIABLES**

**PERSUASIVENESS OF ZELOTEC’S AD (RELIABILITY = .93)**

- How much do you like the ad?
- What overall rating would you give the ad?
- How concerned do you think Zelotec is about protecting the environment?
- To what extent do you think Zelotec protects the environment?
- To what extent do you think Zelotec pollutes the environment?
- If you were a member of the Tempe City Council and were eligible to vote, how likely would you be to vote in favor of allowing Zelotec to open a plant in the area?

**HONESTY OF ZELOTEC’S AD (RELIABILITY = .95)**

- In your opinion, how honest is the ad?
- In your opinion, how truthful is the ad?
- To what extent do you feel that you can trust the information presented in the ad?
- To what extent do you feel that you can believe the information presented in the ad?
- To what extent do you feel that the ad accurately portrays the corporation?
- To what extent do you feel that the ad is unbiased?