

Department
Business and Management

Chair
International Marketing

KEYS TO THE POWER OF PERSUASION

**The imaginative potential of concrete language
on message persuasiveness**

- ABSTRACT -

SUPERVISOR
Prof. Michele Costabile

CO-SUPERVISOR
Prof. Marco Francesco Mazzù

CANDIDATE
Marco D'Epifanio
655041

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Chapter 1

DYNAMICS OF WORD OF MOUTH

Word of Mouth (hereafter WOM) has been broadly defined as an informal communication among consumers regarding products, services, brands or firms (Dichter, 1966). The main characteristic of this communication, as highlighted by Arndt (1967), is the nature of the source as non-commercial. It means the source hasn't any actual or direct interest in the business purpose of the firm, even though there are other personal drivers to WOM.

In order to briefly explain how WOM works and why it is a crucial component of marketing, we will faithfully report the most recent review of this phenomenon (De Angelis, 2012).

WOM drove the interest toward what influence individuals, in the last paragraph we will explain how a better understanding of persuasion research can improve the firm's WOM management.

1.1 How does it work

De Angelis (2012) identifies four typologies that categorize this phenomenon: valence (positive or negative), stage (generation or transmission), form (opinion or advice) and content (interesting or accessible).

Then, there are four product characteristics that constitute the most important scenarios for WOM: ease of evaluation, perceived risk, visibility and complexity.

The drivers of WOM have been classified in four categories of antecedents (De Angelis, 2012):

- **Transactional.** They are referred to the single consumption episode: *satisfaction, perceived quality, perceived value* and *second order satisfaction*.
- **Relational.** They are referred to the broader consumer-firm relationship: *loyalty, commitment* and *trust*.
- **Interpersonal.** They are referred to the relationship among WOM actors: *tie strength* between sender and receiver, their *affinity* and *similarity*.
- **Individual.** They are referred to the sender's personal motives that drive product conversations. A recent review (Berger, 2014) identifies 5 psychological factors (or functions) that shape WOM: Impression management, Emotion regulation, information acquisition, social bonding and persuasion.

1.2 Relevance

Kotler claimed that advertising is less impactful than peers communication in one of the first edition of its famous *Marketing Management* (1967). As time passed, WOM was judged as the most

effective and least understood marketing strategy (Misner, 1999) and it was found to influence from 50% to 70% of all purchase decisions (Balter, 2008; Bughin et al., 2010).

Nowadays, the study of WOM falls in a technological context that is radically different from that one in which marketers operated only two decades ago. As a consequence, the company's management of this phenomenon has to consider the following trends that can be easily observed:

- *Consumers are more susceptible to WOM;*
- *Consumers generate more WOM;*
- *Online WOM has a higher impact on firms than offline;*
- *Firms can control eWOM;*

The digital revolution led to the point that reputation of firms can rapidly inflate if positively nurtured by WOM as rapidly blow up due to negative WOM (such as a bubble).

WOM impacts some indicators that directly affect the firm's performance: customers acquisition, sales, stock price and consumer behaviour.

1.3 WOM and Persuasion

Marketing strategy can be outlined through sophisticated persuasion tools that can have several applications as: advertising, social media, WOM marketing and online reviews.

Chapter 2

PERSUASION: PROCESSES AND VARIABLES

Up to now, social psychologists contributed mostly to the growth and development of persuasion knowledge, for this reason they will be the giants on which shoulders we will build in this dissertation.

Persuasion is a communication process with a conscious attempt to change another's attitude in an atmosphere of free choice. As we can see, there are four main ingredients that define the concept of persuasion: communication process (presence of a source, message, recipient and context), conscious attempt, the objective is attitude change (it means create a predisposition toward something, persuasion cannot aim directly to behaviour because that would be coercion) and free choice.

In *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (Cialdini, 2006) it is explained that the human mind is susceptible of some automatic reactions it cannot control, as a consequence six weapons can be used to persuade others:

- **Reciprocity.** When someone gives us something for free, it is human nature to feel obligated to return the favour.

- **Consistency.** The human mind has an almost obsessive need to be consistent with things we do.
- **Social proof.** People adjust their behaviour on the base of what others do.
- **Liking.** People we like exert a higher power in making us comply with their requests.
- **Authority.** Information from a recognized authority can provide us a valuable shortcut for deciding how to act in a situation.
- **Scarcity.** Opportunities seem more valuable to us when their availability is limited.

These principles belongs to a specific area of persuasion processes.

2.1 Bases of Attitudes

An attitude is a general evaluation he has regarding objects, issues, places or other people (Allport, 1935). They are characterized by a relative enduringness over time and by a structural valence that can range from very positive through neutral (representing the absence of the attitude) to very negative. The things toward which we have the highest attitudes are those that can more easily found in our choices: if I buy an iPhone it means I have a more positive attitude toward it in comparison with competitor brands.

2.1.1 Structure

The **expectancy value theory** (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) explains that the attitude toward an object depends on the beliefs that the individual has about that object.

All these beliefs determines the attitude as a multiplicative function of:

- *Expectancy*, (i.e., likelihood) that means how likely the attribute/consequence can be associated to the object (in other words, it's an evaluation of the belief strength);
- *Value*, (i.e., desirability) that is the evaluation of how desirable the attribute is in a scale such as good-bad, positive-negative or favourable-unfavourable;

Lesson #1 – In order to change an attitude, it is necessary to modify value or expectancy of actual beliefs or adding new beliefs with the best expectancy-value combination, any change has to be linked with a causal explanation.

Another consideration about the beliefs behind an attitude is about their nature. According to the **tripartite theory** (or ABC model of attitudes, Breckler, 1984), a belief can belong to one of the following three areas:

- *Affective*: it includes emotions or feelings (e.g., “Owning this smartphone makes me happy”);
- *Behavioral*: it includes actions or behaviours (e.g., “I have just tried this smartphone”), that means people may infer attitudes from their past actions;

- *Cognitive*: it includes cognitions or thoughts (e.g., “The battery of this smartphone stands for 4 hours”);

Lesson #2 – It is more effective to change an attitude by using contents that match the area of beliefs (Affective, Behavioral or Cognitive) that is (or even that is perceived to be) the most relevant.

2.1.2 Why are they used

The **functional theory of attitudes** explains they are necessary to manage the every-day life, they are useful to guide people in decisions, they help to cope with the surrounding environment. That is, attitudes are functional. The main functions they have are catalogued by researchers on the base of the benefits they provide (Katz, 1960; Maio & Olson, 2000): knowledge, utilitarian, social adjustive, social identity, value-expressive, ego-defensive.

Lesson #3 – In order to increase the attitude toward an object, it is first necessary to understand what’s that object’s main function for individuals and then use arguments that support that function.

2.1.3 Attitudes and behaviour

Attitude’s **strength** is the most relevant factor that can predict to what extent an attitude will guide behavior. Strong attitudes are those that influence decisions and behavior, are persistent over time and are resistant to counterpersuasion (Krosnick & Petty, 1995).

For what concerns the causes that make an attitude strong, there is a multitude of indicators that are identified as the determinants of attitude’s strength. The most recent review about this topic (Visser, Bizer & Krosnick, 2006) lists the followings: extremity, importance, knowledge, accessibility, elaboration, certainty, ambivalence and structural consistency.

2.1.4 Measurement

Attitude assessments can be usefully distinguished considering the degree of directness through which the attitude is measured.

Direct techniques simply ask respondents for an evaluation of the attitude object. **Indirect** techniques, on the other hand, infers the individual’s attitude from his reactions or behaviours.

The effect of persuasion is directed toward attitudes, thus it can be measured on the base of how the initial attitude does change. In an early classification (Miller, 1980), three possible goals of persuasion were identified or, in other words, three possible effects of attitude change: *shaping*, *reinforcing* or *changing* in the strict sense.

The extent of persuasion (or *attitude change differential*) can be computed for a single individual as the difference of attitude level before and after the persuasive message. If there are several groups of respondents (e.g., one group receives strong arguments and the other weak arguments) we can compute a relative measure of attitude change by asking only the attitude level after the persuasive message and then making a comparison among groups. Finally, persuasion can be asked on a numeric scale directly (“how much do you think the message is convincing or persuading?”), it can be inferred from intentions (“are you going to put into practice the message’s position?”) or even from behavior (“do you want to buy this product?”; “do you want to share the message?”).

2.2 Historical Background

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (hereafter ELM) is the contemporary framework that is currently used to understand persuasion processes and variables. Before explaining this model, its historical foundations will be briefly highlighted.

Psychology was the discipline who pioneered studies on persuasion, it began in 1930s with research on attitudes (Allport, 1935) and attitude change (Hovland’s experiments during World War II).

Hovland and his colleagues took concepts and ideas from Aristotele and started to systematically study how different variables affect persuasion (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953).

Their approach holds that the persuasion process requires several steps: attention, comprehension, learning, acceptance and retention of the message. Thus, the effect of any variable can be predicted considering how it influences this process: distracting someone from message reduces persuasion because it interferes learning, a credible source enhances persuasion because it motivates people to pay attention to the message. This theory provided a very logical and linear beginning, indeed it is based on the *single effect* and *single process* assumptions (for a historical review see Petty & Briñol, 2008).

From ’50s to ’80s scientific research simply exploded, a huge quantity of data and an impressive number of theories have been proposed. However, the more empirical results were discovered the less agreement about the dynamics of persuasion was achieved: whatever effect was demonstrated in one study, following results showed the opposite effect.

Another development in this period is the **cognitive response theory** (Greenwald, 1968), it’s relevant because it goes beyond the learning approach’s assumption that people are like sponges that passively absorb the information they receive. Instead, how people cognitively react to the persuasive message is the real determinant of persuasion (that is how much mental effort they use), even more important than the message itself.

As researchers found contradicting results, the necessity of new theories to accommodate these findings was finally satisfied in the 1980s. The two most popular models, the Elaboration

Likelihood Model (ELM) and the Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM), were originally proposed in doctoral dissertations and subsequently they were expanded into full persuasion theories (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Chaiken, Liberman & Eagly, 1989). Both models are rooted in the cognitive response approach, thus they support the cognitive effort (called *elaboration* by the ELM and *processing* by the HSM) as the main determinant of persuasion effectiveness.

What they add is that people do not always exert mental effort when facing a persuasive message but they can also use mental shortcuts that avoid them to waste mental resources.

2.3 The Elaboration Likelihood Model

The name of the model suggests that there are factors affecting the probability (*Likelihood*) that an individual will strongly *Elaborate* on the persuasive message. Elaboration is the extent to which a person scrutinize message arguments “in light of the associations available from memory” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, p. 128).

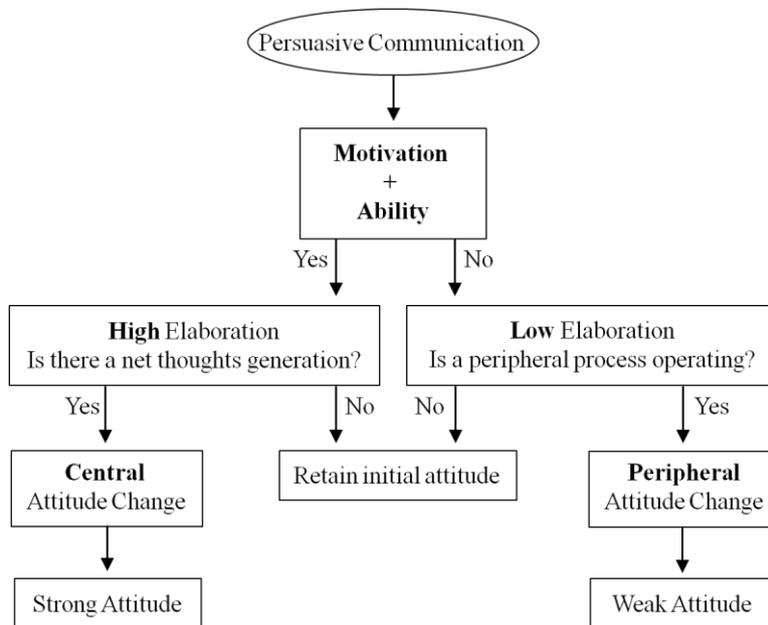
The ELM assumes that elaboration ranges in a continuum from **low** to **high**. Only in the high extreme people will ponder issue-relevant information and the merits of arguments in relation to knowledge they already possess. In the opposite case people will engage in a number of less effort-demanding processes (such as the mechanisms presented by Cialdini) that allow them to arrive quickly and easily to a conclusion.

When are individuals particularly likely to elaborate persuasive messages? Luckily, the answer is very intuitive: it depends on how much the individual *want* and *can* elaborate the message. More formally, the two factors are (Petty, Wheeler & Tormala, 2010):

- **Motivation:** it is the desire to exert a high level of mental effort. It depends on how much the individual is personally involved with the issue and also on a psychological trait called Need for Cognition;
- **Ability:** it is the availability of the necessary skills and opportunity to engage in thinking. These depends on prior knowledge about the issue and on other opportunity factors (such as distractions or message repetition) that can hamper or enhance ability to think;

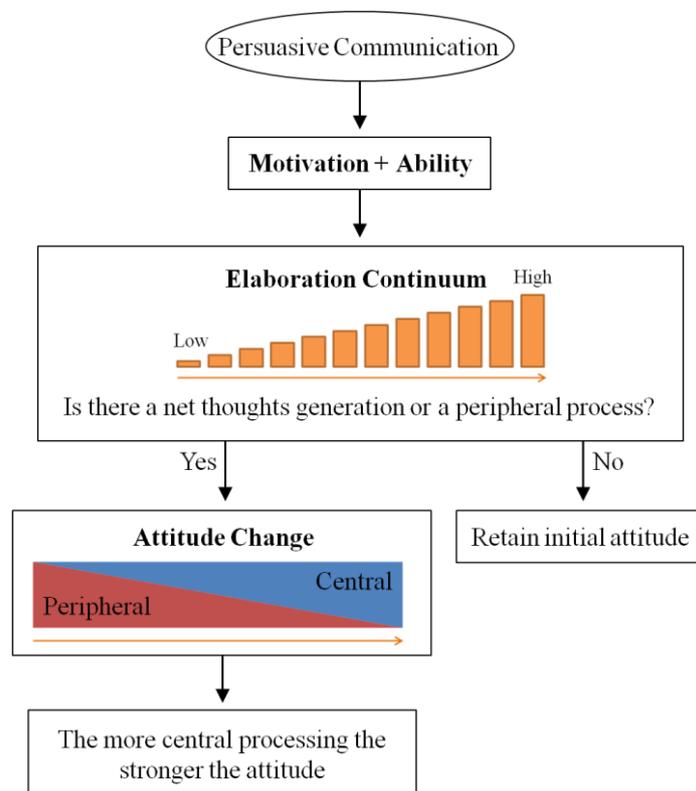
The elaboration level will directly determine how attitudes will change, that is how persuasion will occur: in the high extreme of the elaboration continuum, attitudes will change through the **central route**, when instead the elaboration likelihood is low, attitudes will change through the **peripheral route**.

What the model postulates, and confirms through empirical experiments, is that these ways to persuasion vary in their effectiveness: attitude changes coming from the central route (i.e., high mental effort) are **stronger** than changes coming from the peripheral route.



The previous diagram is as easy to comprehend as technical incorrect.

For the reason why it is a discrete representation that rigidly distinguishes between high and low, central and peripheral, it fails to depict how the ELM explains a more complex reality. The co-existence of both central and peripheral routes to persuasion, that jointly influence judgments, is the implication of the *tradeoff hypothesis*. What this notion says is that movements in either direction along the elaboration continuum tend to enhance the relative impact of one route over the other (Petty, Wheeler & Tormala, 2010). In order to graphically include both the elaboration continuum and the tradeoff hypothesis, we propose a different representation of the ELM.



2.4 High- and Low- Elaboration Processes

The main processes that can be activated when motivation and ability to think are low can be divided in **associative** processes (*classical conditioning, affective priming, mere exposure*) and **inference-based** processes (*balance, attribution, heuristics, priming*).

When the individual is able and motivated to actively think about the issue, three high elaboration processes can produce persuasion: elaboration due to the interaction with a **persuasive message** (cognitive response approach), **self-persuasion** without any message (role-playing exercises or simply asking to think about the topic) or self-persuasion as a result of a **dissonance process** (theory of cognitive dissonance, it can be exploited by *inducing compliance* or *inducing hypocrisy*).

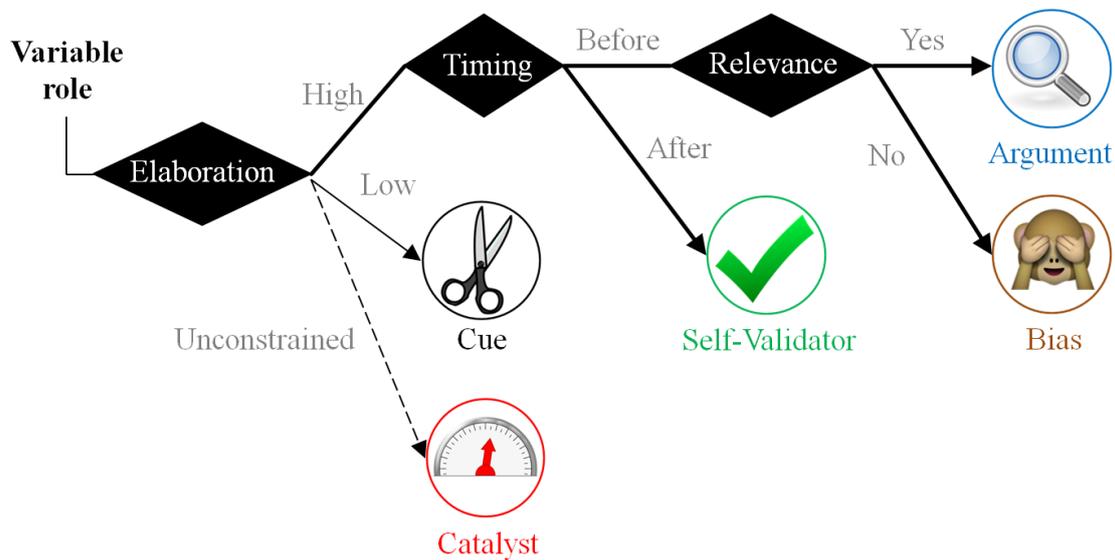
In case of a persuasion message, what makes an argument strong for the purpose of attitude change? The answer is embedded in the previous lessons we learned by studying attitudes.

When elaboration is high, it doesn't mean he will do it in an objective manner (Petty, Wheeler & Tormala, 2010). Indeed, both motivation and ability to think can be biased by any factor that can influence the direction of thinking.

2.5 Multiple Roles Hypothesis

The ELM identifies for any given variable in the persuasion setting (referred to source, message, recipient or context) 5 different roles it can potentially assume in influencing attitudes. That means, the same variable can affect persuasion in five different ways, the one that will occur can be predicted on the base of some parameters:

- **Cue.** It is any signal that the recipient with low ability and motivation to think can use in order to save mental effort and engage in low elaboration processes.
- **Argument.** If the variable is relevant in order to evaluate the attitude object, the recipient with high motivation and ability to think will scrutinize it as an argument (together with all other arguments).
- **Bias.** When elaboration is high, a given variable could bias the direction of thinking toward a conclusion that is either preferred (due to biased motivational factors) or constrained (by biased ability factors).
- **Catalyst.** When the recipient is not sure about how much effort the issue deserves (and there are no constraints on mental effort), a given variable may influence the amount of thinking/processing it will be spent.
- **Self-Validator.** After a message has been processed in high elaboration, the subsequent discovery of a given variable may be used by the recipient to validate his own thoughts (whether they were favourable or unfavourable to the message's position).



However, two roles (i.e., self-validator and catalyst to think) require an additional parameter to predict their effect on persuasion: **Arguments' Quality**. If arguments are strong, dominant thoughts that will be generated after processing will be favourable to the message's position. Only in this condition the previous two roles will enhance persuasion by amplifying the impact of dominant thoughts. If, instead, dominant thoughts are unfavourable to the advocated message, a higher impact of them will reduce persuasion.

2.6 Variables of Persuasion

Persuasion variables (38 in this dissertation) constitute the keys to the success of persuasion together with the parameters that determine their role.

Variables affecting attitude change have traditionally been organized into source, message, recipient and context categories since Hovland's pioneering researches. Each variable will be discussed on the base of all available scientific experiments.

 Source	 Message	 Recipient	 Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Power • <i>Credibility</i> - Expertise - Trustworthiness • <i>Attractiveness</i> - Likability - Physical attractiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Content</i> - Sidedness - Arguments' quality - Arguments' quantity - Evidence - Narrative - Vividness - Unavailability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender - Intelligence - Self-esteem - Personal relevance - Prior knowledge - Need for cognition - Self-monitoring - Dogmatism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distraction - Repetition - Audience reactions - Forewarning - Mood - Confidence

<i>Amplifying factors:</i> - Speed of speech - Majority/minority status - Similarity - Number of sources - Powerless speech	- Emotions • <i>Structure and style</i> - Order of presentation - Conclusion drawing - Framing - Pace - Rhetorical questions - Intensity of language		
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In this dissertation, the effect of a new variable on persuasion will be presented.

The research question that will be empirically tested is about the relationship between message persuasiveness and the language abstractness/concreteness dimension as defined by the Linguistic Category Model (Semin & Fiedler, 1988).

Chapter 3

THE LINGUISTIC CATEGORY MODEL

The Linguistic Category Model (LCM hereafter, Semin & Fiedler, 1988) explains the categories of language that can be used to convey interpretations in terms of abstractness or concreteness when describing a social situation, that is a person’s behavior.

The first LCM’s distinction is straightforward: the difference between verbs and **adjectives**. They refer to the possession of qualities or properties. However these can regards not only persons but also objects, situations and even actions.

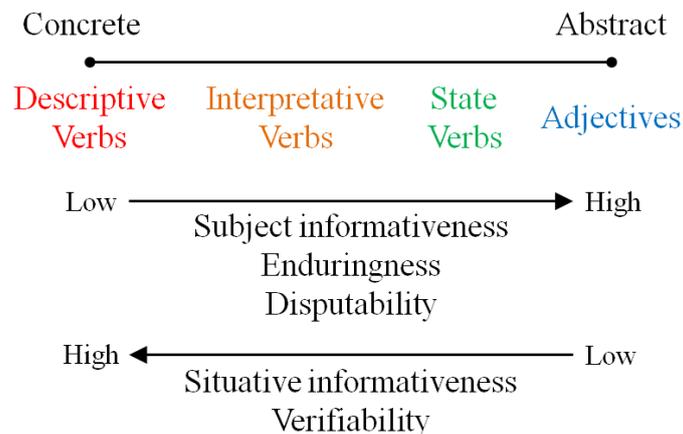
The following LCM distinction is among verbs. These can classified as:

- **Descriptive Action Verbs** (DAVs) refer to any single specific action (i.e., it has a clear beginning and end) that can be visualized in a physical context (*walk, meet, push*).
- **Interpretative Action Verbs** (IAVs) refers to any specific action such as DAVs (i.e., it has a clear beginning and end) but the main difference is that they cannot be objectively visualized in mind and thus they are very open to interpretation (*help, cheat, improve*).
- **State Action Verbs** (SAVs) are very similar to IAVs (i.e., defined beginning and end, evaluative component) but instead they don’t refer to an action itself but to the emotional consequences of it: *amaze, surprise, anger, excite*.
- **State Verbs** (SVs) refer to mental and emotional states that are relatively enduring, it means there isn’t any defined beginning and end: *admire, hate, like, prefer, love* are affective states while *think, understand, consider, accept, doubt* are cognitive states.

The model proposes that the different categories can be organized along a dimension of **concreteness-abstractness** (Semin & Fiedler, 1991):

- 1) **Descriptive** (DAVs, the most concrete);
- 2) **Interpretative** (IAVs include also SAVs because they don't differ significantly in abstraction level);
- 3) **State** (SVs);
- 4) **Adjectives** (ADJs, the most abstract);

These categories have the following psychological implications.



The way language categories are used have been found in intergroup relations, stereotypes, courtrooms and WOM. The effects of language concreteness/abstractness was used by receivers to infer the describer's attitude toward the described actor. Then concrete words were found to have advantages in terms of **cognitive processing** and **imageability**.

One experiment (Hansen & Wänke, 2010) found that concrete words increase the message's perception of **truth**, and this effect is mediated by the imageability of concrete words. Building on these solid results, the hypothesis we propose is:

H1: Concrete language has a higher effect on message persuasiveness in comparison with abstract language and this effect is mediated by visual imagery.

Chapter 4

POTENTIALITIES OF MENTAL IMAGERY

In one social experiment, subjects confused real perception with visual imagery (Perky, 1910). Following studies confirmed these hypotheses on a neurological basis: they found that 14 brain areas over 22 required by both tasks (two-thirds) were activated in common (Kosslyn et al., 1997).

Imagery is described as a process by which sensory information is represented in working memory within different levels of the elaboration continuum (for a review see MacInnis & Price, 1987).

Visual imagery involves only the sight dimension and it is the type of imagery that has received the highest attention in research, followed by auditory imagery, because they are the most dominant in individuals.

Effects

The research area of the imagery **consequences** have been ordered in high and low imagery processing in the review by MacInnis and Price (1987).

Imagery Strategies

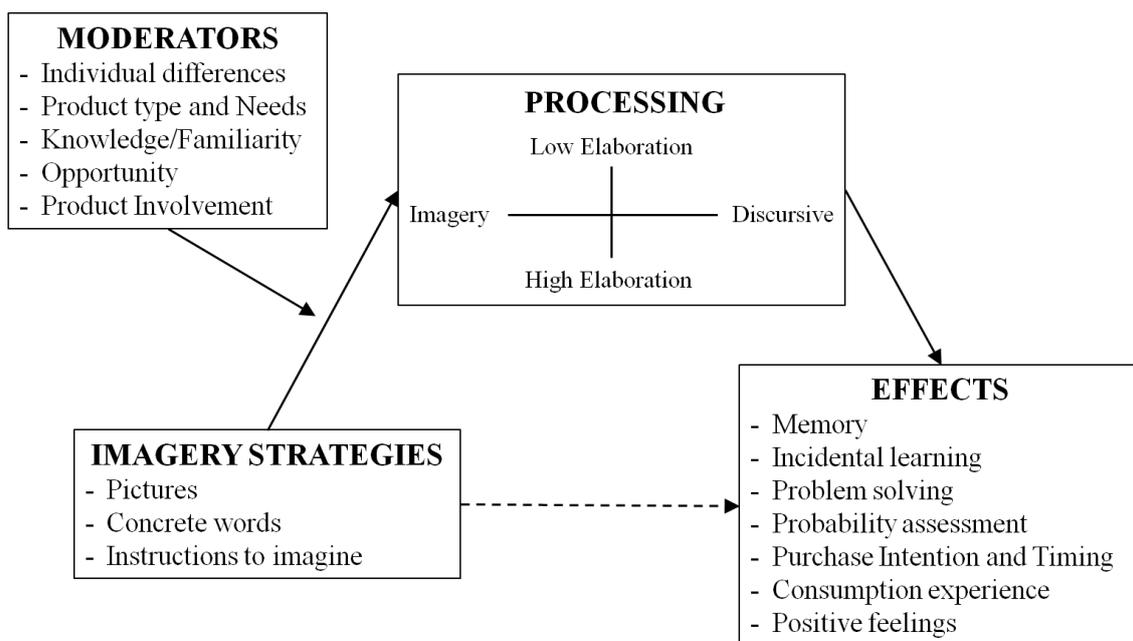
The **sources** that traditionally have been identified as inducing visual imagery are pictures, concrete words and instructions to imagine (for a review see Lutz & Lutz, 1978).

Moderators

The review by Babin, Burns and Biswas (1992) sum up the factors that influence the effectiveness of an imagery-evoking strategy. These **moderating** variables can thus amplify or hamper their effect on imagination. These are individual differences, product type, familiarity, opportunity and involvement.

Measurement

The **measurement** of imagery was initially referred to individual differences, following attempts the extent of imagination provoked by imagery-eliciting strategies were Ellen and Bone (1991), Babin and Burns (1998) and Miller et al. (2000).



In **advertising**, visual imagery was found to significantly affect consumers’ attitudes and intentions in contexts where they avidly search for some decision rules, such us experience goods and online purchasing.

Chapter 5

EXPERIMENTS PRESENTATION

The aim of this research is to study the effects of language abstractness or concreteness on message persuasiveness.

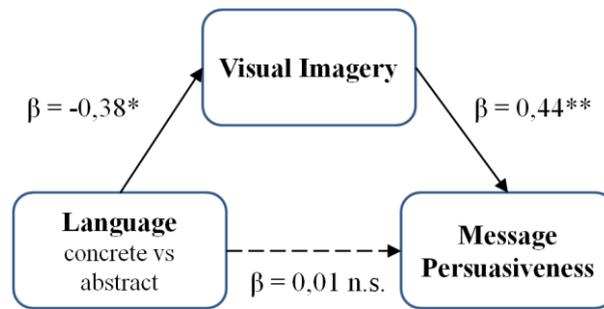
5.1 Study I

H1: Concrete language has a higher effect on message persuasiveness in comparison with abstract language and this effect is mediated by visual imagery.

The stimulus that is used in the experiment is a text message sustaining the effectiveness of a university course (Public Speaking), presented in abstract language (more adjectives) to half the participants and in concrete language (more descriptive action verbs) to the other half (approximately). After measuring the groups' ratings of persuasiveness and visual imagery for both messages, we can demonstrate which language is more persuasive and whether imagination provides an explanation for this.

On a statistical basis, results support the mediation model we proposed in H1.

Abstract Message	Concrete Message
<p>The course of Public Speaking is <u>regularly</u> taken by Alberto Castelvechi at Luiss.</p> <p>Alberto is an <u>expert</u> of different communication methods and he is <u>extremely able</u> to make the lesson <u>exciting</u> and <u>rich</u> of contents. <u>Undoubtedly</u> he is a <u>versatile</u> and <u>distinct</u> person.</p> <p>The course program is <u>highly varied</u> and <u>unpredictable</u>. All contents are proven to be <u>intensely educational</u> and to make students <u>satisfied</u> of the course. Principles learned by participants are <u>strongly advanced</u> and <u>transversal</u> to many contexts.</p> <p>The course will be <u>absolutely effective</u> in teaching how to speak in public.</p>	<p>The course of Public Speaking is <u>regularly</u> taken by Alberto Castelvechi at Luiss.</p> <p>During the course, Alberto <u>will present</u> some slides about the principles of public speaking and he will <u>explain</u> some relaxing techniques, by showing for example how to <u>swell</u> the belly when breathing.</p> <p>Among all exercises, participants will <u>move</u> to make lines and will <u>speak loudly</u> in order to learn how to <u>modulate</u> voice. Furthermore, they will <u>meet up</u> in groups with the purpose of <u>writing</u> a speech that, at the end of the course, they will <u>expose</u> to the class.</p> <p>The course will <u>improve</u> this way the capability to speak in public.</p>



5.2 Study II

The second experiment of our empirical analysis has two objectives. The first is to give solidity to the previous findings by varying some experimental parameters: the message sustained the effectiveness of the Homeopathic medicine, it was presented as a video and responses were collected in-lab.

The second goal is to introduce a new variable that we expect it works as a moderator of the language effect on persuasion: personal experience, that is having already approached the experience presented in the message (i.e. a homeopathic examination) or not.

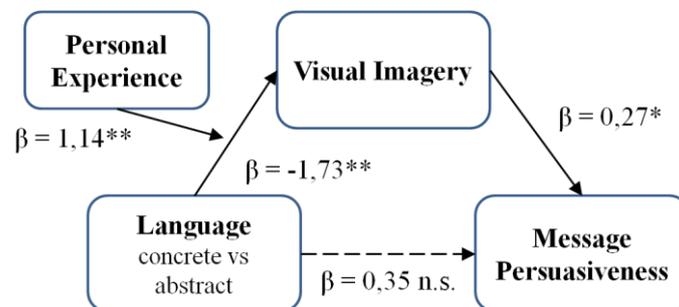
H2: The mediation effect of visual imagery between language concreteness and message persuasiveness is stronger when there has been a personal experience of the message's object.

The stimulus is a video message sustaining the effectiveness of this medicine, presented in abstract language to half of the participants and in concrete language to the other half. Once again, ratings of persuasiveness and visual imagery will be measured for both messages together with the measurement of personal experience.

The statistical analysis refuse H2 and support the opposite version: the mediation effect of visual imagery between language concreteness and message persuasiveness is stronger when there hasn't been a personal experience of the message's object.

Abstract Message	Concrete Message
<p>The homeopathic doctor is an <u>expert</u> of the symptoms' causes, he is <u>unbeatable</u> in this kind of research.</p> <p>The measurement machinery, namely the electronic acupuncturer, is <u>highly effective</u> and <u>reliable</u>. It is <u>extremely precise</u> and <u>technological</u> in order to measure both disequilibrium's causes and substances that</p>	<p>During the examination, the homeopathic doctor <u>tells</u> to the patient the symptoms' causes through a measurement machinery, that is the electronic acupuncturer. The doctor <u>gives</u> him two electrodes and after <u>pressing</u> some parameters on the machinery, he <u>looks</u> the results on the display.</p> <p>At the end, the doctor <u>writes</u> a chart with all the disequilibrium that have been <u>found</u> and the</p>

<p>will <u>solve</u> them with the <u>maximum</u> <u>certainty</u>.</p> <p>For this reason, the homeopathic medicine is <u>absolutely effective</u> as a cure.</p>	<p>substances that the patient has to <u>ingest</u> in order to <u>resolve</u> the problem. Both disequilibrium and substances are <u>found</u> through the electronic acupuncturer.</p> <p>For this reason, the homeopathic medicine <u>works</u> as a cure.</p>
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5.3 Discussion

The contributions of this dissertation can be used as practical advices in the marketing areas we suggested when talking about WOM: advertising could be tested in terms of imaginative potential (above all when presenting a new product/service), company's communications in social media will be more persuasive if set in concrete language, monitoring can consider concreteness as a proxy of influence in semantic analysis, WOM marketing could ask customers to concretely describe their product experiences, online reviews could benefit from a concreteness indicator for both companies and customers.

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Chapter 2 – PERSUASION: PROCESSES AND VARIABLES

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