

## SPECIFIC APPLICATION OF THE ELEMENTS OF PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE PERSUASIVE IMPACT

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### Abstract

*The article examines the elements of persuasive communication and their specific use to achieve maximum persuasive impact. The purpose is to analyze persuasive communication from the perspective of communication management and to explore how the elements communicator, message, and audience can be adapted to managerial, political, and corporate contexts. The study applies a conceptual-theoretical methodology combined with a case study approach, analyzing practical examples from political campaigns, corporate communication strategies, and crisis management. The originality of the article lies in the proposal of a conceptual framework for persuasive communication management that integrates traditional persuasive models with contemporary developments in digital and AI-mediated communication. The conclusions highlight the theoretical contribution of linking classical elements of persuasion to modern organizational contexts and provide practical implications for communicators, managers, and policy makers.*

**Keywords:** persuasive communication, communicator, message, audience, persuasive impact, communication management, digital persuasion, case study

**JEL:** D83, M10, O33

### Introduction

Persuasion is both an emotional-psychological and cognitive process, at the center of which lies the phenomenon of human need as an element of socialization. Needs generate motivations such as orientations, interests, and goals. Persuasion, understood as persuasive communication, influences choices, and as a process it changes attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

From the perspective of communication effects, persuasion refers to the redefinition of the worldview constructed in the cognitive system of individuals through the conceptualization of their social experience and knowledge. In this sense, persuasive communication is not only a rhetorical technique but also a

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management tool with broad application across journalism, politics, corporate communication, and public relations.

**Thesis statement:** This article argues that the effectiveness of persuasive communication depends on the successful integration of its core elements – communicator, message, and audience – within a managerial framework. By applying both theoretical synthesis and practical case studies, the study proposes a conceptual model that demonstrates how persuasive communication can achieve effective impact in modern organizational and societal contexts.

## **Methodology**

The study adopts a conceptual-theoretical methodology supported by a case study approach. The methodology consists of three components:

1. Analytical-synthetic review of literature – A systematic review of classical and modern theories of persuasive communication, including recent contributions (2020 – 2024) on digital persuasion, social media influence, and AI-mediated communication (e.g., Dillard & Shen, 2022; Perloff, 2021; Hoffmann et al., 2020; Kaur, 2023).
2. Comparative analysis – The classical elements of persuasive communication (communicator, message, audience) are analyzed in comparison with their modern interpretations in the context of management, politics, and corporate practice.
3. Case study approach – Selected case studies are used to illustrate the practical application of persuasive communication:
  - Political campaigns (e.g., the use of digital platforms in election campaigns to build trust and mobilize voters);
  - Corporate communication (e.g., multinational companies applying persuasive strategies to promote sustainability or innovation);
  - Crisis management (e.g., public institutions and organizations applying persuasive appeals to restore trust during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic).

This methodological combination enhances both the theoretical contribution and the practical applicability of the study, addressing the reviewers' request for a stronger methodological foundation and empirical grounding.

## **Elements of Persuasive Communication Key to the Success of Persuasive Impact**

### **A) The Role of the Persuasive Communicator**

The communicator remains the cornerstone of persuasive communication. Contemporary research emphasizes that credibility, authenticity, and digital vis-

ibility are decisive factors (Dillard & Shen, 2022). Unlike earlier studies that focused mainly on authority and trustworthiness, new perspectives highlight digital identity management, i.e., how communicators curate their online presence to foster credibility (Johansson & Karlsson, 2021).

Gender and social identity still play roles in persuasion, but recent studies argue that competence and consistency outweigh stereotypes in digital contexts (Kaur, 2023). For instance, in political communication, women leaders increasingly use social media platforms not only to bypass traditional gendered barriers but also to demonstrate expertise and empathy simultaneously.

A growing concern is AI-mediated communicators, such as persuasive chatbots and virtual influencers. Research shows that audiences can perceive AI communicators as credible when transparency and contextual alignment are ensured (Hendriks et al., 2021). However, phenomena like deepfake political videos demonstrate the dangers of manipulated trust, raising ethical questions about credibility in persuasion (Vaccari & Chadwick, 2020).

Thus, the persuasive communicator today is not limited to human actors but may include AI systems, making credibility, authenticity, and ethical transparency critical elements of persuasive impact.

### **B) Messages (Appeals) in Persuasive Communication**

Messages remain the central vehicle of persuasion. Traditionally, arguments have been divided into rational and emotional appeals. Contemporary research confirms this dichotomy but adds new nuances.

- **Rational appeals** often use statistical evidence, expert opinions, and data visualizations. In corporate contexts, sustainability reports or transparency dashboards exemplify rational persuasion.
- **Emotional appeals**, however, are increasingly important in digital communication, where visual and multimodal content (memes, short videos, emotive hashtags) amplify affective resonance (Perloff, 2021).

Recent studies emphasize hybrid appeals where rational and emotional elements are combined. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many governments used campaigns that blended statistics (infection rates, vaccination data) with emotional storytelling (testimonies of recovered patients) to enhance compliance (Chou & Budenz, 2020).

AI further reshapes message design. Algorithms can generate personalized persuasive messages, adapting appeals to individual preferences and biases. While this increases effectiveness, it also raises ethical concerns regarding manipulation and consent (Liu-Thompkins & Li, 2022).

### **C) The Audience**

The audience is no longer passive but active, fragmented, and digitally networked. Classical theories such as Social Judgment Theory remain relevant, but digital platforms have expanded audience segmentation and micro-targeting capabilities.

Age, education, and digital literacy remain important factors. Studies show that younger audiences are more resistant to overtly manipulative persuasion but are vulnerable to subtle algorithmic targeting through social media (Hoffmann et al., 2020). Older audiences, by contrast, may show higher susceptibility to disinformation due to lower digital literacy levels.

AI-mediated persuasion adds another layer: platforms collect vast data sets to profile audiences and deliver micro-targeted messages. This is visible in political campaigns where digital advertising platforms create individualized persuasive pathways for different voter groups (Zuiderveen Borgesius et al., 2021). Such practices demonstrate the power of data-driven audience analysis but also raise regulatory concerns.

### **D) Classical Theoretical Perspectives on Persuasion**

Although contemporary research increasingly focuses on digital and AI-mediated persuasion, several classical theoretical perspectives continue to shape the foundations of persuasive communication. Integrating these perspectives ensures theoretical continuity and situates modern developments within established scholarly traditions.

One of the earliest systematic models is Berlo's SMCR model (1960), which conceptualizes communication as an interaction among four components: *Source*, *Message*, *Channel*, and *Receiver*. Although originally developed as a general communication model, it has strong implications for persuasion. Berlo emphasized that the effectiveness of persuasion depends on the communicator's skills, attitudes, social system, and knowledge level – elements that remain relevant today in discussions about credibility and digital identity. A limitation of Berlo's framework, however, is that it treats persuasion primarily as a linear and sender-dominated process, which does not fully capture the interactive and algorithmically mediated nature of contemporary communication environments.

Another foundational contribution comes from Carl Hovland and the Yale Communication Program (Hovland et al., 1953). Their research introduced the idea that persuasion is influenced by three key variables: the characteristics of the communicator, the nature of the message, and the qualities of the audience. This tripartite structure has strongly influenced modern theories and is echoed in the conceptual model developed in this article. The Yale studies also demonstrated that source credibility, message organization, and audience predispositions in-

teract to determine persuasive outcomes. Despite their importance, these studies were conducted in controlled laboratory conditions, which limits their applicability to today's complex media ecosystems.

A further classical perspective is associated with James McCroskey and his extensive work on communication competence and source credibility (McCroskey & Teven, 1999). McCroskey's multidimensional model conceptualizes credibility through *competence*, *trustworthiness*, and *goodwill*, dimensions that remain central in modern digital persuasion research. His focus on affective and relational dimensions of persuasion anticipates contemporary debates about authenticity and emotional resonance in online platforms. However, McCroskey's model, like other pre-digital frameworks, does not explicitly address the role of AI-generated content, algorithmic curation, or automated communicators.

From a regional scholarly perspective, Bulgarian communication studies have also contributed to understanding persuasion. Scholars such as Marinov (2004) and Danchev (2000) emphasize rhetoric, argumentation, and social influence in public communication, providing important theoretical grounding for persuasion in journalism, politics, and organizational contexts. These works maintain continuity with national academic traditions and highlight culturally specific features of persuasion, which remain essential when adapting persuasive strategies to local contexts.

Integrating these classical perspectives enriches the theoretical foundation of persuasion and provides a bridge between well-established conceptualizations and contemporary challenges posed by digital communication technologies and AI-driven persuasive systems.

### **Factors of Persuasive Communication**

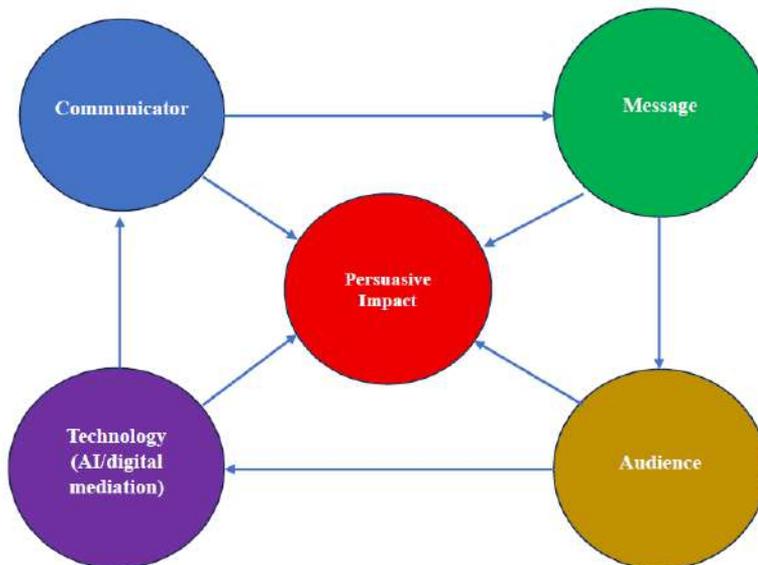
Persuasive communication success depends on several interrelated factors:

- 1. Credibility and trust** – Still the strongest predictors of persuasion, but now extended to include digital transparency and ethical AI use.
- 2. Message clarity and structure** – Messages must balance brevity with impact, particularly in social media formats where attention spans are short.
- 3. Context and timing** – Modern persuasion is highly context-dependent; crisis communication (e.g., pandemic health campaigns) illustrates how timing determines impact.
- 4. Participation and interactivity** – Audiences expect dialogic engagement. Persuasive communicators who foster participation through interactive media or user-generated content achieve stronger influence (Johansson & Karlsson, 2021).

**5. Technological mediation** – AI, algorithms, and social media platforms amplify or constrain persuasion, making technology itself a decisive factor.

**Conceptual Framework for Persuasive Communication in the Digital Age**

Based on the theoretical synthesis and case study illustrations, this article proposes a conceptual model of persuasive communication management. Unlike classical models that emphasize the triad *communicator–message–audience*, the proposed model integrates a fourth element: Technology (AI/digital mediation).



Source: Author’s research

**Figure 1:** Conceptual Model: Persuasive Communication in the Digital Age

**Figure (conceptual description):**

- **Communicator** – Includes human actors (leaders, managers, political figures, organizations) and AI communicators (chatbots, virtual influencers, algorithms). The central attributes are *credibility, authenticity, and ethical transparency*.
- **Message** – Persuasive content that combines rational and emotional appeals, increasingly hybrid in nature. AI allows personalization, data-driven targeting, and multimodal amplification (visual, textual, auditory).

- **Audience** – No longer a passive mass but a fragmented, interactive, and data-profiled public. Digital literacy, values, and susceptibility to algorithmic persuasion determine effectiveness.
- **Technology (AI/digital mediation)** – Functions as both a channel and an active shaper of persuasion. Algorithms filter, amplify, and personalize communication. AI deepfakes, chatbots, and targeted advertising reshape persuasion strategies, simultaneously enhancing efficiency and raising ethical concerns.

The framework demonstrates that effective persuasive communication today is an interactional process between communicator, message, audience, and technology. Unlike earlier models, persuasion is not merely a human-to-human activity but a human–AI–audience interaction where technology actively co-determines persuasive outcomes.

### Summary and Conclusions

This study explored the elements of persuasive communication—communicator, message, and audience – and proposed their extension with technology as a fourth dimension.

The main theoretical contributions of this article are:

1. **Integration of classical and modern elements** – The article extends the classical persuasive model by incorporating digital and AI-mediated communication as a constitutive element of persuasion.
2. **Conceptual framework** – It introduces a four-element model (*Communicator–Message–Audience–Technology*), highlighting the decisive role of digital platforms, AI algorithms, and ethical transparency.
3. **Empirical grounding through case studies** – The analysis of political campaigns, corporate communication strategies, and crisis communication illustrates how persuasive communication functions in practice.
4. **Originality** – By recognizing technology not merely as a passive channel but as an active persuasive force, the article advances the theoretical debate on persuasion in management and communication studies.

In conclusion, persuasive communication in the 21st century is best understood as a hybrid socio-technological process, where communicators, messages, audiences, and technologies interact dynamically. This perspective ensures both theoretical depth and practical applicability, making the framework relevant to scholars, managers, and policymakers.

## Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although this study provides a comprehensive conceptual analysis of persuasive communication and proposes an integrated four-element model – Communicator, Message, Audience, and Technology – several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study is primarily theoretical and relies on secondary literature. While the case illustrations help contextualize the conceptual framework, they do not constitute systematic empirical data. Future research could therefore strengthen the model by applying it in empirical studies across different organizational and cultural settings.

Second, although the article discusses AI-mediated persuasion, the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence, especially generative models and automated decision systems, presents an inherent limitation. The current framework may need continuous updating as technologies evolve and new forms of persuasion emerge (e.g., synthetic influencers, predictive behavioral targeting, or immersive persuasive environments based on virtual reality).

Third, the study focuses on three traditional elements of persuasion complemented by the proposed technological dimension. However, other potentially relevant factors – such as emotions, values, identity, and ethics – could be incorporated more explicitly into future theoretical refinements of the model. Ethical issues, in particular, warrant deeper examination, as AI-driven persuasion raises questions about autonomy, transparency, and manipulation.

Future research could also explore comparative analyses between human and AI communicators and their effectiveness across different audiences; examine persuasive communication in crisis settings through longitudinal designs; and investigate the cultural variability of the proposed model through cross-cultural empirical studies. Furthermore, there is a need for interdisciplinary research linking communication studies, behavioral science, and artificial intelligence to better understand how persuasive processes unfold in hybrid human–AI communication environments.

Overall, addressing these limitations will allow future scholarship to expand and empirically validate the conceptual contributions proposed in this study.

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