

Consumer Behavior

9. Attitudes and Persuasion



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9.1. The concept of attitude

Attitude is a **learned predisposition** of the individual which represents his **positive or negative feelings toward an object**, concept or idea.

Attitudes are learned. They come from the individual's experience and learning processes. Individual's knowledge about the object plays a key role in the construction of attitudes.

Attitudes have a direction. Attitudes towards any object can be positive or negative.

Attitudes have an object. Attitudes are evaluations of a product, brand, person, idea...

Rosenberg, M.J. (1956). "Cognitive structure and attitudinal effect" *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 53, 367-372.

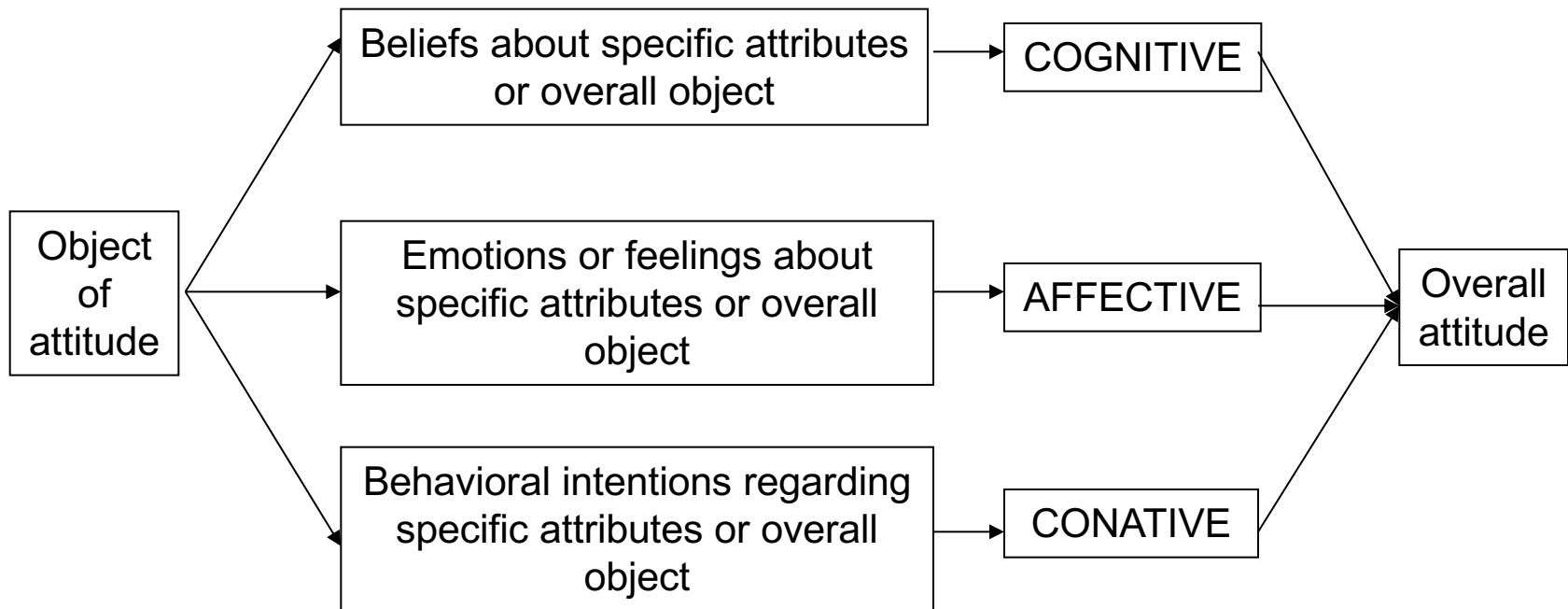
Attitudes have become an important area of study in psychology because of a widely held belief that they **precede** the individual's **behavior toward the object**, and hence can be used as important predictors of behavior.

However, there is an important distinction between **attitudes towards objects** (products, brands...) and **attitudes towards behaviors** related to the object (purchasing or consuming a given product or brand).

Positive attitudes towards a product may not affect purchasing behavior, but positive attitudes towards purchasing the product is a necessary condition for purchase.

Ajzen, I. & Fishbein, M. A. (1977). "Attitude-Behavior Relations: A Theoretical Analysis and Review of Empirical Research", *Psychological Bulletin*, 84, 5, 888-918.

9.2. The three components of attitude



Rosenberg, M. J. & Hovland, C. I. (1960). *Attitude Organization and Change*, Yale University Press.

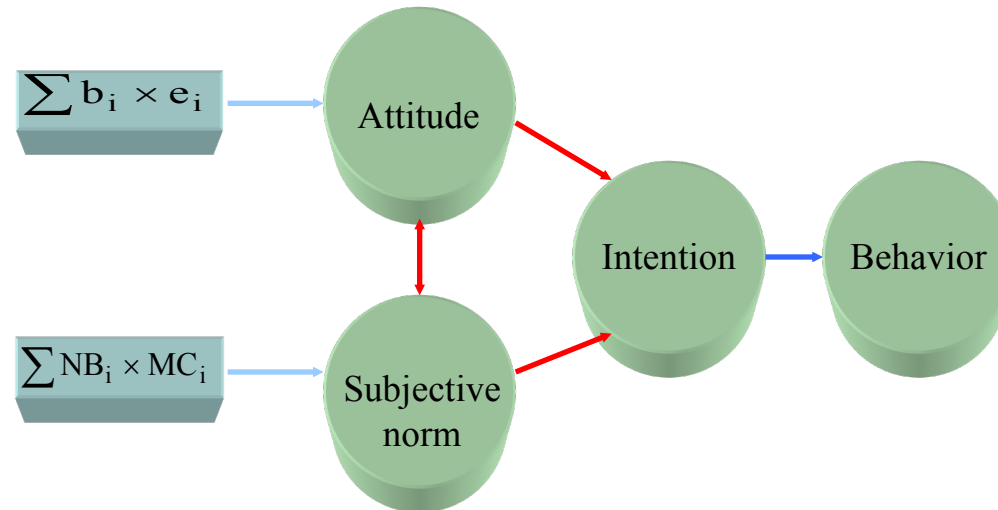
The **cognitive component** comprises **beliefs** about the object or any of its characteristics. It is the **rational** component providing arguments supporting positive or negative attitudes.

The **affective component** is formed by **emotions and feelings** toward the object. It is an **unconscious** component resulting in broad evaluations.

The **conative component** refers to the **volitional** aspect of attitudes. It is reflected in a subject's **intention** to carry out a specific behavior.

The three components are **consistent** resulting in a **balanced attitude**.

9.3. The theory of reasoned action



b_i = belief about attribute i ; e_i = evaluation of attribute i .

NB_i = belief about normative influence i ; MC_i = Motivation to comply with influence i .

Fishbein, M. A. & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research.* Ed. Addison Wesley.

Behavior is directly **affected by** an individual's **intentions**, which are **previously conditioned by attitudes and subjective norm**. Any effect from attitude and subjective norm on behavior is moderated by intentions.

The **subjective norm** is a concept similar to attitude, but refers to **beliefs and emotions regarding an individual's social environment**. It comprises an individual's beliefs about what relatives or other influential people may think about the behavior in question and the individual's motivation to comply with any of them.

Evaluations and motivation to comply are assumed to reflect the affective component of attitude and subjective norm.

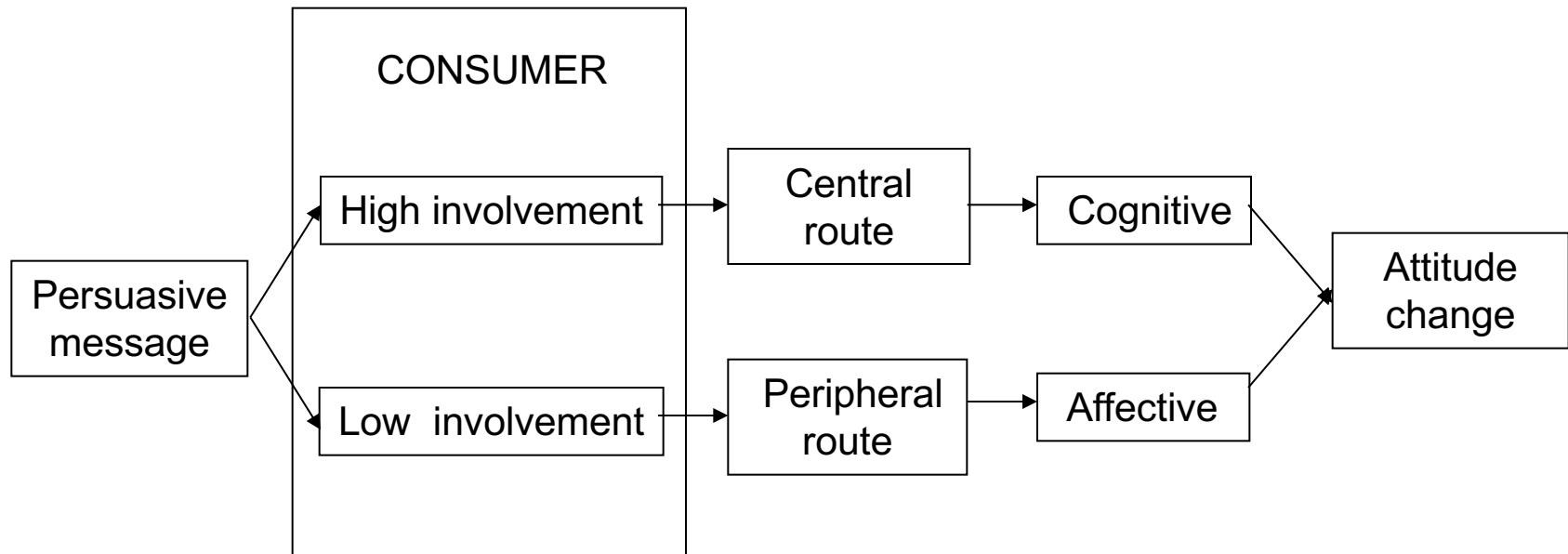
9.4. Attitude change and persuasion

Attitude change via cognitions. Focusing on beliefs about the attributes of the product by changing them, changing their importance or developing new beliefs.

Attitude change via affects. An attempt to influence consumers' liking of a product without directly impacting on their beliefs or behavior. Increasing liking may positively influence beliefs which may lead to product purchase.

Attitude change via behavior. Inducing an individual to purchase or try the product. Once the behavior has been carried out by the individual, affects and beliefs will change in order to be consistent with the behavior.

Routes of persuasion



Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). *Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change.* Springer-Verlag. New York

Persuasion is a process of **attitude change through communication**. It is focused on the cognitive and affective components of attitude.

The level of the **consumer's involvement** in the behavior, alternatively their perception of risk, will **affect** the **effectiveness** of the elements **of a persuasive message**, making consumers act more or less rationally.

Central routing. When **consumer's involvement is high**, persuasion is focused on the cognitive component of attitude, by **changing beliefs with argumentation**.

Peripheral routing. When **consumer's involvement is low**, there is no need to enter into a discussion on existing beliefs. **Peripheral signals will develop positive feelings and emotions** toward the product or brand.