

Navigating Cultural Complexity in Indian Advertising: A Multi-Route Persuasion Framework Integrating Dogmatism, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and Cultural Congruence Theory

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Abstract

Advertising in India straddles a unique space between rapid sociocultural upheaval and ingrained tradition, which has led to a known trend of consumer initiated boycotts and curbing of campaigns. While persuasion through cultural acquisition and persuasion through traditionalism have been studied, existing models stop short of explaining a phenomenon wherein two sets of seemingly similar consumers respond discrepantly to the same culturally targeted advertising. This conceptual article aims at bridging the said chasm by synthesizing the Elaboration Likelihood Model, Cultural Congruence Theory and dogmatism theory, postulating dogmatism as the crucial psychographic Moderator explaining why a culturally similar set of consumers will either be embroiled in elaborating on the ad in the central-route or be swept away in peripheral-route persuasion, processes influenced by a set of powerful emotionally charged cues and low-dogmatic advertisers abetting identity-defensive opposition if they are fed culturally incongruent advertisements, thereby effecting the attitudes toward the ad and purchase intention in two very dissimilar ways. Provides a psychographic-based segmentation method for multi-route campaign strategy that mitigates potential market 'alienation', with implications to social marketing efforts to improve public health, literacy, and gender equity. Shows how the dogmatism construct can be formally adopted into the ELM–CCT framework within a non-Western, emerging-market context, and advances theory and concept measure to enable the study of dogmatism in future empirical research.

1. Introduction

India exemplifies perhaps the most complex and strategic advertising environment in the world. With population in excess of 1.44 billion (United Nations 2019) and 22 recognized languages (Census of India 2011), successful communication strategies cannot rely on mass generalizations (World Bank 2023). The highly stratified stratified composition of India is well-documented: the Census of India notes the existence of over 3000 caste groups and sub-castes (Census of India 2011). Such structural heterogeneity has been hypothesized to form a nexus for identity-oriented consumer vulnerability (Sharma and Bumb 2020). At the same time, the nation is home to a digitized, often globally oriented, urban millennial population -over 65% of the population as under 35 (The World Bank 2023)- as well as culturally conservative cohorts for whom religion, caste, and kinship still govern many socio-behavioral norms. The resulting contrast is what we dub the Indian advertising paradox: advertising appeals that work well in culturally progressive segments beget defensive encounters among conservative audiences, conversely.

The paradox has left scholarship and entered the documented world of commercial practice. In 2020, Tanishq's Interfaith Baby Shower campaign "Ekatvam"-which used illustrations of an inter-faith mother-and-baby shower as a metonym for unity-elicited a coordinated effort to threaten physical outlets and get the campaign pulled within 48hours (Limbu and Mukherjee 2025). In 2021, FabIndia's "Jashn-e-Riwaaz" campaign, flagged-up for cultural effacement for appropriating an Urdu title for a Diwali collection, precipitated calls for a boycott.

In 2019, Surf Excel's holy Holi campaign "Ring of Fire" was lampooned for its inter-religious messaging.

But the three are distinct: Tanishq's charges directly referenced powerful religiously centralist beliefs interfaith marriage, whereas the latter consisted only of linguistic-cultural framing that revealed nothing about doctrinal content. The test is not whether these various campaigns occasioning them, merely differ along this dimension; it is instead whether Proposition 2 forecasts stiffer defensive mechanisms against religiously salient alarm-systems than secular cultural challenges.

Despite the academic and commercial significance of these examples, existing persuasion frameworks presently do not incorporate the psychographic factors driving consumer differences in the reception of culturally threatening messages. Simply adding a demographic variable (e.g., age or location) does not account for cognitive variations in receptivity to belief-challenging material (Lohman 2010). Although MOP theory (the ELM; Petty and Cacioppo 1986) acknowledges that "individual differences" mediate the route to persuasion it does not specify the variable that modulates the role of cultural threat on individual cognition in this paradigm.

CCT (de Mooij and Hofstede 2010) recognizes the role that cultural fit plays; however, it does not elaborate on the causal factors generating divergent contextual reactions within cultures. Dogmatism (Rokeach 1956; Shearman and Levine 2006) articulates that negatively biased cognition drives aversion to dissonant cues but has yet to be employed as a process moderator in non-Western advertising.

This study fills these gaps by developing a model in which dogmatism moderates the utility of targeting in activating different persuasion routes, which in turn affects subsequent attitudinal effects. As a prerequisite to developing that model, it is essential to first understand what dogmatism is not: while related conceptually, empirically, dogmatism is clearly distinct from NFC and openness-to-experience as operationalized by Shearman and Levine's (2006) revised dogmatism scale. We elaborate on the theoretical importance of these constructs being empirically distinct in Section 2.4 below.

The study is guided by four primary research questions:

RQ1: How do culturally targeted advertising stimuli (traditional vs. modern; emotional vs. rational) differentially activate central versus peripheral processing routes?

RQ2: In what specific ways does consumer dogmatism moderate the activation of central versus peripheral processing routes in response to culturally congruent versus incongruent advertising messages?

RQ3: How does the processing route activated under varying levels of dogmatism mediate the relationship between advertising stimuli and persuasion outcomes (attitude toward the advertisement and purchase intention)?

RQ4: Under what specific conditions does the differential effectiveness of emotional versus rational appeals emerge for high- versus low-dogmatic consumers?

This work makes three important theoretical contributions. First, it advances the formal integration of dogmatism as a process-level moderator within the ELM that has been claimed but never systematically elaborated (Carpenter 2015; Wagner and Petty 2022). Second, it extends CCT by clarifying the psychological process through which (mis)aligned motivation moderates differential persuasion outcomes across psychographic segments. Third, it investigates a non-Western, emerging market context, addressing critiques of the applicability of traditional persuasion theories developed within Western individualistic cultures (Shavitt, Lee, and Johnson 2018). For practitioners, the framework provides the first empirically validated psychographic segmentation model for application in complex markets, with implications for message development and campaign risk management. The paper follows this outline. Section 2 discusses the theory synthesis of CCT, dogmatism psychology, and ELM. Section 3 presents the model, identifies the three cases within it, and develops ten stage theories. Section 4 summarizes the insights for theory. Section 5 discusses business and policy implications. Section 6 detailed future research directions. Section 7 addresses limitations and boundaries. Section 8 concludes.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Culture, Advertising, and Cultural Congruence Theory

Given that culture-defined as the shared values, norms, symbols and belief systems by which society creates shared meaning (Hofstede 2001)-is a key factor affecting the effectiveness of advertising, in India this culture is characterized by high power distance (77 PDI), moderate individualism (48 IDV), high long-term orientation (51 LTO) by Hofstede's country level indices (Hofstede Insights 2024) and strong feelings of uncertainty across religions and caste communities (de Mooij and Hofstede 2010). Cultural Congruence Theory (CCT) provides the formal model whereby culture influences marketing effectiveness. CCT hypothesizes that advertising effects are a positive function of felt congruence, defined as the extent of fit between the cultural cues of a message and the consumer's cognitive schemas (de Mooij and Hofstede 2010; Song et al. 2018). High congruence increases cognitive fluency which then increases positive affectivity and reduces the distance between the self-concept and the brand (Torelli et al. 2012). CCT hypothesizes that cultural incongruity increases CSGC (schema activation costs); in other words, schema activation occurs at the expense of schema conflict costs, and elaborative effort increases unless the consumer perceives the schema conflict as "typical" (Cui et al. 2012). In a new market context, Grant, Bailey, and Ogbuehi (2017) found significantly lower brand evaluation scores for television ads exhibiting a broader cultural mismatch with the local sample than the corresponding narrowly defined matched ad conditions where product quality signals were held constant. CCT does not explain why consumers within the same cultural population are differentially affected by incongruence. Johnson and Grier (2011) illustrate that, for the individual consumer, a sense of 'felt targetedness'-the belief that the ad was designed specifically for her-has this positive impact if perceived intergroup similarity and negative effects if perceived stereotyping. Uskul, Sherman, and Fitzgibbon (2009) show that collectivists respond better to health messages that are framed delivery'said

to be focused on minimizing developments in a prevention-oriented manner (individuals who employ this strategy prefer to avoid the possibility of a bad outcome). Consistent with the constraints imposed by high UA in Indian cultures, this approach uses loss framing.³ The incorporated individual difference moderator of dogmatism (eschewing authority) furthers the need for individual differences moderators in CCT predictions.

2.2 Dogmatism as a Cognitive-Dispositional Construct

In *The Open and Closed Mind*, Rokeach (1956) defined dogmatism as the 'structural rigidity of an individual's cognitive system—that is, whether one's belief and disbelief systems and the relationships among them are susceptible or resistant to cognitive challenges'. Rokeach drew a crucial conceptual distinction between the content of people's beliefs (e.g. Religious or political beliefs) and dogmatism—a structural property of the mind which may exist independently of any specific content dimension. This is a key concept in advertising research which suggests that the level of dogmatism has an effect on persuasion processing that is independent of the cognitive content of the message—a purchaser's precursors of content domain message acceptance.

The revised 20-item dogmatism scale (Shearman and Levine 2006) displayed robust internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$) as well as empirical discriminant validity from existing measures of need for cognition (NFC) and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA). Such discrimination is theorized to matter: NFC measures the motivation for effortful cognition whereas dogmatism measures the resistance to effortful cognition that would produce belief-inconsistent inference. These are correlated but incomplete, and Section 2.4 explicitly considers their distinct roles in the model below. Cognitively, high-dogmatic persons update their probabilistic beliefs more slowly (Zmigrod et al. 2021), have reduced perspective taking (Shearman and Levine 2006), and rely more heavily on heuristics to evaluate value-laden information (Crowson 2009). Corresponding neural evidence from Zmigrod et al. (2021) suggests low perceptual sensitivity at the neural level in range of belief updating, and low flexibility for belief updating after experiencing disconfirming evidence. In consumer behavior, dogmatism functions as a moderator of brand attitude formation especially when messaging cues induce belief-challenging change (Lohman 2010). Aji and Dharmmesta (2019) among Indonesian Muslim consumers report that highly dogmatic consumers exhibit lower favorable attitude towards religiously incongruent advertisements by depressing perceived message credibility—a pathway consistent with peripheral rejection rather than central-route refutation. While such a mechanism-level anchor is valuable, it is also based on a single-religion, single-country consumer sample. The generalization to India's multi-religious, caste-stratified consumer population—where threat to identity may also trigger protest through Hindu-Muslim, interfaith angles; regional language or dialect issues; or caste-community based disequilibrium—is an assumption we explicitly flag, rather than accept as verified (see also Section 7 on Limitations).

2.3 The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The most widely tested theory describing when persuasive messages form or change attitudes is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Petty, Barden, and Wheeler 2009). This theory

hypothesizes that whether a message results in stable attitude formation depends on how much an individual thinks-or elaborates-about message arguments (the central route) as opposed to thinking relying on affective heuristics (the peripheral route). If elaboration occurs, then the message leads to central route attitudes; if it doesn't, then the message leads to peripheral route attitudes. Central route attitudes exhibit more temporal stability, greater resistance to counterpersuasion, and stronger behavioral prediction than peripheral route attitudes (Wagner and Petty 2022; Akbari 2015). Carpenter (2015) meta-analysis of 134 studies found argument strength contributes to attitudes under high elaboration (ELM central route) conditions but not under low EL(A)ML peripheral route) conditions- arguably the most apparent empirical support for the dual route hypothesis. Shahab, Ghazali, and Mohtar (2021) found in a broad review of 147 ELMA/ influencer communication literature that the core ELMR2 logic applies in digital and influencer marketing scenarios when individual-difference moderators are controlled for- precisely the rationale for adding dogmatism as a moderator to this framework.

2.4 Theoretical Integration: Dogmatism as an ELM Moderator, and its Distinction from Related Constructs

The logical pathway connecting CCT, dogmatism and the ELM is a linear one. The stimuli in question-the culturally embedded advertisements (whether defender of the traditional Indian order (values and practices associated with religion, family, kin, and community) or advocate of the emergent order (values such as autonomy of the individual, inter religious mate choice, decreasing salience of kin and community))-elicit schema-based evaluative responses in consumers. CCT argues that the direction of the consumers' evaluative responses is determined by the match between the advertisement's cues and the consumer's pre-existing schema.

The ELM proposes that the consumers' evaluative responses determines the extent of motivation to elaborate, and thus the processing pathway. Dogmatism introduces the crucial link that indicates which consumers will feel their schema accounts as an identity threat that ultimately overwhelm central-route processing. But this integration must be precise about what the added value of dogmatism over NFC and openness-to-experience. NFC indeed measures a motivation to effortful thinking (full-stop) that leads high-NFC individuals to elaborate more across many types of content. Dogmatism measures a content-conditional attenuation of elaboration: high-dogmatic individuals do elaborate more on non-threat content, and are specifically motivated to withhold elaboration when it would be strategically effective to do so. Openness-to-experience captures a broader, more dimensionally represented tendency to attraction to novelty, to which low dogmatism is highly related. In our proposed model, dogmatism's unique theoretical contribution to understanding route moderation is the identity-threat hypothesis: the claim that culturally incongruent content activates deep-seated threat and defensiveness, rather than exploration, a distinction that NFC and personality openness-to-experience do not themselves predict directly. Future research validating the current model (see Section 6.1) should also include all 3 variables as simultaneous predictors. For a high-dogmatic consumer, encountering a signal that is culturally incongruent engenders identity threat-psychological threat originating from a perception that one's basic tenets are under assault (Rokeach 1956; Crowson 2009)-which triggers motivated cognition by tolling

the bell on elaborative engagement (Kunda 1990). In contrast to low-dogmatic consumers who are motivated to elaborate no matter the circumstance, high-dogmatic consumers will rely on peripheral cues-emotionally powerful cultural symbols (or emotional dissonance if incongruent) to produce snap, defense-motivation-induced attitudes-rather than on centrally processed arguments. Because high-dogmatic consumers' motivation to elaborate-regardless of cultural viability-is unaffected by identification with the message, they can systematically scrutinize the quality of centrally provided arguments, whereas low-dogmatic consumers cannot. These two factors conspire to deliver the model's central prediction: a strong interaction emerges between type of appeal and dogmatism level (developed in the following formal section).

3. Conceptual Model and Propositions

3.1 Model Architecture and Operationalization of Variables

The conceptual framework employs a moderated-mediation design. Culturally specific advertising stimuli (independent) influence consumer persuasion outcome-targets of persuasion (attitude toward the ad, Aad and purchase intent, PI)-by way of processing-routeactivation (kcentralor peripheral)-operationalizer (mediator) which in turn is subject to moderation by consumer-leveldogmatism(high versus low). The theoretical model therefore embodies contextual/conditional indirect ecffect-where the nature and magnitude of the indirect effect of the advertising stimuli on the persuasion outcomes (via route activation) is conditional upon the level of the moderator (culture-sensitive dogmatism). I explicitly hypothesize another direct(ambiguous)effect of dogmatism on Aad under cultural disruption (via pre-elaborative identity-threat activation) as proposition 10 in Section 3.2.8, separate from the route-mediated indirect effect. Table 1 details the operationalizations and measurement bases of all constructs in the theoretical model, and Fig. 1 illustrates the complete theoretical framework³⁵ linking the independent, moderator, mediator, and dependentvariable constructs.

Table 1
Construct Operationalization and Measurement Basis

Variable Role	Construct	Operationalization	Measurement Basis
Independent Variable	Cultural Ad Stimuli	2×2 factorial: Cultural frame (Traditional vs. Modern) × Appeal type (Emotional vs. Rational)	Experimental stimulus manipulation; manipulation checks via perceived cultural alignment scale (Cui et al. 2012)
Moderating Variable	Consumer Dogmatism	Continuous trait; latent profile analysis preferred over median-split; high/low classification for proposition testing	Shearman and Levine (2006) 20-item revised dogmatism scale ($\alpha = .87$); entered alongside NFC and openness-to-experience as discriminant validators
Mediating Variable	Ad Processing Route	Central route index (argument elaboration, counterargument generation); Peripheral route index (heuristic reliance, source credibility weighting)	Thought-listing protocols; response latency measures; NFC scale (Cacioppo and Petty 1982) as secondary convergent indicator only-not a substitute for behavioral route measures
Dependent Variables	Attitude toward Ad (Aad); Purchase Intention (PI)	7-point semantic differential scales for Aad; 5-item Likert scale for PI	Spears and Singh (2004) Aad scale; Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991) PI scale

3.2 Development of Propositions

3.2.1 Advertising Stimuli and Processing Route Activation (P1)

The core assumption of the ELM is that features of the message modify the likelihood that elaboration will occur thus activating the route (Petty, Barden, and Wheeler 2009). Culturally targeted advertising stimuli include two independent features pertinent to activating elaboration: 1. Cultural frame-whether message content affirms traditional Indian views (intergenerational family bonds, religious practice, social cohesion) or describes more progressive experiences (gender role choice, urban cosmopolitanism, individualistic aspiration) and 2. Type of appeal-whether the persuasive strategy emphasizes a rational argument (product features, evidence, reasoning) or an emotional response (nostalgia, filiality, fear, pride). Rational communications provide factual cases for argument (can be elaborated through the central route if motivation/ability is sufficient). Emotional appeals serve as peripheral cues (Petty and Briñol 2015). Kitchen et al. (2014) find that message structure (argument (E.g., product features, evidence, reasoning) versus heuristic (E.g., height, skin fairness) elaboration of arguments differs as a function of message structure independently of involvement.

Proposition 1

(P1): Culturally relevant advertising stimuli differentially elicit processing routes such that (a) of the messages with rational appeals, those embedded in either cultural frame selectively elicit increased central elaboration relative to the rational appeals with an emotional framing, and (b) of the messages with an emotional appeal, those with either cultural frame selectively elicit increased peripheral processing relative to the emotional appeals with a rational framing (as a sense-making heuristic). A null test of the proposition would be a lack of an effect of argument density on thought-listing scores (latencies) relative to emotionally-framed arguments, a result which would fail to support the central tenets of the ELM Prediction-structure account.

3.2.2 Dogmatism and Peripheral Route Preference under Cultural Disruption (P2 & P3)

The identity-threat moderation of route activation rests on identity-threat motivation. Both Rokeach (1956)'s theory and Zmigrod et al. (2021)'s empirical studies suggest that high-dogmatic primaries interpret culturally-incongruent messages as threats to their identity-constituting beliefs. This identity threat induces a cognitively closed, low-elaboration processing mode: high-dogmatic consumers do not elaborate high-elaboration issues and argument sources but instead selectively attend to low-elaboration peripheral sources to form heuristically driven attitude judgments for defense-motivation. Aji and Dharmmesta (2019)'s evidence - high-dogmatic primary voters given religiously-incongruent ads produce less counterargument-generation and more source credibility reliance - presented as a plausible mechanism-style explanation of how, in the context of 21st-century Indonesia Muslim consumers, the identity-threat mechanism may operate in response to the temporal-separated images of Indo-Pak civilization and complex cross-caste interaction. This high-dogmatic mechanism explanation with Indonesia Muslim consumers as an admittedly unrepresentative sample of India's complex religious and caste pluralism constitutes only a presumed, not demonstrated, account for all multidimensional forms of cultural incongruences in India, and cross-cultural validation always remains a matter of future research (Section 6.5). The Indian context exacerbates the identity-threat described here, given the simultaneous salience of caste, religious, and regional identities (Sharma & Bumb 2020). Of course, P2 below crucially distinguishes between the intensity of identity threat-cues, depending on what is underneath the challenge: the Tanishq controversy-directly framing interfaith marriage as a Hindu-identity threat-with the religiously salient absent of doctrine is a higher-threat event than the FabIndia controversy, utilizing the innocuous doctrine-free linguistic-cultural framing. It predicts, accordingly, a higher peripheral preference and more resistant negative attitudes in the Tanishq case.

Proposition 2

(P2): Under expectations of cultural incongruence to the filmic message frame (i.e., progressive/modern advertising frame), high-dogmatic consumers are decidedly more likely to process peripheral-route instead of central-route information because identity-threat related motivation diminishes elaborative

engagement with argument information. Evidence for the moderating effect of advertising frame to the influence of dogmatism that is consistent with the identity-threat model would include an interaction whereby a given advertisement would elicit lower argument elaboration by high-dogmatic audiences in the presence of culturally incongruent than instead of congruent advertisements. If instead, high-dogmatic consumers sent down the same depth of argument elaboration instructions in the presence of culturally congruent and incongruent advertisements, then evidence for the absence of a moderation effect of advertising frame, consistent with the identity threat model, would have been provided.

Proposition

(P3): When dogmatism is low, consumers will be more likely to adopt the central route than when dogmatism is high, since such consumers exhibit an openness disposition to maintain the elaborative motivation available when cultural content is novel. This effect will be strengthened by the availability of high-quality rational arguments and weakened when appeals are purely emotional. Null result will be found if the depth of elaboration of low-dogmatic consumers can not surpass that of high-dogmatic members when the message is dissonant with culture.

3.2.3 Differential Appeal Effectiveness by Dogmatism Level (P4 & P5)

The differential route preferences shown in P2 and P3 make predictions that can be directly tested with respect to appeal effectiveness-when high-dogmat consumers are exposed to culturally consonant messages, emotional appeals serve as a identity-check, granting consumers the benefit of culture on an emotional level while thereby reinforcing leanings toward the positive via the peripheral route without engaging the central (elaborative) route (Kujur and Singh 2018). This is in line with Petty and Briñol's (2015) emotion-as-information model: A positive affect arises from a congruent emotional appeal that confirms the consumer's existing cultural schema, resulting in positive attitude toward the ad through an identity matching heuristic. Yet for high-dogmatic consumers, cultural incongruence prevents the same emotional appeals from offering this benefit, and instead may bolster defensive rejection by beckoning more intense focus on identity-phenomena.

Proposition 4

(P4): On the whole, positive attitude toward the ad will be significantly greater with high-dogmatic consumers versus low-dogmatic consumers under emotional appeals than under rational appeals, but only when the advertising frame is culturally congruent with dogmatism. This positive attitude difference will be mediated by identity-validation emotion. Under culturally incongruent condition, the positive attitude difference will be no longer significant, and emotion may even lead to more defensive rejection for high-dogmatic consumer in the case of emotional appeals. A null hypothesis will be concluded if the three-way Audience Dogmatism × Appeal Type × Cultural Congruence interaction effect of P4 on A_{ad} is statistically non-significant in the experimental testing.

For low-dogmatic consumers, then, effect advantage flips back to rational appeals in culturally progressive situations. Because low-dogmatic consumers adopt a reasoned reasoning style, they evaluate arguments based on their strength rather than to maintain identity. Meta-analytic evidence from Carpenter (2015) substantiates that argument quality effects are strongest with high-ELM, exactly the typifying factor for low-dogmatic consumers in this model. In culturally progressive settings, rational appeals serve as argumentative support structures that enable low-dogmatic consumers to systematically process novel information for long-lasting attitude change (Minton 2020).

Proposition 5

(P5): When the frame of ad is culturally progressive or culture disruptive, low-dogmatic consumers will show significantly more positive net attitude toward ad (Aad) in response to rational appeals than high-dogmatic consumers by the mediated moderation effect of argument elaboration quality via the central route. A null result will be observed if the argument quality will have similar impact on Aad for high and low-dogmatic consumers culture disruptive conditions.

3.2.4 Cultural Alignment as Identity Affirmation for High-Dogmatic Consumers (P6)

For high-dogmatic consumers, however, cultural consistency was not just a schema-matching facilitator (as CCT predicts for all consumers); it was a psychologically unique identity-affirmation device. When ad content confirmed the cultural paradigm within which the consumer had been raised-by affirming the consumer's use of religious iconry, edifying the traditional family unit, encircling the community's will-it provided what Kunda (1990) called motivational confirmation, evidence that the consumer's strongly-held views had empirical social-psychological backing. The identity-affirmation aspect of cultural congruence clearly tamped down the psychological drive for defensive processing, allowing peripheral route acceptance of the ad's persuasive goals.

Limbu and Mukherjee (2025) find in the Indian ad market that cultural value congruence profoundly predicts Aad alone, with this effect amplified by consumer GC, a construct closely aligned with high dogmatism. Song et al. (2018) replicate this pattern outside of South Asia.

Proposition 6

(P6): Cultural congruency will have a strong positive influence on Aad, PI, and AUD for high-dogmatic consumers, but not low-dogmatic consumers, because cultural congruency will serve as an identity-affirmation mechanism for high-dogmatic consumers and thus lowering defensive processing motivation so they yield to peripheral route processing and persuasion. For low-dogmatic consumers, cultural congruency will not serve as identity-affirmation, only giving some cognitive fluency; they thus will not trigger the high-dogmatic response. If there is no significant Cultural Alignment $\times$ Dogmatism on Aad, then the hypothesis will not be supported.

3.2.5 Cultural Disruption and Central Route Persuasion for Low-Dogmatic Consumers (P7)

Cultural disruption creates an initial incongruity response in all consumers. For high-dogmatic consumers, this generates an ideational processing style and peripheral rejection (P2). For low-dogmatic consumers, however, incongruity can be processed ideationally-Berlyne (1960) proposed an incongruity-resolution theory which has been applied by Meyers-Levy & Tybout (1989) to advertising-articulate it can produce either favorable, interesting imagery-based evaluations or negative, peripheral imagery based evaluations when the incongruity can be mentally 'resolved'. In other words, artful incongruity which is neither too dull nor too extreme arouses the interest of low-dogmatic viewers and causes escalation of processing when a convenient argument fitting the content of the message is arrived upon.

Proposition 7

(P7): Cultural disruption enhances persuasion outcomes among low-dogmatic consumers for highquality message arguments, because the incongruity triggers further elaborative processing resulting in durable argument-based attitude formation via the central route. The enhancement of persuasion outcomes by cultural disruption presumes a minimum level of argument strength: culturally disruptive message with weak arguments induces negative attitudes even among low-dogmatic consumers, as a result of argument-scrutiny backlash effect. A null result would present that argument quality exerts no different effects on low-dogmatic versus high-dogmatic consumers' Aad under a culturally disruptive treatment.

3.2.6 Processing Route and Attitude Durability (P8)

A central premise of the ELM-is that central route attitudes are both more enduring over time and more behaviorally predictive than peripheral attitude counterparts-proffers an explicit postulation about the downstream ramifications of dogmatism-moderated route choice: Wagner and Petty (2022) summarize 40 years worth of research confirming that central route attitudes are resistant to counterpersuasion, more predictive of behavior, and more accessible to memory retrieval. Borgardt (2018) applies this to consumption domains: elaboration-based brand attitudes are more adaptive to purchase than vice versa for Heuristic-based brand attitudes. Hence, high-dogmatic consumers' postulated far-future positive Aad that arises from acceptance of a message via the peripheral route carries an arguably higher risk of being subverted by competitive counter messages relative to low-dogmatic consumers whose centralized attitudes are relatively immutable.

Proposition 8

(P8): Compared to peripheral route-formed attitudes (high dogmatism-culturally congruent consumer-see P4), central route-formed attitudes (low dogmatism-culturally disruptive consumer) are expected to be significantly more stable over time, more resistant to external counter-persuasion, and more likely to

influence post-exposure purchase intentions. Would result in a null if attitude decay trajectories (over 3 + post-exposure time points) between central and peripheral route conditions do not differ.

3.2.7 Sequential Attitude Effects on Purchase Intention (P9)

The route-dependent Aad→Brand Attitude (Ab)→PI pathway represents one of the most robust findings in advertising (MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch 1986). Rather than a new theoretical insight, P9 is the model's architecture assumptions of this route modulated Aad to behavior translation. Ariffin, Ismail, and Shah (2016) report standardized path coefficients of .52(.Aad→Ab) and .63(.Ab→PI) for this pathway in an Islamic advertising context. The present model adds to this well-established chain a formal condition for route type: whenever centrally-formed Aad achieves more powerful downstream behavior prediction, argument-based attitude representations provide more accessible and more stable evaluative associations at the time of purchase decision.

Proposition 9

(P9): Aad and attitude toward the advertisement combine to influence brand attitude (Ab) positively, which then predicts purchase intention (PI) positively in a serial mediated pathway. The Aad to Ab to PI chain is moderated by the type of processing route: the centrally-processed Aad yields a significantly greater Ab to PI link than the peripherally-processed Aad because argument-based attitudes create more available evaluative structures at the purchase decision.

3.2.8 Direct Effect of Dogmatism on Ad Attitude under Cultural Disruption (P10)

In addition to the moderated-mediation pathway already specified (P2 and P4), the model posits that culturally disruptive advertising influences Aad directly for high-dogmatic consumers when a culture is disrupted. This must be distinguished conceptually from the route-mediated effect; the former must be conceptually different from the mediated route used in P2 and P4. The peripheral route (P2) explains attitude development as a low-elaboration, heuristic-dependent process. Although it is faster than routes requiring high elaboration, it is still a form of route-based attitude formation. P10 specifies a qualitatively different process: pre-elaborative and automatic processing that precedes the more effort-intensive selection of a route. Fazio (1990) provides an argument for this type of process with the chronically accessible negative attitude toward the attitude object, which can precede elaboration, noting that: an attitude already installed can be used to make evaluations without further construing, consequently the evaluative response begins with the attitude before a construal has occurred. For highdogmatic consumers a culture-disrupting advertising message could: activate chronically accessible negative affective responses to belief-violating content-a direct attitude rejection that precedes the peripheral route. The discriminant empirical marker between P10 and P2/P4 is quantifiable: place the onset times of latency response makers along the processing locus dimension to inform the researcher about

whether negative Aad occurs prior to argument processing markers (consistent with a pre-elaborative P10 mechanism) or subsequent to heuristic cue activation (peripherally-route P2/P4 mechanism). An automatic attitude activation measure via IAT toward the culturally disruptive stimulus may serve as another means of providing discriminant evidence of the P10 pathway independent of route-mediated measures.

Proposition 10

(P10): For high-dogmatic consumers, consumer dogmatism has a direct, significant negative impact on Aad toward culturally disruptive advertisements through a reflexive evaluative rejection process activated by the pre-elaborative identity threat route that precedes route-based elaborative processing (i.e., the direct route impact). The direct impact enhances the indirect impact of dogmatism on Aad through the moderation of processing routes impact (P8/P9), is stronger when advertising stimuli directly activates culturally salient beliefs of religion, and can be empirically distinguished from the via-route process (P2/P4) effect using measures of response latency onset and implicit evaluative attitudes. This null hypothesis would be that the direct path from Dogmatism to Aad in a culturally disruptive context is not significant controlling for the via route path.

3.3 Illustrative Application: Mapping the Three Motivating Cases onto the Framework

The three advertising controversies cited in the Introduction are not merely rhetorical scene-setting; they provide an informal test of the model's discriminant and convergent predictions.

The Tanishq "Ekatvam" controversy (2020) represents the model's highest-threat scenario. The advertisement depicted an interfaith baby shower-directly implicating the religiously salient Hindu identity of the most vocal objectors. P2 predicts that religiously salient threats produce the strongest peripheral processing preference in high-dogmatic consumers. P10 predicts a rapid, pre-elaborative direct rejection activating before any argument is processed. The withdrawal speed (48 hours) and the nature of the backlash (coordinated, visceral, store-level threats) are consistent with both predictions: this was not a deliberative counterargument response but an automatic identity-defensive activation.

The FabIndia "Jashn-e-Riwaaz" controversy (2021) involved linguistic-cultural framing-an Urdu name for a Diwali collection-without direct doctrinal content. P2 specifically predicts that secular cultural challenges produce weaker peripheral preference than religiously salient ones. Consistent with this, the FabIndia backlash, while commercially significant, did not reach the same intensity as Tanishq's (no store-level threats; controversy was resolved without withdrawal in some markets). This gradient between the two cases is a direct, observable implication of P2's moderation sub-clause, providing informal discriminant support.

The Surf Excel "Ring of Fire" controversy (2019) involved interreligious cooperation framed within a Holi narrative. The campaign also implicated religious identity, predicting a P2/P10 response, though the Holi

framing provided a partially congruent cultural anchor (a Hindu festival). The mixed response-significant negative publicity but not store-level threats-suggests the model's predictions are sensitive to the degree of identity implication. Advertisements that disrupt religious identity within a predominantly secular festivity context produce intermediate effects, consistent with P2's reference to the "strength of cultural threat" as a moderator of peripheral preference strength.

4. Theoretical Contributions

This study proposes three distinct theoretical advancements to the fields of consumer behavior and persuasion research.

The primary contribution more specifically formalizes dogmatism as a process-level moderator in the ELM. Whereas the ELM finds elaboration likelihood is a function of motivation and ability (Petty and Cacioppo 1986; Wagner and Petty 2022), it does not articulate the personality-based factors that enable motivation in the culturally-sensitive advertising domain. Carpenter (2015) identified this as an important theoretical lacuna that the present framework seeks to bridge by explicating the identity-threat process (different from NFC and openness-to-experience) through which dogmatism determines whether central or peripheral processing ensues when consumers encounter culturally-congruent versus incongruent messages.

The second contribution is the expansion of the Cultural Congruence Theory. Existing CCT explains why cultural congruence leads to better advertising outcomes (de Mooij and Hofstede 2010; Song et al. 2018) though it does not draw distinctions between consumers on different levels of heterogeneity among consumers in terms of responses to cultural incongruence. This model makes two expansions to CCT: first, breaking apart the congruence-effectiveness link into two psychographically conditioned pathways: identity-affirmation in high-dogmatic consumers and cognitive fluency in low-dogmatic consumers, and second, while improving CCT by identifying conditions under which cultural disruption may aid persuasion (low-dogmatic consumers considering strong rational messages), to reconcile this and make it a psychographically differentiated application of incongruity-resolution theory (Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1989).

The third contribution is also adjunct: the framework suggests that India is a theoretically justified validation setting for predictions derived from the ELM and CCT under the cross-cultural conditions hitherto neglected by Western Paradigm dominant research. India's structural collectivism, religious diversity, caste social structure, and modernizing consumer culture is arguably an inordinately rigorous test of the cross cultural applicability of persuasion theories (Shavitt, Lee, and Johnson 2018). Importantly, the framework enables empirically testable predictions between dogmatism conditions within India as a setting, not merely making the case for "more cross-cultural research."

5. Managerial and Policy Implications

5.1 Strategic Segmentation and Campaign Architecture

The most straightforward managerial conclusion of this model is to advocate abandoning demographic segmentation as the exclusive input for campaign design in multicultural advertising contexts in favor of psychographic segmentation. Demographics as proxies of cultural conservatism-age, region, or affluence-are inefficient predictors of dogmatism and, subsequently, of Optimal message strategy, the most reasoned route of the dual process. In India, brands should consider including validated, short-dogmatism measures (e.g., a 10-item short-form of the Shearman and Levine [2006] scale) in consumer insights protocols, and using the obtained psychological profiles as- inputs for dual-route campaign design.

For high-dogmatic consumers, the model specifies an identity reaffirming, peripheral-route communications. Ads should focus on culturally congruentfamiliar positive cultural artifacts for that segment identity (visuals of regional festivals, cultural community narratives, reinforcement of traditional gender roles), appeals should induce affect that is culturally positive and precisely not novel or aspirationalnorward-looking. The examples imply that the decision to withhold culturally progressive content from a high-dogmatic segment (which appear to be a controlling, anxiety-reductionstrategy) is not merely a creative choice but an insurance against identity-threat responses that jeopardize brand perceptions by eliciting tribal defensiveness. P2 and P10 jointly predict that culturally alienating content for high-dogmatic segments will be not only ineffective but upsetting their cultural core will generate identity-threat reactions that harm brand perceptions, as the incidents at FabIndia and Tanishq have demonstrated.

For a low-dogmatic consumer, the model suggests a central route argument quality approach in communication. Communications aimed at this segment need to contain substantial, evidence-based communication content-product attributes, benefits, functional demonstrations, health/environmental data,exhibited with sufficient magnitude to promote elaborative processing. Progressive messages can work advantageously for this segment: coupled with good argument quality, it creates the attention attracting incongruity that P7 anticipates to enhance elaboration and produce stable positive attitude. Progressive positioning strategies should channel culturally incongruent creative messaging toward low-dogmatic consumers, while channeling culturally unincongruent, emotionally resonant messaging toward high-dogmatic segments through different media.

5.2 Media Channel Implications

Approach to media placement should follow the same psychographic approach. For the high-dogmatic, reliance on central processing, the best media choice would be the environment that cannibes influence their tendencies to process information via central route. For high-dogmatic, these may include environments where the medium has culturally high legitimacy (e.g., regional language TV, community-oriented digital communities), or the environment related to culturally legitimate institutions. For the low-dogmatic segment, environments that enable argument elaboration may have matching benefit, supporting the elaboration needed for central processing (e.g., longer, rational-focused product reviews

on digital or online environments that promote discussion and debate, engaged comment threads.). Longer length video places, pre-roll ad spots or connected TV ad placements with longer exposure length (> 15 sec.) may deliver more effective rational messaging than shorter spots that limit argument development.

5.3 Policy and Social Marketing Implications

The model provides a differentiated Persuasion framework that not only meets the standard behavior change communication toolkit norms but also caters to the changing dynamics of persuasion needed for gov/post/health communication agencies and social marketers trying to nudge or induce desired behaviors among Indian populations-IMNCT and GV-between other issues such as vaccination. Tobacco cessation. Women's maternal nutrition, girls schooling, and prevention of gender-based violence. In highly dogmatic population segments, social marketing efforts are more effective when messages about behavior change are delivered through local, story-like forms that have the approval of community leaders. For a maternal nutrition campaign, utilizing messages like—a family's health depends on the nutrition of its mother' and—healthy newborns show good-take rates among highly dogmatic, rural audiences than messages which convey medical facts requiring central-route processing. Religious leaders, old women, or other trusted community members can be highly effective peripheral cues. In low-dogmatic segments—that is, typically youth, urban dwellers, high education-levels—evidence-based, data-rich messaging with compelling logic will, more than anything else, foster durable change in attitude and behavior. Specific to gender-equity messaging targeted at progressive urban youth, presenting compelling reasons for attitude change will be key, as the high processing routes of this group are the ones most susceptible to presenting a bottom-up, argument-quality-based persuasion. A one-size-fits-all approach will undoubtedly backfire and miss the mark entirely with each segment: high-dogmatists will always be exposed to culturally appropriate messaging that simply will not be deep enough for low-dogmatists, and vice versa. The best policy will be to align culturally sensitive creative messages across the psychographically supported media channels at play for each segment.

6. Future Research Directions

6.1 Empirical Validation of the Moderated-Mediation Architecture

The main empirical goal should be direct experiment to test the moderated-mediation model. The recommended method is a 2 (cultural frame: traditional versus contemporary) by 2 (appeal: emotional versus rational) by 2 (dogmatism: high versus low) between-subjects factorial experiment with Aad and PCI as primary DV and processing route as the mediator. Processing route should be measured along with thought-listing protocol and response latency measures; the NFC scale can be used as an additional convergent validity to check and as a secondary means for assessing the behavior route of processing, but should not replace the behavioral measures of processing route given the of discriminant validity problems outlined in Section 2.4. Stimuli material should be geared toward a purchase product category

which holds personal or social meaning for the target culture, but not too central to one's identity (e.g., food, personal care) so that cultural frame manipulation is not confounded with status toward this purchase. Checks should include Cui et al.'s (2012) cultural congruence scale and Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) elaboration scale items. Most critically, the validation should feature dogmatism, NFC, and openness-to-experience as simultaneous moderators to exclude the possibility that the unique contribution of dogmatism to route selection is statistically artifactual. To be sufficiently powered for a three-way factorial design at an alpha of .05 and 1 - beta of .80 with a conservative $f = .15$ (small effect), a minimum of $N = 320$ should be recruited from Indian consumers in at least two geographic regions of the country.

6.2 Measurement of Processing Route via Neurological and Behavioral Indicators

Administering thought-listing protocols depends on introspection, can be confounded by social desirability effects, and is especially challenging when consumers are high dogmatists and may not report identity-defensive thinking. In future work, researchers should triangulate these findings with behavioral and neurological measures. Eye-tracking can provide an operational definition of elaborative engagement through fixations and return fixations toward argument-dense versus visual-affective sections of advertisements.

Event-related potential (ERP) investigation of P300 amplitude (a hypothetically has been identified as a neural correlate of the depth of cognitive elaboration; Yurcer et al., 2014; Nikopour et al., 2014) can be utilized to explore the direct, unmediated neural evidence of the dogmatism route of activation hypothesis predicted by P10, in support of Zmigrod et al.'s (2021) neurological dogmatism research.

Implicit association tests (IAT) can provide an additional measure of automatic attitude activation as a proxy for the preelaborative direct rejection route described in P10.

6.3 Longitudinal Assessment of Attitude Stability Differences

Proposition 8

predicts central route attitudes are more temporally stable and behaviorally predictive than peripheral route attitudes. Tests must measure the decay or stability trajectories of attitude strength for both routes among experimentally exposed consumers over time. Ideally, a three-wave panel (immediate post-exposure, two-week-, and six-week-follow-up) study with intervening competitive advertising (i.e., counterpersuasion) would empirically test this hypothesis-structural equation modeling with latent growth curve analysis could then model attitude decay trajectories as a function of processing route and dogmatism.

6.4 Extension to Digital and Social Media Advertising Environments

The model was developed on a broadcast and print advertising context, but India's novel digital advertising ecosystem – dominated by 700 + million internet users and short-form video consumption – differs markedly in its processing context. Future work should test whether the dogmatism $\times$ route $\times$ appeal interaction holds in digital environments, where the peripheral cues (engagement metrics/influencer trust cues) are more immediately available, and argument elaboration is inhibited by the format. Critical questions include:

1. (a) Whether influencer source heuristics serve as peripheral shortcut cues, bolstering low-dogmatic consumers' message acceptance when the source is itself culturally preferential?
2. (b) Whether signals of social proof (comment sentiment/share volume) moderate dogmatism's effect on route selection?
3. (c) Whether the short-form video format inhibits low-dogmatic consumers' use of rational appeal by limiting argument development?

6.5 Cross-Cultural Replication and Boundary Condition Testing

Although theoretically applicable in India, the model needs further testing in other multi-cultural markets that have both advertising triggered backlash and large variation in dogmatism as the definition of a viable replication. This can be found in Indonesia (largest Muslim countrodemocracy, accusations of interfaith advertising), Brazil (large cultural diversity, accusation of race and gender based advertising) and United States (continuing culture-warring todate that affects brand communication). Cross national replications would allow for systematic testing of whether the identity-threat mechanism (discussed before) would work in the same manner if the 'threatening' content differentiates from the Hindu-Muslim interfaith content in India to 'race' in US or 'secular vs religious' in the Indonesian or Brazilian marketplace.

6.6 Mediating Role of Moral Emotions

The mediating process underlies the model's specification of dogmatism as the predictor of peripheral route preference, but does not detail what emotions in particular evoke this threat response. Future research should explore if the various moral emotions disgust (related to reactions of norm-breaking behavior, as in the Tanishq and FabIndia cases), contempt (related to the threat of one's in-group status), and moral outrage (related to notional willful threats to cultural system integrity)-serve as mediators of the dogmatism–route effect. Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley (2000) report that disgust elicits more automatic and durable attitude formation than either contempt or anger (as in moral outrage). Advertising that stimulates consumer disgust while high-dogmatic may create more deeply-ingrained negative Aad that proves less susceptible to corrective messages later.

7. Limitations and Scope Conditions

As a conceptual paper, this study's limitations are inherent to the theoretical-synthesis approach rather than to empirical methodology. The following scope conditions define where the model's predictions are likely to hold and where they require qualification.

First, the model treats dogmatism as a binary (high vs. low) moderator for propositional clarity, but the underlying construct is continuous. Empirical testing should employ latent profile analysis or continuous moderation rather than median-split approaches, as the latter artificially inflates Type I error rates and discards meaningful variance in the middle of the distribution. The propositions as stated describe extreme profiles; effects at intermediate dogmatism levels remain theoretically unspecified.

Second, the identity-threat mechanism's primary empirical anchor-Aji and Dharmmesta (2019)-derives from Indonesian Muslim consumers responding to religiously incongruent advertising. India's religious and caste plurality means that the mechanism may operate through different specific identity threats (e.g., caste community disruption, regional linguistic identity, or Dalit identity challenges) that are not captured by a single-religion study. The present model assumes the identity-threat mechanism generalizes across these triggers, but empirical cross-context verification is required before this can be treated as demonstrated rather than proposed.

Third, the model does not yet account for rival moderators of advertising processing route, including religiosity, right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), and need for closure (NFC). Each of these constructs shares theoretical adjacency with dogmatism and has established advertising-response literatures. Future empirical work should enter these as covariates alongside dogmatism to establish the latter's unique predictive contribution, which is theoretically justified by the identity-threat mechanism but not yet empirically isolated.

Fourth, the model was developed with traditional broadcast and print advertising in mind. Its application to digital advertising environments-where peripheral cues (likes, shares, algorithmic amplification) may operate through mechanisms not captured by the original ELM-requires the extensions described in Section 6.4 rather than direct application of the present propositions.

Fifth, all ten propositions remain empirically untested. The moderated-mediation architecture is theoretically grounded and supported by adjacent empirical literatures, but the specific interaction predictions (particularly P4's three-way interaction and P10's discriminant empirical signature) may not survive experimental testing. Authors of future empirical tests are encouraged to specify in advance (pre-registration) what null or reversed patterns would mean for the model's theoretical framework rather than treating non-significant interactions as null results to be explained away.

Sixth, the proposed sample size ($N = 320$) is adequate for detecting medium-sized three-way interactions at conventional power levels, but smaller effects-which are plausible given the complexity of the model-

would require substantially larger samples. Any empirical replication should conduct a priori power analysis based on the specific effect size expected rather than treating $N = 320$ as a universal threshold.

8. Conclusion

This study proposes an integrated conceptual model to address a recognized theoretical and practical gap in persuasion science: the absence of a formally specified psychographic framework for explaining heterogeneous consumer responses to culturally complex advertising in non-Western, multicultural environments. By formally integrating dogmatism as a process-level moderator within the ELM and linking this dual-route mechanism with CCT's schema-activation dynamics, the model specifies how identical advertisements-with equivalent product and execution quality-can simultaneously foster positive attitudes in one consumer segment while triggering identity-defensive rejection in another.

The ten propositions developed in Section 3, grounded in existing empirical literatures and organized through a systematic integration of dogmatism theory, ELM, and CCT, provide a falsifiable and experimentally testable structure for future research. The model's core prediction-that high-dogmatic consumers rely on peripheral cues to form attitudes that are positive when cultural congruence is present but brittle in the face of competitive counter-messaging, while low-dogmatic consumers employ central route processing yielding more stable argument-based attitudes-generates a specific and distinctive empirical signature that differentiates this framework from adjacent accounts based on NFC or openness-to-experience alone.

The informal illustrative analysis in Section 3.3 demonstrates that the model's gradient predictions-stronger defensive responses for religiously salient threats (Tanishq) than for secular-cultural challenges (FabIndia) than for ambiguous festivity-context disruptions (Surf Excel)-are consistent with the documented intensity differential across the three motivating cases. This convergent informal evidence, while not a substitute for experimental testing, provides preliminary external validity support for the model's discriminant predictions.

For practitioners, the framework offers a psychographic segmentation model that moves beyond demographic targeting toward the identification of consumers' dispositional tolerance for belief-discrepant information. For public health authorities and social marketers, the model supplies a multi-route communication strategy allowing for differentiated message design, appeal tailoring, and messenger selection across psychographic segments, with the dual goals of immediate acceptance and long-term attitude stability.

The limitations documented in Section 7 define the model's current scope: it is a conceptual framework whose propositions are directional, theoretically grounded, and ready for empirical testing-not a confirmed theory of Indian advertising response. The expensive pattern of advertising backlash in Indian markets is, on this framework's account, a predictable consequence of single-route, culturally generalized communication strategies applied to a psychographically diverse consumer base. The

appropriate response is not cultural restraint but psychographically informed, multi-route campaign architecture-a response for which this conceptual model provides the theoretical scaffolding.

Declarations

- **Competing Interests:** The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.
- **Ethics Approval:** Not applicable. This is a conceptual paper and did not involve primary data collection from human or animal participants.
- **Data Availability:** Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

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Figures

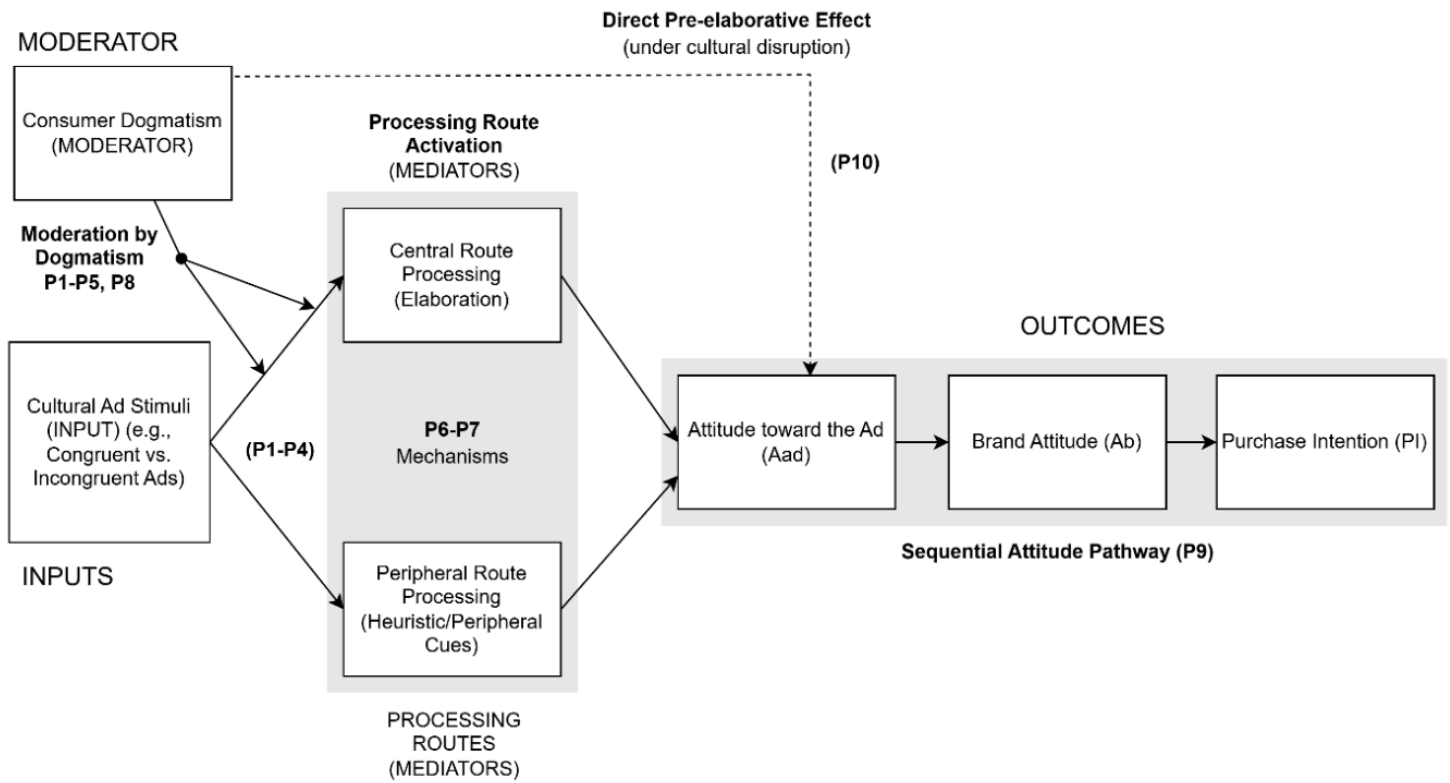


Figure 1

Conceptual Model of Multi-Route Persuasion