CHAPTER SEVEN

The ability to think carefully about the merits of a message is the second factor that influences which route is taken. People may be motivated to carefully consider the arguments they are receiving, but they may have difficulty comprehending the message. The arguments may be too complicated, people may be rushed or hurried, or there may be competing sources for their attention. When attitude change occurs under these circumstances, it occurs through the peripheral route rather than the central route, because the merits of the arguments are obscured.

Figure 7.8 summarizes how these two variables combine to influence persuasion. The key point to consider is that the central route is taken relatively infrequently. This is because it occurs only when people are motivated and able to think carefully about the information they are receiving. Advertisers seem to recognize this fact. When you are home watching television, you’re probably not motivated to carefully attend to a commercial message. Moreover, you’re also probably distracted when the commercial comes on (e.g., you are going to the refrigerator to get something to eat). That’s why advertisers load up their commercials with peripheral cues. They know you’re not thinking a lot about the message itself, so they attempt to persuade you using other means, such as attractive sources or pleasant music.

3. Consequences of Which Route Is Taken

Attitude change can occur through either route, but attitudes changed through the central route are stronger than attitudes changed through the peripheral route. In this context, stronger means more enduring, more resistant to attack, and more likely to guide behavior. Attitudes changed through the central route are stronger because they were