

IDENTIFICATION OF PERSUASION PRINCIPLES IN BUSINESS BEHAVIOR – METHODOLOGY PRS40

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Abstract: The aim was to enrich the understanding of persuasion issues with a specific focus on identifying persuasion principles in business behavior. Data from respondents were obtained through the PRS40 questionnaire (Principle of Persuasion). The goal was achieved through the development and validation of the original PRS40 methodology, which was created to identify persuasion principles in business behavior by specifying its factor structure and basic psychometric parameters.

Keywords: Persuasion, Principles of Persuasion, PRS40 Methodology, Business Behavior

1 Introduction

Persuasion, influence, and manipulation are concepts we encounter daily. However, we often do not know the differences between them. Most of us even use these techniques in various ways without realizing it. In the world of business and entrepreneurship, these techniques are indispensable. Companies now even provide various courses for their employees. In these courses, people learn not only how to use these techniques but also how to defend against them. Zelina (1990) believes that the persuasion process is closely related to other aspects of conducting a good conversation, such as proper preparation, understanding people, and building rapport during the conversation. The art of persuasion can be learned through practice and attentiveness to feedback.

The word "persuasion" comes from the Latin word "persuasio," which can be translated as "convincing" (Korolko, 1998). Manipulation differs from persuasion in that the manipulator's goals are not known to us. Prokúpek (2017) attempts to explain the differences between persuasion, manipulation, and influence. He defines persuasion as a conscious effort to change the attitudes, opinions, or behavior of another person or group while maintaining free will. It must not involve pressure, bans, or commands, and the recipient has the right to refuse. Prokúpek (2017) describes manipulation as persuasion using dishonest techniques. The boundary between manipulation and persuasion may not be the same for everyone, so it cannot be precisely defined. What one considers honorable, another may regard as dishonorable behavior. Subsequently, the author describes influence. He believes that influence is a conscious or unconscious act on others that can lead to a change in their attitudes, opinions, and behavior (Prokúpek, 2017). Influence is therefore the broadest of these three concepts.

Within his definitions of persuasion, Gálik (2012) states that it is an intentional attempt to influence, it is a form of communication involving the transmission of a message, it involves changing the mental state of the recipient (changing thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, or behavior), and it respects the recipient's free will, distinguishing it from manipulation.

Various methods are used in persuasion to truly convince people. Rational and emotional arguments are used, where it is important to pay attention to the content of the information. Expert opinions are often used for persuasion, or popular celebrities are utilized as well (Karlíček, Král, 2011).

Perloff (2008) defines persuasion as a symbolic process in which the communicator seeks to convince the recipient to change their attitude or behavior by sending a message in an atmosphere of free choice.

According to Šerkovin (1977), persuasion can be considered as a flow of information that reduces the level of psychological resistance of the recipients subjected to communication influence.

2 Research

The aim of the research was to enhance the understanding of persuasion issues with a specific focus on identifying persuasion principles in business behavior. This objective was achieved by proposing and validating the original methodology PRS40 for the purpose of identifying persuasive principles concerning the specification of its factor structure and basic psychometric parameters. The results were processed using the statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics 26 through statistical methods: Pearson's correlation coefficient; factor analysis (Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation), Cronbach's alpha, Friedman test.

Based on the defined research aim, a research problem and research hypothesis were formulated and addressed within the research project: Problem: Is there a structure of persuasive principles in business behavior, and is it possible to delineate the taxonomy of this structure? Hypothesis: We assume that there is a structure of persuasive principles that can be taxonomically specified in business behavior. The data were obtained through a research project on a sample of 338 respondents operating in the business environment, including 153 (45.3%) men and 185 (54.7%) women aged 18 to 67 years (average age 38.39 years, standard deviation 12.937).

Taxonomic specification of the factor structure of the existence of persuasive principles in business behavior: By factor analysis using the Principal Component method with Varimax rotation, five factors were extracted, confirming the existence of the presumed factor structure of persuasive principles in business behavior (Table 1, Table 2, and Graph 1). These factors were characterized as follows:

Attractiveness - Respondents who score higher in this factor tend to believe more that if they feel physically more attractive, they communicate better. These respondents adhere to the belief that physically attractive people are better communicators. They tend to ignore or reject information that conflicts with their opinions and beliefs. Self-deception is used to maintain their thoughts and feelings in line with what someone else has done or is planning to do. Cronbach's alpha: 0.860.

Reciprocity - Respondents who score higher in this factor perceive people around them as bigger, wiser, and more experienced than themselves. They adhere to the tendency that kindness is repaid with kindness and help with help. This factor also holds the belief that kindness, gifts, and invitations must be reciprocated. If they see people in certain situations, they tend to adopt their behavior. Cronbach's alpha: 0.840.

Popularity - Respondents who score higher in this factor are characterized by seeking answers or direction to follow. They do not ask what others can do for them but what they can do for others. Respondents feel the need to orient themselves in the world and have the need for correct information. Cronbach's alpha: 0.830.

Free Choice - Respondents who score higher in this factor tend to believe more that their decisions are right and good. They need constant explanations for trust in a person to develop. If they feel their free choice is somehow narrowing, they want to act immediately. They then react with direct resistance and try to regain their freedom. They feel better if they see that more people before them were satisfied with the same decision before buying. Cronbach's alpha: 0.799.

Adaptability - Respondents who score higher in this factor are adaptable when they are unsure how to perceive or interpret a situation. A discounted price of a product makes them feel the product is scarce. This factor also involves carefully observing the surroundings and then adapting to them. They are more manipulated by peer pressure than the truth of the situation. Cronbach's alpha: 0.850.

Tab 1: Saturation of extracted factors by individual items

	Factors				
	Popularity	Adaptability	Attractiveness	Reciprocity	Free Choice
PRS1 - When I see someone with an expensive car or watch, it evokes respect for that person in me.			,554		
PRS2 - If I feel physically more attractive, I communicate better.			,576		
PRS3 - I tend to listen to those who are similar to me (not physically).			,560		
PRS4 - Physically attractive people are better communicators from a communication standpoint.			,721		
PRS5 - Once I make a decision, I feel internal pressures to behave in line with that decision.			,604		
PRS6 - Sometimes I deceive myself to keep my thoughts and feelings in line with what someone else has done or is planning to do.			,668		
PRS7 - I tend to ignore/reject information that conflicts with my opinions and beliefs.			,597		
PRS8 - I believe that physical attractiveness influences popularity.			,641		
PRS9 - Compliments towards me increase the popularity of the communicator in me.			,598		
PRS10 - I perceive people around me as bigger, wiser, and more experienced than myself.				,436	
PRS11 - I adhere to the tendency that kindness is repaid with kindness and help with help.				,601	
PRS12 - I am accustomed to reciprocating all kindness, gifts, and invitations in the future.				,769	
PRS13 - My own thinking compels me to reciprocate kindness, gift, or help with the same kindness, gift, or help.				,639	
PRS14 - If someone does something for me, I feel that I owe them in some way, and vice versa.				,478	
PRS15 - If I give a gift to an acquaintance, it is very likely that I will also receive a gift on another occasion.				,577	
PRS16 - If I hear laughter in the background, I start laughing too.				,641	
PRS17 - If I see people in certain situations, I tend to adopt their behavior.				,598	
PRS18 - I seek answers and direction to follow.	,569				

PRS19 - I choose the service/product that I consider most trustworthy.	,563				
PRS20 - I mostly encounter people who are kind, smiling, respond to every email or call in personal contact.	,448				
PRS21 - The more I am in contact with people and see them, the sooner I establish friendship with them.	,657				
PRS22 - Face-to-face communication is more effective than mediated communication.	,726				
PRS23 - I do not ask what others can do for me, but what I can do for others.	,624				
PRS24 - I believe that people are interdependent.	,695				
PRS25 - I have the need to orient myself in the world and have correct information.	,527				
PRS26 - I need explanations for trust in a person to develop.					,445
PRS27 - I believe that my decisions are right and good.					,558
PRS28 - If my free choice is limited, I feel an increased need to behave to maintain my freedom.					,631
PRS29 - When purchasing a product at a discounted price, I feel joy and satisfaction.					,553
PRS30 - If I feel my free choice is somehow narrowing, I want to act immediately.					,733
PRS31 - If someone or something restricts my free choice, I react with direct resistance and try to regain it.					,712
PRS32 - I feel better if I see that more people before me were satisfied with the same decision before buying.					,460
PRS33 - The "discounted price" of a product I am interested in makes me feel its scarcity.	,492				
PRS34 - I tend to behave as those around me behave.	,635				
PRS35 - I tend to buy things that have been on the market the longest.	,540				
PRS36 - I adapt because I am unsure how to perceive or interpret a situation.	,560				
PRS37 - The need for acceptance by others forces me to agree with them.	,800				
PRS38 - I behave in a certain way because that is what others want.	,817				
PRS39 - I am more manipulated by peer pressure than by the truth of the situation.	,790				
PRS40 - I carefully observe my surroundings and try to adapt my behavior to them.	,603				

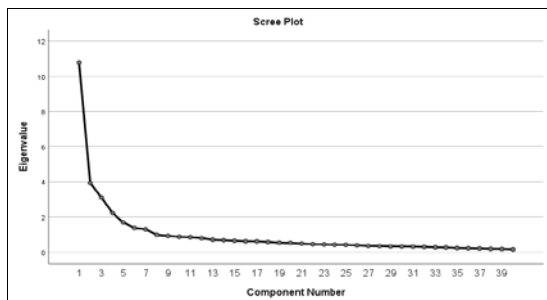
Tab 2: Results of factor analysis

Factor	Eigenvalues	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Popularity	10,786	26,965	26,965
Adaptability	3,933	9,832	36,797
Attractiveness	3,100	7,749	44,546
Reciprocity	2,224	5,561	50,107
Free Choice	1,691	4,229	54,336

Source: Own processing

During the evaluation of the analyses, we proceeded based on the criterion of Kaiser normalization, where we established a fixed number of factors (5 factors), as the research sample on which the factor analysis was conducted consists of 338 respondents operating in a business environment.

The extracted factors explained together 54.336% of the variance. This variance was sufficiently high, and the proposed factor structure could be accepted. It was supported by the reliability values obtained using Cronbach's alpha (Tables 3-7). The identification of additional factors that would increase the mentioned percentage was not appropriate. Further factors could not be meaningfully specified in content. The extracted factors could be quite clearly specified in content. The indicated factor structure is also confirmed by the result of the used Scree plot method (Graph 1).



Graph 1 Displaying identified factors based on the Scree Plot method

Tab 3: The values of Cronbach's alpha for the factor Attractiveness

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PRS1	27,24	36,813	,520	,852
PRS2	25,82	37,088	,594	,845
PRS3	25,93	36,554	,608	,844
PRS4	26,55	34,925	,654	,839
PRS5	26,08	37,685	,562	,848
PRS6	26,60	35,920	,596	,845
PRS7	26,54	35,946	,533	,852
PRS8	26,07	35,734	,608	,844
PRS9	26,21	35,898	,624	,842

Cronbach's alpha for the factor Attractiveness = 0,860

Tab 4: The values of Cronbach's alpha for the factor Reciprocity

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PRS10	23,30	26,664	,457	,840
PRS11	22,04	26,206	,616	,817
PRS12	22,24	24,356	,736	,800
PRS13	22,16	25,318	,686	,807
PRS14	22,27	25,871	,588	,819
PRS15	22,80	25,718	,576	,820
PRS16	23,11	25,409	,508	,831
PRS17	23,15	25,723	,553	,823

Cronbach's alpha for the factor Reciprocity = 0,840

Tab 5: The values of Cronbach's alpha for the factor Popularity

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PRS18	26,30	21,453	,473	,822
PRS19	26,04	21,619	,557	,810
PRS20	26,69	21,615	,494	,818
PRS21	26,17	20,386	,706	,791
PRS22	26,14	20,506	,648	,798
PRS23	26,47	20,725	,610	,803
PRS24	26,42	20,357	,559	,810
PRS25	26,16	22,265	,420	,828

Cronbach's alpha for the factor Popularity = 0,830

Tab 6: The values of Cronbach's alpha for the factor Free Choice

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PRS26	22,20	15,778	,478	,782
PRS27	22,01	16,617	,485	,781
PRS28	22,25	15,353	,569	,765
PRS29	22,13	15,479	,546	,770
PRS30	22,36	14,473	,631	,752
PRS31	22,29	14,699	,584	,762
PRS32	22,16	15,939	,423	,793

Cronbach's alpha for the factor Free Choice = 0,799

Tab 7: The values of Cronbach's alpha for the factor Adaptability

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PRS33	18,80	30,642	,470	,847
PRS34	19,20	29,329	,577	,834
PRS35	19,03	31,183	,449	,848
PRS36	18,64	31,340	,516	,840
PRS37	19,24	27,971	,740	,813
PRS38	19,42	27,917	,769	,810
PRS39	19,47	28,600	,723	,816
PRS40	18,81	29,934	,496	,844

Cronbach's alpha for the factor Adaptability = 0,850

The results of Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis confirm the adequacy of the analysis results with satisfactory values within each factor. The obtained values of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicate that the internal consistency of the items comprising the specified factors falls within an acceptable range. Cronbach's alpha is an indicator of consistency, reliability, of the mentioned factors. A value of 0.8 for this indicator represents a high level of consistency, reliability.

The correctness of the stated factor structure of the PRS40 methodology is further supported by the values of the computed intercorrelation coefficients between the individual extracted factors (Table 8).

Tab 8: Inter-correlations of defined factors in the PRS40 methodology

Factors	Attrac-tiveness	Reci-procity	Popula-rity	Free Choice	Adaptability
Attrac-tiveness	1	,472**	,462**	,584**	,463**
Reciprocity	,472**	1	,560**	,414**	,440**
Popularity	,462**	,560**	1	,464**	,279**
Free Choice	,584**	,414**	,464**	1	,280**
Adaptability	,463**	,440**	,279**	,280**	1

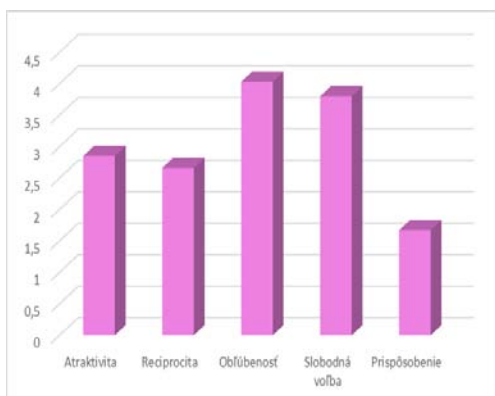
Adaptability	,463**	,440**	,279**	,280**	1
	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	

Legend: **Statistical significance at the 0.01 level of significance

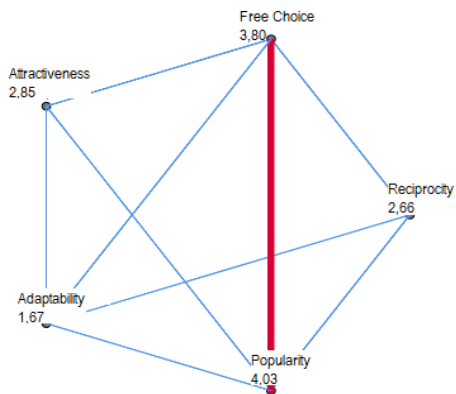
The results of correlation analyses indicate that individual principles of persuasive behavior identified by the PRS40 methodology are statistically significantly related. Correlations at the significance level of 0.000 represent the extent to which individual factors are related to each other.

The factors extracted by the PRS40 methodology were not assessed equally. The Friedman test confirmed statistically significant differences in the evaluation of individual tested factors at the significance level of 0.001 (Chi-Square 510.042; df 4; Asymp. Sig. 0.000). Five newly emerged factors (Attractiveness - 2.85; Reciprocity - 2.66; Popularity - 4.03; Free choice - 3.80; Adaptation - 1.67) of persuasive principles in business behavior were analyzed.

Respondents achieved the highest scores in the Popularity factor. Respondents prefer to seek answers or direction to follow. These respondents utilize popularity as a component of the need to orient themselves in the world and the need to always have the right information. These respondents do not ask what others can do for them, but what they can do for others. The lowest score was specified in the Adaptation/adaptability factor. Respondents are adaptable if they are not sure how to perceive or interpret a situation. They carefully observe their surroundings and then adapt to the situations. Respondents achieved average scores in the Attractiveness factor. In this case, respondents believe that if they feel physically more attractive, their communication is better and more confident. They hold the opinion that physically attractive people are better communicators. They tend to ignore information that conflicts with their opinions and beliefs (graph 2).



Graf 2 Assessment of the average values of each extracted factor in the PRS40 methodology



Graph 3 Pairwise ComparisonSource: Own processing

Through the method of pairwise comparison, or pairwise rating, we display the ranking or selection from a group of alternatives

by comparing them pairwise, where each node represents a sample count of successes. Pairwise comparison is used for decision-making or studying people's preferences. This rating simplifies and improves the accuracy of respondents' decision-making.

The presented research results and their interpretation are considered important for verifying the hypothesis: We assume that there is a structure of persuasive principles that can be taxonomically specified in business behavior. The proposed 5-factor structure of analysis of persuasive principles in business behavior and its basic validation parameters confirm the meaningfulness of the proposed specification for creating a methodology to identify principles of persuasion in business behavior.

3 Discussion and conclusion

Part of a salesperson's professional competence is the ability to persuade recipients about the credibility, correctness of their words, and ultimately to withstand the criterion that offers time, truthfulness, and activeness of words. In persuasive methods, the word primarily occupies a central position as the basic means of persuasion. The possibility of using persuasion in practice by salespeople is certainly inspiring.

The development and subsequent validation and verification of the PRS40 methodology are considered meaningful activities. It should be noted that the original PRS40 methodology can be applied in the context of various processes related to persuasion and people management in both business and managerial contexts. Specifically in the field of business, the use of this methodology can be specified in terms of personnel selection for business positions, their further education and training, and the preparation of operational and strategic materials in the area of persuading recipients.

In evaluating the analyses, we proceeded based on the criterion of Kaiser normalization, where we established a fixed number of factors. The proposed five-factor structure of analysis of persuasion in business behavior and its basic validation parameters confirm the meaningfulness of the proposed specification for creating a methodology to identify these methods in business behavior.

Basic principles such as attractiveness, reciprocity, popularity, freedom of choice, and adaptability are increasingly integrated into our lives, thereby integrating us into society. By using proper persuasion, a professional, or salesperson, can achieve tremendous power and incorporate it into fulfilling their requirements for selling goods, services, gaining and providing gifts, obtaining consent from the other party, and more. It is up to us how we view the salesperson who persuades us. It is up to us what or who we succumb to and start believing.

Cialdini (2009) refers to his principles as "weapons of influence." We fully agree with this designation and extend its application to all persuasive tools and strategies that exist. Each of these tools can indeed be imagined as a weapon. All weapons are capable of contributing to achieving a good goal in certain situations, but in the wrong hands and used incorrectly, they can cause great harm. These are tools that do not belong in everyone's hands, and their use needs to be regulated.

The presented findings and insights indicate the possibility of creating such a methodology, although further analyses are needed, and especially their implementation on larger, more heterogeneous samples, possibly including additional business situations.

At the same time, the findings highlight the necessity of constantly considering the degree of generality of accepted conclusions within the principles of persuasion, or the situational and contextual conditionality of these principles.

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