

Using Social Norms To Preserve The Environment

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The Fundamental Principle of Social Influence: Consensus (The Descriptive Social Norm)

People are likely to follow the lead of others
like them.

We follow the lead of:

Many others

Similar others

Descriptive Social Norm
(Consensus)

Hotel Towel Reuse Study

Typical in-room appeals:

1. Environmental protection; and
2. Environmental cooperation

Environmental Focus

HELP SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT.

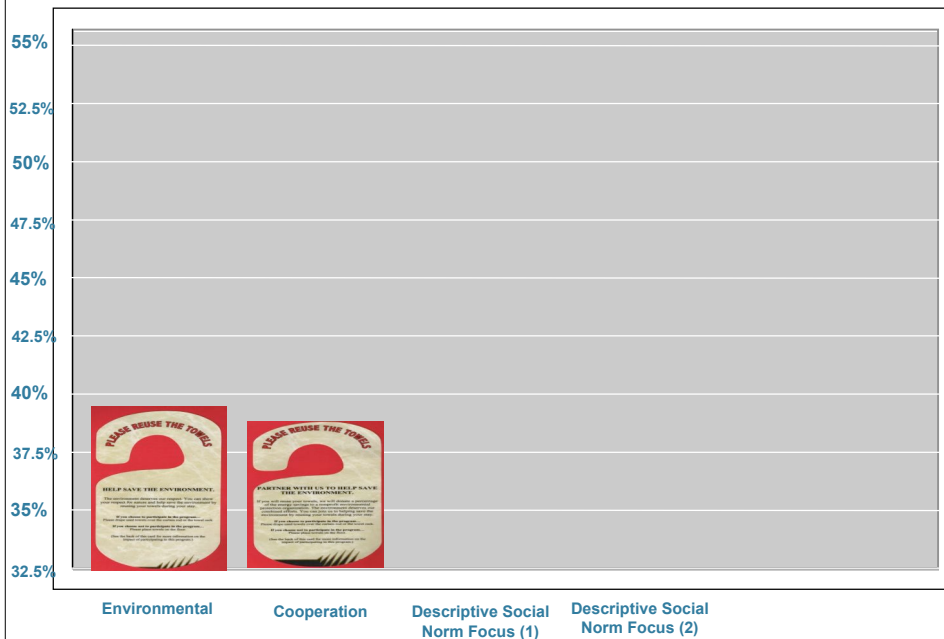
The environment deserves our respect. You can show your respect for nature and help save the environment by reusing your towels during your stay.

Cooperation Focus

PARTNER WITH US TO HELP SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT.

If you will reuse your towels, we will donate a percentage of the energy savings to a nonprofit environmental protection organization. The environment deserves our combined efforts. You can join us in helping save the environment by reusing your towels during your stay.

Percentage of Towel Reuse



Descriptive Social Norm Focus (1)

JOIN YOUR FELLOW GUESTS IN HELPING TO SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT.

Almost 75% of guests who are asked to participate in our new resource savings program do help by using their towels more than once. You can join your fellow guests in this program to help save the environment by reusing your towels during your stay.

Percentage of Towel Reuse



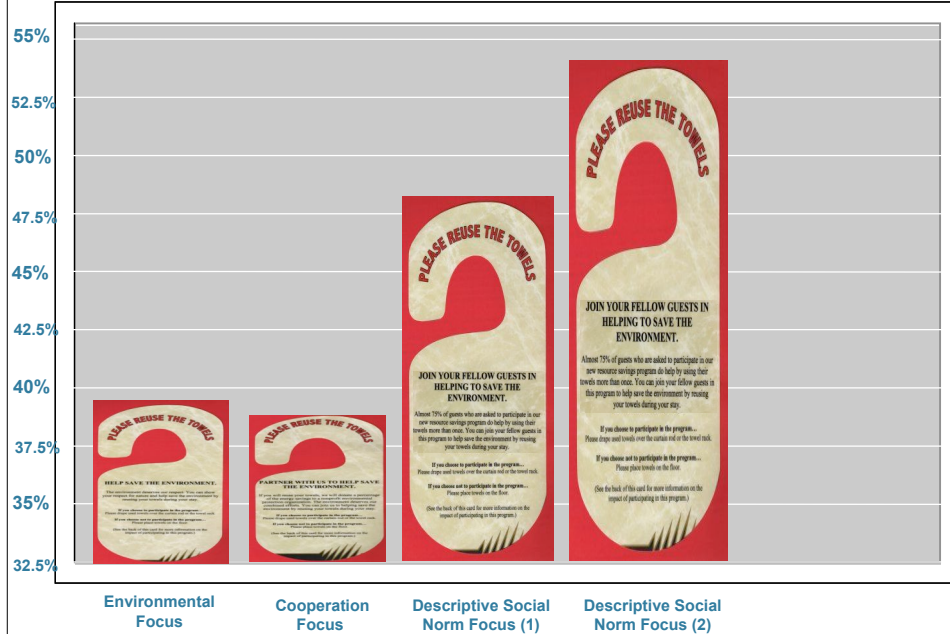
But is there an even more impactful message that could be sent, knowing what we know about the consensus principle?

We follow the lead of:

Many others

Similar others

Percentage of Towel Reuse



People Underestimate the Power of Social Norms

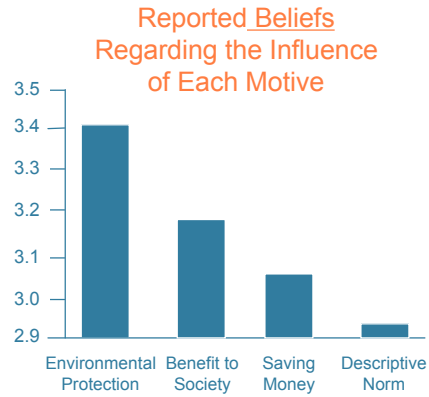
This is true both:

when, as observers, they decide how to interpret the causes of their own actions

and

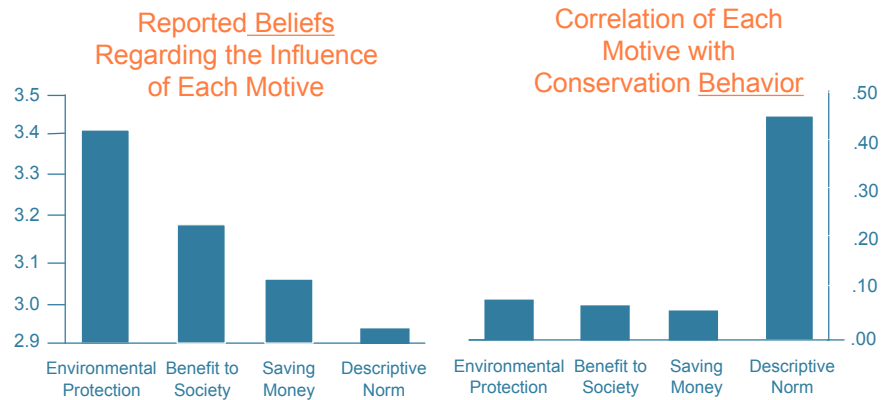
when, as tacticians, they decide how to influence the actions of others

California Energy Savings Survey



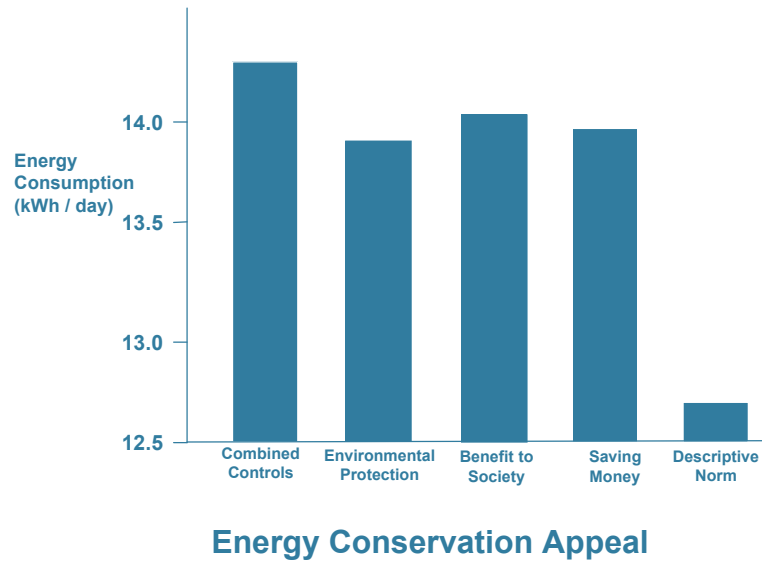
Different Motives to Conserve Energy

California Energy Savings Survey



Different Motives to Conserve Energy

Field Experiment



Descriptive Social Norm

(Implications)

We can use this principle to advance conservation goals, by:

- 1. Informing people of the true conservation efforts of their neighbors**—something they significantly underestimate; and
- 2. Tailoring this information to their particular circumstances** (e.g., to the efforts of their neighbors who are most comparable to them).

Descriptive Social Norm

(Implementations)

To implement these implications, it is necessary to have the means to collect, tailor, and deliver information regarding energy usage norms in neighborhoods.



Positive Energy

Descriptive Social Norm (Implementations)

Positive Energy

A communications platform employing descriptive social norms to influence efficiency and conservation:

- Provide regular feedback
- Compare customer's energy use to that of like neighbors
- Enable customers to set and track personal conservation goals
- Provide insights into what is likely causing over usage (e.g. summertime A/C usage)



Positive Energy

Descriptive Social Norm (Implementations)

Positive Energy

Components of the Platform:

Home Energy Reports: printed reports comparing energy use to relevant neighbors. Includes tailored recommendations and offerings.

Individualized Websites: designed to educate and motivate residential energy customers

Data warehouse and data mining: underlying technology that combines utility meter data with housing data and other demographic data.