

THE POWER OF THE MAJORITY

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Psychology can help us to understand how people think and make decisions. This knowledge is useful in all sorts of ways - with our children, with our partners or in business relationships. One such example is called "The Majority View" or "Social Proof".

Decision Making

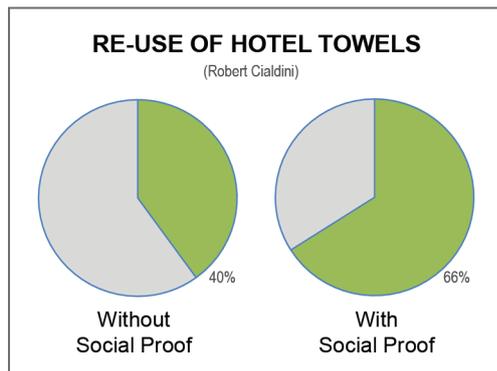
When people are asked to make a decision, there are many things that will persuade them in a possible direction: Some are fairly obvious, like the recommendations of friends, the advice of an expert, or the person's budget, etc. However some are less obvious. Consider the following real story about hotel bath towels.

The Lesson of Hotel Bath Towels

Most people are familiar with the cards that are often placed in hotel bathrooms asking guests to consider the environmental benefits of reusing the towels. These cards are trying to persuade people to do something and studies have shown that an average of about 40% of guests will reuse their bath towels in response.

However a researcher (Robert Cialdini) decided to test whether there was a way to influence more people to reuse their towels?

He found that by simply changing the wording on the card, the reuse rate for towels instantly rose to 66%.



The new card had the additional wording:

"The majority of guests who stay in our hotel reuse their towels".

The reason this rose so dramatically is something that psychologists call "Social Proof".

Social Proof

When people are told what other people are doing, there is a tendency for them to do it too. Most people can think of an example in their own lives where they have been influenced in this way. For example, where to go on holidays, what book to read, or what technology to buy?

People will often deny that they are influenced by what others are doing, but many studies have shown

that this is not true. The increase achieved by Social Proof has been measured as Plus 65% (26/40). Pointing out to people what others are doing in the same situation, is highly likely to have an influence on the decision being made. This is especially true when the views are from people who closely resemble them.

Applications in Eyecare

Understanding “Social Proof” and the power of “The Majority View” can help us in guiding our patients. For example:

- *“Our other patients with high pressures like yours always come in to have them checked every 6 months”.*
 - *“Most of our patients who are ordering prescription sunglasses get them with polarized lenses”.*
 - *“Most people who need two prescriptions like you have progressive lenses - hardly anybody has bifocals any more”.*
 - *“Most of our patients always return for a routine eye examination every 24 months”.*
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