



Influence at Work

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSUASION

Effective Communication: Persuasion and the Science of Social Influence

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Principle 1: Consensus

(Descriptive Social Norm)

- People are likely to follow the lead of multiple, comparable others

We follow the lead of:

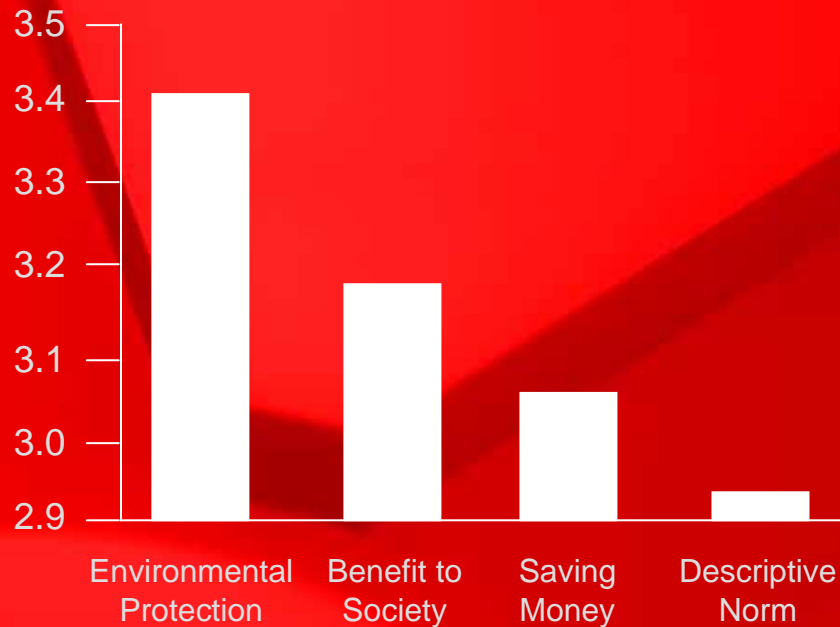
- Many others
- Similar others

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

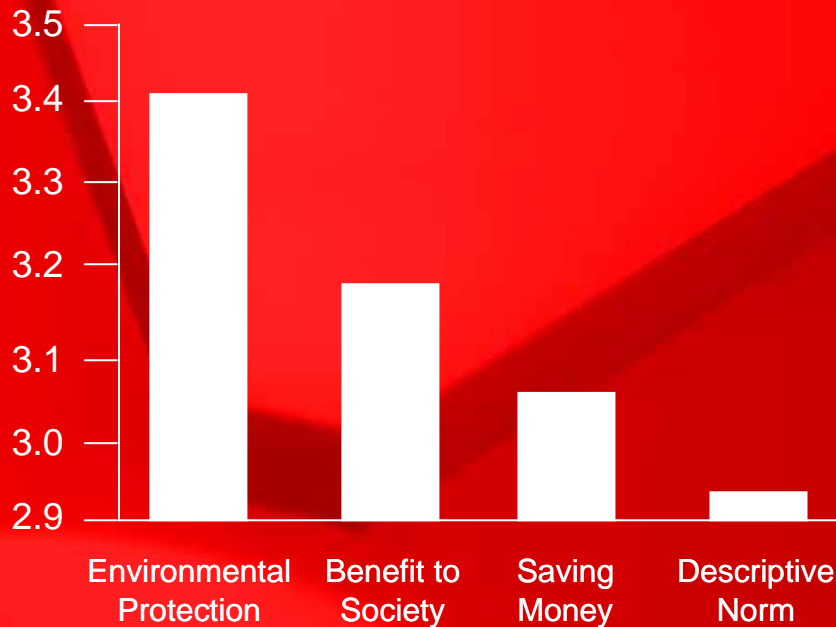
Reported Beliefs Regarding the Influence of Each Motive



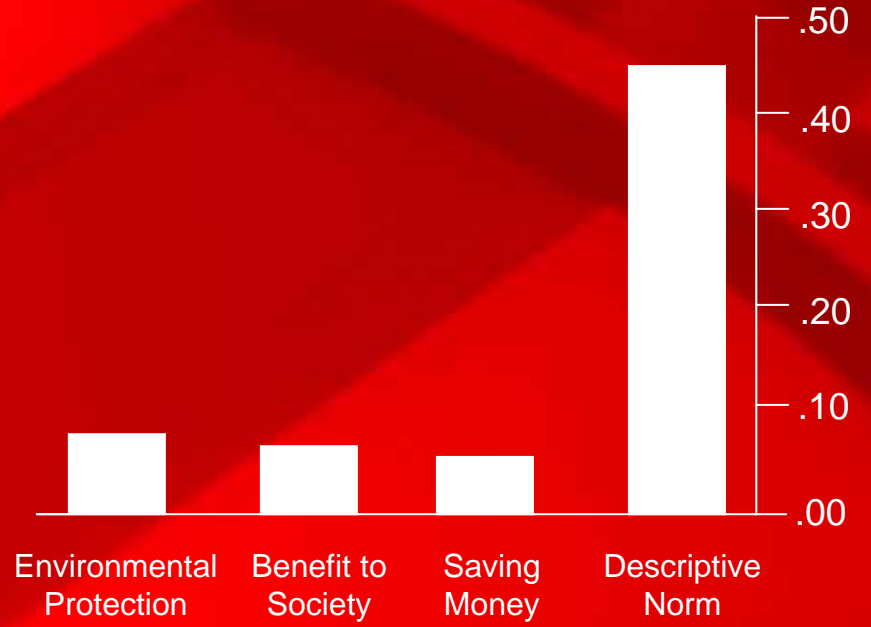
Different Motives to Conserve Energy

California Energy Savings Survey

Reported Beliefs Regarding the Influence of Each Motive

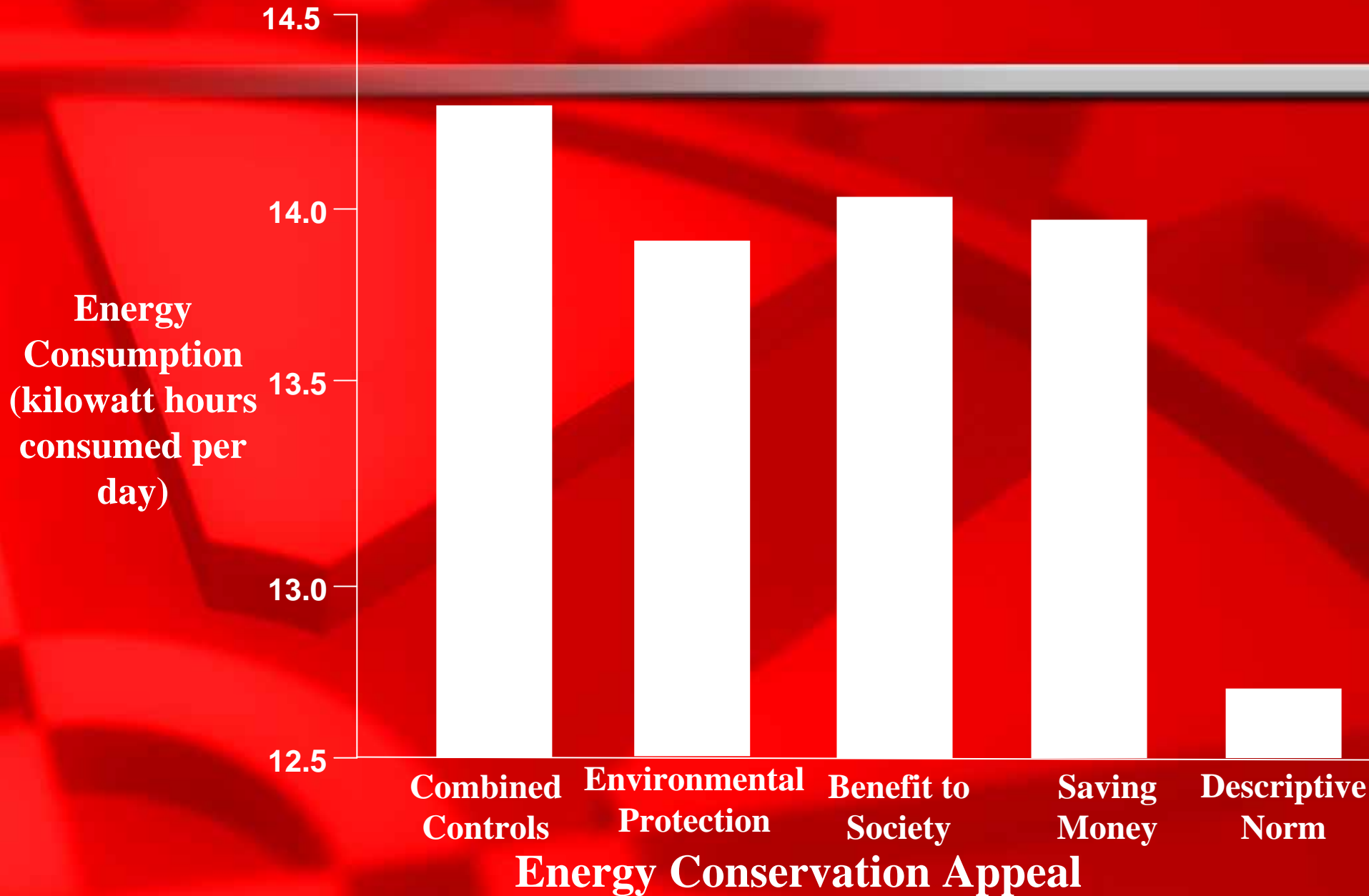


Correlation of Each Motive with Conservation Behavior



Different Motives to Conserve Energy

Field Experiment



Descriptive Social Norm

(Consensus)

How can we use this principle to advance environmental goals?

By providing a corrective to the approaches typically employed to mobilize pro-environmental action.

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

Descriptive Social Norm (Consensus)

- **Hotel Towel Reuse Study**

Typical in-room appeals:

- (1) Environmental protection; and**
- (2) Reciprocal benefits (Economic cooperation)**

Social Influence Principle 2: The Norm for Reciprocation

- **People are more likely to take an action if it is in return for a gift, favor, service or concession received**

The Norm for Reciprocation

Social Obligation

**When we receive, we are obliged
to give in return; and woe to
those who don't.**

Environmental Focus

HELP SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT.

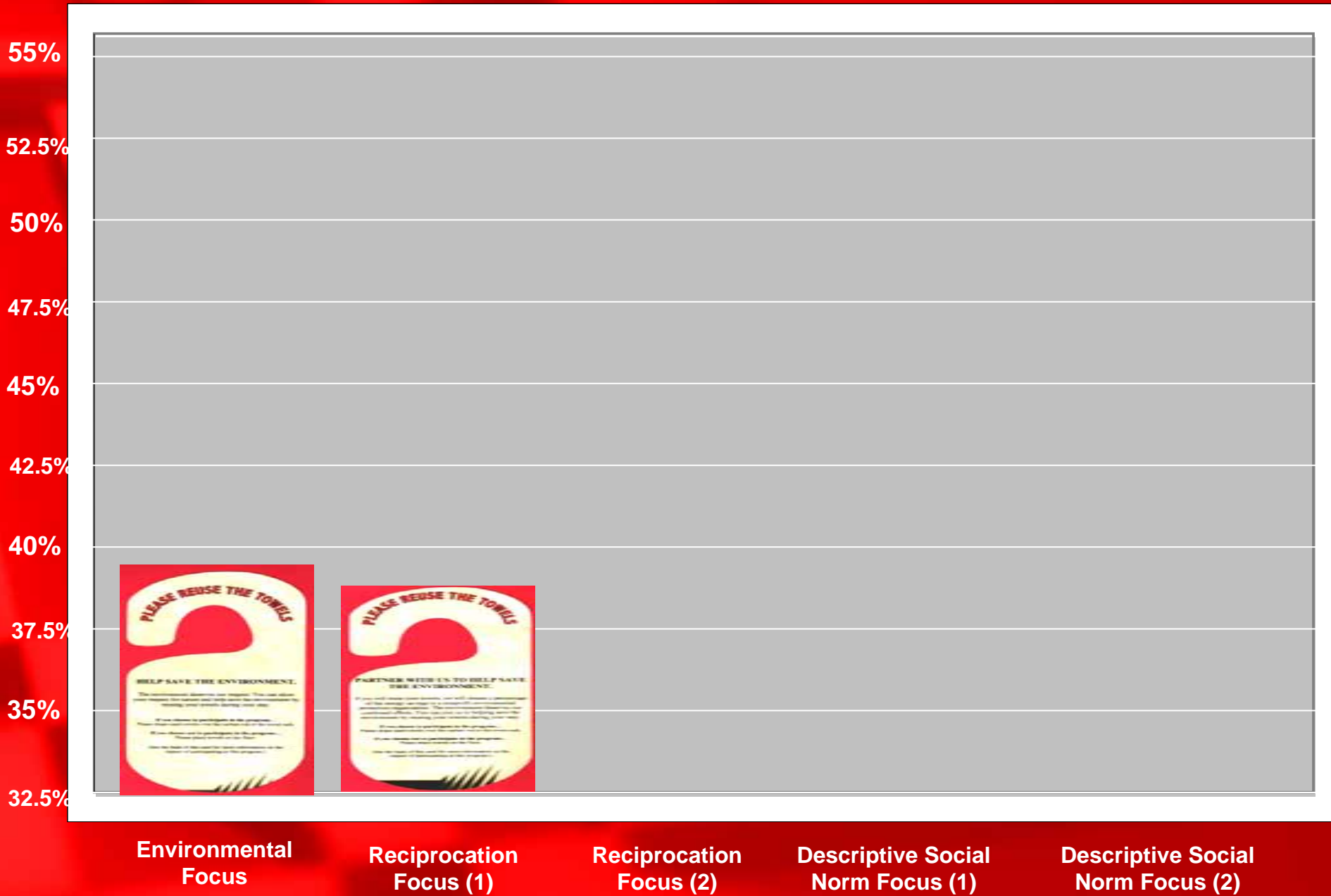
The environment deserves our respect. You can show your respect for nature and help save the environment by reusing your towels during your stay.

Reciprocation Focus (1)

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.



A notable aspect of the data:

In the Reciprocation Focus (1) condition, the hotel's pledge to donate to an environmental cause *if* guests reused their towels didn't increase recycling at all. Why?

There is no sense of social obligation to cooperate with someone who offers you something, provided that you perform a favor first.

However, there is a powerful sense of social obligation — embodied in the norm for reciprocation—to cooperate with someone who does something for you **first** and then asks for a favor in return.

Reciprocation Norm Focus (2)

**WE'RE DOING OUR PART FOR
THE ENVIRONMENT.
CAN WE COUNT ON YOU?**

Because we are committed to preserving the environment, we have made a financial contribution to a nonprofit environmental protection organization on behalf of the hotel and its guests. If you would like to help us in covering the expense, while also conserving natural resources, please reuse your towels during your stay.

Percentage of towel reuse.

55%
52.5%
50%
47.5%
45%
42.5%
40%
37.5%
35%
32.5%



Environmental Focus

Reciprocation Focus (1)

Reciprocation Focus (2)

Consensus Focus (1)

Consensus Focus (2)

Consensus 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.

55%
52.5%
50%
47.5%
45%
42.5%
40%
37.5%
35%
32.5%



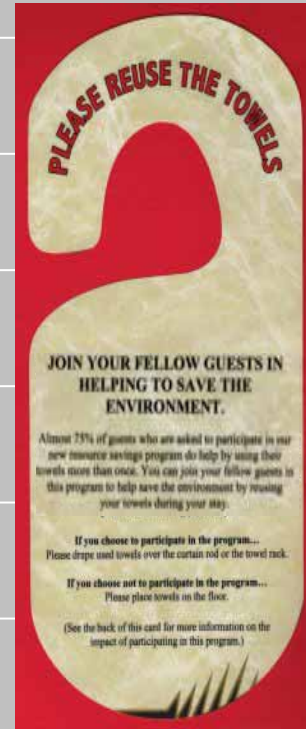
Environmental Focus



Reciprocation Focus (1)



Reciprocation Focus (2)



Consensus Focus (1)

Consensus Focus (2)

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**

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Environmental Focus

Reciprocation Focus (1)

Reciprocation Focus (2)

Consensus Focus (1)

Consensus Focus (2)

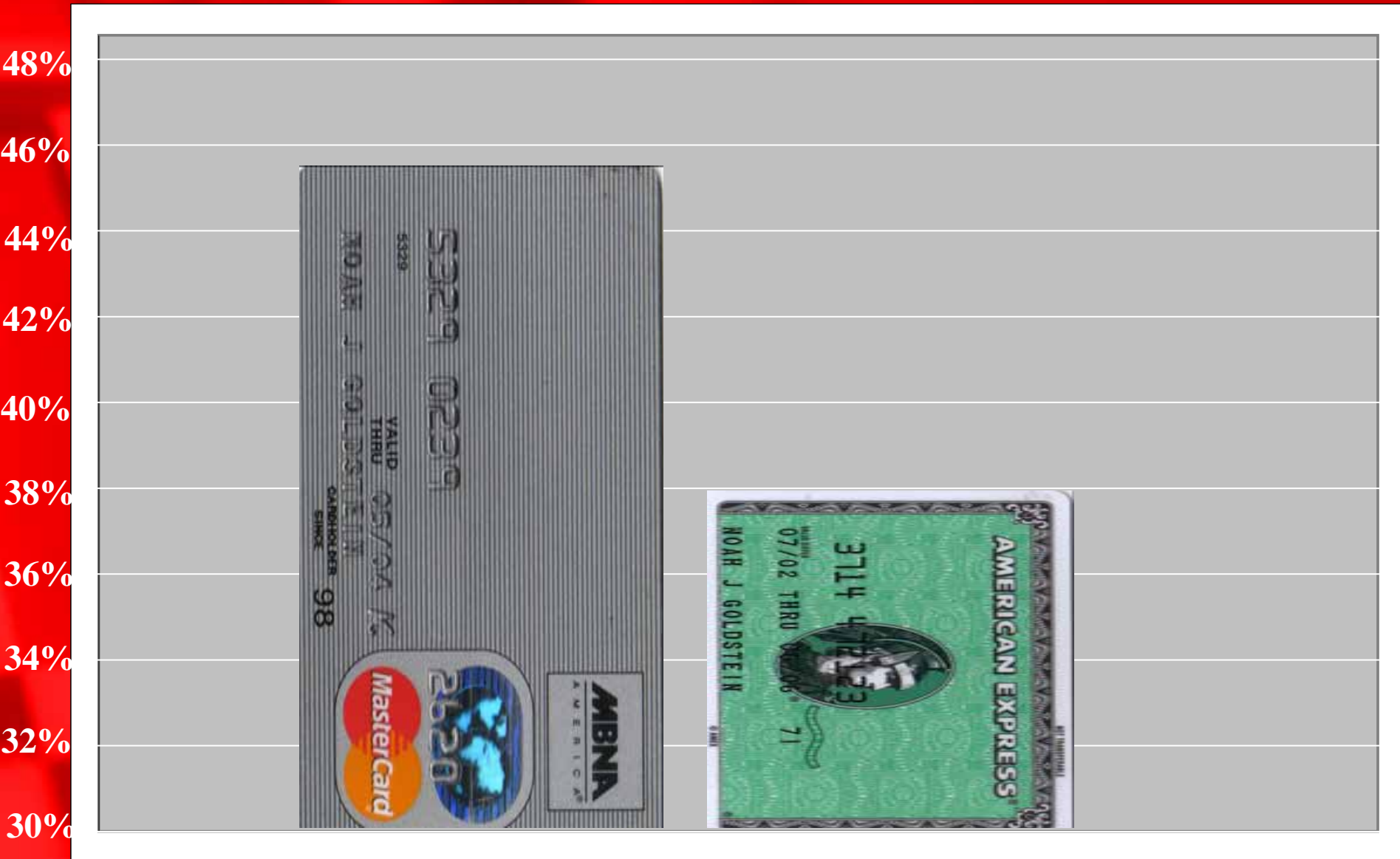
Two other notable aspects of the data:

- **The most successful of the communications**
 - **was one that we have never seen employed by any hotel management,**
 - **yet was costless to the organization.**

Conclusions

- **By and large, decision-makers focus too often on financial / economic factors when seeking to motivate others.**
- **They would be well advised to consider what is known about social psychological motivators such as those reviewed here.**

Percentage of towel reuse, by payment.



MasterCard or
Visa

American
Express



