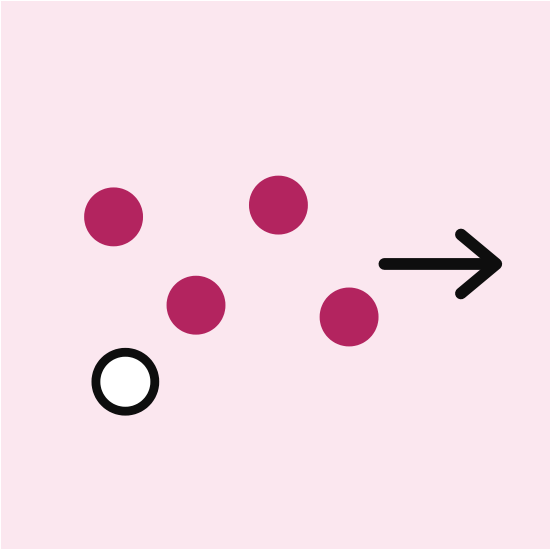
Concept

Bandwagon effect

We tend to adopt a behavior, an idea or a product when we see that many people have already done so.



In Spanish
Efecto arrastre

Origin
Leibenstein (1950)

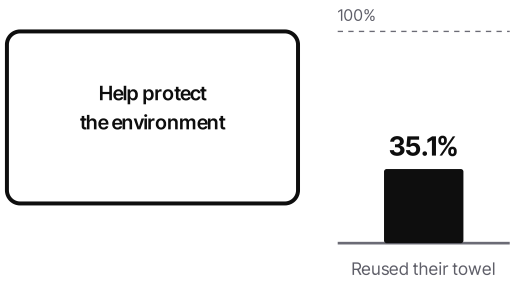
What problem it addresses

It explains why popularity attracts more popularity, and why telling people what most others do changes behavior.

An example

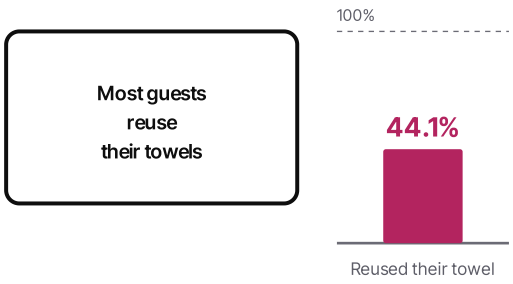
A hotel left different cards in its rooms asking guests to reuse their towels.

Message about the environment



Reused the towel: **35%.**

Message about what others do



Reused the towel: **44%.**

The request was the same. Knowing what other guests did made it more effective.

Why it happens

1

When we don't know what to do, we look at others.

2

What most people do seems right or safest.

3

Besides, we want to fit in, and doing what the group does brings us closer to it.

Applications in design

Use it like this

Show real data on what people similar to the decision-maker do, if it helps them decide well.

Avoid

Making up usage figures, reviews or "people viewing this" counters.

Don't fall for it

Ask yourself whether you would choose it even if nobody else had.

35% → 44%



What the research says

Guests who reused their towel with the standard message and with the message about other guests (Goldstein, Cialdini and Griskevicius, 2008).

●●● **Solid evidence.** Leibenstein (1950) described the bandwagon effect in economics: demand for something grows because others already buy it.

Connections

Used in

- Dot voting

Related to

- Nudge and choice architecture
- Deceptive patterns (dark patterns)
- Principles of influence

Authors and works

1950	**Harvey Leibenstein**	Described the bandwagon effect in demand theory.
2008	**Noah Goldstein, Robert Cialdini and Vladas Griskevicius**	Showed the power of social norms in a real-world hotel experiment.

Sources

Original sources

- Leibenstein, H. (1950). Bandwagon, snob, and Veblen effects in the theory of consumers' demand. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 64(2), 183–207. View source (https://doi.org/10.2307/1882692)
- Goldstein, N. J., Cialdini, R. B., & Griskevicius, V. (2008). A room with a viewpoint: Using social norms to motivate environmental conservation in hotels. Journal of Consumer Research, 35(3), 472–482. View source (https://doi.org/10.1086/586910)

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