
APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE FOR THE SPORT INDUSTRY: SEEING IS BELIEVING

Submitting author: Dr Victoria Kendrick
Loughborough University, Design School
Loughborough, LE113TU
United Kingdom

All authors: Victoria Kendrick (corresp), Robin Ammon Jr., Gil Fried

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Abstract

AIM OF ABSTRACT

The Five Man Electrical Band was a rock group from Ottawa, Canada, best known for their 1971 hit single "Signs". The well-known lyrics state "Signs, signs, everywhere there's signs. Blocking out the scenery, breaking my mind. Do this, don't do that, can't you read the signs". One does not have to travel very far at an athletic event before being besieged by signs. Warning signs pertaining to foul balls and broken bats; ticket signs directing spectators to the will call window; signs at concessions stands stating a two-beer limit, no smoking signs in every venue.....sporting events are inundated with signs.

This article was written to help develop a more accurate understanding of what appropriate signage should be in the sport industry. Through analyzing industry standards, and traffic and safety industry research, this article will attempt to help provide a clearer picture of what constitutes appropriate signage in the sport industry. The article concludes with some suggestions for appropriate signage.

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

The power of the crowd was an issue highlighted throughout the London 2012 Olympic Games, where consideration for spectator experience was a key priority. The success of such an event was undoubtedly due in part to the provision of adequate and effective signage across the venue, contributing to the positive experience of users. Such considerations included the adequate and effective use of signage to direct users to the event itself, as well as within the venue, to enable users to locate facilities, flowing safely and comfortably within and around the venue (Kendrick, Haslam & Waterson, 2013).

Sporting events, as with any venue hosting numerous customers (hospitals, train stations & music festivals for example), provide an area

to be navigated. Signage considerations are not always considered sufficiently during the design and organization of these events. Research suggests that inappropriate, ineffective as well as excessive information has many consequences for pedestrian flow within crowded environments including sporting events (Dixon, 2002).

CONTEXT DESCRIPTION, ACTORS INVOLVED

Effective signage systems are important to direct the stakeholders within and between sporting events. The provision of signage within sporting events has focused on the health and safety of users, with less emphasis given to well-being and satisfaction of the crowd (Kendrick et al, 2013). However, interest surrounding the benefits of signage to the experience of crowd users is evident within the transportation industry (Dixon, 2002). Consideration surrounding the human factors and design of understandable signage across user groups marks an important advance in the development of functional signage (Waterson, 2012). Much research focuses on signage within other service industries [primarily transportation hubs (Dixon, 2002)]. For example this research is disseminated in publications such as the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices that highlights proper lettering, placement, reflectivity, and related issues. Signage issues are also covered by the Occupational Safety Hazard Administration (OSHA) which warns individuals about hazards in the workplace. In addition, the Consumer Product Safety Commission has addressed signage as it applies to playground safety issues. Finally, signage issues have been addressed in the fitness industry with the development of “standards” or “guidelines” by The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), American College of Sport Medicine (ACSM) and the International Health Racquet Sport Association (IHRSA).

IMPLICATIONS AND LEARNING

The following suggestions provide useful strategies for administrators and sport managers in implementing a more successful signage management program.

- Make sure the sign can communicate to those possessing communication deficiencies such as illiteracy or being a non-English speaker.
- Indicate that a hazard exists. In order for the warning or sign to be effective it also needs to provide instruction.
- Consider issues that affect filtering of the warning such as information overload, improper risk assessment, improper situational assessment, or benign experiences with a hazard that haven't been seen to materialize.
- Place easy to read and comprehensible signage high above the crowd so it is easy to view within the crowd (Kendrick et al., 2013; Dixon, 2002).
- Use pictograms as a substitute for text (Rousek & Hallbeck, 2011).
- Create understandable signage for children and adults (Waterson et al., 2011)
- Provide alternative solutions to excessive signage by employing mobile

applications adapted to the user. Ensure that only relevant information is retrieved and presented in a way that is suitable (Sun, 2010).

- Eliminate ineffective signage and customer information that may lead to congestion and bottlenecks within a crowd (Dixon, 2002)

References

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