USSC **FOUNDATION**

On-Premise Sign Zoning

The Impact of Zoning Regulation On Site Performance

USSCF ON-PREMISE SIGNS / RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

ON PREMISE SIGN ZONING
The Impact of Zoning Regulation on Site Performance

A Research Project of the
UNITED STATES SIGN COUNCIL FOUNDATION

By
Peter Everett, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Marketing
Smeal College of Business
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania

Michael Hostetler
Diagnostics Plus Research
State College, Pennsylvania

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The United States Sign Council Foundation Inc.
211 Radcliffe Street, Bristol, PA 19007
215-785-1922

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Background and Methodology

Research Objectives

The broad purpose of the research was to collect information from businesses about how their signage is affected by local sign ordinances and how that in-turn affects their business performance.

Research Personnel

The project was designed and conducted by Diagnostics Plus, a State College, Pennsylvania market research firm, in collaboration with Dr. Peter Everett, Ph.D., a professor of marketing in the Pennsylvania State University Smeal College of Business.

Dr. Everett holds a Ph.D. in psychology and planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a BS in psychology from the University of Washington in Seattle. He has worked with many profit and non-profit corporations and local, state and Federal agencies to carry out market research and to develop marketing plans and strategy. Everett focuses much of this work on the service marketing and the transportation industry with special expertise on consumer research and customer satisfaction. Everett has written two books on marketing and transportation and over 40 articles on the subjects. He has presented talks all over the world on consumer behavior and transportation. Everett chaired the State College, PA Planning Commission for eight years and was an advisor to the Casey Administration (former Pennsylvania governor) for tourism and travel.

Founded in 1986, Diagnostics Plus is a full-service survey research firm specializing in business-to-business market research, employee research and customer feedback systems. Diagnostics Plus has provided research services for more than 500 companies throughout the world, including many in service and transportation related industries. Michael Hostetler, Senior Project Manager at Diagnostics Plus, has managed many business to business market research projects during his twelve years at Diagnostics Plus. His other research experience includes transportation, customer satisfaction, product development and branding research and general population market research.

Project Overview

This report includes the results of two related research projects: a series of in-depth interviews and a telephone survey. Both projects were conducted with business personnel located throughout the country who have corporate responsibility for exterior store signage at consumer businesses. The types of businesses represented include home supply, grocery, auto, electronic, book, department, clothing, hobby and drug stores, eating places and hotels/motels.

In-Depth Interviews

The in-depth interviews were conducted by a Diagnostics Plus research associate who traveled to Florida, Texas, California and Ohio to speak in-person with nine participants about how they are affected by and contend with signage restrictions. During the interview respondents identified locations that represented specific examples of how local restrictions can affect signage to the point where it can be detrimental to business results. Photographs of these examples are included in the in-depth-interview summary that comprises the first section of this report.

Telephone Survey

The telephone survey, the results of which are presented here in the summary charts, was conducted with 88 respondents, including all nine of the participants in the in-depth interviews. Each participating company has at least thirty sites with exterior signage; 61 have 100 or more and 21 have 1,000 or more. The respondents all characterized themselves as having responsibility for the exterior signage at their company's sites. A list of telephone survey respondents is located at the back of the report.

The telephone survey included lines of questioning related to the frequency, type and effect of changes that respondents have been required to make to their preferred sign package as a result of local restrictions, the importance of signage to business outcomes, particular areas of the country where signage restrictions are most likely to be imposed and how signage is perceived in comparison to other factors that can influence site performance.

Executive Summary

The in-depth interviews and telephone survey revealed similar themes:

- The size and height of signs are the features most commonly affected by restrictions.
- Sign owners perceive size restrictions to be the biggest problem they face in installing preferred sign packages.
- For store mounted signs, the number of signs is perceived to be the attribute that has the greatest influence on business performance, followed by size.
- For freestanding signs, the number and size of the signs have equally strong influence on business performance, followed by sign height.
- Store owners are unable to install their preferred height, size or number of signs about a third of the time.
- Installation of the preferred sign package was rated as similar in importance in influencing business performance to factors such as the health of the local and national economy, the nature of adjacent stores and the type of products sold.
- California and Florida are perceived to be particularly restrictive of exterior signage.

Other information that came out of the in-depth interviews includes:

- Obstruction of signs by landscaping at business sites can be a major problem, especially when combined with height restrictions and specification of monument signs.
- Even relatively tall signs can be hidden by vegetation.
- Restrictions of sign content, such as the inclusion of logos, secondary messages and colors are prevalent.
- Surrounding buildings, existing signs and other conditions affecting the context of the site are usually not taken into account when restrictions are applied.
- Governing and enforcement agencies are inflexible and can be arrogant when approached regarding exceptions to signage restrictions.
- Businesses are often reliant on a property developer, whose interests can differ from their own, to negotiate signage parameters.
- Some municipalities do not offer a variance procedure and even if they do the process of seeking a variance is time consuming and expensive to the extent that many companies will not even attempt to secure them.
- Sign ordinances can exacerbate the aesthetic problems that they are intended to alleviate by providing incentive for store owners to keep old signs in use beyond the point where they would otherwise be replaced.

- Sign ordinances can be difficult to interpret, by both store owners and governing bodies, which can lead to misunderstandings and require signs to be removed or altered even after installation to the specifications initially rendered.
- There is little uniformity across municipalities and navigating through the sign design process can be frustrating. Many perceive a need for more generally accepted signage guidelines that would be broadly applicable, perhaps at a statewide or regional level.

Conclusions

- Businesses are being adversely affected by signage restrictions that often seem arbitrary and sometimes arcane.
- Signage restrictions can result in reduced business performance in the same way that performance is affected by traffic, the economy and unfair competition.
- Sign restrictions are perceived as commonplace and difficult to fight. Businesses seem resigned to accepting them in most cases, unless they receive some sort of encouragement that a variance may be likely.

Please give a brief description of your job and your business:

AutoNation: I am responsible for obtaining exterior signage for the Southern states. We are America's largest Automotive Retailer. We have 370 new car dealerships in more than 15 states.

Comp USA: We are one of the nation's leading sellers and resellers of personal computer-related products and services. We have 227 stores in 90 major metropolitan markets.

Landscaping, along with height and size restrictions and limits on the number of signs allowed can have an adverse effect on the health of a retail business.

Goodyear: I am responsible for all signage throughout the United States. This would also include all retail and wholesale distribution areas. I am also responsible for exterior signage at racetracks, warehouses, and fleet vehicles. We are a provider of retail tires and car service.

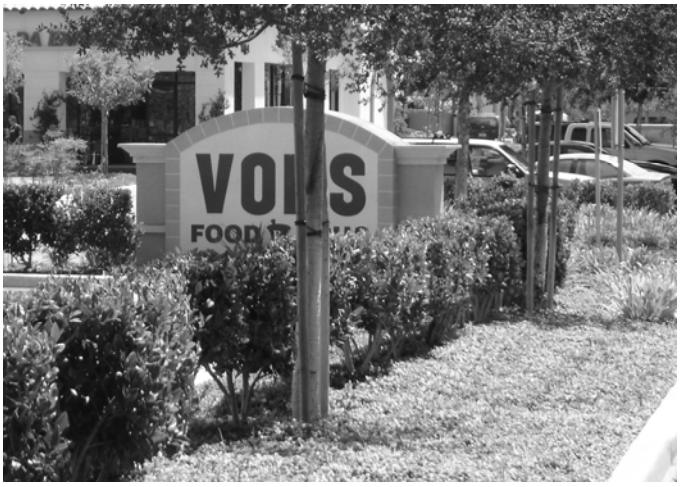
Office Depot: I am a signage coordinator, and am responsible for coordinating the exterior signage for new stores. I oversee the building of monument and exterior signs. We have vendors throughout the country that install the signs and apply for the variances if needed. This is a retail business specializing in office supplies and furniture.

Panda Restaurant: My primary duty is to project manage store development. I am responsible for assuring that all signs meet code requirements, real estate, and sign standards. My two main goals are: first, to have the largest sign possible and second to have the appropriate signage installed before the store opening. We've been in business for 30 years. Panda started out in Southern California. The first restaurant was called Panda Inn. The restaurant then became involved with the Galleria Mall. The developer asked the Panda owners to create a fast food type venue. At that point, they developed a Panda Express concept. This was actually an abbreviated menu of the Panda Inn restaurant. Panda restaurants have over 650 stores. Panda has a goal of creating 10,000 stores.

Robinson Oil: We are in the gasoline and convenience store business. We have 30 locations in the state of California. The gas stations are called Rotten Robbie. The convenience stores are called Mrs. Robbie's Market. We have 12 convenience stores, 9 smaller versions of the convenience store. We have nine other pumper locations. Our operations exist between Salinas and Santa Rosa, California - the greater bay area.

Rue 21: I am the project manager for Rue 21. I am also responsible for the signage for each store. We specialize in selling retail apparel for girls from ages 13 to 30 years of age. We currently have 184 stores throughout the United States.

Safeway: I have 264 stores that are my responsibility. I am a store designer, and I manage the architects and engineers. I also work closely with the real estate and construction departments. I direct the architects and engineers in coming up with sign designs for the Safeway stores. First I give them preliminary drawings for each store. The architects and engineers incorporate the drawings and work out the details. Then I give them direction on exterior elevation, signage, and fixtures that they use in the building. We are a national grocer. We have approximately 1,700 stores in the United States and Canada. We are going to be adding four new stores by the end of the year.



Sign ordinances can place severe limitations on business signage. This monument sign is partially obscured by relatively small shrubs.

Warehouse Shoe Sale: I work very closely with our retail development. I also assist in obtaining permits for our signage. We are the largest independent shoe store in Southern California. We carry over 2,000 styles of shoes. The average store size is approximately 6,500 to 7,000 square feet. We currently have 38 southern California locations, spread out in four counties. We have one store in Ventura County: three stores in Orange County, and one store in San Bernardino County. We also have 32 stores in Los Angeles County.

Preferred size, color and lighting of your primary signs

AutoNation: This varies for each company. A lot depends on what type of colors or lighting we are using. I would prefer to have 160 square feet for every company, but this is not always the case. The color depends on what company we are preparing signs for. So, really, the colors vary for each company. I prefer to have interior illuminated signs for the wall or store-mounted signs.

Comp USA: Our primary sign is approximately 250 square feet. The site sign package is roughly 34 feet wide and 8 feet in height. We typically ask for 5-foot letters. Underneath "Comp USA", we have a tag line. The tag line says, "Technology Superstore". The old store signs have the tag line, "Computer Super Store." Our preferred color is red. We prefer to have internally illuminated channel letters.

Goodyear: Our freestanding signs are approximately 6 feet by 25 feet (150 square feet). The wall–mounted signs are hard to figure. There are several components involved in building signage. The lettering for "Goodyear" is usually 18 to 24 inches. In addition, we would like to have the "Gemini" wall sign added to the building. This is typically 3 feet by 11 feet. However, since Goodyear owns Dunlop tire, we would prefer to also have Dunlop on our signs. Those letters are usually about 18 inches. We prefer yellow letters. If the letters were illuminated,

they would then have a yellow face with reflex blue returns. Our company would prefer both interior illuminated sign cabinet and, illuminated channel letters.

Office Depot: Our prototypical sign is a five-foot building sign, and four, twenty-inch tab signs (about 300 square feet). Our preferred color is red. We have internally illuminated channel letters. The letters are individually mounted.

Panda Restaurant: We prefer a sign that has a 5 feet logo, with 18-inch letters. This is to be on a ribbon layout. This is mainly for our wall-mounted signs. The company is just now becoming involved with freestanding signs. Our primary signs are red, yellow, black, and white. We prefer exposed neon channel letters. Our logo is face lit.

Robinson Oil: We would prefer to have a sign that is 75 square feet. We would also like to use a blue striping on our canopies. We like to incorporate changeable price signs. That is a very important aspect of our business. We usually have four prices of gas listed. Three are gas, and the other is diesel. Blue and white are the company colors. Our company also has some red included. Our main sign has interior lighting. There are some municipalities that do not allow for interior illuminated signs. When this happens, we have to customize a sign to have exterior lighting.

There is a Rotten Robbie filling station on the right just after the crosswalk. Its sign can barely be seen (see page 19 for a picture from a better angle).

Rue 21: I would prefer a four foot sign, which runs about sixteen and a half feet long. The number "21" would be four feet, and the "Rue" would be a little smaller. I would prefer to have red in outlet centers, and black halo illuminated in an indoor mall. If our company used wall-mounted signs, there would be no lighting. We would use central lettering for interior signs, and, exterior would be illuminated. Our company does not use freestanding or ground-mounted signs.

Safeway: We usually like four to five-foot letters for the Safeway signs. We would also prefer to have the signs three to six feet in height. I try to use logos that are in scale with the rest of the building. I always try to get the largest sign possible for each site. However, ordinances do not always approve. Our company always tries to do something that is tasteful. Red is our standard corporate color. Safeway used to have neon signs. However, we have now switched to using LED interior illuminated lighting. I believe that this type of lighting offers better performance. The lights seem to last longer, and, are cheaper to use.

Warehouse Shoe Sale: Our Company prefers to have 30 to 40 foot high freestanding signs. The wall-mounted signs are usually 6 feet high and 8 feet long. We prefer a primarily yellow backdrop with red letters. Our company prefers interior illuminated lighting.

Is your company losing the right to have larger signs because of local zoning codes?

AutoNation: Our Company is losing the right to have larger exterior signage because of local ordinances. The main problem in Florida is the height of the signs allowed. I would prefer to have 24 foot free standing signs; however on average they are allowed only 10 to 14 foot signs. This can definitely affect business performance.

In Port Richey, Florida the Cadillac dealership recently moved approximately one block from its original location. Since the move, business has been below average. I believe that this may be the result of not having a large enough freestanding sign.

"The Shops" must be there somewhere. If you look closely you can see the index sign set back on a median.

Comp USA: California and Florida are the most difficult for signage restrictions. I believe that I am being fair with the cities, I do not ask for anything extraordinary. Typically, our stores are mainly in power centers and in-line stores. Stores next to Comp USA are usually pet stores and, bookstores. Since our stores are in the middle, I typically ask for 250 square feet on the front of the building. However, if that building backs up to a freeway, for visibility purposes, I then prefer to have signage on the rear of the building. If our stores were end caps, I then would prefer to have some signage on the side of the building. In most cases, I do not go out and self develop a piece of property. The developer is the one negotiating the sign package with the city. The city then advises the developer what signage is allowed. The developer then argues his case to the best of his ability. However, in the long run, the developer just wants to get any deal completed. I usually end up with a smaller sign package than I would prefer.

I just became aware of a sign package this morning taking place in Rancho Cucamonga, California. The building is 25,000 square feet. The site is located on a shopping center parcel. However, the Comp USA is situated as a freestanding building. This allows me four sides. Two of the sides are in view of a major freeway in Los Angeles. You can see the building traveling both north and southbound. The front of the building becomes visible only when you enter the parking lot. The other major feeder road is on the other side of the building. I was not allowed to have three signs on the building. In turn, I decided not to put signs on the feeder road, but, instead, placed one each of the two sides. I then placed one sign on the front of the building. The local ordinances did not allow for me to place my tag line on the signs. I was only allowed to have, “Comp USA”, on my signs. I went to the city to fight the ordinance. The city then told me that the developer was the one responsible for settling the sign package. I was thus told that if I had issues, the developer was the one to speak with. I was also advised that I could resubmit a sign package however the percentages were against

me. I then explained to the city that the tag line was important to the company. I then proposed a variance that would allow for me to place signs on just the sides of the building with the tag line .the city then responded by saying “we do not owe you anything and, we do not like tag lines.” At that point I refrained from pursuing any more issues. In conclusion, I was only allowed to have “Comp USA” on the signs. The letters are now only 3 feet instead of 5 feet.

Another example is a sign package in Marietta, California, where lighting became an issue. That store was an in-line tenant. We were permitted 250 square feet of signage; however, we could only use neon lighting. I advised that the company would prefer to use (LED) lighting.

The index sign shown on the previous page is even less visible from the other direction.

Goodyear: Yes, we both agree that our company is losing the right to have larger signs because of local zoning codes. There are some locations that do not even offer a variance procedure. So, they are basically settling for smaller signs. We do not have the personnel or the time to request a variance. For the most part, we comply with the variances and local codes. If the odds of securing a variance for additional signage were favorable, then, we would pursue a variance. The sign companies that we do business with advise us of our chances for obtaining a variance. In order to obtain a variance in the state of New Jersey, a company is required to have an attorney. We believe that this could cost the company at least $2,000. Some of these municipalities require an attorney, just to discourage against filing for a variance.

Office Depot: Sometimes there are local zoning ordinances, master sign programs, or a historical review board that can affect a sign package. There are different variables that influence what we can actually have for our sign package. Sometimes it is because of Target, which does not allow us to use their tag signs or departmental signs. This places restrictions on other stores in that particular plaza. In some cases, Office Depot is not allowed to use their 5-foot signs. The restrictions that are placed on stores are called a real estate easement agreement. In many cases we try to get into the sign program as the land is being developed. This way the landlords can attempt to incorporate our package into the development.

Panda Restaurant: We are constantly losing the right to have larger signs because of local ordinances. We also have to deal with master plan sign criteria. Variances are very hard to achieve, they are based on hardship. The hardship has to do with whether or not a store sign is being blocked by another store. Hardships may apply to stores that are set back off the street. Most of the Panda restaurants are in excellent locations. However, I always receive complaints from store managers. The managers believe that their signs are not effective enough because of local constraints. We have looked into variances; however, our locations are normally too good. The majority of our stores are end cap locations. However, the real

estate department and operations people at Panda Restaurant believe that they should be allowed better signage at some locations. I am in the process of conducting a scientific study on how square footage for signage is determined. I would like to see if we are maximizing our allowable square footage.

Robinson Oil: There are some areas of California that are very restrictive. Alamo and Santa Rosa, California are the most restrictive. San José has a square footage restriction; however, we are able to deal with it. California has a law that says gas stations have to have signs facing both sides of the street. We must display all of our gasoline prices. So, in some instances, this conflicts with the local ordinances. In some instances we have attempted to obtain variances. Municipalities are also restrictive with the type of signage they allow on their canopies. Some cities do not allow for any signage on their canopies.

Mountain View, California is very restrictive - they do not allow curb signs or pump toppers.

Rue 21: In a strip center you can only get one sign. However, in an outlet center, a company may be able to receive two signs. In this instance, a company could possibly put a sign in the back of the building. If you are located on a corner, a company will be allowed to put a sign on the front, and, one on the side. It all depends on the center and location of the store.

Shrubbery, ornamental trees and an Office Depot sign.

Safeway: Cities are developing master sign programs for the community more often. This is reducing the size and the amount of signage allowed. I am not sure why the communities are developing these plans. I think they feel signage is a negative to the community, rather than a benefit. The communities should look at it as a good way for people to find our place. Signage is not really for repeat customers, it is more for the first time people to come in and find you. Master sign programs spell out the type, size, and amount of signage allowed. Cities no longer allow cabinet style signs. Cabinet signs are basically square signs. Cities would like to see more individual lettering.

We wanted to advertise that a bank was inside the store and attempted to place a bank name in cabinet form. The bank did not have individual letters so the city did not allow for this type of cabinet sign. We were not allowed to alert our customers that there was a bank inside of our store. This had a negative impact for this Safeway store. This is becoming more frequent in cities that we deal with. It affects us in that we cannot alert customers that there is a bank inside of our store. So not only does the bank not benefit, our company also loses out.

Color has become another issue for local ordinances. Some cities mandate what type of color a company can use for their signs.

In our Hayward, California store, we were only permitted to use white signs. White is not the corporate branding color for Safeway. This could affect a stores performance.

Our company has about a 50 percent success rate with variances. Depending on the project, most cities are willing to work with us.

There were two instances in Dublin, California where the city allowed proper signage on one of its two stores. The two stores are approximately four miles apart. The store where we have proper signage is an instance where the city wanted us there. The other Safeway is located in a part of the city where they have a master sign program. Here, they did not allow us the proper signage. The store they allowed proper signage for is doing as well as expected. However, the other location is not doing as well as expected. I feel not having the proper signage there is affecting business. We are well off what kind of business we had expected when we first started the project. Both stores are located near freeways. The store that is doing well is located off of interstate 680, where we were permitted tower signs. We also have signs that are well lit.

The other store is located off of interstate 580, which has a clear view of the store; however, signage is much smaller. It is out of scale with the rest of the building. I believe that a lot of people just keep driving past it, not knowing it is there.

Size ordinances can lead to signs that are out of scale with the buildings on which they are mounted.

Going for variances can be very costly. There was a variance in San Francisco, California, that was too time-consuming and costly. I had to meet with developers, real estate agents, and engineers on four different occasions. The variance only allowed for us to add two directional signs. We were also required to remove an exterior sign.

Warehouse Shoe Sale: We cannot get preferred sign packages because of local city ordinances. The cities dictate what type of signage we are allowed.

Are you settling for smaller signs because you do not want to deal with the restrictive local codes?

AutoNation: Our Company settles for smaller signs. Our percentages for obtaining variances are very poor. This is the main reason we do not even apply for variances. I am of the belief that the variances are too costly to our company. In most cases, one has to hire an attorney to file for the variance. Filing for the variance is very time consuming.

Office Depot: We attempt to obtain a variance in some instances. However if we are told we have poor chances then we do not proceed.

There was a project in Georgia where we were told to go ahead and try for the variance. However, the municipality in Georgia warned us that they would probably just pocket the money. Another variance we attempted in South Florida cost us $10,000. We did not even get the variance. We did receive a variance in Baltimore, Maryland after being told that our chances were above average.

Another instance occurred in Alexandria, Virginia. The site, which used to be a bank, was 7,000 square feet. However, it was located right next to a church where George Washington attended. The restrictions placed on our company were very severe. The ordinance only allowed us to have non-illuminated letters with gooseneck lighting. Basically, we were only allowed black letters on a brick building. We were advised that it would take at least four hearings before they finished the process. They also instructed us to hire a local sign vendor. After all the hearings; we did not get what we wanted. In the end, we received only backlit white letters.

Rue 21: I have attempted to fight municipal ordinances. I try to get the biggest sign that is allowed. Our sign man will submit the largest sign package possible. Sometimes it will be allowed; however, other times we will get the package rejected. I believe that the mall's architectural design dictates the size of signage allowed.

There are two sites where we were very disappointed in our sign package. The first location occurred in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The second site was in Las Vegas, Nevada. These two sites had signage that was just too small. We were told it depended on what zone we were in at the mall. Signage is dictated by square footage. If you have square footage that is 3,500 to 4,000 square feet, then, you could only have a two-foot sign. If your square footage was 10,000 feet then you were allowed to have a six- foot sign.

Safeway: The cities will tell what you are allowed for signage and they have to abide by that. In some instances, cities will allow for larger letters, or, they will allow for more of an area to place another sign. We are permitted to have a Starbucks sign in some of our stores. The primary focus is to put the Safeway sign in first. Then, if permitted, we would like to be able to alert the public to other services available in Safeway stores.

Many stores do not allow for this type of signage. For example: Freemont, California.

Warehouse Shoe Sale: We try to open our stores rather quickly. We have no time or money to fight the local ordinances. We do not have the money to pay lawyers to fight the local ordinances. I believe that we would probably not win a variance. I would like to see a system that favored or, allowed businesses like ours, a recourse in city government. I would like to be able to apply for variances that were reasonable. I would also like to see variances resolved in a more expeditious fashion.

What other things can have an effect on a site's performance?

AutoNation: I believe frontage roads can also affect a site's performance. This means having better access to the place of business. I feel that not having easy access to our site in Port Richey, Florida may be another factor as to why the business is not exceeding expectations. Landscape ordinances are also affecting exterior signage. The local municipalities include in the ordinance that we must have some type of landscape around our ground-mounted signs. There are sites where the hedges are growing above the ground-mounted signs. People driving in their cars are unable to see the signs because of the growing shrubbery. It is up to the landlords to see that the shrubs and hedges are kept trimmed. There are many instances of the landlords neglecting tree maintenance.

This photo taken through a windshield is a good example of how landscaping can obscure even large signs. On the right is a somewhat clearer image of the same sign taken from the sidewalk.

Comp USA: I believe that access is very important. The majority of people drive by stores that are not readily accessible. Landscaping can affect a site's performance. Some ordinances require that companies have landscaping around their freestanding signs. This can cause problems when the trees or shrubs grow higher than the signs. In California, we have palm trees around the ground-mounted signs. On occasion, the palm trees will outgrow the height of the sign.

Goodyear: I think that communities are getting away from pole signs. I see companies using monument signs more often. Landscaping plans also affect signage. This is when the communities have the companies plant shrubs around their monument signs. So, the landlords will allow for an 8 to 10 foot monument sign, however, the shrubs then outgrow the signs. Even though you have to comply with local codes, you are also restricted because of planned commercial development areas. Even though you may be able to have a location adequately identified according to city codes, planned commercial developments have their own set of restrictions. Obtaining signage in historical districts is difficult to achieve. Maintenance and upkeep of a building is also very important.

Panda Restaurant: Trees or landscaping can also affect a site's performance. There is always a potential for trees to obstruct signs. I am working on some projects now where the trees are covering the signs. It is the responsibility of the landlords to keep trees trimmed. Competition from other restaurants in the area can affect business. So, I started a store signage profile. I go out to the stores and conduct a site survey. I conduct surveys on all stores near our site. I would like to have a better understanding of what my stores are up against. I would like to know if my competitors are using pylon signs or monument signs. I feel this will help in the long run.

Here is a situation I encountered in Lewisville, Texas. There, we were given a 30-foot tall sign to share with another tenant. However, the sign face was only 6 foot by 6 foot. So, I put our sign up. However, there were other pad sites next to the Panda sign. The pad sites had an area of 250 square feet. It was a little tough to compete with the other sites. We are now talking with the city to see if we can have our own sign on the highway. I would really like to have at least 250 square feet. So, analysis showed that Panda could only get up to a 9 by 9-foot sign face. We are studying ways to get our own sign or share a sign.

Office Depot: Access to a site is very important. However, I believe that exposure is even more important. Being able to see a store from the road is important. I always get calls from managers of stores saying, "This is bad, they don't know we're here, can we get a pylon sign? They can't see us from the road." I always get these complaints from the regional store managers.

"This is bad, they don't know we're here, can we get a pylon sign?"

Robinson Oil: The best piece of property in the world is only as good as the access. Some of the communities restrict the number of driveways we are allowed. They control the number of pumps allowed and, the lay out of the islands. Some locations do have direct access. Some service stations only have access through the shopping center.

Rue 21: I believe that the area and local economy can affect a store's performance. Our stores appeal to both moderate and low-income people. Our prices are the selling points. If we did not have a sign, word of mouth would do us well. However, a good sign package is very important, because you still want people to come in.

Safeway: Accessibility is another factor that can affect a stores performance. If there is only one entrance to the store, or, if it requires a u-turn, people may be inclined to look for sites that are easier for them.

Warehouse Shoe Sale: Demographics play a major role in a site's performance. The city of Los Angeles is very aggressive when it comes to companies having tent sales. It is difficult to obtain permits for tent sales. The company is usually permitted only two tent sales per year. I feel we need at least five tent sales per year to be successful. We also have what is called a street team. The street team consists of a disc jockey and salesmen. These teams travel from store to store, playing music and giving out gifts. The goal is to bring attention to the store. Whenever the street teams appear at a below average store, our sales increase for that day.

The cities with strict ordinances frown upon the street team themes. Within 30 minutes of a street team's arrival, the local police arrive and cite them. The fine is usually $400.00.

I also believe that political events affect business performance. When the INS conducted sweeps of the immigrant population in Los Angeles County, our sales dropped 30 percent. 70 percent of our client base is Latino.

What is the biggest problem you have with exterior signage restrictions?

AutoNation: The biggest problem we are having with exterior signage is the preferred height. I really believe that not having the preferred height affects business performance. If you ask any of my managers, they will tell you that exterior signage affects business performance. I always get calls from managers asking me to get better signage for their particular sites.

Height restrictions can make free standing signs ineffective.

I am particularly disappointed with the signage at the Nissan dealership located at 1051 federal highway, Fort Lauderdale (see photo). I believe that the ground-standing sign is not high enough. When driving south on federal highway, the ground-standing sign is not visible until you are right in front of the dealership. I am sure that some people probably do not even see the sign.

I would like for the local ground-standing signs to be higher. Since they do not allow for higher signage, I would like to be able to have more signs, would like to have one sign that displays the dealership name. Then I would like to have one notifying the public of the dealership's used car lot.

Comp USA: The thing I argue the most is the size, or the dimensions, of the letters. I feel that color does not seem to pose much of a problem. I believe strongly in the correlation between signage and a site's performance. I believe that having a preferred sign package is important to the success of a store. The regional managers are always calling and complaining to me about their signs.

Goodyear: Square footage was the biggest problem concerning exterior signage. The color of the signs is also an issue. When our company returned to the blue and gold colors, we had to change our design color specs. We encountered problems when we wanted to paint the background area dark blue, with yellow border. Some communities would not allow for Goodyear to do this. Goodyear wanted to utilize the yellow letters. However, the letters needed to be on a dark background for maximum visibility.

On one occasion, a dealer received a sign with the big blue area on the building and yellow letters. The dealer reported that with that type of signage, there was a 20 percent increase in foot traffic. Planning boards do not like the blue band on the buildings. The committees want earthy tones, like beige, and tans. However, if we were to add a primary color, like blue, the committees would frown on that.

Because of zoning ordinances, we usually end up with 12 to 15 foot signs.

At a store in Stow, Ohio we had an 8 foot by 40-foot sign. The sign was so popular, that, it was used as a direction marker. Goodyear then wanted to add additional bays to this store. However, the community required that we remove the 40-foot sign. So we complied with the ordinance and replaced it with a 15-foot sign.

In California, we are restricted to mainly monument signs. These signs tend to be 8 feet by 12 feet. The pole signs that remain standing in California are refaced, so they comply with local ordinances.

If we were allowed to have better signage, some of our businesses would be more productive.

In Portland, Oregon, city codes caused me to design a sign, which I thought was appropriate. The city thus approved the signage. In the meantime, Goodyear had already sent the new signs out to Portland. It resulted in our company having to change our entire signage. We had to put a set of big letters on the side of the building instead of on the front. I feel that the lettering did not fit in the area. We then had to put smaller letters that were on the side, in the front of the building. The place looks horrible now. This dealer store now looks as if the signs were just thrown up without any consideration of what was going on with the building.

We would like to see additional square footage for our signs. We would also like to know how the cities are determining the allowable square footage. We want to know exactly how they can determine square footage. We want to see some standardization for measuring square footage for exterior signage.

Office Depot: I believe it is the square footage and the height of the signs. Sometimes color can be a problem.

Panda Restaurant: Square footage is the main issue. Some cities force us to have a lower lighting level. Some cities do not even allow face lighted letters or logos. Panda is required to have halo lit letters in some locations. This lighting is not as effective as face lighted. We also prefer exposed neon, rather than Plexiglas faced. The neon is very bright and attention getting at night. The number of signs is also an issue. Since our

The use of logos, which can be central components of store signage, is often restricted.

locations are usually end cap, I would like to have three signs. However, the cities are only allowing two. If I had a preferred sign package at sites that were not performing as expected, I think that would give them the best chance to have a successful business. Because of Panda restaurants' reputation, we are able to be successful without preferred sign packages. However, I have about 7 to 10 stores that continually call me to ask for help with their signage. These stores have not been meeting their requirements. However, there is not much I can do. These stores were signed per the criteria. They have already maximized their signage.

One example of where signage restrictions have affected business is in Santa Barbara, California. The store was not permitted to have our logo on the building. They would only put up our letters. Our sign brand requires us to have the logo and letters. I believe that this was one of the most restrictive sites.

With a cap on the total square feet of signage per site, installing the main sign left only enough allocated footage for the small logo to be placed on the highly visible side of this restaurant and left no option for signage on the equally visible rear.

The second location that had poor signage is in Salinas, California. This was an end cap location. The side of the store was very large and had great visibility to the freeway. However, because the square footage allowed by the sign criteria was so restrictive, all we were allowed was a main sign on the front. We were also allowed a 3-foot logo on the side. The city advised us that we were allowed to place some signage in the window. However, the windows were below the roof canopy and it could get very dark under the canopy.

In conclusion, I would like to see at least 70 to 80 percent more signage for the storefront. I would also like to see the logo 3 to 4 feet higher. I would also prefer having 24-inch letters. I would also like to see the sign criteria written so that a person could understand it. Some criteria are too complex to understand. I would like to see the sign criteria simplified, and straightforward.

Robinson Oil: I would like some agreement with the city council, on having everyone signed correctly. Then, companies would have to meet the state requirements for posting the product. I would like to see Rotten Robbie be more competitive with major supermarkets in the area.

For example: one week, we would like to promote milk and cigarettes. That would typically be against the sign ordinance. Doing this would be over the allowed square footage for the signage.

I would like for the cities to come to some midway point on the name. Secondly, we do not like being restricted on the size of the numerals for the gasoline prices. We would like for these cities to tell us exactly what type of sign we can have. We have problems sometimes, because we come up against architectural committees.

The architectural committees want to dictate the size of the numbers of letters. They want to tell the type of color. This just adds so much cost to a project.

Freestanding signs of even moderate height, such as at right, are disallowed in some areas, leaving businesses to rely upon monument signs (above and on page 8) to alert customers of their presence.

We also have a problem with the height of the freestanding signs. In some instances, companies are only allowed monument signs. We would like to have the signs at least 6-8 feet off the ground. We want the traffic to be able to see the store.

Mountain View, Hayward and Santa Cruz, California have severe restrictions on signage. We feel that if we were allowed to have proper signage at these locations, business would improve. It is not the phrase, “build it and they will come.” They have to see it so they can come.

Rue 21: The biggest problem has to do with the size of the signs. We do have problems with color in some locations. We really only get two color choices. We are only allowed to use our preferred colors about fifty percent of the time.

Safeway: The biggest problem is with the amount of signage that is permitted. We would like to alert the public that we have other services available in Safeway stores. We are really missing out on that aspect of signage. Safeway has also had some problems with the color of signs permitted.

The main problem areas are in Mill Valley, California. Here, we were only allowed to use burgundy color signs. Over the years the sign has turned brown because of weather.

Warehouse Shoe Sale: Size and square footage are the biggest issues. In some cities, it is the amount of signage that is an issue. In the city of Whittier, California, they do not allow any

signage that promotes our product. We are only allowed to promote our store. I would like to alert customers that we sell a variety of brands. Our company sells Nike, Reebok, Jordan, and other big name brands. I feel that it is necessary to advise customers of the brand names available. Every time we put a sign up promoting a brand name, we get a $500.00 fine.

In some cities, like Montclair, California, the biggest issue was color.

We had already installed a sign at the Montclair location. However, the city made us remove the sign. The city asked us to install a new color. The city had originally approved the sign. The city advised me that the color was too yellow. This process was very costly to the company.

It is important to have comparable or tasteful signage. I am very much in favor of working with cities in achieving this goal. However, I feel that there are times when larger signage is necessary.

For example: At a location in El Monte, California there is a 30-foot high wall next to my store. I lobbied to have a sign that was 40 feet high. The city would only allow me 25-foot high signs. I believe that the poor signage is affecting our business.

Limited to a height of twenty-five feet, this shoe store sign is hidden from northbound drivers by a thirty foot high neighbor and from southbound drivers by curbside trees.

I am also displeased with my signage at another location in La Puente, California. At this location, my store is completely blocked both northbound and southbound. When traveling northbound on Hacienda Blvd, trees are blocking the vision of my store. Then, traveling southbound, the store is blocked by a car dealership. My sign is only about 4 feet off the ground. I believe the sign needs to be higher. Even though we have been there for almost three years now, we still have people coming in and saying “we had no idea you were here.” Some patrons have told my store managers that they are dumb. They tell management that they should make our sign larger. My managers then call me and request better signage. At that point I have to inform my store managers why they are not allowed better signage.

When I know that I am not getting the signage requested, I then am obligated to spend more on marketing.

Is there some type of standard that you would like to see adopted for exterior signage?

Robinson Oil: I would like to have the municipalities in the state of California have a couple of variations. I do not like having a multitude of variations. I believe that every planning commission will disagree about some aspect of the signage. I just want to be able to have a few options. Some of these ordinances are too complex. We do not want to have to do complete overhauls on our signage. That is a process that can be very expensive. Our company spends more money designing the sign, than what the sign is actually worth. We would like to have rules that we could live by. We would like to eliminate all of the back and forth meetings to decide on appropriate signage. I would like to see something that is more uniform. We want the ordinances set so everyone can comply. That means the individual person, or the small company. We would first like a sign that we can buy affordably. There are also instances where a company may have 5 other stores who are older, and located next to us. I think that the company's image has been tarnished because of what is beside us. I feel what municipalities should do, is make sure the local ordinances are adhered to.

Safeway: I would like to properly sign our building so that it is in scale with the project. For example, in one building, where we are the anchor tenant, our signs are just as big as some of the smaller tenants. Some cities think of signage as a nuisance rather than a tool. The cities think it detracts from the community rather than adding to it. If signage is done tastefully, and, is in scale with the project, it has a useful purpose. If stores were allowed proper signage, it would increase sales and limit the traffic congestion. It would benefit retailers as well as the tax revenue for that community. Stores that are located in vacation spots could benefit from having good signage.

Stores in Santa Cruz, and Pollock pines, California, could benefit greatly from better exterior signage. Pollock pines is located near the freeway, however, because of the trees, people are unable to see the store. The Santa Cruz store problem is that people are only able to see it if they are traveling north on route 1.

What are the sites that are doing well? What sites are doing poor because of signage restrictions?

Warehouse Shoe Sale: The store on S. Figueroa Street, in Los Angeles, California, is our second highest grossing store. The other store that has good signage and is profitable is in Wilmington, California.

The store in El Monte, California is doing somewhat worse than projected. This store is averaging $5,000 to $10,000 less than what we should be making in one week. Also, the store in Whittier, California is doing very poorly. I think that this store should be pulling in $35,000 to $45,000 per week. The store is making about $15,000 to $25,000 less than what it

should be. We are fortunate to pull in $25,000 per week. The signage is poor and we are not allowed to conduct promotionals.

The store in La Puente, California, is making $10,000 to $15,000 less than what it should be making per week. This store should be making $35,000 to $40,000 per week. In La Puente, California when traveling northbound a person is completely blocked by trees. (This is Hacienda Blvd going north). Traveling southbound, you are completely blocked by cars at a car dealership. The city at this location only allowed us small landmark signs of about 4 to 5 feet high. I took a city council member to lunch to try and get a variance in La Puente. I needed three votes to get a variance and only received two votes. The city council member told me, “When you go to the US Constitution, it tells you everything you can do, when you come to La Puente, we tell you everything you cannot do.” I wish that there were a standard sense of everything I can do with signage. I believe that would then dictate to city council what I could not do with signage.

In-Depth Interview Respondents

Autonation, Inc
Elaine May, Project Manager
Fort Lauderdale, FL
August 9, 2004

CompUSA
John Romberger, Sr. Director of Construction
Dallas, TX
July 26, 2004

Goodyear Tire
David Petrilla, Regional Identification Manager
Richard Kandel, Identification Designer;
Akron, OH
August 19, 2004

Office Depot
Virginia Malkemes, Signage Coordinator
Delray Beach, FL
August 10, 2004

Panda Restaurant Group, Inc
Larry Furst, Signage Designer
South Pasadena, CA
August 25, 2004

Robinson Oil Corporation
Bill Pakulski, Merchandise Manager
Jerry Cummings, President
San Jose, CA
August 26, 2004

Rue 21
Linda Letendre, Construction Field Project Manager
Pittsburgh, PA
June 29, 2004

Safeway
Jason Gomes, Construction and Design
Pleasanton, CA
August 27, 2004

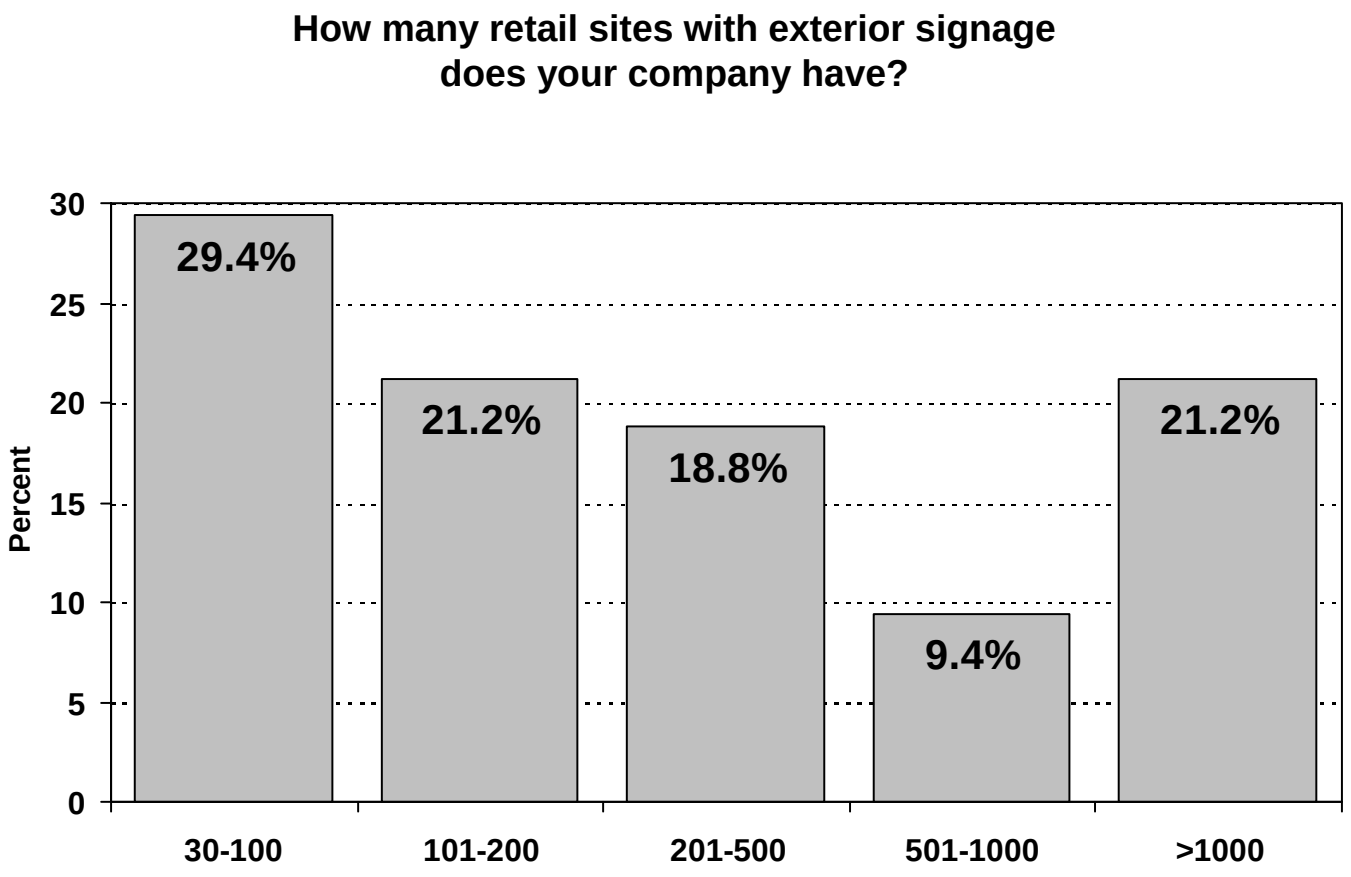
Warehouse Shoe Sale
Joel Estrada, Director of Public Relations
Los Angeles, CA
August 24, 2004

Brief Interviews

Tire Kingdom
John Costa
Juno Beach, FL

Bealls Department Store
Frank DePalma
Bradenton, FL

Number of Retail Sites

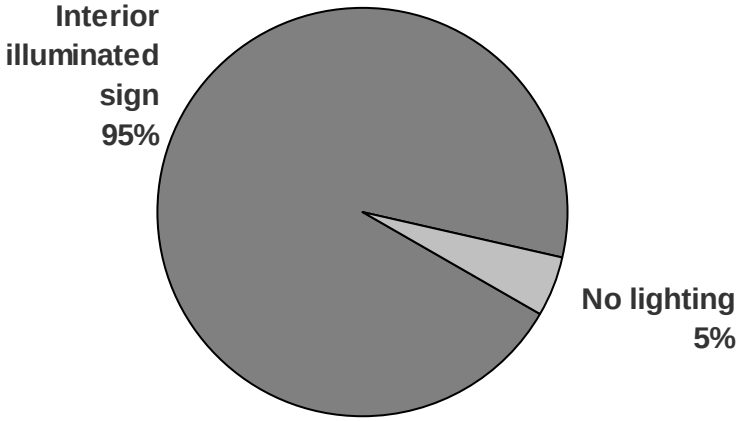


Sign Preferences – Lighting

All sign owners prefer signs with interior illumination.

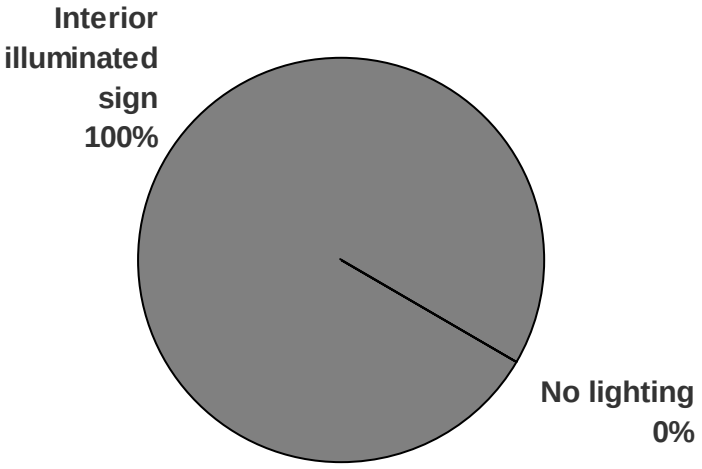
Store Mounted

7. Do you prefer an interior illuminated sign cabinet, illuminated channel letters or no lighting for your primary store/wall-mounted signs?



Freestanding

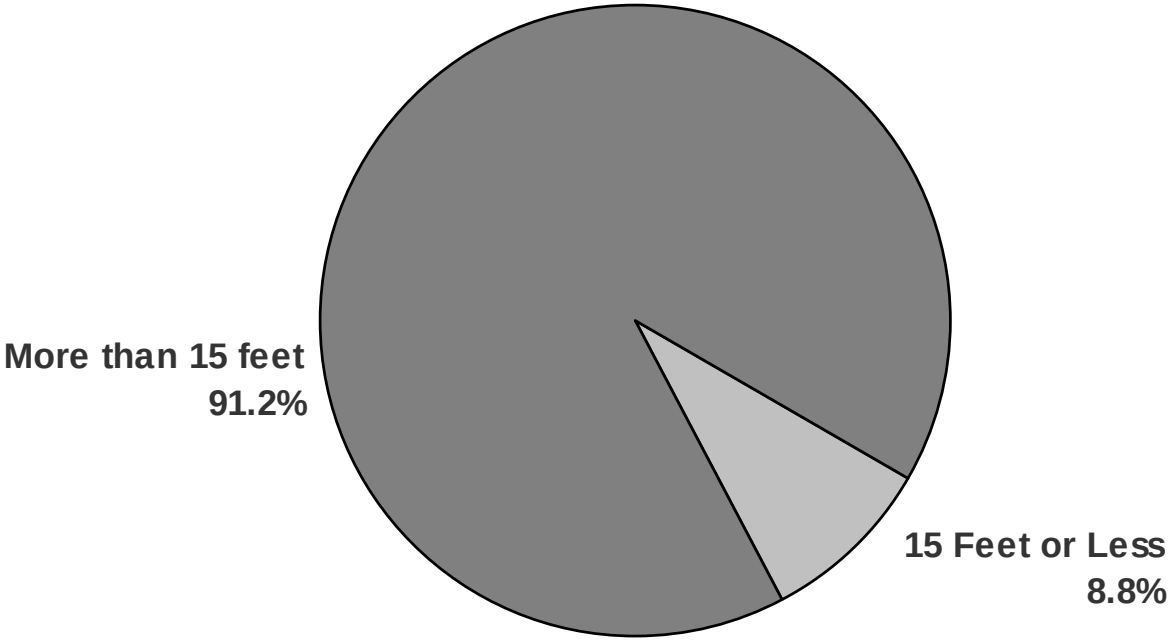
14. Do you prefer interior illumination, illuminated channel letters or no lighting for your own ground-mounted/freestanding signs?



Sign Preferences – Height

Most sign owners prefer their freestanding signs to be more than 15 feet high.

11. What is the preferred height, in feet, to the top of your own ground-mounted/freestanding signs?

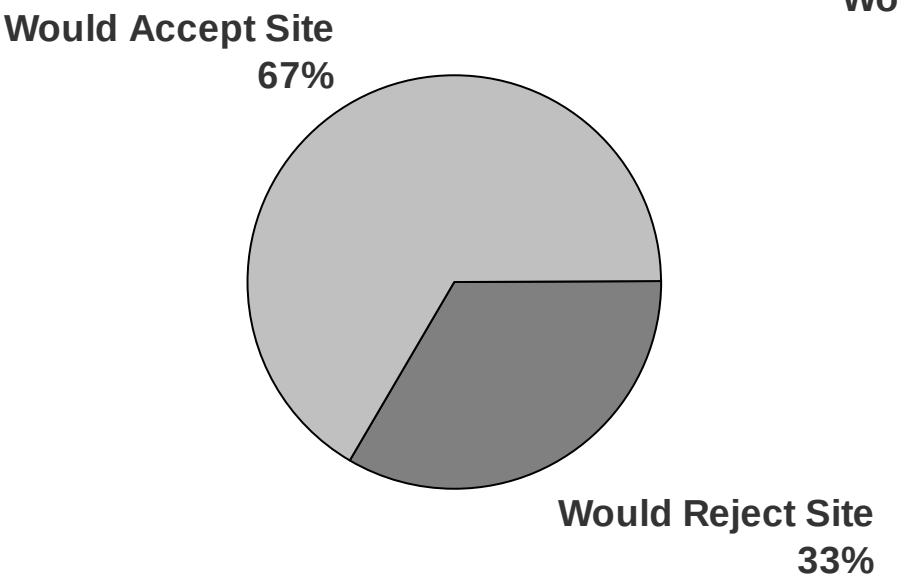


Need for Freestanding/Directory Signs

A third of sign owners would reject a site if they were not allowed to erect a freestanding sign. More would reject a site if they were denied space on a shared sign.

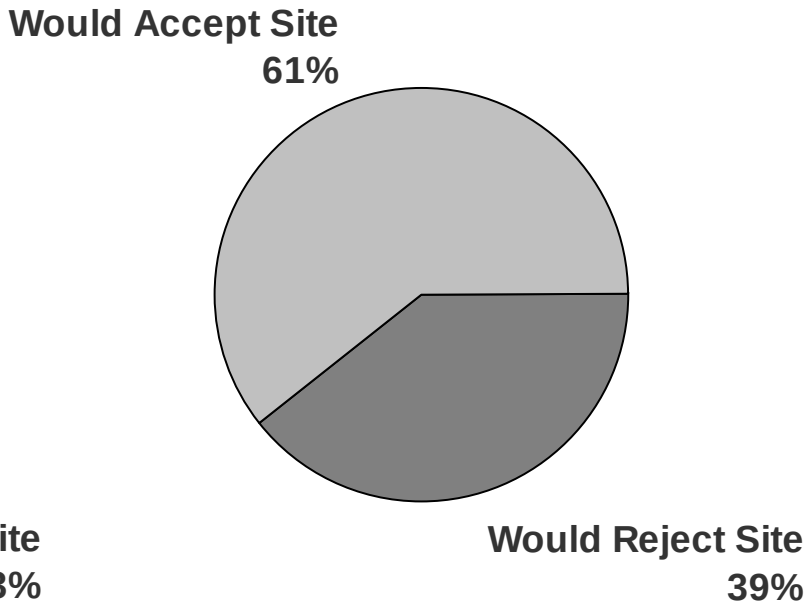
No Freestanding Sign

16. Would you reject a potential site location if you were not allowed to install your own ground-mounted/freestanding signs?



No Shared Directory

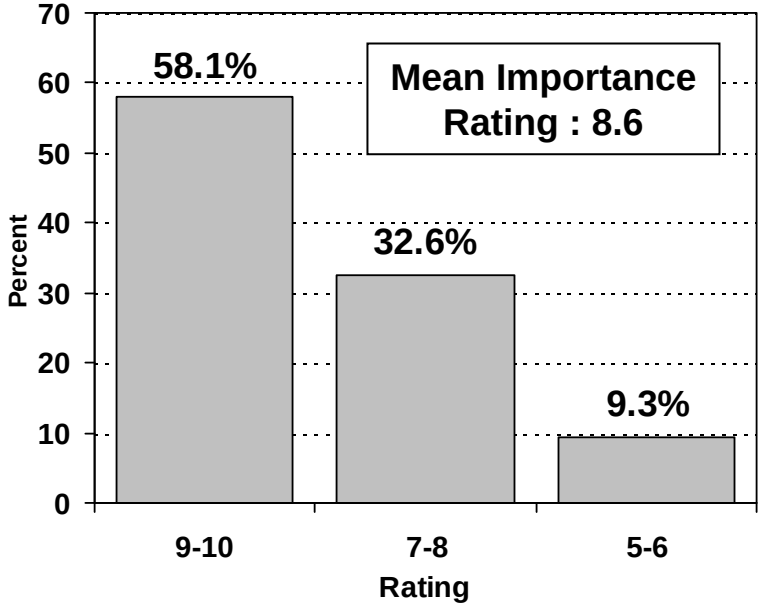
17. Would you reject a potential site location if you were denied space on a shared or tenant directory ground-mounted/freestanding sign?



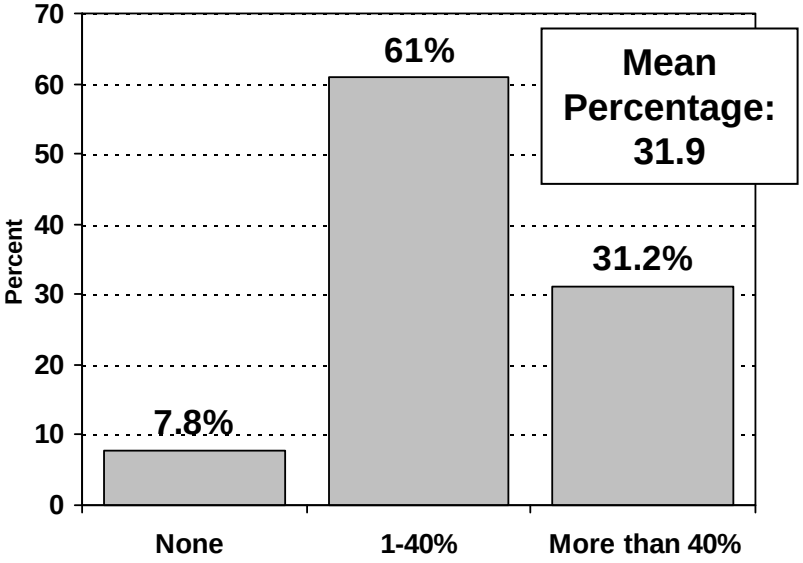
Preferred Sign Package Importance & Denials

A majority rated the importance of installing the preferred signage 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale. On average, 32% sites nationwide could not install preferred signage.

19. How important do you think the installation of your preferred sign package is on store performance? (10 = Very important, 1 = Not at all important)



15. What percentage of your stores nationwide were not allowed to install your preferred sign package?



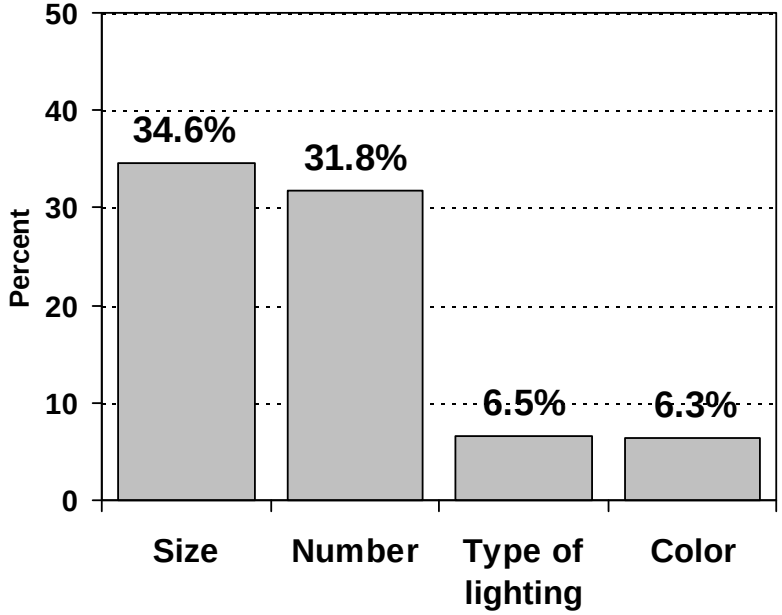
Preferred Sign Package Denials

Sign size and height are the most commonly denied sign features, followed by the number of signs.

18. What percent of the time are you unable, because of regulations, to install the preferred…

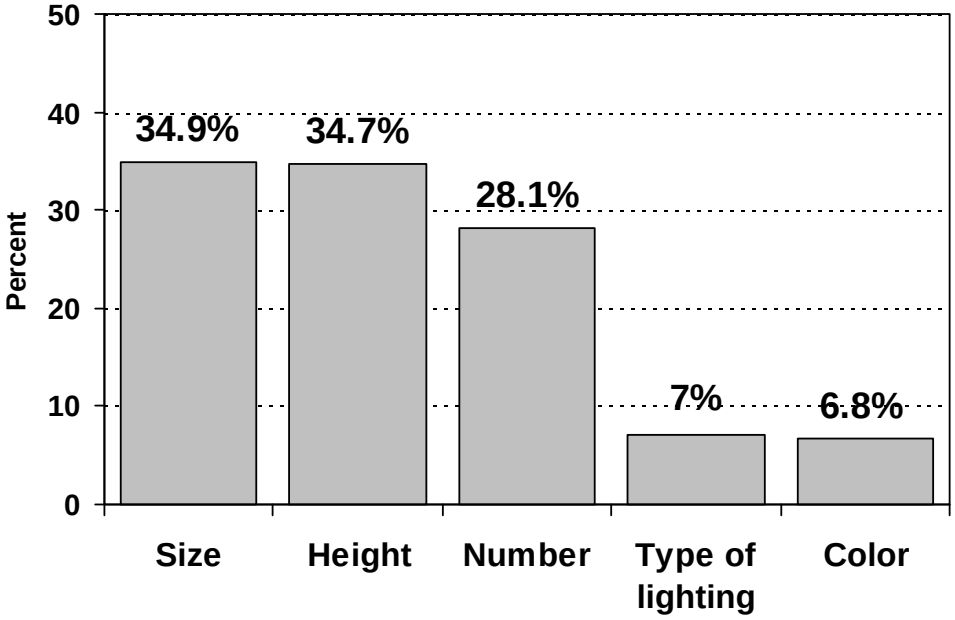
Store Mounted

mean percentages



Freestanding

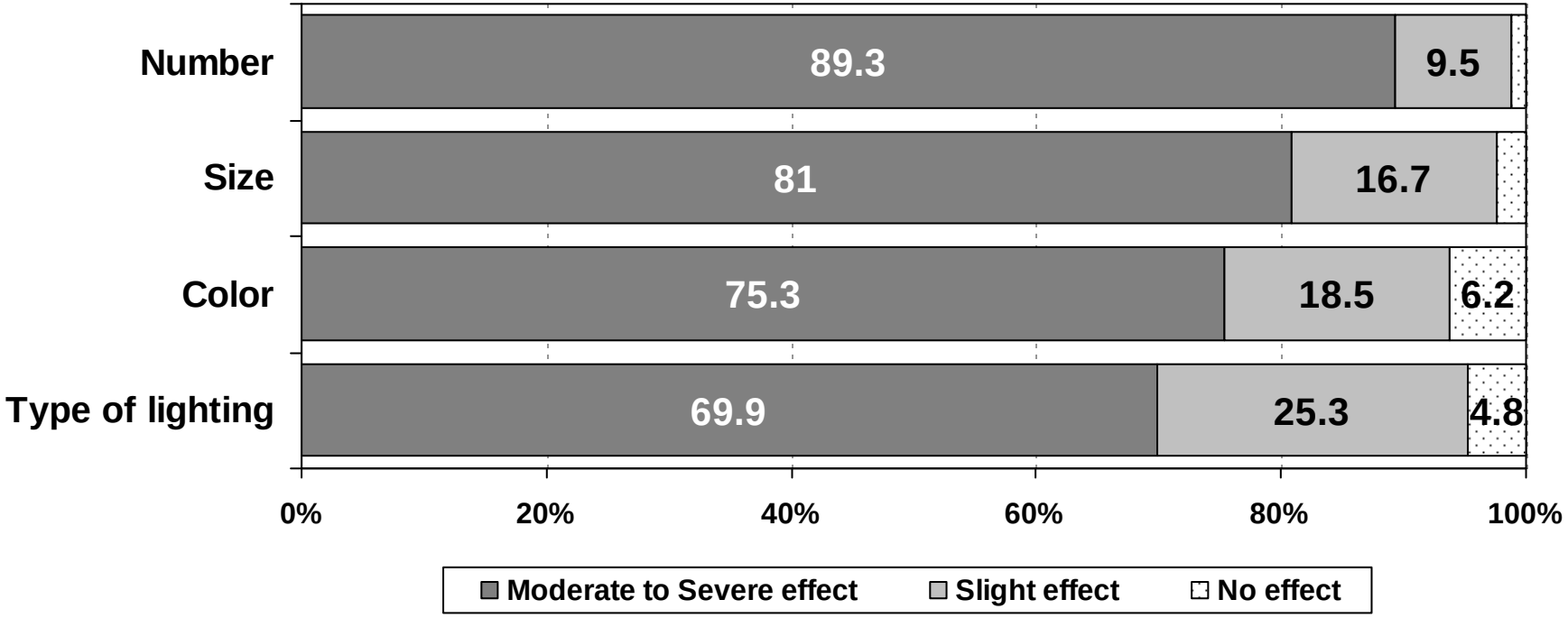
mean percentages



Effect of Changes on Site Performance – Store/Wall

All aspects of preferred sign packages are perceived to have strong effects on site performance, with the number and size of signs having the greatest influence.

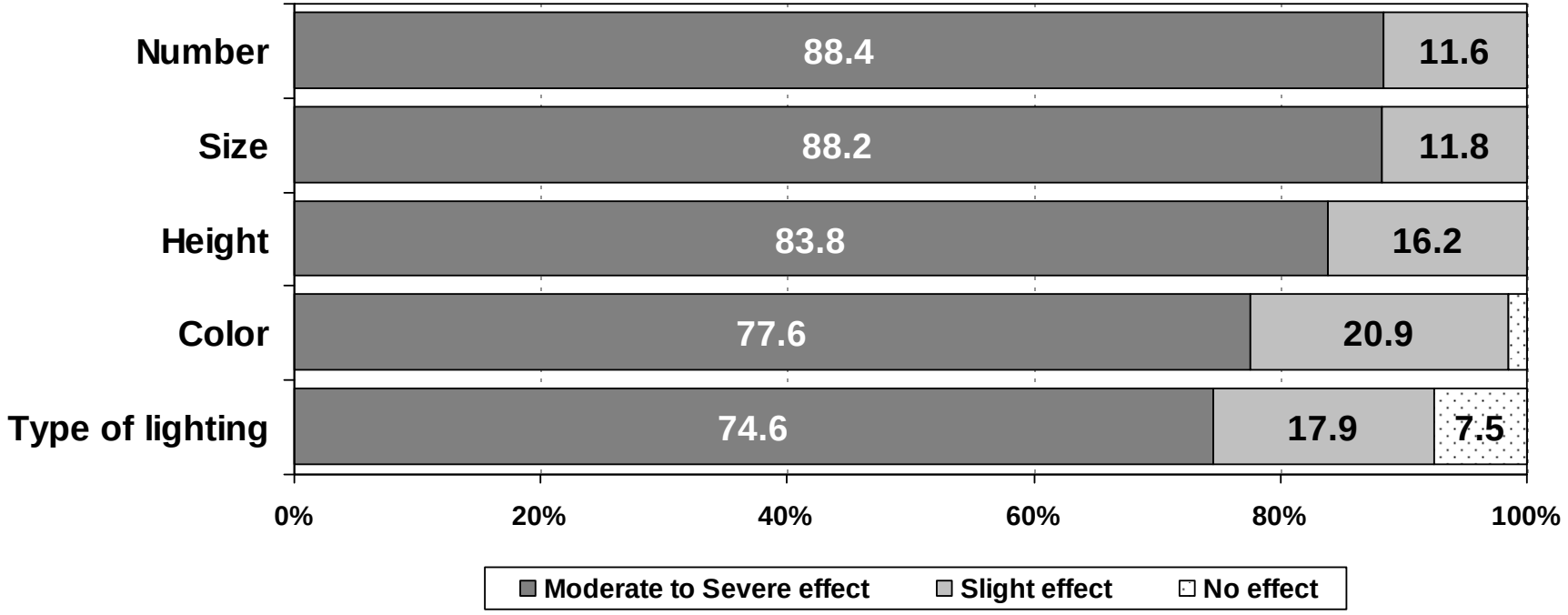
21-24. How would it affect a site's performance if you could not install your preferred ____ of store/wall mounted signs?



Effect of Changes on Site Performance – Freestanding

Number of signs, size and height are the freestanding sign attributes that have the greatest effect on site performance.

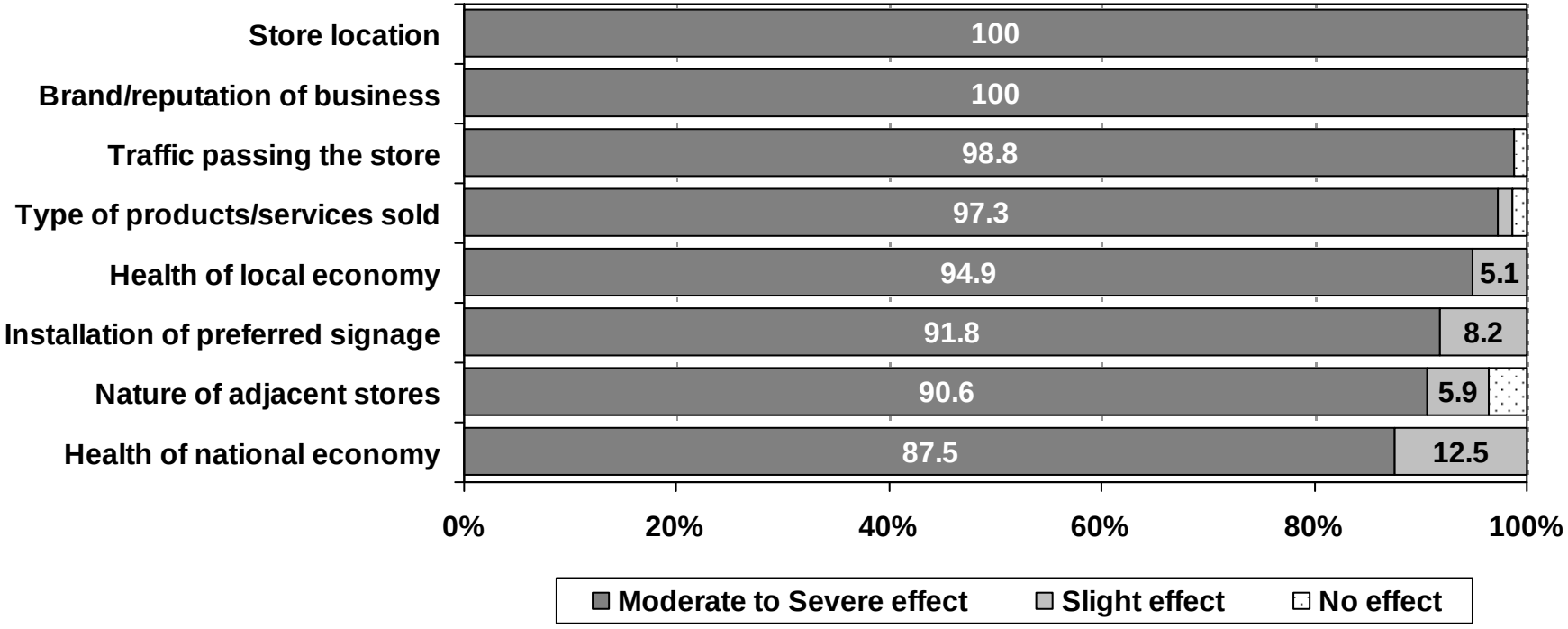
25-29. How would it affect a site's performance if you could not install your preferred ___ of freestanding signs?



Site Performance Influencers

Signage is rated similar to other potential site performance influencers.

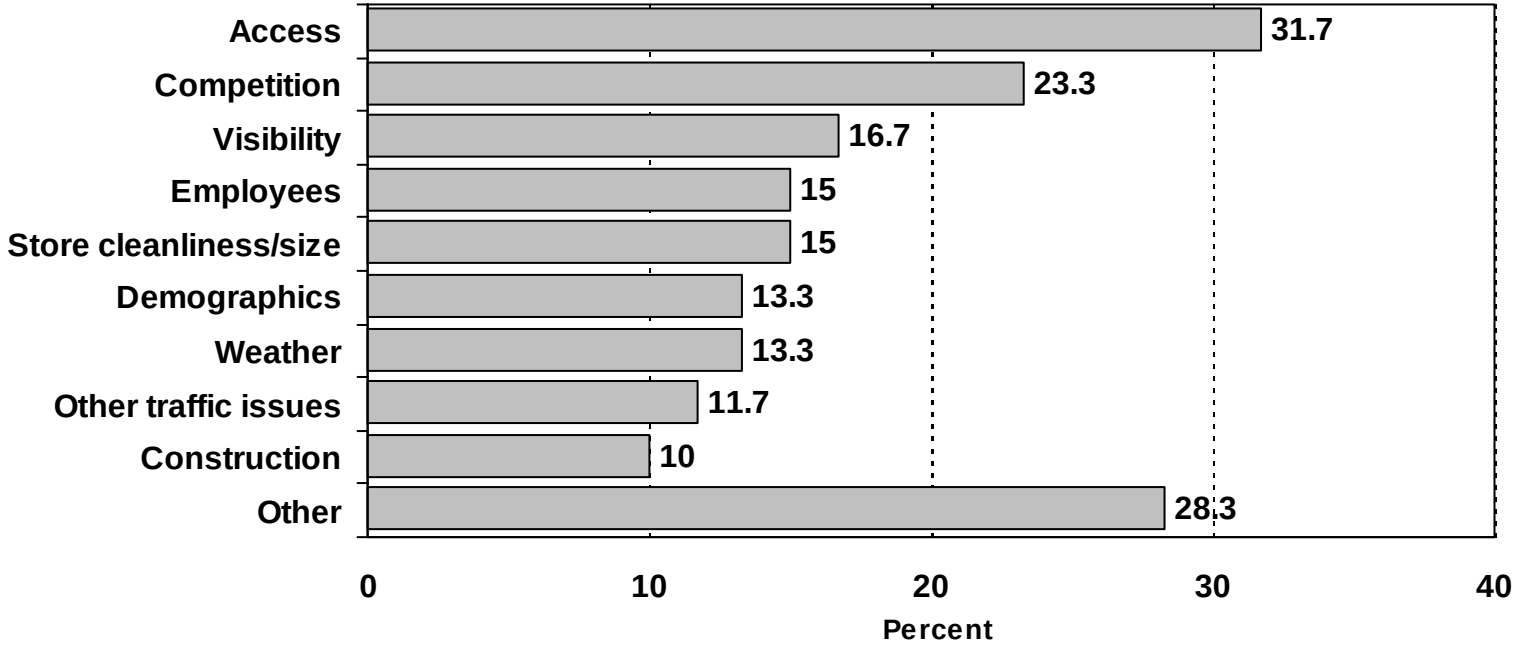
30. How much does the ___ affect a site's performance?



Other Factors Affecting Site Performance

Access, competition and visibility are most commonly cited as other influencers of site performance. Signage can be used to leverage all three of these attributes.

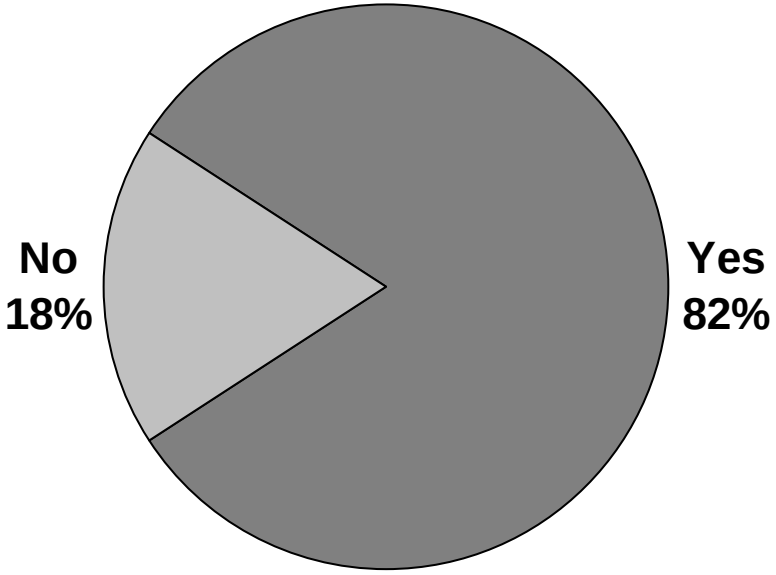
31. What other things can have an effect on a site's performance?
(Coded from open-ended responses)



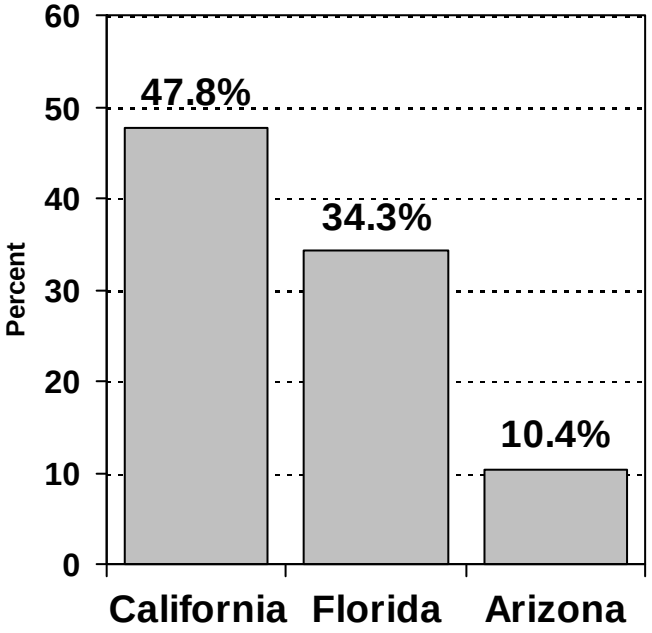
Signage – Particularly Restrictive Areas

California and Florida are perceived to be particularly restrictive of exterior signage.

32. Are there any particular states or regions of the country that you consider particularly restrictive when it comes to exterior signage?



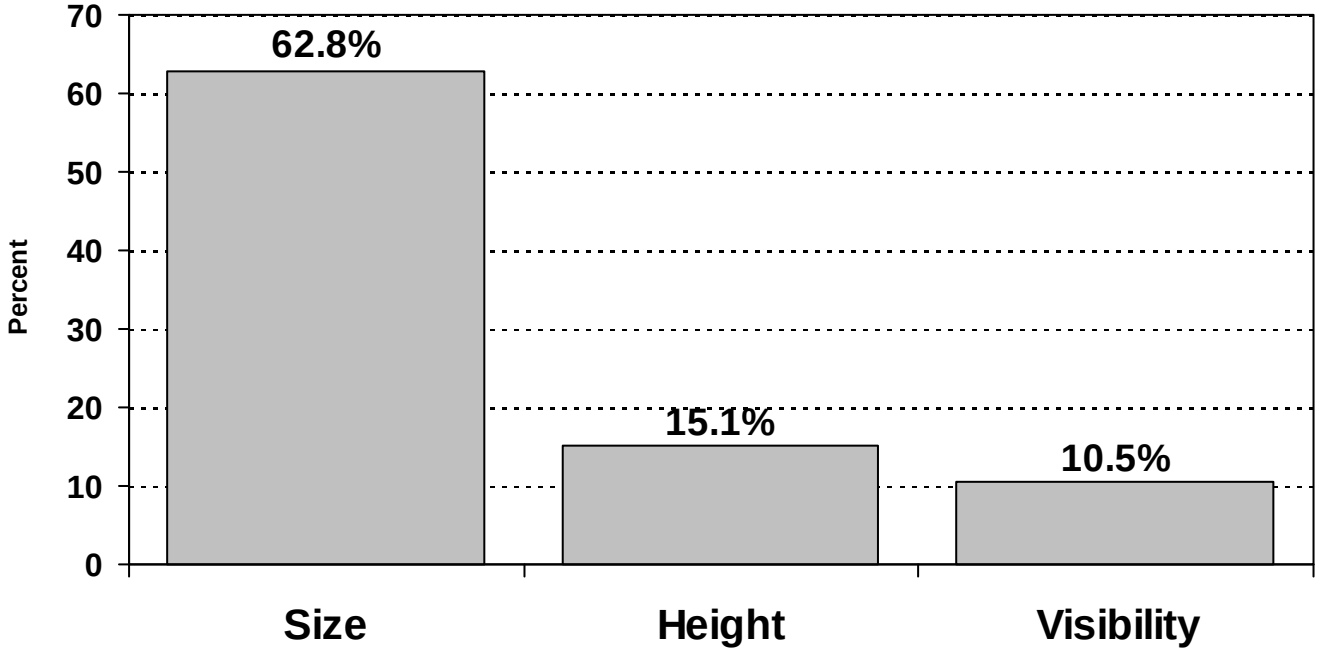
33. What particular states or regions? (top three mentions)



Biggest Problems with Signage Restrictions

Sign owners perceive size restrictions to be the biggest problem they face in installing preferred sign packages.

34. What is the biggest problem you have with exterior signage restrictions?
(Top three mentions, coded from open-ended responses)



Telephone Interview Respondents

COMPANY, NAME, TITLE	NUMBER OF SITES
84 LUMBER COMPANY LP; EIGHTY FOUR, PA	500
A C O INC.; FARMINGTON HILLS, MI	69
ACCOR ECONOMY LODGING, INC.; DALLAS, TX	1000
ADVANCE AUTO PARTS INC. A; ROANOKE, VA	2600
ADVANCE AUTO PARTS INC. B; ROANOKE, VA	2500
ALBERTSONS INC.; BOISE, ID	2800
AMERICAN GENERAL; BATON ROUGE, LA	53
ARLINGTON HOSPITALITY; ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, IL	60
AUTONATION; FORT LAUDERDALE, FL	5000
AUTOZONE INC.; MEMPHIS, TN	3600
BARTELL DRUG COMPANY; SEATTLE, WA	52
BI-MART ACQUISITION CORP.; EUGENE, OR	65
BON-TON STORES INC.; YORK, PA	140
BORDERS GROUP; ANN ARBOR, MI	1200
CAR TOYS INC.; SEATTLE, WA	54
CARLSON RESTAURANTS (WORLDWIDE); DALLAS, TX	250
CASUAL MALE RETAIL GROUP; CANTON, MA	485
CHEVRON STATIONS INC.; SAN RAMON, CA	300
CHEVYS INC.; EMERYVILLE, CA	75
CKE RESTAURANTS; SANTA BARBARA, CA	1000
COMP USA; DALLAS, TX	300
D F A HOLDINGS INC.; HOLLYWOOD, FL	70
DAVIDS BRIDAL INC.; CONSHOHOCKEN, PA	220
DILLARDS INC.; LITTLE ROCK, AR	230
EAT N PARK; HOMESTEAD, PA	78
EXTENDED STAY HOTELS; SPARTANBURG, SC	620
FACTORY 2-U STORES INC.; SAN DIEGO, CA	172
FAZOLI'S RESTAURANTS INC.; LEXINGTON, KY	153
FOOD LION LLC.; SALISBURY, NC	1200
FORWARD CORP.; STANDISH, MI	30
FRIENDLY ICE CREAM CORP.; WILBRAHAM, MA	600
GAS AMERICA SERVICES INC.; GREENFIELD, IN	72
GIANT CONST CO.; LANDOVER, MD	200
GOODYEAR TIRE AND RUBBER; AKRON, OH	600
GOODYS FAMILY CLOTHING INC.; KNOXVILLE, TN	350
HALF PRICE BOOKS; DALLAS, TX	82
HAPPY HARRY'S INC.; NEWARK, DE	74
HOSS'S STEAKHOUSE; DUNCANSVILLE, PA	42
HY-VEE INC.; WEST DES MOINES, IA	230
J T S ENTERPRISES; TAMPA, FL	50
KB HOLDINGS INC.; PITTSFIELD, MA	300
LITTLE CEASAR ENTERPRISES INC.; DETROIT, MI	NA
LOWE'S; NORTH WILKESBORO, NC	1000
MACY'S/ FEDERATED; SAN FRANCISCO, CA	140

COMPANY, NAME, TITLE	NUMBER OF SITES
MARCUS CORP.; MILWAUKEE, WI	195
MCDONALDS; OAK BROOK, IL	NA
MERVYNS; HAYWARD, CA	1300
MIDAS; ITHACA, IL	1700
MID-VALLEY OIL COMPANY INC.; NEWBURGH, NY	150
MORGAN BUILDINGS SPAS & POOLS; GARLAND, TX	33
MOTIVA ENTERPRISES LLC.; HOUSTON, TX	1300
NEBRASKA BOOK COMPANY INC.; LINCOLN, NE	100
NEIMAN MARCUS GROUP INC.; DALLAS, TX	42
NORDSTROM INC.; SEATTLE, WA	120
OFFICE DEPOT; DELRAY BEACH, FL	5000
O'RIELLEY AUTOMOTIVE; SPRINGFIELD, MO	1170
P J UNITED INC.; BIRMINGHAM, AL	145
PANDA RESTAURANT GROUP; ROSEMEAD, CA	650
PAPA JOHNS INTERNATIONAL; LOUISVILLE, KY	500
PETRO STOPPING CENTERS LP.; EL PASO, TX	60
PRIMA MARKETING LLC.; FAIRMONT, WV	80
RAG SHOPS INC.; HAWTHORNE, NJ	70
RED ROBIN GOURMET BURGERS; ENGLEWOOD, CO	240
RITE-AID; CAMP HILL, PA	3400
ROBINSON OIL CORPORATION; SAN JOSE, CA	30
ROMACORP INC.; DALLAS, TX	260
RUBIO'S RESTAURANTS INC.; CARLSBAD, CA	140
RUE 21.; WARRENDALE, PA	184
SAFEWAY, INC.; PLEASANTON, CA	1700
SCHOTTENSTEIN STORES CORP.; COLUMBUS, OH	110
SHONAC CORP.; COLUMBUS, OH	300
SMITH'S FOOD & DRUG; SALT LAKE CITY, UT	130
SNYDERS DRUG STORES INC.; MINNETONKA, MN	70
SOMERSET TIRE SERVICE INC.; BOUND BROOK, NJ	106
SONIC CORP.; OKLAHOMA CITY, OK	2800
STARWOOD HOTELS & RESORTS; WHITE PLAINS, NY	500
TETCO STORES INC.; SAN ANTONIO, TX	160
THE CRYSTAL COMPANY; CHATTANOOGA, TN	400
TIME OIL CO.; SEATTLE, WA	110
TRAVELCENTERS OF AMERICA INC.; CLEVELAND, OH	150
TWEETER HOME ENTERTAINMENT; CANTON, MA	160
WALGREEN CORPORATION; DEERFIELD, IL	4500
WAL-MART STORES INC.; BENTONVILLE, AR	4000
WAREHOUSE SHOE SALE; LOS ANGELES, CA	39
WESCO INC.; MUSKEGON, MI	50
WINN-DIXIE STORES INC.; JACKSONVILLE, FL	900
YUM BRANDS INC. A; LOUISVILLE, KY	6000
YUM BRANDS INC. B; LOUISVILLE, KY	6000

USSC **FOUNDATION**

538 North Street
Doylestown PA 18901
215-785-1922
www.usscfoundation.org