

UC Research Examines the Economic Value of On-Premise Signs*

Good signage holds benefits for both businesses and their customers. But what qualifies as good signs?

Results of a national survey of more than 160 large and small businesses will be presented Oct. 12 at the University of Cincinnati annual National Signage Research and Education Conference in Cincinnati.

UC researchers Christopher Auffrey, associate professor of planning; Henry Hildebrandt, professor of architecture and interior design; and Jeff Rexhausen,

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associate director of research for the Economics Center at UC, will present a year-long project blending survey research and case studies in the presentation, “Understanding the Economic Value of On-Premise Signs: A Study of the Impact of On-Premise Signage and Criteria for Evaluation.”

The survey found that businesses primarily invested in signs to help make their businesses stand out and to help potential customers find their locations. “As a result, we found that businesses that pay attention to their signage and invest in the design and placement of signs get better results from their investment,” says Rexhausen. “Signs communicate information, and buyers and sellers both benefit from better communication of that information.”

The researchers say the results of the research are especially useful for business owners considering sign investments, as well as for the sign companies working with them, and local governments that seek to balance various considerations in their sign regulations.

In addition to how businesses approach different types of signage, Rexhausen says the survey and case studies found economic impacts that sign changes had on businesses. The survey also found that 75 percent of the businesses surveyed had changed the design of their signs in the past five years – selecting a new look, new type or new illumination.

The case studies highlight the lodging industry, retail banking, specialty retail and the suburban commercial corridor, where there’s an effort in one Greater Cincinnati suburb to make the business district environmentally more attractive yet easier to navigate for customers searching for service.

The study was supported by conference sponsor Signage Foundation, Inc. Established in 2002, SFI is a not-for-profit, non partisan organization dedicated to fulfilling the educational, research and philanthropic purposes of on-premise signage.

The National Signage and Research Education Conference is sponsored by SFI, in collaboration with the Carl H. Lindner College of Business, and the UC College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning (DAAP).

* By Dawn Fuller. Posted on October 11, 2011 at University of Cincinnati’s website www.uc.edu.