

**Compendium of a Decade's Worth of Research Studies
on Distraction from Digital Billboards (Commercial
Electronic Variable Message Signs [CEVMS])**

Summary and Critique

Prepared for California State Department of Transportation

Legal Division

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Background

This compendium is a stand-alone document that updates this author's 2009 report for AASHTO (the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) through NCHRP (the National Cooperative Highway Research Program) Project 20-7/256,¹ which was a critical review of research that had been undertaken, and guidelines that had been developed, up to that time that addressed the potential consequences for driver distraction from Commercial Electronic Variable Message Signage (CEVMS) along the roadside, commonly known as "digital billboards."

For this report we critically reviewed the available research papers that have been published or presented within approximately the last decade. These papers represent the work of academic, industry, and government researchers in many countries (including, but not limited to Sweden, Denmark, Israel, Canada, US, England, and Australia), and which followed many different research protocols. Whereas earlier studies (primarily those from 2010 and prior) often suffered from limitations in equipment, methodology, or statistical rigor, leaving their conclusions open to question and controversy, those performed in the more recent past were generally more robust, and tended to reach similar conclusions to one another.

Broadly summarized, the more recent studies have tended to find that outdoor advertising signs, particularly CEVMS, attract drivers' attention, and that more dramatic and salient signs attract longer and more frequent glances. This attention is often captured through a "bottom up" physiological process, in which the driver attends to the sign unintentionally and unconsciously, with the eyes captured involuntarily by the sign's changing imagery, brightness, conspicuity, and occasionally, motion and/or sequencing (employing successive screen displays to communicate one thought or message).

Several of the reported studies suggested that the distraction caused by outdoor advertising signs could be tolerated by experienced drivers and when attentional or cognitive demands of the driving task were low, but that the risk increased when such signs competed for the driver's visual attention with more demanding road, traffic, and weather conditions, when travel speeds were higher, or when an unanticipated event or action (such as a sudden lane change or hard braking by a lead vehicle) occurred to which the driver had to respond quickly and correctly.

In addition, the more recent research continues to show that the drivers most susceptible to unsafe levels of distraction from roadside billboards are the young (who are more prone to distraction and less adept at emergency vehicle response) and the elderly (who have more difficulty with rapidly shifting attention, poorer night vision and glare susceptibility, and slower mental processing time). As will be seen in this Compendium, these concerns are heightened today, with our elderly driver population growing quickly, traffic increasingly dense, more roads under maintenance or repair (construction and work zones

¹ Wachtel, J. (2009). "Safety Impacts of the Emerging Digital Display Technology for Outdoor Advertising Signs: Final Report. NCHRP Report 20-7/256. Available at: [http://rightofway.transportation.org/Documents/NCHRP%20Reports/20-7\(256\)%20digital%20outdoor%20advertising_aashto.pdf](http://rightofway.transportation.org/Documents/NCHRP%20Reports/20-7(256)%20digital%20outdoor%20advertising_aashto.pdf)

create added risks), and larger, brighter digital and video roadside advertising signs competing for the driver's attention.

Also, the most recent epidemiological studies have begun to demonstrate what has long been suspected but not proven – that roadside billboards are associated with increases in crash rates where such billboards are located.

While employing a broad array of approaches and methodologies, the common theme among the studies cited clearly indicates that the more that CEVMS succeed in attracting the attention of motorists that render them a worthwhile investment for owners and advertisers, the more they represent a threat to safety along our busiest streets and freeways, where these signs tend to be located. Further, we found evidence to confirm that the outdoor advertising industry in the US is actively engaged in studying ways to *increase* the attention-attracting power of roadside billboards - to the ultimate detriment of traffic safety.

A small number of research studies cited herein have found little or no relationship between CEVMS and traffic safety. One such, long anticipated, study was announced on the website of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on December 30, 2014. The FHWA study, however, has been severely criticized for faulty methods and analyses in a peer-reviewed critique by the present author². The FHWA study remains available on the agency's website but has never been formally published. Despite studies published by the outdoor advertising industry itself, those studies that show no adverse effects of CEVMS are far outnumbered by those that show such a relationship³.

It has been shown that road environments cluttered with driving-irrelevant material (often called visual complexity) make it difficult for the driver to extract critical information from the roadway scene that is necessary for safe driving in a timely manner, a particular problem for older drivers. In addition, with the growing proliferation of CEVMS, ever-newer technology that renders them more compelling, the expansion of on-premise signs using this technology, and several States considering the use of such signs within the right-

² Wachtel, Jerry (2015). "A Peer-Reviewed Critique of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Report Titled: "Driver Visual Behavior in the Presence of Commercial Electronic Variable Message Signs (CEVMS)."
Available at:
<http://nebula.wsimg.com/722c5bb9d76d4b10b6d7add54d962329?AccessKeyId=388DC3CA49BF0BEF098B&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>

³ In 2007, two studies sponsored by the outdoor advertising industry (the Outdoor Advertising Association of America [OAAA] and its research arm, the Foundation for Outdoor Advertising Research and Education [FOARE]) were submitted through the peer review process to the Transportation Research Board of The National Academies. Both reports, one a human factors study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), and the other an epidemiological study by Tantala and Tantala, received overall negative reviews from peer reviewers, and were therefore rejected by TRB both for presentation and publication. Although Virginia Tech has not performed subsequent work in this field, Tantala and Tantala have continued to perform research under the sponsorship of OAAA/FOARE. However, for whatever reasons, FOARE and OAAA have not made the subsequent studies available to the public, so they could not be addressed in this report.

of-way, it was appropriate to provide an up-to-date review of the most recent research and guidelines.

The next section of this report provides a brief summary of each of the studies cited. The following section, the Compendium itself, provides further details about each study, including its sponsorship, research protocol, strengths and weaknesses, and source identification. This document concludes with a complete list of references.

Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the major findings of each of the 22 studies discussed in the Compendium. Key conclusions are highlighted in **bold**. The subsequent section of this report, the Compendium itself, provides additional detail about each study, and information about how to access the study, where available.

The studies are cited here, and in the Compendium, in generally chronological order.

Chan, et al., 2008 – USA, Amherst, MA

The researchers compared susceptibility to distraction from sources inside the vehicle (e.g. phone dialing, map reading) to those outside the vehicle (e.g. billboards) for both young novice drivers and experienced drivers. As predicted, for the in-vehicle distractors, the young drivers looked away from the roadway for extended periods (2 seconds or longer) more than twice as often as the experienced drivers. Surprisingly, however, results showed that: (a) external distractors were even more distracting, and (b) the experienced drivers were just as distracted as the newly-licensed drivers on this critical measure of distraction when they performed the outside-the-vehicle tasks. The authors had assumed that experienced drivers would exercise the same degree of caution with the external distractors as they did with the internal ones. Instead, “the experienced drivers showed little concern for the effect that diverting their attention to the side of the roadway might have had on their ability to perceive potential risks immediately in front.” In some 81% of the external tasks, older drivers glanced for longer than 2s away from the forward roadway. The authors concluded by saying: “**...we think that our drivers engaged in the external search task were truly distracted with potentially serious consequences.**”

Young, et al., 2009 - England

In this driving simulator study, participants drove rural, urban, and highway routes in the presence and absence of roadside billboards, while their driving performance was measured. Billboards had a detrimental effect on lateral control, and appeared to increase crash risk. Longitudinal control was not affected. The most striking effects were found for driver attention. Driver mental workload (using the NASA developed TLX scale) significantly increased in the presence of billboards. On rural roads and motorways, results showed that billboards were consciously attended to at the cost of more relevant road signs. The authors reached a “**persuasive overall conclusion that advertising has adverse effects on driving performance and driver attention.** Whilst there are sometimes conflicts of interest at Local Authority level when authorizing billboards (since Councils often take a share of the profit from roadside advertising), these data could and should be used to redress the balance in favour of road safety.”

Backer-Grøndahl, & Sagberg, 2009 - Norway

The authors asked drivers who had actually been involved in a crash to identify, from a list, what they believed were the causes of distraction for that crash. (Cell phone use was

excluded). The most frequently reported sources of distraction were: (1) conversations with passengers, and (2) attending to children in the back seat. However, **when the researchers applied the statistical method known as quasi-induced exposure, they found that distractions with the “highest relative risk” were: (1) billboards outside the vehicle, and, (2) searching for addresses. The authors note that both of the highest risk distractors were *visual* distractions, rather than physical, auditory, or cognitive ones.**

Chattington, et al., 2009 - England

The researchers found “significant effects on both drivers’ visual behavior and driving performance” in the presence of both static and video billboards. As expected, the video signs were seen as more potent distractors than similarly placed static signs. The authors state that their results “support and extend (the findings of) other studies of driver distraction by advertising,” citing studies by Crundall, et al, and of Young and Mahfoud (both of which were extensively reviewed in the Wachtel 2009 report for AASHTO). The study showed that **several aspects of driving performance were adversely affected by both video and static billboards, with the video signs generally more harmful to such performance than the static signs. The authors list these effects as speed control, braking, and lane position maintenance.**

Horberry, et al., 2009 - Australia

Road authorities may be justified in using the best research information available, even if incomplete, coupled with engineering judgment, for the development of billboard guidelines. **The authors recommend that their client (Queensland, Australia) adopt advertising restrictions at known areas of high driver workload, including “locations with high accident rates, lane merges, curves/bends, hills and road/works/abnormal traffic flows.”** (They state that) “this is broadly in line with Wachtel who recommended a restriction of advertisements at times when driver decision, action points and cognitive demand are greatest – such as at freeway exits/entrances, lane reductions, merges and curves. Although useful for all road users, such restrictions would be of specific benefit to older drivers.”

Bendak & Al-Saleh, 2010 - Saudi Arabia

The authors used a driving simulator in which test subjects drove on two similar roads, one with advertising signs and one without. Twelve male volunteers, ages 23-28, participated in the study. Driver opinions about billboards were also sought using a simple questionnaire distributed to male drivers at random in the city of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. 160 questionnaires were returned. Results of the simulator study showed that **the driving speed of participants was not affected by the presence of advertising signs. However, two of the five indicators were statistically significant. Both “drifting unnecessarily from (the) lane” and “recklessly crossing dangerous intersections” were significantly**

more prevalent in the presence of billboards. Although not reaching statistical significance, each of the other three measures, tailgating, speeding, and failure to signal, were all worse in the presence of billboards. Half of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they had been distracted by a billboard, and 22% indicated that they had been put in a dangerous situation due to distraction from billboards.

Milloy & Caird, 2011 - Canada

This was a driving simulator study that looked at distraction effects of a video billboard and a wind turbine. **The results demonstrated a *causal* (italics original) relationship between the presence of a video billboard and collisions with, and delays in responding to, the lead vehicle.**

Edquist, et al., 2011 – Australia

“The finding that the presence of billboards increases time to detect changes is an important one.” Billboards can automatically attract attention when drivers are engaged in other tasks, delaying their responses to other aspects in the environment. The effect of billboards was particularly strong in scenes where response times are already lengthened by high levels of visual clutter. This is of particular concern because roads with high levels of clutter are the very kind of busy, commercial, high traffic environments where billboards are most often erected.”

The results are consistent with growing evidence suggesting that billboards impair aspects of driving performance such as visual search and the detection of hazards, and therefore should be more precisely regulated.

Edquist, et al., 2011, Sydney, Australia

These authors used a motion base driving simulator with a 180-degree forward view. They studied drivers' (elderly, novice, and in-between) lane change response to road signs telling them to change left or right, in the presence and absence of simplified billboards. Overall, drivers were significantly more likely to make errors at sites with billboards than without; elderly and novice drivers showed a stronger effect than comparison (mid-aged) drivers. For both novice and older drivers, both static and changeable billboards were associated with reduced time spent fixating on the road ahead. As predicted, the presence of billboards distracted eye movements from the road ahead and delayed responses to road signs. **The presence of billboards changed drivers' patterns of visual attention, increased the time needed for drivers to respond to road signs, and increased the number of errors in this driving task.**

Dukic, et al., 2012 - Sweden

In this on-road, instrumented vehicle study, **drivers had a significantly longer dwell time (time looking at the billboards), a greater number of fixations, and a longer**

maximum fixation duration when driving past digital billboards compared to other signs along the same road sections.

Perez, et al., 2012 – USA, Washington, DC

The authors of this Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) sponsored study used an instrumented vehicle that recorded volunteer drivers' eye glances as they drove along pre-determined routes in Reading, Pennsylvania and Richmond, Virginia. The routes included digital as well as static billboards, undefined on-premise signs, and areas free of commercial signage. The routes were driven during daylight and at night, and the report found that **digital billboards “were not associated with ‘unacceptably long glances away from the road’.”** As noted above, however, the draft report of this study was **strongly criticized by the agency’s selected peer reviewers, particularly with regard to the efficacy of the obtained eye glance data. Indeed, the participants in the study did gaze more often to digital billboards than to other signs, in some cases more than twice as much.** (For example, 71% vs. 29% at night in Richmond). As a result of the critical peer reviews, the authors took 33 months to revise the study, which, although dated September 2012, was released on the agency’s website on December 30, 2013. This revised report, in turn, was reviewed by the present author, whose critical report was reviewed and agreed-to by 14 independent expert peer reviewers. To our knowledge, the revised FHWA report was not subjected to peer review by the agency prior to its issuance on the agency website, and it has never been given an official agency report number, putting it in a state of uncertainty with regard to its publication.

Divekar, et al., 2013 – USA, Amherst, MA

Experienced drivers are far less likely to be distracted by inside-the-vehicle tasks (e.g. cell phone, map display, entertainment system) than novice drivers. However, the researchers were surprised to find that **experienced and novice drivers are at an equal and elevated risk of getting into a crash when they are performing a secondary task outside the vehicle such as looking at billboards**

Roberts, et al., 2013 - Australia

The appearance of movement or changes in luminance can involuntarily capture attention, and engaging information can capture attention to the detriment of driving performance, particularly in inexperienced drivers. Where this happens in a driving situation that is also cognitively demanding, the consequences for driving performance are likely to be significant. Further, if this results in a situation where a driver’s eyes are off the forward roadway for 2 seconds or longer, this will further reduce safety. Additionally, road environments cluttered with driving-irrelevant material may make it difficult to extract information that is necessary for safe driving, particularly for older drivers. The studies that have been conducted show convincingly that roadside advertising is distracting and that it may lead to poorer vehicle control.

Herrstedt, et al., 2013 - Denmark

The authors studied drivers using an instrumented car equipped with an eye-tracking system, a GPS system for registering the vehicle's speed, and a laser scanner for measurement of following distances to other road users. The overall findings of the studies demonstrate that **"advertising signs do affect driver attention to the extent that road safety is compromised."** In 69% of all drives past advertising signs, the driver glanced at least once at the sign; in almost half of all drives, the driver glanced twice or more at the same sign. For 22% of all drives, the total glance duration of successive glances was two (2) seconds or longer. In 18% of all drives, glance durations of one (1) second or longer was recorded. In approximately 25% of all glances, the safety buffer to the vehicle ahead was less than two (2) seconds, and in 20% of the glances, the safety buffer was less than 1.5 seconds. This study has been praised in independent peer review by Dr. Richard Pain, Transportation Research Board Senior Program Officer, retired. Dr. Pain considered this study to be the best designed and conducted on-road study in this field, the conclusions of which, he believes, were far more valid and robust than those of the FHWA study (discussed above).

Hawkins, et al., 2014 – USA, College Station, TX

This study, sponsored by the on-premise signage industry, was a statistical (epidemiological) analysis of crash rates in the vicinity of on-premise digital signs that had been first installed in 2006-07. On premise signs differ from billboards in several ways. Per the common meaning of the term, on-premise signs must advertise only a business or service that is available on the property on which the sign is located. Because of that, on-premise signs typically function to identify the business and, as such, they may have little text or imagery other than that required for such identification. On the other hand, they are often closer to the road than billboards are permitted to be, and it is often possible for them to be larger than billboards and to feature motion or the appearance of motion. This study employed an analysis methodology known as *empirical Bayes* (or EB) to look at before-and-after crash data in four states. A total of 135 sign locations and 1,301 control sites were used, and the researchers found **"no evidence the installation of on-premise signs at these locations led to an automatic increase in the number of crashes."**

Schieber, et al., 2014 – USA, Vermillion, SD

In this simulator study the authors varied message length (4, 8, or 12 words) on digital billboards that participants drove past at either 25 or 50 MPH. Although there was no decrement in lane keeping or billboard reading performance at the lower speed on straight roads, **"clear evidence of impaired performance became apparent at the higher (50 MPH) driving speed."** The analysis revealed that, rather than weaving in and out of lane while reading the billboards with longer messages, participants tended to **slowly drift away from the lane center and then execute a large amplitude corrective steering input about eight (8) seconds after passing the billboard.** Eye gaze analysis showed that information processing overload began to emerge with a message length of eight (8) words and was clearly present with twelve (12) word messages under the 50 MPH condition.

Young, et al., 2015 – Australia, Sydney, New South Wales

These authors studied 19 participants who each drove an instrumented car along a previous selected route that included billboards (static only) and comparable road segments without billboards. Measures of speed, longitudinal and lateral control were captured. The researchers used a methodology called Verbal Protocol Analysis (VPA), which appears to be similar to the technique known as commentary driving in the US. The findings, based on studying 2 billboards and 2 control sections of a freeway suggested to the researchers that: **driving demands seemed to influence whether and how much attention was paid to billboards, rather than the billboards influencing driver behavior. Drivers focused on the billboards when driving demands were low. However, when driving demand increased, drivers tended to pay less attention to the billboards, suggesting that drivers can self-regulate their attention to billboards and reduce their attention to them when they are required to focus on the immediate traffic or driving situation.**

Sisiopiku, et al., 2015 – USA, AL, FL

The authors analyzed crashes from eight (8) digital billboard locations in Alabama and ten (10) in Florida. All sites were on high speed, limited access highways. A total of 377 crashes in Florida and 77 in Alabama were used in the analysis. Actual traffic collision reports were used since the authors discovered numerous errors in coding in the summary crash databases that they initially examined. Although the data set was too small to employ statistical analyses, the authors found that **“the presence of digital billboards increased the overall crash rates in areas of billboard influence compared to control areas downstream of the digital billboard locations. The increase was 25% in Florida and 29% in Alabama.”** The predominant crash types that were overrepresented at billboard locations were rear-end and sideswipe collisions, both typical of driver distraction.

Rempel, et al., 2015 - Canada

These authors, working on behalf of the Transport Association of Canada, developed a set of guidelines for the control of digital and projected advertising signs. The resultant guidelines are based on a comprehensive literature review, a survey of Canadian governmental jurisdictions, a review of existing sign regulations, interviews with international Governmental agencies, discussions with sign industry representatives, and the application of human factors and traffic engineering principles. **The key principle documented in the Guidelines is that they “provide recommendations designed to control (digital billboards) such that they emulate static advertising signs (italics added), and therefore result in a similar distracting and road safety effect as static advertisements.”**

Samsa & Phillips, 2015 - Australia

These authors, working on behalf of the Outdoor Media Association of Australia, studied 29 participants, ages 25-54 in an instrumented vehicle. The participants were fitted with “eye tracking glasses” and their eye fixations and driving performance was assessed as they drove a 14.6 km route in Brisbane, Queensland. **The route took them past a “number” of advertising signs, including static, digital, and on-premise signs. The results showed that fixation durations “were well below” 0.75 seconds, and that there were no significant differences in vehicle headways between the three types of signage. One statistically significant finding was that lateral deviation was poorer when billboards were present.** (Note that, at present, only an Abstract of this industry-sponsored study is available).

Wilson & Casper, 2016 – USA

This was a two-part study. In Part 1, groups of drivers selected in a convenience sample, were presented with video clips from a driver’s perspective, of a drive through settings that contained billboards. Their eye direction was “measured” by use of a fixed, floor mounted camera. “To potentially grow the business, the industry needed a more refined measure that took into account the actual noting of advertisements.” The results from the initial noting of billboard advertising were significant and all hypotheses were supported. In Part 2, the authors examined the applicability to billboard advertising of a model of Visual Attention Theory. Through a thought experiment, they sought to determine the ability for a billboard to capture attention due to factors such as visual saliency and physical characteristics such as size, location, “dwell time,” side of the road, position within the driver’s field of view. Again, all hypotheses were confirmed. One of the authors’ key conclusions was that: **“billboard advertising appeared to be attended to because it was located close to where other vehicles, pedestrians, traffic signals, and directional signage were found ...”**

Belyusar, et al., 2016 – USA, Cambridge, MA

In this on-road study, data was collected from 123 subjects, nearly equally divided between males (63) and females (60) and between young (age 20-29, N = 63) and older (age 60-69, N = 60). These volunteers drove an instrumented vehicle under normal driving conditions (with no specific tasks to perform) past a digital billboard on a posted 65 MPH roadway with four travel lanes in each direction. Data was collected during late morning and early afternoon to avoid commuter traffic. The authors state: **“In contrast to the recent FHWA report (Perez, et al., 2012), the findings revealed statistically significant changes in total number of glances and, depending upon the direction of travel, moderate-to-long duration glances in the direction of the billboard.”** Older drivers were thought to be particularly affected. The authors also found that: **“Drivers glanced more at the time of a switch to a new advertisement display than during a comparable section of roadway when the billboard was simply visible and stable.”** Given typical billboard

dwell (cycle) times of six (6) or eight (8) seconds, these findings add to the argument the dwell times for such signs should be considerably longer.

Herrstedt, et al, 2017 – Denmark

This was a quasi-naturalistic study of 16 participants driving an instrumented car along two test routes in daylight and (in a subset of trials) in darkness. Glances were captured by eye tracking equipment to on-road and off-road (outside the vehicle) sources. The focus was on LED billboards. Four research questions were asked: (1) To what extent do LED advertising signs distract drivers' visual attention;? (2) Is drivers' visual attention to LED signs diverted and maintained to such an extent that it affects road safety;? (3) How does distraction from LED signs compare to other types of distractors;? and (4) Does distraction from LED signs differ during daylight and darkness? The most important conclusions reached are that: **"drivers' visual attention was diverted by LED-advertising signs. In more than every 10th drive past visual distraction occurred, e.g. cumulative glances of more than 2 sec. within a 6 sec. period, when the driver looked at the LED-advertising. In 4% of the drive pasts visual distraction occurred together with a 'safety buffer' less than 0 sec. The safety buffer reflects the time available to respond to a sudden critical event requiring immediate action in order to avoid an accident."**

Mollu, 2018 – Belgium

Per a 2015 European Commission report, distraction accounts for 10-30% of all European road accidents. Although there is no consistent definition of distraction, most definitions describe a *diversion* of attention away from the driving task, and *toward a competing activity* inside or outside the vehicle. This diversion of attention may be visual and/or cognitive. The author and his colleagues sought to study whether the glance behavior of road users was influenced by advertising signs, whether such signs lead to changes in driving behavior and whether there were notable effects on road safety as a result. Thirty-five test subjects (age range 20-69; 54% male) completed the protocol and drove a simulator past LED billboards with 3, 6, and 15-second dwell times, and at 41 and 65-meter distances from pedestrian crossings. The signs were placed in a road segment with a retail zone and in one transitioning to a built-up area. All other characteristics of the sign (size, placement, illumination, etc., were held constant. At the shortest display times and the closest distance to the pedestrian crossing the study showed significantly higher mental demands and lower performance. The longer the message display time, the fewer glances were made to the sign. **The signs also contributed to higher approach speeds to pedestrian crossings and delayed slowing upon approach to the crossing.** There was also an indication, although not statistically significant, of increased swerving behavior (change in lateral position) in the presence of the billboards.

Oviedo-Trespalacios, et al. – 2019 – Australia, Queensland

This report claims to be a critical review of selected, relevant literature, but it does not appear to be critical. The documents chosen for review have been identified by the use of a model called TCI (Task-Capability Interface) which compares task demands with the driver's capabilities, and which lead to conclusions about success or failure. Based upon the literature review, some general conclusions are reached. These include: **Roadside advertising signs are environmental clutter, which adds additional task demands. Roadside advertising signs impaired drivers' eye movement patterns. Young drivers seem to have a lower ability to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant information. Although it is not possible to conclude a direct relationship between outdoor advertising and crashes, there is an emerging trend in the literature suggesting that roadside advertising can increase crash risk, particularly with changeable displays such as those on digital billboards.**

Gitelman, et al., 2019 - Israel

This study examined the impact of roadside billboards on crash occurrence along two sections of a suburban, limited access highway, during three time periods. The first time segment occurred while the billboards were visible to drivers (Period 1). After the Israeli Parliament established a study period, all billboards were either covered or removed. This identified the second period (Period 2). Finally, the study period ended, and the billboards were again made visible to drivers. This was Period 3. **The results indicated that billboard removal (including covering) in Period 2 was associated with systematic downward trends and significant reductions in crash numbers compared to Period 1 when billboards were still visible. These findings held for both property damage and injury accidents. When billboards were restored in Period 3, findings showed consistent upward trends and significant increases in both crash types when compared with Period 2 data.**

Costa, et al., 2019 - Italy

These authors studied the response (fixation rate and duration) to six categories of signs, e.g. billboards, on-premise signs and gas price digital signs. They used 15 participants driving an instrumented car equipped with an eye movement system. Larger size text on signs was associated with a higher fixation rate, as were signs on the near side of the road. Signs with smaller text and many characters were related to a lower fixation rate because they "probably fail to attract the driver's visual attention due to the poor readability in a dynamic context. "Fixation duration was not affected by advertising sign category, but longer durations were found for signs close to the road level than for those that were elevated, in keeping with prior research." The distance at which signs were fixated increased linearly with speed, sign size, and text length.

The study showed there was a significant amount of "long" fixations that, in the circumstance of an immediate reaction required by the driver, could pose serious problems for traffic safety. "We can conclude that there is a discrete amount of cases in which distraction induced by roadside advertising could adversely impact traffic safety."

Compendium of Recent Research Studies on Commercial Electronic Variable Message Signs (CEVMS)

Key to Codes Used in Tables:

***Type of Study:**

N = on-road, naturalistic
Q = on-road, quasi-naturalistic
C = on-road, controlled
S = lab, simulator
L = lab, other
E = epidemiological, crash data
R = review of other work
CR = critical review of other work
D = discussion /consultation with experts
G = guidelines or regulations development
QI = questionnaires, interviews, surveys, focus groups, etc.

****Type of Signs Studied:**

O = On-premise
C = Conventional billboard
D = Digital billboard
V = Sign contains video or animation
H = Official highway sign
U = Unknown

Date 1 st published/presented	2008
Location	U.S. (Massachusetts)
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Chan, E., Pradhan, AK, Knodler, MA, Jr., Pollatsek, A. & Fisher, DL Empirical Evaluation on a Driving Simulator of the Effect of Distractions Inside and Outside the Vehicle on Drivers' Eye Behaviors
Forum	TRB – presentation and CD ROM
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	National Science Foundation; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)
Type of Study*	S
Type of Signs Studied**	C (simulated)
Brief Description of Method	Young, novice drivers (age 16-17) are at greatly elevated risk of crashing, and it is believed that distraction plays a large role in such crashes. More experienced, older teen drivers (age 18-19) have also been shown to look away from the forward roadway for extended periods of time. This simulator study compared such extended, off-roadway glance durations of newly licensed drivers to those of older, experienced drivers, using eye movement recordings as participants drove along a simulated roadway and engaged in distracting tasks both inside and outside the vehicle.
Summary of Findings	The researchers compared the average maximum duration of an <i>episode</i> , (the maximum time that drivers spent continuously looking away from the forward roadway). For the in-vehicle distractors, the average was 1.63s for the experienced drivers, and 2.76s for the younger drivers. Another measure, the percentage of scenarios in which the maximum duration of an episode was greater than 2s, yielded similar findings. The results were statistically significant between the two groups. As predicted for in-vehicle distractors, the young drivers looked away from the roadway for extended periods (2s or longer) more than twice as often as the experienced drivers while engaged in inside-the-vehicle distractors (such as phone dialing, map reading, and CD searching). Surprisingly, however, results showed that: (a) external distractors were even more distracting, and (b) there was no difference between newly-licensed and experienced drivers on this critical measure of distraction when the drivers performed outside-the-vehicle tasks, specifically, searching for a target letter in a 5x5 grid representative of a billboard. The authors had assumed that experienced drivers would exercise the same degree of caution with the external distractors as they did with the internal ones. Instead, “the experienced drivers showed little concern for the effect that diverting their attention to the side of the roadway might have had on their ability to perceive potential risks immediately in front. In fact, in 81% of the external tasks, older drivers glanced for longer than 2s away from the forward roadway. The authors conclude: “...we think that our drivers engaged in the external search task were truly distracted with potential serious consequences.”
Strengths	The study is the first to directly compare the susceptibility to distraction from internal and external tasks between newly licensed and experienced drivers.
Weaknesses/Limitations	Older drivers were not included in this study. The representativeness of the outside-the-vehicle task is questionable.
Availability/Accessibility	TRB 2008 Annual Meeting CD-ROM

Date 1 st published/presented	2009
Location	UK (England, London)
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Young, MS, Mahfoud, JM, Stanton, N. Salmon, PM, Jenkins, DP & Walker, GH. "Conflicts of Interest: The implications of roadside advertising for driver attention." Brunel University, West London, England
Forum	Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour, Vol. 12(5), September 2009, 381-388.
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Insurance company – The Rees Jeffreys Road Fund
Type of Study*	S
Type of Signs Studied**	C, H
Brief Description of Method	The study was conducted in the University's driving simulator. 48 drivers drove urban, rural, and motorway routes in the presence and absence of billboards. Dependent variables included measures of speed and lateral control, and driver attention (mental workload, eye movements, and recall of signs and billboards).
Summary of Findings	The presence of billboards had a detrimental effect on lateral control, and appeared to increase crash risk. Longitudinal control was not affected. More striking effects were found for driver attention. Driver mental workload significantly increased in the presence of billboards. On rural roads and motorways, results showed that billboards were consciously attended to at the cost of more relevant road signs. "We must once again emphasize the persuasive overall conclusion that advertising has adverse effects on driving performance and driver attention. Whilst there are sometimes conflicts of interest at Local Authority level when authorizing billboards (since Councils often take a share of the profit from roadside advertising), these data could and should be used to redress the balance in favour of road safety."
Strengths	A fully interactive high fidelity simulator was used. The use of the NASA-TLX instrument for measuring subjective mental workload was a useful tool that is used too infrequently in studies of driver performance. All participants experienced identical road and sign condition the only manipulation being the presence or absence of billboards.
Weaknesses/Limitations	The sample of participants did not include either older or younger drivers – the age groups thought to be at greatest risk for adverse consequences of billboard distraction. Measures of lateral and longitudinal variability were constrained by the study design and were not fully representative of the measures of these variables used most commonly in the US.
Availability/Accessibility	Journal is available online.

Date 1 st published/presented	2009
Location	Norway
Author(s) Title; Affiliation	Backer-Grøndahl, A., & Sagberg, F. “Relative crash involvement risk associated with different sources of driver distraction.” Institute of Transport Economics, Norway
Forum	First International Conference on Driver Distraction and Inattention
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Unknown
Type of Study*	E, QI
Type of Signs Studied**	C
Brief description of method	Used web- and paper-based questionnaire to ask 4300+ drivers who had been in a crash to identify from a list of possible choices the cause of their crash. Separated those at fault from those not at fault. Relative crash risk of each factor was estimated using the quasi-induced exposure method.
Summary of Findings	The most <i>frequent</i> sources of distraction were: (1) conversations with passengers, and (2) attending to children in the back seat. When the statistical method was applied to the data, it was found that distractions with the “ <i>highest relative risk</i> ” were: (1) billboards outside the vehicle, and, (2) searching for addresses. The authors note that both of the highest risk distractors were <i>visual</i> distractions, vs. physical, auditory, or cognitive.
Strengths	Authors controlled for possible confounding variables (such as age, gender, driving experience [years] and annual mileage driven) using logistical regression with culpability as the dependent variable.
Weaknesses/Limitations	Some researchers question the viability of the quasi-induced exposure method; cell phone use was (intentionally) excluded from the questionnaire. (It likely would have proven to be the highest risk factor). Confidence intervals were quite large.
Availability/Accessibility	Presented at large international conference; published in conference proceedings.

Date 1 st published/presented	2009
Location	UK - England
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Chattington, M., Reed, N., Basacik, D., Flint, A., & Parkes, A. "Investigating Driver Distraction: The Effects of Video and Static Advertising: Transport Research Laboratory
Forum	Report
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Transport for London
Type of Study*	S
Type of Signs Studied**	C, V
Brief Description of Method	Used the high fidelity TRL driving simulator, with a specifically designed urban/suburban database typical of the area around London. 48 participants drove 4 different routes, each of which required about 15 minutes. Participants did not know the purpose of the study. Their eye movements were unobtrusively recorded. Roadside advertising was designed to vary by: location (placement within the scene); type (static or video); and exposure duration (at 30 MPH, drivers could see at least 50% of the advertisement for either 2, 4, or 6+ seconds. Video ads ran in a 6-second loop.
Summary of Findings	"The report has found significant effects on both drivers' visual behavior and driving performance when static and video adverts are present and that the video adverts seem more potent distractors than similarly placed static adverts. The results support and extend (the findings of) other studies of driver distraction by advertising." (Here, the authors cite the work of Crundall, et al, and of Young and Mahfoud, both of which were extensively reviewed in the Wachtel 2009 report for AASHTO). The study showed that several different aspects of driving performance were adversely affected both video and static billboards, with the video signs generally more harmful to such performance than the static signs. The authors describe these effects as being "fundamental to the safe control of the vehicle." The effects include: speed control, braking, and the variability of each of these measures, as well as drivers showing that they are "less able to maintain a consistent lane position"
Strengths	A very comprehensive and sophisticated simulation study. The researchers went so far as to pre-screen the content of the simulated advertisements to ensure that they were of equivalent interest to the different age groups in their participant population.
Weaknesses/Limitations	It is important to note that this study compared digital video billboards to traditional static billboards (i.e. it did not examine digital billboards with intermittent displays (i.e. those that change their message every 6-8 seconds) that are typical in the U.S. Although the authors state that their participants represented a "wide range of ages," it is not known how well young and old drivers were represented in the study. This is of concern because these two age groups at the ends of the driving population distribution are known to have the greatest degree of difficulty with attention and distraction.
Availability/Accessibility	TRL Report Number RPN256.

Date 1 st published/presented	2009
Location	Australia, Queensland
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Horberry, T., Regan, MA, & Edquist, J. Driver Distraction from Roadside Advertising: The clash of road safety evidence, highway authority guidelines, and commercial advertising pressure. University of Queensland (Australia), INRETS (France), Monash University (Australia).
Forum	Unknown
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Swedish National Road and Transport Institute, VTI
Type of Study*	CR, D, G
Type of Signs Studied**	C, D
Brief Description of Method	Critical review of the research, worldwide, as well as existing guidelines and regulations.
Summary of Findings	“Road authorities around the world may ... be justified in using the best research information available (albeit incomplete) coupled with engineering judgment for the development of 3 rd party advertising guidelines.” The authors recommend that Main Roads Queensland adopt advertising restrictions at known areas of high driver workload, including “locations with high accident rates, non-junction related lane merges, curves/bends, hills and road/works/abnormal traffic flows. This is broadly in line with Wachtel who recommended a restriction of advertisements at times when driver decision, action points and cognitive demand are greatest – such as at freeway exits/entrances, lane reductions, merges and curves. Although useful for all road users, such restrictions would be of specific benefit to older drivers.” The authors correctly point out the flaw in arguments that suggest that guidance or regulatory controls are premature because there is a lack of data showing a causal relationship between billboards and accidents
Strengths	The study examined in detail the existing (2002) guidelines that seek to “minimize the possibility for 3 rd party roadside advertisements to distract drivers...” with an intent toward developing upgraded guidelines.
Weaknesses/Limitations	The review of current guidelines, worldwide, is somewhat superficial.
Availability/Accessibility	https://document.chalmers.se/download?docid=653291678

Date 1 st published/presented	2010
Location	Israel (Tel Aviv)
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Gitelman, V., Zaidel, D., & Doveh, E. “Influence of Billboards on Driving Behavior and Road Safety,”
Forum	Presented at: Fifth International Conference on Traffic and Transportation Psychology (2012); and at Annual Meeting of Transportation Research Board of the National Academies (2013)
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Israel National Roads Authority
Type of Study*	E
Study Design	Quasi-experimental: Before and after crash data with controls – Crash data with DBBs present (2006-7) and absent (2008), with and without signs that were covered. Dependent measure – crashes and injuries. Control variable – traffic volume. Study sites – 8 treatment and 6 control.
Type of Signs Studied**	C
Brief Description of Method	Because of complaints, Israel’s Supreme Court ruled that a series of billboards on an urban freeway near Tel Aviv had to be removed for 1 year while an evaluation took place. At control sites, the billboards remained visible throughout the study period. At treatment sites, billboards were visible in the “before” period (2006-7), and were covered during the “after” period (2008). Crashes were recorded and categorized (property damage only, injury or fatality) under four conditions: (a) at treatment sites while signs were visible; (b) at treatment sites after signs were covered; (c) at control sites where signs were visible; and (d) at the same control sites while signs were still visible but signs were covered at the treatment sites.
Summary of Findings	At control sites, crashes remained essentially the same throughout the 3-year study period; at the treatment sites, crashes declined dramatically after the billboards were covered. The results were the same for injury and fatal crashes. After adjusting for traffic volume, crashes were reduced at the treatment sites (where billboards were visible in the “before” period but covered during the “after” period) by the following percentages: all crashes by 60%; injury/fatal crashes by 39%; property damage crashes by 72%.
Strengths	For a field study, this used a well-controlled research design. Before-and-after measures were obtained both for sites where the billboards were covered during the study, and for the sites where the billboards remained visible during this same time period. Road sections were in close proximity, on the same highway, ensuring that traffic speeds and volumes, as well as weather conditions, law enforcement activity, etc. were comparable.
Weaknesses/Limitations	There might have been differences in certain roadway characteristics between the treatment and control sites (e.g. curves, merges, etc.) that were not identified.
Availability/Accessibility	Findings available as PowerPoint from either conference; original study is in Hebrew only; English translation not yet available.

Date 1 st published/presented	2010
Location	Saudi Arabia
Author(s)	Bendak, S., & Al-Saleh, K.
Title	"The Role of Roadside Advertising Signs in Distracting Drivers."
Affiliation	King Saud University
Forum	<i>International Journal of Industrial Ergonomics</i> , 40, 233-236.
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Research Centre of the College of Engineering, King Saud University
Type of Study*	S, QI
Study Design	
Type of Signs Studied**	O, C, D, V
Brief Description of Method	Twelve male drivers, age 23-28, drove a simulator consisting of two urban roadways, each 9.3-km long, and matched for physical, environmental and traffic characteristics. One road contained advertising signs; the other was devoid of advertisements.
Summary of Findings	The average driving duration was 12.83 minutes for each route showing that the presence of advertising signs did not materially affect driving speed. There were no accidents. Lane placement and position maintenance suffered significantly in the presence of advertising signs. According to the authors: "swinging and drifting from lane in the presence of advertising signs is a strong indication of how such signs distract drivers and affect their performance." A second finding was that "recklessly crossing dangerous intersections" was also significantly and adversely affected by the presence of advertising signs. This finding, according to the authors "indicates the loss of this fine coordination between paying attention and driving. ... This can reasonably attributed... to the longer reaction time needed in the presence of hazards due to being distracted." All three of the other measures: tailgating, "overspeeding," and failure to signal, were poorer in the presence of advertising signs, but these were not statistically significant. In response to the questionnaire, 50% of the 160 respondents said they had been distracted by advertising signs, and 22% reported having been in a dangerous situation at least once due to being distracted by advertising signs.
Strengths	The two simulated routes driven were matched for key characteristics; the differences between them were essentially only in the presence or absence of advertising signs.
Weaknesses/Limitations	No females and no drivers older than 28 were included. "Advertising" signs of many different types were comingled, so it was impossible to identify the effects of any one category of signs, such as billboards. No definition is provided of the behavior identified as "recklessly crossing dangerous intersections." The authors attribute poorer performance in this measure to longer reaction time in the presence of the advertising signs, but there is no indication that they measured this response. The questionnaire completed by 160 respondents was not included in the paper.
Availability/Accessibility	www.elsevier.com/locate/ergon

Date 1 st published/presented	2011
Location	Canada (Calgary, Alberta)
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Milloy, SL; and Caird, JK. “External Driver Distractions: The Effects of Video Billboards and Wind Farms on Driver Performance.” University of Calgary
Forum	Book chapter
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Unspecified
Type of Study*	S
Type of Signs Studied**	V (simulated)
Brief Description of Method	The contribution to driver distraction from in-vehicle technologies such as cell phones, I-Pods, and navigation systems have been studied extensively. But it is external distractions that compose the single largest category of distraction-related crashes. The least is known about such crashes, possibly because the variety of people, objects and events that make up external distractions are very difficult to study in a controlled empirical fashion. In theory, drivers often have spare cognitive capacity that they can allocate toward distractors such as billboards. The question asked here was: what happens when an unlikely but totally plausible emergency event takes place – can the driver “reallocate” his or her attention so as to respond to the event in a timely manner. In this “event-based” scenario, either the driver responds adequately or not. In this simulator study, drivers on a freeway moving at 80 km/h (50 mph) in an industrial environment passed a video billboard at the same time that a lead vehicle suddenly braked hard.
Summary of Findings	The results found a <i>causal</i> (italics original) relationship between the presence of the video billboard and collisions with, and delays in responding to, the lead vehicle. The authors note that the billboards in this study were less able to capture the drivers’ attention than video billboards in the real world because the simulated billboards were not as bright as actual billboards, and because the study was not conducted at night, where the distracting effects were believed to be greater. The implication is that real world safety problems may be more significant than those indicated by the study.
Strengths	A high fidelity, interactive driving simulator with a 150-degree forward field of view was used. All 21 subjects made three drives, and viewed two static and two video billboards in each. The images on the billboards were different in each presentation. A lead vehicle appeared intermittently, and, twice during each presentation, braked suddenly so that the subject had to respond quickly to avoid a collision
Weaknesses/Limitations	Younger and older drivers, those believed to be most susceptible to such distractions, were not included in the study. Learning may have occurred from earlier drives, and subjects may have come to use the appearance of billboards as a visual cue to prepare to brake for the lead vehicle.
Availability/Accessibility	Published in: “Handbook of Driving Simulation for Engineering, Medicine and Psychology.” Edited by: D.L. Fisher, M. Rizzo, J.K. Caird, & J.D. Lee. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

Date 1 st published/presented	2011
Location	Australia, Perth
Author(s)	Edquist, J., Horberry, T., Hosking, S. & Johnston, I
Title	“Advertising billboards impair change detection in road scenes”
Affiliation	Monash University Accident Research Centre
Forum	2011 Australasian Road Safety Research, Education & Policing Conference
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Unknown
Type of Study*	L
Type of Signs Studied**	C, H
Brief Description of Method	The authors used a “change detection” paradigm to study how billboards affect visual search and situation awareness in road scenes. Change detection time has been shown to correlate with at-fault errors in a simulated driving task. In a controlled experiment, inexperienced (mean age 19.3), older (73.0), and comparison (34.8) drivers searched for changes to road signs and vehicle locations in static photographs of road scenes. The road scenes ranged from suburban main streets to multilane highways to provide varying levels of background clutter. The actual experimental protocol is too complex to include in this summary, but may be found in the original article.
Summary of Findings	“The finding that the presence of billboards increases time to detect changes is an important one. This result lends support to the idea that billboards can automatically attract attention when drivers are engaged in other tasks, delaying their responses to other aspects in the environment. The effect of billboards was particularly strong in scenes where response times are already lengthened by high levels of built or designed clutter. This is particularly concerning, as road scenes with high levels of built and/or designed clutter are just the sort of busy, commercial, high traffic environments where billboards are most often erected.” Participants took longer to detect changes in road scenes that contained advertising billboards. This finding was especially true when the roadway background was more cluttered, when the change was to an official road sign, and for older drivers. The results are consistent with the small but growing body of evidence suggesting that roadside billboards impair aspects of driving performance such as visual search and the detection of hazards, and therefore should be more precisely regulated in order to ensure a safe road system.
Strengths	The change detection task has been shown to be relevant to safe driving performance, but has been underutilized in research. The inclusion of three diverse age cohorts addresses limitations in many other studies.
Weaknesses/Limitations	The study did not include an actual, or simulated driving task; rather a surrogate measure for visual subtasks required during driving. (However, the results are consistent with mounting evidence showing that roadside billboards impair key aspects of driving performance). Horberry, et al., (2009) argue that: “rather than waiting until it can be proven beyond doubt that roadside advertising is responsible for a particular collision, road authorities should regulate billboards to minimize the probability of interference with driving.”
Availability/Accessibility	http://casr.adelaide.edu.au/rsr/RSR2011/4CPaper%20166%20Edquist.pdf

Date 1 st published/presented	2011
Location	Australia, Victoria
Author(s)	Edquist, J., Horberry, T., Hosking, S., & Johnston, I
Title	"Effects of Advertising Billboards During Simulated Driving."
Affiliation	Monash University, Victoria Australia
Forum	Applied Ergonomics, 42, 619-626
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Department of Main Roads, Queensland, 2 Post-Graduate Awards
Type of Study*	S
Type of Signs Studied**	C, D
Brief Description of Method	The study used a motion simulator, with 3 groups of participants; novice, older and comparisons who were neither. The 180-deg. display presented scenarios that included 3-lane divided arterial roads through commercial and industrial environments. The presence of other traffic was varied. The main task was to change lanes in response to roadside lane change signs at regular intervals. This task was broadly based on the ISO standard Lane Change Test. Drivers maintained their own chosen speed. Dependent measures included: errors (missed a sign or changed into the wrong lane), and time to change lanes. More errors and slower lane changes were indicative of poor performance. Billboards were present, on either side of the road, at a subset of the lane change signs. Billboard displays contained a large logo of well-known companies (see weaknesses below). Head and eye movements were captured. After each drive, participants completed the NASA-RTLX mental workload scale.
Summary of Findings	In all cases, lane changes at sites with billboards took longer than sites without (control sites). Drivers were significantly more likely to make errors at sites with billboards. This effect was stronger for older and for novice drivers than it was for comparison drivers. The effect of billboards was to reduce the time fixating on the road ahead for almost all subgroups of participants, and this effect was stronger for older and novice drivers. As predicted by multiple resource theory, the presence of billboards distracted eye movements from the road ahead and delayed responses to road signs.
Strengths	Included novice and older drivers; used NASA RTLX for self-report on workload.
Weaknesses/Limitations	Lead vehicles did not change speed, thus did not increase driver workload. Study in general presented low workload conditions.
Availability/Accessibility	https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0003687010001274?via%3Dihub

Date 1 st published/presented	2012
Location	Sweden (Stockholm)
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Dukic, T., Ahlstrom, C., Patten, C., Kettwich, C., & Kircher, K. "Effects of Electronic Billboards on Driver Distraction." Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute, and Karlsruhe Institute of Technology
Forum	Journal of Traffic Injury Prevention
Peer Reviewed?	Y
Sponsor/funding source	Swedish Transport Administration
Type of Study*	Q
Type of Signs Studied**	D
Brief Description of Method	The Swedish government allowed 12 digital billboards to be erected along highways near Stockholm for a trial period during which this, and related research was conducted. 41 volunteers drove an instrumented vehicle past 4 of the billboards in both day (N = 20) and night (N = 21) conditions. Eye movements (and other measures) were recorded. "A driver (was) considered to be visually distracted when looking at a billboard continuously for more than two seconds with a single long glance, or if the driver looked away from the road for a 'high percentage of time'." (This is defined in the study based on prior research, but is too complex for inclusion in this brief summary). Dependent measures were eye tracking and driving performance measures.
Summary of Findings	Drivers had a significantly longer dwell time (time looking at the billboards), a greater number of fixations, and a longer maximum fixation duration when driving past a DBB compared to other signs along the same road sections. No differences were found for day-night, or for specific driver performance variables.
Strengths	Excellent review of the relevant literature and explanation of the psycho-physiological processes involved
Weaknesses/Limitations	It is known from other research that younger drivers (e.g. those under age 25) and older drivers (e.g. those over age 65) are more likely to be distracted by roadside stimuli that are irrelevant to the driving task; this study was limited to drivers between the ages of 35 and 55.
Availability/Accessibility	http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15389588.2012.731546

Date 1 st published/presented	2012
Location	USA
Author(s) Title	Perez, WA, Bertola, MA, Kennedy, JF, & Molino, JA “Driver Visual Behavior in the Presence of Commercial Electronic Variable Message Signs (CEVMS).”
Affiliation	SAIC (now Leidos)
Forum	Unnumbered FHWA Report
Peer Reviewed?	N ⁴
Sponsor/funding source	Federal Highway Administration
Type of Study*	C
Type of Signs Studied**	O, C, D, H
Brief Description of Method	FHWA contractor used instrumented vehicle with on-board eye glance data recording as participant drivers drove along predetermined routes in Reading, PA and Richmond, VA. Each route took the participants past a series of on-premise and off-premise (billboard) signs, apparently both conventional and digital, during daytime and at night.
Summary of Findings	Gazes to the road ahead were high across all test conditions; however, in three of the four test conditions digital and conventional billboards resulted in a lower probability of gazes to the road ahead as compared to the control conditions in which billboards were not present (although on-premise signs, including, potentially, electronic signs, might have been present). In Richmond, drivers gazed more at the digital than standard billboards at night, but this difference was not found in Reading.
Strengths	The study used state-of-the-art eye glance recording equipment. The study route had drivers pass signs on rural and urban routes, and surroundings that differed in visual complexity.
Weaknesses/Limitations	Numerous critical discrepancies between draft and final reports; errors in identifying billboard locations including size, distance from road edge, side of road; both far and near distances at which eye glances to billboards were recorded were artificially truncated; two experimenters sat in the vehicle with the participant driver; data overload required experimental vehicle to pull off road for resets; inappropriate recordation of billboard luminance levels; confounding of billboards with on-premise signs.
Availability/Accessibility	Report is available on the FHWA website at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/real_estate/oac/visual_behavior_report/final/cevmsfinal.pdf

⁴In March 2011, FHWA released a draft version of the report to three pre-selected peer reviewers. The reviewers were not identified and the draft report was not made available to the public. The comments of two of the three reviewers (the third did not provide meaningful or comprehensive comments) were so critical of the draft report (stating, in essence, that the report’s findings about eye glance durations to billboards were not credible) that FHWA spent the next 33 months revising and rewriting the report. A final report, which was *not* peer reviewed, was released on the agency’s website on December 30, 2013, although the report was dated September 2012. Although the unreleased draft report was given the official agency report number FHWA-HEP-11-014, the final report remains unnumbered and unpublished.

Date 1 st published/presented	2013
Location	U.S. (Massachusetts, Amherst)
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Divekar, G., Pradhan, AK, Pollatsek, A., & Fisher, DL; "Effects of External Distractions" University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Forum	Journal
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, Arbella Insurance Group Charitable Foundation
Type of Study*	S
Type of Signs Studied**	D (simulated)
Brief Description of Method	Following previous research in the same lab, the authors sought to understand: (a) why experienced drivers were taking such long glances at external distractions (simulated billboards) when they were unwilling to do so for distractors inside the vehicle, and (b) if these experienced drivers were sacrificing some of their ability to monitor visible hazards in the roadway ahead of their vehicle, are they sacrificing even more of their ability to anticipate unseen hazards. Novice and experienced drivers performed an external search task (reading a simulated billboard) while driving in a simulator. Eye movements were recorded, as were vehicle performance.
Summary of Findings	Distractions are a major contributor to crashes, and almost one-third of such distractions are caused by sources external to the vehicle. Of these, digital billboards stand out because of their brightness and changing imagery. Recent research indicates that such billboards may attract attention away from the forward roadway for extended periods of time, and converging evidence shows that looking away from the forward roadway for such extended periods is associated with elevated crash risk. The external tasks in this study were designed to be similar to scanning a sign dense with information in the real world, such as a digital billboard that changed message every few seconds. "This study provides clear evidence that external tasks are distracting not only for novice drivers, but also for more experienced drivers." For both groups, external distractions significantly affect the drivers' anticipation of hazards. Overall the study showed that experienced as well as novice drivers are at an elevated risk of getting into a crash when they are performing a secondary task such as looking at a billboard.
Strengths	Sophisticated driving simulator with realistic hazard scenarios.
Weaknesses/Limitations	The simulated billboards, although requiring an external, visual distraction task, were not very representative of roadside billboards. There was no effort to study the effects of such external distractions on older drivers, a group known to be at high risk for such distraction
Availability/Accessibility	Transportation Research Record, Journal of the Transportation Research Board No. 2321.

Date 1 st published/presented	2013
Location	Australia
Author(s)	Roberts, P., Boddington, K., & Rodwell, L.
Title	"Impact of Roadside Advertising on Road Safety"
Affiliation	ARRB Group (formerly Australian Road Research Board)
Forum	Austroads Road Research Report: Publication No. AP-R420-13
Peer Reviewed?	Unknown
Sponsor/funding source	Austroads (The Association of Australian and New Zealand Road Transport and Traffic Authorities)
Type of Study*	CR, G
Type of Signs Studied**	O, C, D, V
Brief Description of Method	(a) A critical review of existing literature to study the risk of distraction from roadside advertising, and to communicate these findings; (b) document and review existing guidelines across different highway agencies to identify gaps and inconsistencies; (c) develop guiding principles and make guidance recommendations that could be used to create guidelines and to harmonize guidelines across diverse agencies.
Summary of Findings	Most drivers, under most conditions, most of the time, probably possess sufficient spare cognitive capacity that they can tolerate driving-irrelevant information. The problem comes in some driving situations where it becomes likely that (the appearance of) movement or changes in luminance will involuntarily capture attention and that particularly salient emotional or engaging information will capture attention to the detriment of driving performance, particularly in inexperienced drivers. Where this happens in a driving situation that is also cognitively demanding, the consequences for driving performance are likely to be significant. Further, if this attentional capture also results in a situation where a driver's eyes are off the forward roadway for a significant amount of time (i.e. 2 seconds or longer) this will further reduce safety. Additionally, road environments cluttered with driving-irrelevant material may make it difficult to extract information that is necessary for safe driving, particularly for older drivers. The studies that have been conducted show convincingly that roadside advertising is distracting and that it may lead to poorer vehicle control. Results from the Klauer, et al (2006) studies show that looking at an external object increased the crash risk by nearly four times, nonetheless the number of crashes resulting from such distraction is probably quite small. This suggests that the contribution of roadside advertising to crashes is likely to be relatively minor. Nonetheless, from the Safe System perspective it would be difficult to justify adding any infrastructure to the road environment that could result in increased distraction for drivers. The exception to this may be in the case long drives on monotonous roads where drivers are likely to suffer the effects of passive fatigue.
Strengths	A comprehensive review, not only of existing research, but also of relevant human factors principles, advertising sign technology, and best practices.
Weaknesses/Limitations	Although the authors extensively review and comment on existing regulations and guidelines, only brief mention is made of guidelines in the U.S.
Availability/Accessibility	Available on the Austroads website

Date 1 st published/presented	2013
Location	Denmark
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Herrstedt, L., Greibe, P., & Andersson, P. "Roadside Advertising Affects Driver Attention and Road Safety." Trafitec, Denmark
Forum	International Conference
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Unknown
Type of Study*	Q
Type of Signs Studied**	C, D
Brief Description of Method	32 drivers, both men and women between the ages of 23 and 70, drove an instrumented vehicle on one of several comparable routes. Drivers had to have a current license and not require eyeglasses while driving. Drivers were not informed in advance of the purpose of the drive. The car's instruments recorded eye movements, vehicle speed and position, and proximity to vehicles ahead of the test vehicle. A "safety buffer" was calculated which reflected the time available for the driver to respond to a sudden critical situation requiring immediate action to avoid an accident.
Summary of Findings	A total of 109 drives past advertising signs were completed, and a total of 233 glances to the 16 roadside advertising signs were recorded. Results showed that, in 69% of all drives, the driver glanced at the advertisement at least once. In nearly half of all drives, the driver glanced two or more times to the same billboard. 18% of all glances lasted for 1 second or longer, and the total duration of successive glances on a single drive was 1.5 seconds or longer in 29% of trials, 2.0 seconds or longer in 22% of trials, and 3.0 seconds or longer in 10% of trials. In 65 of the 233 glances (28%), a vehicle ahead was present within a time gap of less than 3.0 seconds. In 59 cases (25%) the safety buffer was less than 2.0 seconds, and in 20% of all cases, the safety buffer was as low as 1.5 seconds. The authors conclude that, in 25% of all cases, driving safety was reduced because the safety buffer was less than 2 seconds to the lead vehicle. Further, in 16% of all drives (17 out of 109), the sum of cumulative glances to the same billboard resulted in visual distraction using the method developed by VTTI (2.0 seconds or more within a 6.0 second window). In other words, the authors state: "In more than every sixth drive past, visual distraction occurs as a result of the advertising sign." Their overall conclusion was that "the investigated advertising signs do capture drivers' attention to the extent that it impacts road safety."
Strengths	This is one of only two known on-road studies to combine measures of driver glance behavior (number and duration of glances to billboards) with the simultaneous measure of following distance to a vehicle ahead, and the only one to (apparently) calculate such following distances via laser scanner for accuracy. Older drivers were included in the participant group.
Weaknesses/Limitations	More details about the specific billboards studied would have been helpful.
Availability/Accessibility	<i>Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Driver Distraction and Inattention.</i>

Date 1 st published/presented	2014
Location	US
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Hawkins, HG, Jr., Kuo, P-F, & Lord, D. “Statistical Analysis of the Traffic Safety Impacts of On-Premise Digital Signs” Texas A&M University
Forum	93 rd Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	On-premise sign industry (Signage Foundation, Inc.)
Type of Study*	E
Type of Signs Studied**	O
Brief Description of Method	135 sites in four states, where on premise signs had been installed in 2006-07, were compared to 1,301 control sites using the Empirical Bayes (EB) statistical methodology.
Summary of Findings	There were no statistically significant changes in crash frequency associated with the installation of the on-premise digital signs studied. A calculated safety effectiveness index was equal to 1.00, with the 95 percent confidence interval between 0.93 and 1.07. The findings were similar for each of the four investigated States. The researchers concluded that “there is no evidence (that) the installation of on-premise signs at the locations (studied) led to an automatic increase in the number of crashes.” The authors point out in their conclusions that it might be of interest to examine whether or not the index varies as a function of sign design and operation or characteristics of the crashes themselves.
Strengths	The study employed a large database and a robust statistical analysis procedure.
Weaknesses/Limitations	The on-premise signs to be studied were chosen by the sponsor and individual sign companies rather than by the authors or at random. It is possible that the selection criteria included a bias toward the least potentially distracting signs (in terms of size, color, contrast, animation, video, etc.).
Availability/Accessibility	Paper No.: 14-2772 of the 93 rd Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board.

Date 1 st published/presented	2014
Location	USA
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Schieber, F., Limrick, K., McCall, R., & Beck, A. “Evaluation of the Visual Demands of Digital Billboards Using a Hybrid Driving Simulator” University of South Dakota
Forum	Journal
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Unknown
Type of Study*	S
Type of Signs Studied**	D (Simulated)
Brief Description of Method	The authors used a purpose-built hybrid driving simulator designed “for investigating the limits of sign reading performance while driving.” The driving task and the view of the road ahead used a validated, commercial simulator; but the digital billboard stimulus was implemented on a separate 20:1 scaled LCD display mounted on a linear actuator rail that could move the simulated sign toward the observer at angular velocities simulating speeds up to 55 mph. 18 university undergraduates participated. Gaze direction (road ahead vs. billboard) was captured by a video recording of each participant’s face as they drove– this technique was previously demonstrated by the senior author. Participants drove once at 25 and again at 50 mph. Digital billboard stimuli were presented at predetermined random intervals, and contained either 4, 8, or 12 frequently used English words, also displayed at random.
Summary of Findings	The authors state: “Although little or no decrement in lane keeping or reading performance was observed at slow speed (25 MPH) on straight roads, clear evidence of impaired performance became apparent at the higher driving speed (50 MPH). Lane keeping performance was significantly degraded when participants were required to read digital billboards with 8 or more words at the higher speed. This decrement became greater when the sign contained 12 words. Surprisingly, the decrements in lane keeping performance emerged <i>after</i> the participants had finished reading the sign. The participants tended to slowly drift away from the center of the lane, and then executed a large amplitude corrective steering input during the 8-second interval after encountering the digital billboard. Eye gaze statistics and reading performance showed that information processing overload began to emerge at a message length of 8 words and was clearly present when 12 words were displayed.
Strengths	Sophisticated, hybrid driving simulator with a custom built zoomed image sign projector designed to overcome traditional simulator constraints on sign legibility at realistic distances. Simulated digital billboards contained different, common words of 4-5 letters each, and each was presented in the same size and location on the billboard.
Weaknesses/Limitations	No older drivers were studied. There is no discussion of the validity of the hybrid driving simulator for this specific application. The simulated billboards were only 10 ft. in width, only about one-fifth the width of typical highway billboards.
Availability/Accessibility	<i>Proceedings of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society 58th Annual Meeting, 2214-2218.</i>

Date 1 st published/presented	2014
Location	Israel (Tel Aviv)
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Gitelman, V., Zaidel, D., Doveh, E., & Silberstein, R. “Accidents on Ayalon Highway - Three Periods Comparison: Billboards Present, Removed, and Returned”
Forum	
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Israel National Roads Authority
Type of Study*	E
Study Design	Quasi-experimental: Billboards present (2006-07), absent (2008), present again (2009-12) with controls. Dependent measure – property damage and injury crashes. Control variable – traffic volume. Study sites – 8 treatment and 6 control.
Type of Signs Studied**	C
Brief Description of Method	Because of complaints, Israel’s Supreme Court ruled that a series of billboards on an urban freeway near Tel Aviv had to be removed, i.e. covered, for one year while an evaluation took place. At the end of the experimental period, the billboards were uncovered such that they were again visible to motorists. At control sites, the billboards remained visible throughout the study period. At treatment sites, billboards were visible in the “present” period (2006-7), covered during the “removed” period (2008), and visible again in the “returned” period (2009-12). Crashes were recorded and categorized (property damage only, injury or fatality) under six conditions: (a) at treatment sites while signs were visible; (b) at treatment sites after signs were covered; (c) at treatment sites where signs were visible again after having been uncovered; (d) at control sites where signs were visible; and (e) at the same control sites while signs were still visible but signs were covered at the treatment sites; and (f) at control sites while signs were again visible at the treatment sites.
Summary of Findings	At control sites, crashes remained essentially the same throughout the 6-year study period; at the treatment sites, crashes declined dramatically after the billboards were covered, and returned just as dramatically once the billboards were uncovered and therefore again visible. The results were the same for injury and fatal crashes. After adjusting for traffic volume, crashes were reduced at the treatment sites (where billboards were visible in the “before” period but covered during the “after” period) by the following percentages: all crashes by 60%; injury/fatal crashes by 39%; property damage crashes by 72%.
Strengths	For a field study, this used a well-controlled research design. Before-and-after measures were obtained both for sites where the billboards were covered during the study, and for the sites where the billboards remained visible during this same time period. Road sections were in close proximity, on the same highway, ensuring that traffic speeds and volumes, as well as weather conditions, law enforcement activity, etc. were comparable.
Weaknesses/Limitations	There might have been differences in certain roadway characteristics between the treatment and control sites (e.g. curves, merges, etc.) that were not identified.
Availability/Accessibility	Complete study is in Hebrew only; English translation is available for the Executive Summary only.

Date 1st published/presented	2015
Location	Australia
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Young, KL, Stephens, AN, Logan, DB, & Lenne, MG An on-road study of the effect of roadside advertising on driver performance and situation awareness Monash University Accident Research Centre
Forum	International Driver Distraction and Inattention Conference, 2015
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Unknown
Type of Study*	Q
Type of Signs Studied**	C
Brief Description of Method	19 participants drove an instrumented car on a prescribed route selected for easy navigation and the presence of many billboards. (Only conventional, static billboards were used). The route was 38km long and took about 50 minutes to complete. There were sections with freeways, retail areas, and arterial roadways. Situation awareness (SA) was measured continuously throughout the drive using a method called Verbal Protocol Analysis (VPA). This required continuous speaking by the driver about things he or she sees, or does, or acts on. Participants were trained in this methodology for 30 minutes prior to starting the drive. VPA seems very similar to the technique known as commentary driving in the US. This paper used only the freeway data, and that section of the route had 2 billboards – one on the left side of the road and one mounted on an overhead bridge. Data analyzed included longitudinal and lateral vehicle control, the output of the VPA recording, and speed.
Summary of Findings	One interesting finding was that drivers drove slower than the speed limit in a roadway section that included the billboard on the roadside, and faster than the speed limit in a comparable section with no billboard. The authors found this of relevance because this particular billboard received the most comments in the VPA and the post-drive interview. There were no significant differences in speed variability or lateral control between billboard and control sections of the route. Network analysis was used to analyze drivers' SA through the VPA. Key concepts forming the drivers' SA were different in billboard than in control segments. In the billboard segment, drivers were aware of their speed and the speed limit, suggesting to the authors that drivers were able to maintain an awareness of driving-related tasks despite the fact that the billboard featured heavily in their awareness, although this aspect of awareness did seem to be reduced from what it was during the control segment. Compared to the roadside billboard, the overpass billboard was far less a feature of drivers' awareness.
Strengths	The use of VPA data was unusual and helpful
Weaknesses/Limitations	Studied static, not electronic billboards; limited number of subjects and billboards.
Availability/Accessibility	

Date 1 st published/presented	2015
Location	USA
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Sisiopiku, VP, Islam, M., Haleem, K., Alluri, P. & Gan, A. “Investigation of the Potential Relationship between Crash Occurrences and the Presence of Digital Billboards in Alabama and Florida”
Forum	Conference Paper
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	U.S. Department of Transportation/RITA, Alabama Department of Transportation, Florida Department of Transportation
Type of Study*	E
Type of Signs Studied**	D
Brief Description of Method	The authors analyzed historical crash records from the states of Alabama and Florida. They identified locations of digital billboards along major limited-access roadways and chose 18 suitable sites for analysis, each with its own control site. Crash records were obtained for a five-year period from a centralized database in Alabama, and crash rates were determined per million vehicle miles travelled at each site. The procedure was similar in Florida, although only three years were studied. Because many crashes in the vicinity of the billboards were found to be located incorrectly, the authors retrieved the actual police traffic collision reports for 783 crashes. Of these, 406 had to be eliminated due to coding errors in the original summary reports, leaving a total of 377 crashes for the safety assessment.
Summary of Findings	The authors state: “The overall results were consistent between the two states. The presence of digital billboards increased the overall crash rates at “digital advertising billboard influence zones” by 25% in Florida and 29% in Alabama, compared to control sites. In addition, sideswipe and rear-end crashes were overrepresented at digital billboard influence zones compared to control sites.
Strengths	Included in their influence zone was a short distance (minimum 0.05 mile) downstream of each billboard. This is in keeping with the findings of Schieber, et al., discussed elsewhere in the present document. The influence zone and associated control zone for each billboard were matched for traffic and roadway conditions.
Weaknesses/Limitations	The authors provide no explanation for how the specific billboard locations were chosen out of all possibilities that they identified. Apparently, they identified “influence zones” by calculating the distances upstream of each digital billboard from which the sign could be seen, using Google Street View. There seems to have been no effort to relate sight distance in the real world to that shown in the Google Street View images. It is unclear whether their 5 years of data (AL) and 3 years (FL) correspond to periods when the billboards studied were actually in place, given that the authors seem to have selected sites from Google Street View.
Availability/Accessibility	<i>Proceedings of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society 58th Annual Meeting, 2214-2218.</i>

Date 1 st published/presented	2015
Location	Canada
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Rempel, G., Montufar, J., Forbes, G., & Dewar, R. “Digital and projected advertising Displays: Regulatory and Road Safety Assessment Guidelines.” MORR Transportation Consulting, Ltd., Intus Road Safety Engineering, Inc., Western Ergonomics, Inc.
Forum	Transportation Association of Canada Report
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Transportation Association of Canada
Type of Study*	CR
Type of Signs Studied**	O, D
Brief Description of Method	The authors performed a critical literature review, met with representatives of Canadian government agencies and outdoor advertising companies, investigated practices and regulations/guidelines in other countries, and applied human factors principles toward the development of guidelines for Canada.
Summary of Findings	The resultant guidelines are specific to traffic safety issues – they do not address the aesthetic, “nuisance,” or economic factors of such signs. Guidance is developed for sign density, spacing, dwell time (which they call “frame duration”), illuminance (which they authors call “brightness”), proximity to traffic control devices and driver decision points, message sequencing and text scrolling, animation, and transition time between messages. The overriding principle proposed in this report is that digital advertising signs should “emulate” traditional signs.
Strengths	A comprehensive review, not only of existing research, but also of relevant human factors principles, advertising sign technology, and best practices.
Weaknesses/Limitations	Accepted industry practices regarding DBB lighting rather than getting the views of lighting experts or undertaking their own independent evaluation.
Availability/Accessibility	Available for purchase from Transportation Association of Canada at http://tac-atc.ca/en/digital-and-projected-advertising-displays-publication-now-available

Date 1 st published/presented	2015
Location	Australia
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Samsa, C., & Phillips, T. “Digital Billboards ‘Down Under’: Are they Distracting to Drivers and can Industry and Regulators Work Together for a Successful Road Safety Outcome?” Samsa Consulting, Outdoor Media Association of Australia
Forum	<i>4th International Conference on Driver Distraction and Inattention</i>
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Outdoor Media Association of Australia
Type of Study*	C
Type of Signs Studied**	C, D, O
Brief Description of Method	29 participants, ages 25-54, drove an instrumented vehicle along a 14.6 km route in Brisbane, Queensland. Drivers were fitted with “eye tracking glasses.”
Summary of Findings	Average fixation durations were “well below 0.75 s”. There were no significant differences in average vehicle headway between the three signage types. There was a statistically significant difference in lateral deviation when billboards were present.
Strengths	The data showing significant differences in lateral deviation in the presence of billboards is in accord with findings from other recent studies.
Weaknesses/Limitations	No older drivers were studied. There is little description of the eye tracking glasses used, but this apparatus is not known to provide the precision necessary to determine exactly where the wearer is looking. No information is provided to enable the reader to determine how vehicle headways were measured; as such it is not possible to compare this study to the one conducted in Denmark, where headway measurement was clearly described.
Availability/Accessibility	https://www.ivvy.com/event/DD2015

Date 1st published/presented	2016
Location	USA
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Wilson, RT, & Casper, J. The role of location and visual saliency in capturing attention to outdoor advertising – How location attributes increase the likelihood for a driver to notice a billboard ad Texas State University, Traffic Audit Bureau for Media Measurement, Inc.
Forum	Journal of Advertising Research
Peer Reviewed?	Unknown
Sponsor/funding source	Traffic Audit Bureau for Media Measurement
Type of Study*	L, R
Type of Signs Studied**	C, D
Brief Description of Method	Two-part study. Part 1 involved presenting video clips of drives past billboards to groups of participants whose eye movements were “measured” by a camera in the front of the room. Part 2 involved the development and analysis of a model of visual attention.
Summary of Findings	Two sub-studies evaluated the contribution to a driver’s visual attention to a billboard from (a) the billboard’s location (close to the road, right side of the road, near the centerline of the driver’s vision, extended “dwell time” [time available to an approaching driver to see the billboard]), and (b) the billboard’s saliency (the billboard’s ability to “pop out” from its background due to the use of color, shading, and compositional design
Strengths	Interesting application of bottom-up and top-down visual attention theories to the question of billboard glances.
Weaknesses/Limitations	The authors did not use eye tracking as traditionally defined; their understanding of eye tracking technology is at least a decade old. They are not justified in their use of the statistics they chose because their data are too crude, and they made too many assumptions based on this nebulous data set.
Availability/Accessibility	Journal of Advertising Research, September 2016

Date 1 st published/presented	2016
Location	USA
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Belyusar, D., Reimer, B. Mehler B., & Coughlin, JF. “A Field Study on the Effects of Digital Billboards on Glance Behavior During Highway Driving.” New England University Transportation Center & MIT Age Lab
Forum	Accident Analysis and Prevention, 88, 88-96
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	US Department of Transportation, Region 1 New England, University Transportation Center at MIT, and the Toyota Class Action Settlement Safety Research and Education Program.
Type of Study*	Q
Type of Signs Studied**	D
Brief Description of Method	This on-road study had 123 subjects, nearly equally divided between males and females and between young and old. Participants drove an instrumented vehicle under normal driving conditions, with no specific tasks to perform, past a digital billboard on a highway with a speed limit of 65 MPH.
Summary of Findings	The authors found statistically significant changes in total number of glances and, depending upon the direction of travel, moderate-to-long duration glances in the direction of the billboard as compared to sections of the roadway in which the billboard was not visible. Older drivers were particularly affected. The authors also found that: “Drivers glanced more at the time of a switch to a new advertisement display than during a comparable section of roadway when the billboard was simply visible and stable.” They concluded: “Given typical billboard dwell (cycle) times of six (6) or eight (8) seconds, these findings add to the argument the dwell times for such signs should be considerably longer.”
Strengths	The driving task was quasi naturalistic; both young and old drivers, and both males and females, were equally represented.
Weaknesses/Limitations	Only one billboard, with two faces, was used in the analysis. There could be characteristics of that sign, or its location, which make the results not generalizable to other billboards.
Availability/Accessibility	http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001457515301664

Date 1 st published/presented	2017
Location	Denmark
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Herrstedt, L., Greibe, P., Andersson, P., & la Cour Land, B. Do LED-advertising signs affect driver attention? Trafitec
Forum	Fifth International Conference on Driver Distraction and Inattention, 2017
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Nordic Committee for Visual Conditions in Road Traffic
Type of Study*	Q
Type of Signs Studied**	C, D
Brief Description of Method	16 test participants drove an instrumented car on each of two routes with LED billboards displayed. Some participants drove in both daylight and nighttime.
Summary of Findings	Overall, when advertising signs were present, visual attention outside the car was 84% to driving-related objects (the road, other road users, road signs and traffic lights), and 14% to non-driving-related objects of which LED billboards account for half of the glances. Thus, LED and other advertising signs make up approximately 10% of drivers' visual attention in terms of glance duration. No significant differences were found in daylight vs darkness periods, although this may be explained by the fact that all road sections driven during the test drivers were equipped with fixed street lighting meaning that no billboards were viewed in a completely dark environment.
Strengths	Creative use of "safety buffer," and "critical glances"
Weaknesses/Limitations	Small number of participants; although the authors mention that more attention is captured by larger signs, they don't measure the signs nor do they use size as an independent variable; signs studied appear to be considerably smaller than typical LED billboards in the US, suggesting that results of a similar study conducted here would be more dramatic.
Availability/Accessibility	Proceedings of the conference

Date 1 st published/presented	2018
Location	Belgium, Flanders
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Mollu, K. “Influence of an Illuminated Digital Billboard on Driving Behavior with a Focus on Variable Display Time and Distance from a Pedestrian Crossing.” Hasselt University and Flanders Agency for Roads and Traffic
Forum	TRB Subcommittee on Digital Billboards
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Flanders Agency for Roads and Traffic
Type of Study*	N
Type of Signs Studied**	D (simulated)
Brief Description of Method	Using a driving simulator, investigators compared subjective workload and responses of drivers to pedestrians crossing in crosswalks. Subjects included 35 persons, age 20-60, with 54% male. Signs varied in dwell time and location in retail zones or in transitions to built-up areas.
Summary of Findings	Study participants rated their mental demand significantly higher and their own performance lower when a digital billboard was present. The minimum speed upon approach to the pedestrian was higher and was reached closer when a DBB was present. Although not statistically significant, lateral displacement was higher in the presence of the DBB. Brake-reaction time (perception reaction time) to the pedestrian was approximately 1.5 times higher in the presence of the DBB – and there was no effect of dwell time or distance to the sign.
Strengths	High definition driving simulator; roads agency sponsored; reasonably large number of subjects. A large number of billboards and road settings were used.
Weaknesses/Limitations	None of the display times matched those in most common use; simulated digital billboards were smaller than those in common use in the U.S.
Availability/Accessibility	Author

Date 1 st published/presented	2019
Location	Australia
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Oviedo-Trespalacios, O., Truelove, V., Watson, B., & Hinton, JA The impact of road advertising signs on driver Behaviour and implications for road safety: A critical systematic review. Queensland University of Technology; Department of Transport & Main Roads
Forum	Transportation Research Part A
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Transport Academic Partnership between Queensland Department of Transportation & Main Roads and Queensland University of Technology.
Type of Study*	R
Type of Signs Studied**	C. D
Brief Description of Method	This was a review of the literature (the actual reviews are in a separate Appendix) using a method called TCI (Task-Capability Interface) which, essentially, compares task demands with driver “capability” which, in turn, leads to positive (safe passage) or negative (which may lead to the driver losing control) outcomes. The TCI method is claimed to be relevant to the study of billboards because they are part of the road traffic environment and therefore serve to modify driving task demands.
Summary of Findings	Roadside advertising signs can be considered environmental clutter, which adds additional task demands. Roadside advertising signs impaired drivers’ eye movement patterns. Young drivers invest more attentional resources interacting with roadside advertising, suggesting a lower ability (than older drivers) to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant information. It is not possible to definitively conclude that there is a direct connection between outdoor advertising and crashes, but there is an emerging trend in the literature suggesting that roadside advertising can increase crash risk, particularly with changeable displays such as those on digital billboards. Most empirical studies to date feature “strong methodological limitations.” There is an urgent need for more research given that roadside advertising technology is changing rapidly.
Strengths	Studies some 90 articles.
Weaknesses/Limitations	Makes some unsupportable statements; references are reviewed and reported only in a separate Appendix to the paper; the reviews are not critical, as claimed in the title.
Availability/Accessibility	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2019.01.012

Date 1st published/presented	2019
Location	Israel
Author(s)	Gitelman, V., Doveh, E., & Zaidel, D.
Title	An examination of billboard impacts on crashes on a suburban highway: Comparing three periods – Billboards present, removed, and restored
Affiliation	
Forum	Traffic Injury Prevention
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	National Road Safety Authority of Israel
Type of Study*	E
Type of Signs Studied**	C
Brief Description of Method	The authors compared precise and comprehensive data direct from the roadway administration about crashes over two conditions (experimental sites where billboards were located and control sites where there were no billboards). They looked at data from three time periods – when billboards were visible, when they had been removed or covered, and when they were made visible again.
Summary of Findings	For both property damage only (PDO) and injury accidents, the data were stark. When the billboards were covered or removed, the reduction in crashes compared to the earlier period when these billboards were visible to drivers was between 30 and 40%, depending on road section. Equally important, when billboards were uncovered again, after the period in which they were covered, accidents rose by 30-60%. Most of these findings were statistically significant.
Strengths	Elegant study design, comprehensive data analysis, 3 periods of study lends further credibility to findings
Weaknesses/Limitations	Studied static, not electronic billboards.
Availability/Accessibility	Traffic Injury Prevention

Date 1st published/presented	2019
Location	Italy
Author(s) Title Affiliation	Costa, M., Bonetti L., Vignali, V., Bichicchi, A., Lantieri, C., & Simone, A. Driver's visual attention to different categories of roadside advertising signs. University of Bologna, Aarhus University
Forum	Applied Ergonomics
Peer Reviewed?	Yes
Sponsor/funding source	Alma Idea 2017 Costa grant from University of Bologna
Type of Study*	Q
Type of Signs Studied**	O, C, others unknown
Brief Description of Method	15 participants (10 male) drove an instrumented car equipped with an eye movement recorder along a 30km round trip along a two-lane, two-way road in both urban and rural areas. Glance numbers and durations were captured for 6 different categories of signs, including billboards, on-premise signs, single and multiple directional signs, and digital gas price signs.
Summary of Findings	Longer glance durations were found for signs closer to the road. The distance at which signs were fixated increased linearly with speed, sign size, and text length. Larger size text on signs was associated with a higher fixation rate, as were signs on the near side of the road. Signs with smaller text and many characters were related to a lower fixation rate because they “probably fail to attract the driver’s visual attention due to the poor readability in a dynamic context.” Interestingly, there was no commonality between the 6 signs that capture the longest glances and the 6 that captured the most glances. With one exception the first group (longest glances) consisted of signs with considerable text and smaller font sizes. In contrast, the six signs with the highest fixation rate (but not duration) tended to have more graphical properties and less text. This suggests to advertisers that the longer glances to signs with smaller fonts and much text take longer to read than simpler, more graphical signs, and therefore should deserve less consideration for roadside applications – and that the simplest sign designs with more, larger graphics and text should be prioritized.
Strengths	Excellent literature review (except, see below), studies a broader number and type of signs than most prior studies.
Weaknesses/Limitations	Makes lots of “factual” statements that are not supported by the literature, no freeway driving in test route, no billboards of size comparable to US, no digital billboards (only digital gas price signs). Some statements of conclusion in the text are not clearly explained, raising questions of interpretation by the reader.
Availability/Accessibility	Applied Ergonomics

Citations:

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