

## Functions, Characteristics, and Effectiveness of Selected Public Signs in Cebu City

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine and analyze the classifications, functions, characteristics, and effectiveness of the selected 30 public signs found along the roads and streets going to Basilica Minore Church, Magellan's Cross, Museo Sugbo, Fort San Pedro, and Ayala Center Cebu. Starting from Kilometer Zero (KM 0), photos of the public signs found along the roads and streets going to the five most preferred places in Cebu City were taken. A survey questionnaire was also answered by the 55 respondents composed of motorists, jeepney drivers, pedestrians, commuters, local and foreign tourists. Findings reveal that *static signs* predominated in the classifications of the public signs. In addition, *indicative signs* were predominantly found in both local and foreign tourists who visit Cebu City. Also, the *absence of uncommonly-used words*, *concise wordings*, and *capitalized words* were the most dominant characteristics in the public signs in Cebu City. Further, the public signs in Cebu City are effective in terms of giving information and directing local and foreign tourists in Cebu City. Lastly, public signs that were problematic were addressed by stating observations and recommendations for the improvement of the physical state of the signs.

**Keywords:** public signs, classifications, functions, characteristics, effectiveness, locals and tourists

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### INTRODUCTION

Public signs are among the fastest ways to directly inform the public on what they are supposed to do, especially when they are on the road. Public signs may appear on a paper, metal, or board shown outside or inside an establishment, institution, and other places where people can see them. Meanwhile, Cebu City, has become a well-known destination for both locals and foreigners coming from different countries. Due to the increasing number of locals and tourists visiting the city, there is a need for the government sectors to manage and control the people who visit the place, especially at the famous spots in Cebu City to maintain and establish a peaceful environment. Various studies such as Chan et al. (2016) and Bornilla et al. (2010) have given attention to investigating symbols and texts present in public signs, specifically those on the streets and roads of the different cities in the country.

This paper discusses the classifications, functions, characteristics, and effectiveness of the selected public signs in Cebu City. The classifications of the public signs include static signs which provide fixed information to the readers of the sign, while dynamic signs demand the public to do a certain action (Yang, 2009). Further, Yang (2009) mentioned that the functions of the public signs are indicative signs which direct people to a certain location and prohibitive signs mainly restrict the public from a specific act. The characteristics of the public signs consist of noun phrases, verbal phrases and gerunds, abbreviations, simple present tense and imperative mood, the absence of uncommonly-used words, the standardized usage of

language, the conciseness of words, the capitalized words, and the combination of words and graphic symbols. The extent of effectiveness of the public signs can be manifested through awareness and compliance by the public.

This study aimed to determine and analyze the selected thirty public signs present in the five most visited places in Cebu City (Static signs and Dynamic signs) according to (Yang, 2009), functions of public signs (Indicative Function and Prohibitive Function) according to (Tang & Wang, 2017), characteristics of public signs (Noun Phrases, Verbal Phrases, and Gerunds; Abbreviated Forms; Simple Present Tense and Imperative Mood; Absence of Uncommonly-used Words; Standardized Usage; Concise Wordings; Capitalized Words; and Combination of Words and Graphic Symbols) as enumerated by Yang (2009), and the extent of effectiveness of the selected public signs in Cebu City.

### METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a quantitative-qualitative design in analyzing the 30 public signs found along the roads and streets in the five most visited places in Cebu City. The five tourist locations were Basilica del Santo Niño de Cebu, Magellan's Cross, Fort San Pedro, Museo Sugbo, and Ayala Center Cebu. In gathering the data, starting from

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Kilometer Zero (KM 0), the researchers took photos of the public signs along the roads and streets going to the five most preferred places in Cebu City. To verify and determine the extent of effectiveness of the signs, the researchers conducted a survey with the 55 respondents (composed of motorists, jeepney drivers, pedestrians, commuters, local and foreign tourists). Furthermore, to verify the results of the survey, a statistician was asked to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the signs. Moreover, two engineers from the Department of Public Works and Highways were interviewed to validate the data and gather information regarding public signs in Cebu City.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Classifications of Public Signs

Findings reveal that static signs occur more in the classifications of the public signs. Table 1 exhibits the classifications of the selected public signs found in the five most visited places in Cebu City, according to Yang (2009).

**Table 1**

#### *Classifications of Public Signs*

Classifications	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Static signs	17	56.67
Dynamic signs	13	43.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 shows that static signs are mostly present in the five most visited places in Cebu City. Static signs have a total frequency of seventeen with a percentage of 56.67. On the other hand, dynamic signs have a frequency of thirteen with a percentage of 43.44. The present study illustrates that most public signs are static because there is a need to direct the public of the roads and streets within the city. Cebu City is an urban area with popular historical sites that attract most local and foreign tourists. On the one hand, dynamic signs exist mostly to prompt the public to do any kind of action. Most of the dynamic signs found along the roads and streets in Cebu City restrict the public from doing some action.

However, Yang (2009) mentioned in his study that in contrast to static signs, dynamic signs are fewer in quantity. Yet, the present researchers observed that dynamic signs are more frequent in the roads and streets going to the five tourist spots in Cebu City since these signs are repetitive. Also, dynamic signs that were found on the streets and roads going to the five tourist spots were mostly intended for drivers, not many for the pedestrians.

### Functions of Public Signs

Indicative signs were found to be more occurring and helpful to both local and foreign tourists who visit Cebu City. Table 2 displays the frequency of the functions of the public signs that were found in the five most visited places in Cebu City, according to Tang and Wang (2017).

**Table 2**

#### *Functions of Public Signs*

Functions	Frequency(f)	Percentage(%)
Indicative	21	70
Prohibitive	9	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 shows that most of the public signs present along the roads and streets going to the five most visited places in Cebu City functions as indicative. The indicative function has a total frequency of twenty-one with a percentage of 70. On the other hand, public signs that function as prohibitive has a total frequency of nine and with a percentage of 30.

The present researchers believe that indicative public signs are prevalent than prohibitive public signs due to the researchers' chosen locations, which were the streets and roads going to the famous tourist spots. The selected roads are located within Central Cebu where Basilica del Santo Niño de Cebu, Magellan's Cross, Fort San Pedro, Museo Sugbo, and Ayala Center Cebu are situated. With this matter, locals and foreigners mostly visit the roads within the five tourist locations, which are the reason why indicative signs should be positioned to guide the public of the ways to take or to go to their destination, particularly if tourists want to visit the five tourist spots. As stated by Tang and Wang (2017), indicative public signs help foreigners to get the necessary information in going to a certain place.

### Characteristics of Public Signs

The absence of uncommonly-used words, concise wordings, and capitalized words were the most dominant characteristics that appeared in the public signs in Cebu City. Table 3 demonstrates the characteristics of public signs along the streets going to the five most visited locations in Cebu City.

**Table 3**

#### *Characteristics of Public Signs*

Characteristics	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Absence of Uncommonly-used Words</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>18.06</b>
<b>Concise Wordings</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>17.42</b>
<b>Capitalized Words</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>16.13</b>
Standardized Usage	24	15.48
Noun Phrases, Verbal Phrases and Gerund	19	12.27
Combination of Words and Graphic Symbols	17	10.97
Simple Present Tense and Imperative Mood	13	8.39
Abbreviated Forms	2	1.29

TOTAL	155	100%
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Table 3 exhibits that almost all public signs located on the streets and roads going to Basilica del Santo Niño de Cebu, Magellan’s Cross, Fort San Pedro, Museo Sugbo, and Ayala Center Cebu have the absence of uncommonly-used words. This characteristic gathered a frequency of twenty-eight with a percentage of 18.06, which is the highest percentage among the results of the eight characteristics in the table. The second-most common characteristic is the presence of concise wordings in public signs. This has a frequency of twenty-seven and a percentage of 17.42. The top third-highest percentage is 16.13, with a frequency of twenty-five is the use of capitalized letters in words present in public signs. In contrast, the least applied characteristic is the use of abbreviations, occurring two times with only 1.29 percent among the results of the eight characteristics of public signs found in specified streets and roads in Cebu City.

The results of the present research reveal that most of the public signs located on the roads and streets of Cebu City utilize words that are common and familiar to the public. The use of common words and language simplifies the message it wants to convey since these signs are intended for the public after all. In this way, local and foreign tourists who would visit certain places in Cebu City will be guided and not be confused while trying to locate the desired place to visit.

In addition, the majority of the public signs contained brief and concise words that enable the public to read and comprehend the signs easily. This is most important for the vehicle drivers who do not have time to halt just to read a sign since it could cause traffic congestion that affects all the succeeding drivers (Interview, Dela Cruz, 2018). On the other hand, short and brief public signs also accommodate pedestrians and tourists who are on the road since these signs are informative and do not require much time for the people to read. Furthermore, Most of the public signs were capitalized since it would be more readable to the public, especially to those drivers who are on the road that need signs to be clear and visible enough to save time from reading the signs (Interview, Dela Cruz, 2018).

On the one hand, the public signs in Cebu City avoid the use of slangs and jargons to fulfill the function or purpose of signs, which is to communicate the message to all effectively. Slangs should not be utilized in public signs because it might confuse the public which leads to misinterpretations of the signs. Jargons should also be avoided because only a limited group of people can understand them. Besides, public signs are meant for the public, so as much as possible, the meaning has to be clear enough for everyone in the community to understand it (Deng, 2014).

#### Effectiveness of Public Signs

In line with whether or not the public follows the texts transcribed on the signs, the present researchers were able to identify the extent of the effectiveness of the selected public signs through the results of the survey.

The current researchers conducted a survey to a total of 55 respondents composed of motorists, jeepney drivers, pedestrians, commuters, Filipino and foreign tourists visiting the five tourist spots in Cebu City.

The following tables and graphs are the outputs of the data analysis done using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

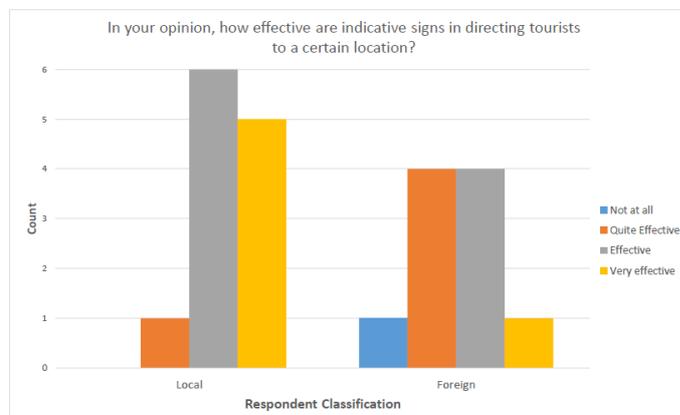


Figure 3. Survey Question #3

As presented in Figure 3, most local tourists responded effectively to the third question “*In your opinion, how effective are indicative signs in directing tourists to a certain location?*” than foreign tourists who answered both *effective* (represented by beige bar on the left) and *quite effective* (represented by green and beige bars on the right side).

As a whole, the findings suggest that indicative signs are effective enough in giving sufficient information, most especially to local and foreign tourists who are visiting a certain tourist spot.

On the one hand, another function of a public sign is to forbid the public from doing a certain kind of action. The effectiveness of prohibitive signs was also determined through the fourth question in which it asks the 30 respondents “*How effective are prohibitive signs in disciplining the public?*” Figure 4 shows the equal number of the local and foreign respondents and the effectiveness of prohibitive signs in restricting the public.

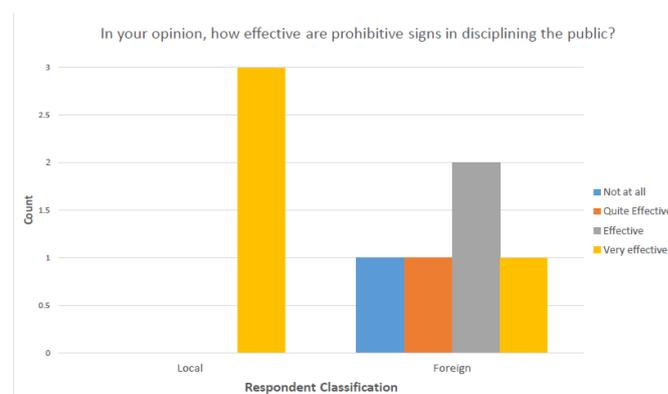


Figure 4. Survey Question #4

As displayed in Figure 4, the majority of the local tourists answered that prohibitive signs are *very effective* in restricting the public (represented by violet bars).

Meanwhile, most of the foreign tourists responded that prohibitive public signs are *effective* (represented by beige bars).

Furthermore, the present researchers utilized the survey to ask 15 local tourists and 15 foreign tourists who were visiting the five most visited destinations in Cebu City, whether they follow the public signs they see from certain roads and streets in Cebu City, leading to the tourist spots.

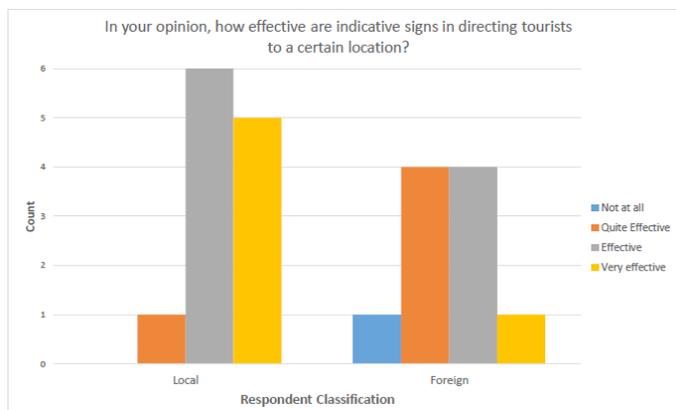


Figure 5. Survey Question #2 for Drivers, Pedestrians, and Commuters

Figure 5 reveals that the majority of the local drivers, pedestrians, and commuters understand the information, directions, prohibitions, and warnings displayed in the public signs installed along the roads leading to the five tourist destinations. The blue bars represent the Always, yellow bars for Very Often, and orange bars for Sometimes. The majority of the respondents, particularly the motorists, answered that they always understand the messages of the signs. Three out of five private vehicle drivers, as well as three jeepney drivers, responded that they always easily understand the public signs. Among the 25 respondents, four of them answered that they sometimes understand the signs.

Furthermore, the present researchers utilized the survey to ask 15 local tourists and 15 foreign tourists who were visiting the five most visited destinations in Cebu City, whether they follow the public signs they see from certain roads and streets in Cebu City, leading to the tourist spots. For Figure 6 below, the local and foreign tourist responded with the survey question, "Do you follow these public signs?."

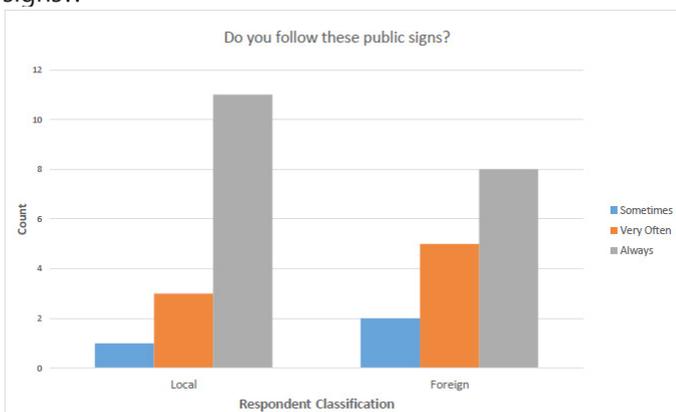


Figure 6. Survey Question #5

Figure 6 displays that most tourists asserted that they always follow the public signs installed in some areas within Cebu City. With the representation of the beige bar visible from the graph, most of the respondents who answered *always* are local tourists with a frequency of 11. Eight from the foreign tourists also responded that they always follow the signs, while the remaining 11 respondents answered either *very often* or *sometimes*, showing that most of them still follow the directions, information, as well as the prohibitions and instructions of the sign. No respondent answered never or rarely to following the signs.

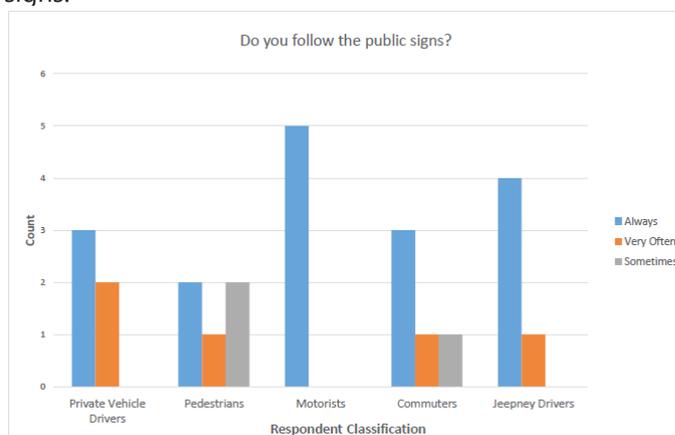


Figure 7. Survey Questionnaire #3 for Drivers, Pedestrians, and Commuters

Figure 7 exhibits that most of the local drivers, motorists, commuters, and pedestrians who answered the survey always abide by the instructions, directions, and prohibitions in the public signs. The vertical bars in the figure represent the answers of the respondents. The orange bars stand for *Always*, the blue bars for *Very Often*, and green bars for *Sometimes*. All five motorist respondents answered that they always follow the instructions indicated on the public signs they see. At the same time, four out of five jeepney drivers also responded that they always comply with the signs. Other respondents, such as the commuters and pedestrians, very often or sometimes follow the signs.

To add, Figures 6 and 7 reveal that the majority of the tourists in Cebu City, and local drivers and commuters adhere to the public signs installed in the roads and streets. No respondent rarely or do not follow the instructions and prohibitions displayed in the signs.

According to Akpan et al. (2015), the effectiveness of the public signs is reflected in the obedience or compliance of the public. With this in mind, the public signs put up in the roads of Cebu City are identified to be effective since tourists adhere to the signs. Additionally, the present researchers interviewed Engr. Joshua Monsanto, who is from the DPWH-Planning and Design Division, and is also a faculty member from the Civil Engineering Department. He stated in an interview, that the effectiveness of the public signs largely depends on whether the public follows the public signs they see, and if they do not obey to the signs, it is ineffective (Monsanto, 2018).

On the other hand, the functions and characteristics of the signs correlate with the effectiveness of the signs. It is vital to consider the clarity of the signs for

it to communicate effectively. Public signs displaying clear, brief, and appropriate use of terms would let more people attend to the information delivered by the sign. The results of the survey show that the majority of the respondents understand the messages of the signs. This implies that the public can interpret the information, urging them to take action on the necessary instructions they need to follow.

Likewise, the effectiveness and characteristics of the sign also involve its functions. The representation of the texts in the signs, as well as the symbols, is presented according to its corresponding function. The results of the survey depict that the respondents were aware of the kind of function the public signs have. This tells that the readers have a clear understanding of the purpose of the signs, which is similar to the findings of Ganesh (2016) that most of the perception of the passengers with the signs in the airport was positive. The participants recognized the signs as effective, which means that the signs in the chosen airports need not be improved. With this in mind, the public's perceptions of the signs depend on how the signs are represented. The awareness of the public on the purpose of the signs also shows that they understand the purpose of the sign. All of these show the correlation of the effectiveness of both the characteristics and functions of the sign.

### CONCLUSIONS

Based on all the findings revealed, the following conclusion are drawn:

The effectiveness of public signs is manifested in the awareness of the public and their compliance with the public signs.

The extent of the effectiveness of the public signs influences the motorists' and pedestrians' obedience to the signs and the extent of understanding of the motorists and pedestrians to the message of the signs. Following the instructions of the public signs shows that the signs are effective, since the motorists and pedestrians understand the sense of the signs, and are aware of its functions and purposes. The characteristics, functions, and the classifications of the public signs are all regarded in examining the effectiveness of the signs. Thus, people who are mindful of the content, quality, quantity, and purpose of the public signs, specifically those that indicate and prohibit, can follow and obey the intended message. To add, the tourists visiting Cebu City who participated in the survey regarding the effectiveness of public signs mostly follow the signs they see in certain tourist destinations within the city. This verifies that the public signs going to the five most visited spots in Cebu City are effective.

The drivers, motorists, and commuters adhere to the public signs, especially if there are traffic enforcers and police officers who reinforce the rules displayed on the signs.

In the survey conducted, the motorists, drivers, and commuters mentioned that they usually follow the public signs as they are aware that the police officers and traffic enforcers are monitoring them. They are mindful

of the penalties that they will get from the police officials who are in charge of the flow of traffic and capturing those individuals who violate the law. So, the presence of police and traffic enforcers greatly helps in monitoring and maintaining safety along the roads and areas in Cebu City.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are formulated:

The Philippine government agencies, such as the Department of Public Works and Highways and Land Transportation Office, can make use of this research in examining and evaluating current conditions of the public signs present within Cebu City. Consequently, the present study can assist the government sectors in improving, repairing, and monitoring public signs that need attention due to insufficiency, improper disposition, and defectiveness.

Future researchers should explore more areas in Cebu or outside the province in gathering public signs. The research environment should not be restricted within the city proper only, but also inspect public signs in rural areas with tourist attractions to know and interpret more the differences or patterns of the installations of public signs, and to be able to know the effectiveness of public signs in various locations.

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