The Effect of Highway Font Type on Readability of Text Under Blurred Conditions

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This project used a custom-built online survey tool to compare the readability of fonts designed for use on highway signs around the world under blurred conditions. The survey tool presented participants with a series of images of blurred text in a number of selected fonts, and collected demographic information about each participant. The results were conclusive, indicating that fonts with more spacing between and increased negative space within the glyphs were far more readable under blurred conditions than their competitors. The accuracy with which people can read the font used in such a high-stakes situation is critical to public safety. The capabilities of this tool could be valuable to governments and other institutions considering fonts for public safety. This tool has the potential to compare the fonts being considered by the FHWA for use on public U.S. road systems, as well as other fonts designed for wayfinding and other applications in which high readability is essential. The tool is also a step forward when it comes to studying road sign readability, compared to expensive and potentially biased in-person experiments.

Awards Won:

American Psychological Association: Second Award of $1,000