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Investigating design of running man in emergency signage

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Abstract

Emergency signages are crucial for safe evacuations but have been challenged by inconsistent and ambiguous designs. We conducted two experiments to evaluate a specific emergency signage design, i.e., running man's pictogram, in ease of conveying the direction to exit an unknown building. We compared the running man's pictogram with traditional arrow signage in exp.1, and in exp. 2, we examined the key features that contribute to the running man's composition. In both conditions, the participant's task was to determine the running man's/ arrow's orientation and press the instructed corresponding keys. We observed a faster and more accurate response for the right arrow than the right running man in experiment 1. Further, in exp. 2, the head/face component showed an advantage in identifying the running man's orientation over the leg/hand. Results suggest running man alone in emergency signage may be risky, especially when it is incomplete without a head and face.