

Increasing Student Turn-out at UBC Varsity Home Events at the University of British Columbia

For the
UBC Athletic Directors
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, British Columbia

by
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background on student turn out at varsity games

Historically, there has been low student and community engagement with the UBC Thunderbirds. This is addressed in a recent UBC Vancouver Strategic Framework for Varsity Programs which has proposed the mission statement:

Excel. Engage. Inspire: Excellence on and off the field of play, engaging and inspiring our community and the world.

Through this strategic framework, the UBC Athletics department have created some goals to improve student turnout. Recent changes to the varsity game marketing strategy to a “festival approach” has resulted in a significant increase in student turn-out to a select few games such as Homecoming, Winter Classic, and Courtside (UBC Athletics, 2015). But with 194 UBC varsity home competitions through the 2017-2018 year (citationXXX) at world class facilities and a student population of 60,000, student turn-out could still be much higher.

Varsity games are currently promoted through social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, which are limited to the UBC athlete population. This limits the availability of non-sports affiliated UBC students to get current information about UBC games.

2.2 Purpose and significance of report

The purpose of this report is to provide suggestions to UBC athletic directions to increase UBC student turn-out at varsity home competitions, supplementing the current strategic framework of the UBC Thunderbirds. Increasing student turn-out at varsity games would increase income for the UBC athletics department and would positively impact school spirit.

2.3 Proposed Plan

To address the issue of low student turn-out, I propose a new marketing strategy directed towards non-athletes in which bulletin boards with information about upcoming varsity competitions would be put up around campus in select locations. To assess the feasibility of this proposed solution, I will design a survey to address several lines of inquiry; how varsity game attendees currently obtain their information about the game; what would be the best way to distribute information; what are the barriers (cost and staff capacity) that might hinder this proposal; and what is the current level of awareness of varsity games within the non-varsity athlete community.

Outline of bulletin board costs:

- UBC Library site charges 50 cents for a large (11x17") paper (citationXXX).
- Following the Summary of UBC's Vancouver Campus Varsity Team Assessment, posters would highlight Tier 1 (men's (M) and women's (W) basketball, football, M and W swimming, M and W volleyball) and Tier 2 teams (M and W cross country, W field hockey, W ice hockey, M rugby, M and W soccer, M and W track and field) (citationXXX).
- Number of home varsity games for all UBC varsity sports = 194.
- Total number of Tier 1 and 2 games = $76 + 62 = 138$ games at home
- 4 bulletin board located: UBC Nest, Totem residence common, Vanier residence common, and Orchard residence common.
- 50 cents per poster x 4 bulletin board locations x 138 posters = \$ 276 for posters

- Bulletin board from staples costs = $95\$ \times 4 = \380 but due to abundance of bulletin boards already present in each location, purchase of a new bulletin board may not be necessary.

2.4 Methods

Thirty-four UBC students responded to a short online survey designed to analyze the distribution of information channels about UBC varsity home competitions as well as gauge the success of a potential strategy to increase student awareness. An analysis of the current strategies used by the UBC Athletics department was performed through an interview of the current athletic director to determine whether the proposed solution appropriately addressed the gaps within the UBC strategic framework as well as determined the feasibility of the solution.

3. DATA SECTION

3.1 Statistics to determine reasons for attending varsity games.

3.1.1 Survey results and graphs

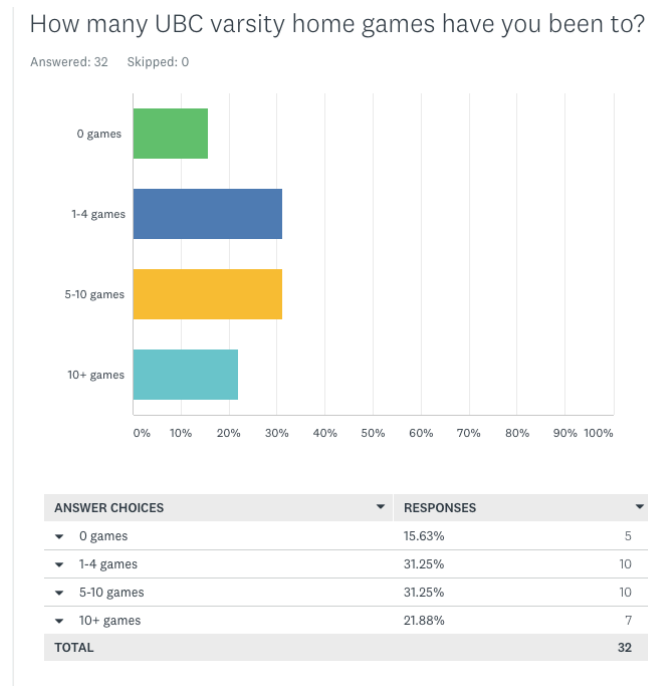


Figure 1. Graph and statistics of student survey #1 – how many UBC varsity home games have you been to? 1-4 games and 5-10 games each took up 30% of the participant vote.

If you have been to a UBC varsity home game, how did you hear about the game?

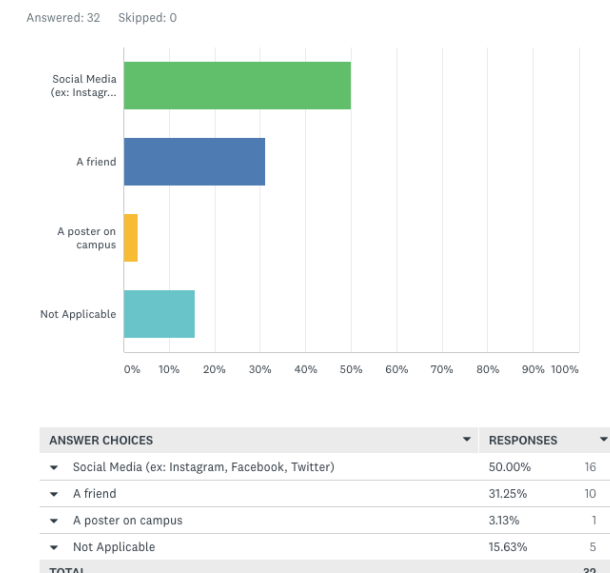


Figure 3. Graph and statistics of student survey questions #3 – If you have been to a varsity game, how did you hear about the game?

If you have been to a UBC varsity home game, did you personally know one of the players?

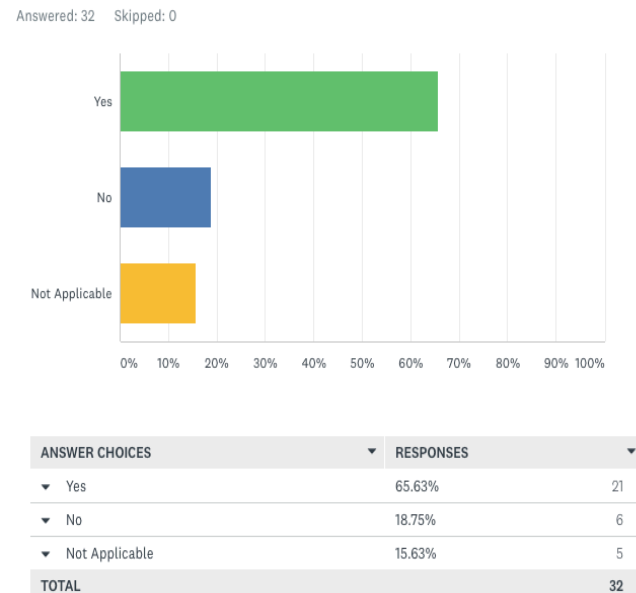


Figure 2. Graph and statistics of student survey questions #2 – if you have been to a varsity home game, did you know one of the players?

Are you currently following UBC Athletics on social media? (ex: ubctbirds on Instagram)

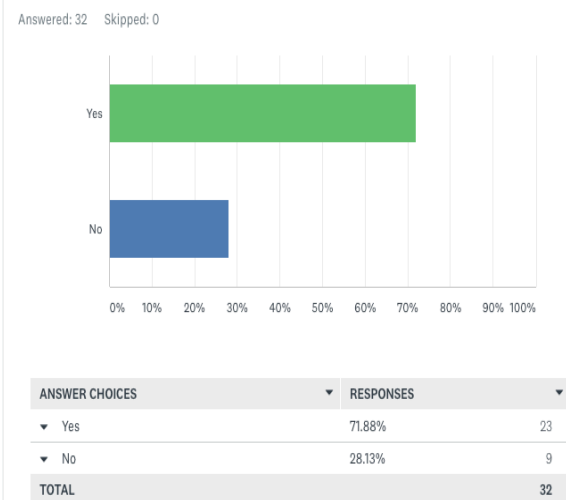


Figure 4. Graph and statistics of student survey questions #4 – are you currently following UBC Athletics on social media?

3.1.2 Discussion of results and interpretations

Graph 1 indicates that nearly 85% of participants have been to at least one varsity home game with many participants having gone more than 5 times. Given that this survey was distributed via my own social network, the data is likely not representative of UBC's entire student population. This data will instead identify several factors which might correlate to increased student attendance at varsity games.

Graph 2 indicates that 77.8% of the survey participants who have attended a varsity game have known at least one player. This is a very significant proportion of participants which suggests that familiarizing the student population with varsity athletes may result in an increase of non-athlete student turn-out at varsity games.

Graph 3, shows that less than 50% of the participants went to the game because of social media, and only 2% went because they saw a poster. The results of this survey indicate that social media marketing does not reach all of the attendees of the game.

Graph 4 shows that only 70% of the survey participants follow UBC Athletics on social media. This number is lower than the participants of the study who have been to varsity games. The main channel of marketing games for UBC Athletics likely does not reach the non-athlete population of the UBC student body.

3.1.3 Findings

- Familiarization of the student population with varsity athletes may result in an increase of non-athlete student turn-out at varsity games.

- Marketing varsity games through social media is not likely to reach the rest of the student population.

3.2 Feasibility of different marketing strategies and interview with UBC Athletics Director

3.2.1 Survey results and graphs

{survey results and graphs}

3.2.2 Discussion of results and interpretations

{survey discussion of results and interpretations}

3.2.3 Findings

{Findings}

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary of findings

Analysis of the student survey has produced several findings. Familiarization of the student population with varsity athletes may result in an increase of non-athlete student turn-out at varsity games. Marketing varsity games through social media is not likely to reach the rest of the student population.

4.2 Determine feasibility

Total cost of printing the posters is estimated to be \$276. With the purchase of 4 bulletin boards costing \$380, the total cost of this solution to athletics would be \$656. UBC Athletics has spent a total amount of \$142,144.82 from January through December 2016. Addition of this proposed solution would increase the UBC Athletics promotional budget by 0.01%. Financially, this is a feasible solution to increasing student turn-out at varsity home games.

UBC Athletics employs XXX students to help run varsity games. With posters already designed for social media, and a system in place within Totem, Vanier, and Orchard residences for the staff to hang posters that they are given, the feasibility of putting new posters up each week is very high.

4.3 Recommendations

Considering the findings of the survey and interview of the Athletic Directors, there is one standout recommendations to help improve student turn-out at varsity games. I suggest that UBC Athletics designate four bulletin board around campus for announcements about upcoming varsity games, player profiles, and past results. One of these locations could be in the new

student building “the Nest” due to high volume traffic of students passing through every week. This is indicated in the survey as 62% of the survey participants pass through the nest at least once per week.



Figure 5. View of the UBC student building “the Nest” with a potential advertisement location where the TVs are.

The three other bulletin board locations could be in the 3 common blocks of the first year residences on campus – Totem, Vanier, and Orchard. Each common area is frequented many times a day by the residents of each residence. Introducing the first-year students to UBC Varsity teams early on can improve campus life drastically.

6. WORKS CITED

Schmidt, Randy. *UBC News*. 2014, *UBC News*, news.ubc.ca/2014/02/28/sport-review/.

{works cited}