

AN ANALYSIS OF RECREATION COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS AMONG ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) STUDENTS IN THEIR FIRST YEAR AT UBC

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Suminski, R. R., Petosa, R., Utter, A. C., & Zhang, J. J. (2002). Physical activity among ethnically diverse college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 51(2), 75-80. 10.1080/07448480209596333

BACKGROUND

From 2012 to 2016, enrollment of international students at UBC increased by 4,744 students and this number continues to grow. Research indicates that international students have lower rates of physical activity than domestic students (Suminski et al., 2002), thus making them an ideal population. This research examines this gap at UBC and proposes recommendations to help improve communication with first year ESL international students.



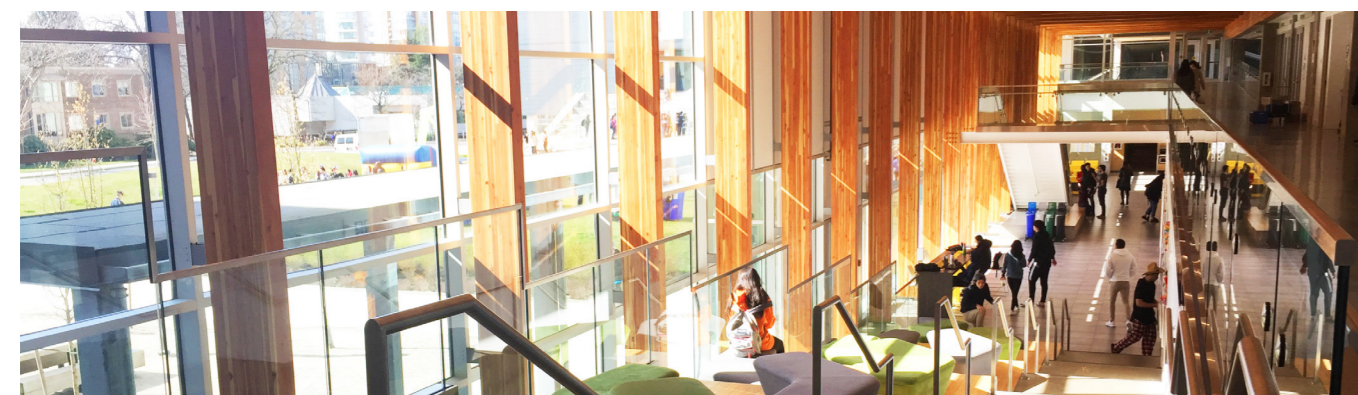
PROJECT DESIGN

Our research design is a mixed methods study, collecting qualitative and quantitative data. This study includes both open-ended and closed-ended questions during the interview process. Participants were asked semi-structured questions. The effectiveness of UBC recreation communication was discussed and participants were offered the opportunity to provide suggestions for how it could be improved.

Inclusion Criteria: The findings presented are drawn from a sample of international students who are in their first year at the University of British Columbia that speak English as their second language (ESL).

Interviews: An in-person interview was conducted with ESL international students in their first year at UBC. Participants were asked 10 questions and several probe questions pertaining to their level of physical activity, UBC Recreation promotion, and UBC recreation events.

Sample: 9 ESL students who were in their first year at UBC were interviewed. The sample included 3 males and 6 females ranging in athletic ability and faculty.



RESULTS

Involvement: Most of the participants that were interviewed reported a limited amount of involvement in organized UBC Recreation activities and programs. Informal, unstructured, and individual recreational activities were preferred by many of the participants. However, some participants spent a substantial amount of time on campus doing these individual activities in UBC Recreation facilities. The mean reported number of hours per week doing recreation on UBC campus, whether structured or unstructured, was 3.6 hours per week.

Language Barriers: Contrary to what we anticipated, none of the participants experienced notable language barriers during the interviews or pertaining to understanding advertisements. When asked how much they understood UBC Recreation advertisements on a scale of 1-10 from No information to All information, all participants provided an answer of 5 or above, with a mean of 8.3.

Knowledge of UBC Recreation Programs: Limited knowledge of UBC Recreation programs was seen across all participants. A participant noted that she has knowledge of some programs offered by UBC Recreation, but feels that they are not convenient for her as a commuter student:

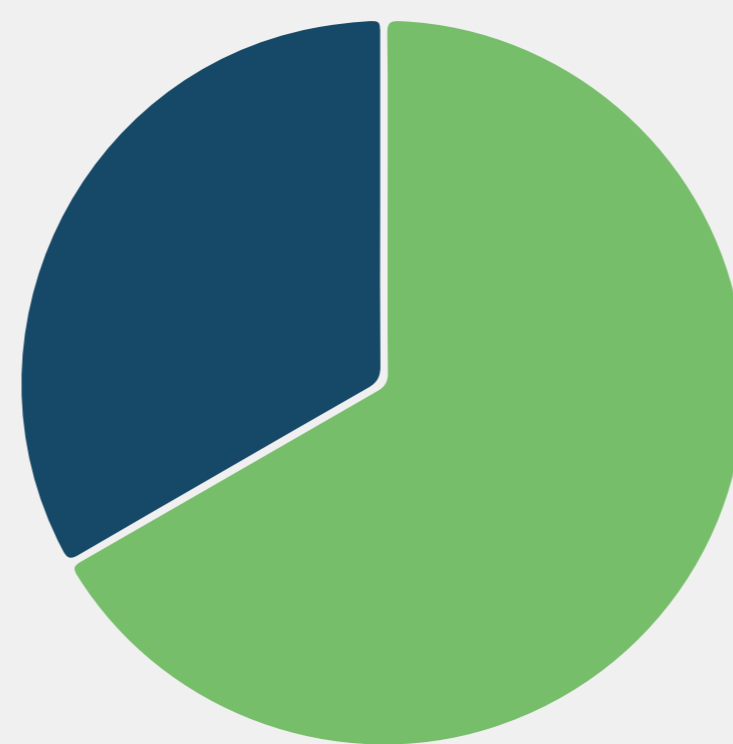
“I haven’t heard of event, but I have heard that you can join like, basketball, and teams here if you want, and there are classes you can join...but that’s more appropriate for someone who lives by UBC or lives on campus.”

- Participant 2

One participant showed slightly more knowledge of UBC Recreation programs when she listed “Free week, the triathlon,...a lot of classes, dance classes, yoga classes” (Participant 1). She was informed of these programs through friends and online platforms such as Facebook.

Do you know where the UBC Student Recreation Centre is?

No
Yes



BARRIERS

Barrier 1: Emphasis on Competition

Participants were more aware of UBC Recreation events/programs that emphasized competition, such as Storm the Wall and Intramurals. One participant mentioned that she did not feel informed enough about recreational activities that promote enjoyment:

“It would be nice to like, go for something that’s for fun...I don’t really know what there is, to be honest, I know the main ones are basketball and swimming...I don’t hear much about it except for like, the athletes I meet.”

- Participant 4

Barrier 2: Loss of networks

A barrier that some participants experienced was a loss or a lack of connections to the UBC campus, whether it be a limited amount of time spent on campus, lack of friends with similar recreational interests, or not being connected to UBC on social media.

“It’s the first year for me to study abroad...I didn’t have any friends in my high school to be in the same university as me, so sometimes I may feel a little bit lonely.”

- Participant 6

Another participant explained that “If I don’t see [the events] in emails, I don’t feel like I have ways to know about it” (Participant 3).

Barrier 3: Quality and Consistency of Advertisements

A few participants commented on the lack of clarity in the advertisements that may have caused confusion:

“There were some points that I’m not sure for the Storm the Wall, for example they said we had to register for the clinic but they didn’t say what’s the content of the clinic and no location was finalized for the clinic, that’s a bit confusing.”

- Participant 5

“For example the intramurals weren’t as advertised as well as the Storm the Wall, for example the deadline wasn’t really clear enough.”

- Participant 7

Another participant found that there was a lack of consistency in the frequency of advertisements across different types of UBC Recreation events:

“If there can be a post every day especially when it comes close to the deadlines for the [intramural] teams...just like exactly like the Storm the Wall campaign, if that’s applicable for everything.”

- Participant 7

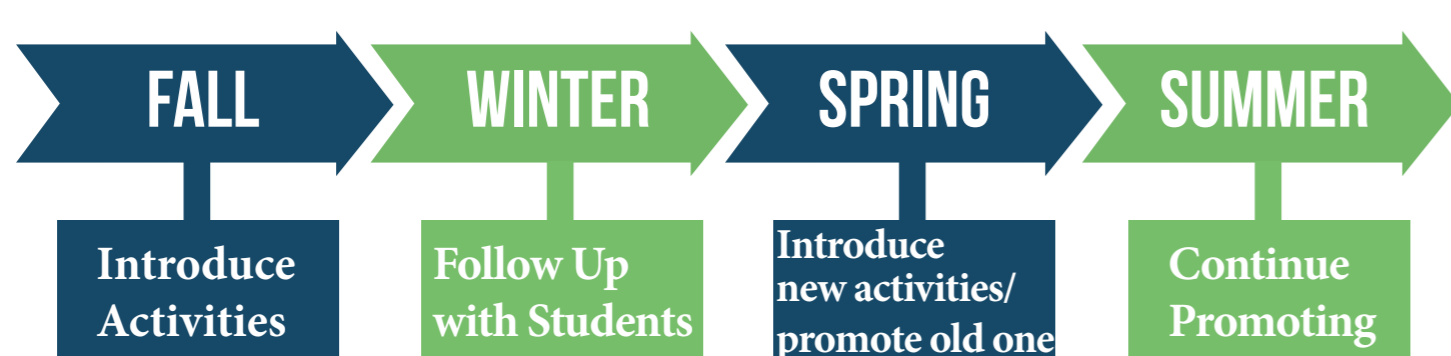
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. UBC Recreation could build on existing social networks by implementing interactive marketing techniques in UBC residence buildings.

TOP 4 WAYS PARTICIPANTS HEARD ABOUT UBC RECREATION ACTIVITIES

4 students heard through friends
3 students heard through General Social Media
2 students heard through Facebook
3 students heard through email

2. Staying consistent with advertising throughout the year could strengthen student engagement with recreation.



3. UBC Recreation representatives could set up booths at residence common areas once a month



4. Emphasize smaller UBC Recreation events using a more inclusive tone more frequently throughout the school year.

