



Final Report:
“Study of Student Opinions of Auburn
University Game Day Experience”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During our research about the relationship between Auburn University college football and the experiences of Auburn University students, we performed secondary research, a focus group interview, and an online survey through Qualtrics.com. The purpose of the research was for us to gain a better understanding of the feelings of Auburn University students toward Auburn University college football. We concluded that the relationship between Auburn University college football and Auburn University students was not as strong as expected or desired. The reason this topic is important is because Auburn University college football is a major part of the college experience and should be something every Auburn University student enjoys.

In our secondary research, our major findings focused on student morale and what contributed to the students' attitudes during the football season. We found that many students had a difficult time maintaining a positive attitude after a loss. Some possible contributing factors to the negative attitudes were students spending their time before the game waiting in long lines and roasting under the hot sun during the game. Students spend a good amount of money on tickets and the game day experience. They want to feel as if they are using their finances wisely and efficiently. It is important that these issues are fixed to preserve and improve the positive and fun atmosphere that Auburn football home games traditionally have brought to students.

The major findings of the focus group interview were similar to our secondary research findings. During the focus group, it was determined that changes need to be made so that Auburn University students will have a more positive Auburn game day college football experience. Positivity is not only a main priority, but it is a crucial element in keeping a close connection between Auburn University students and their favorite team, the Auburn Tigers. In our focus group, half of the participants said they were not affected when the team lost, and the other half of our participants were affected by a loss. The students who were not affected by the game agreed that there should be more exciting and positive things happening during the game, like student spotlights and prizes for the students during the game itself. We enjoyed getting an opportunity to conduct a focus group interview, as it gave us great insight to hear from the Auburn student fans themselves.

For our survey, our main findings reflected the same information we found in our secondary research and focus group interview. We ultimately found that students are satisfied with Auburn home games, but they have recommendations that would improve their game day experience and attitudes. The answers of the survey conformed to the findings of the focus group participants and their opinions.

The overall implications of our research determined that a majority of students are satisfied with game day; however, our research also concluded that improvements are needed to make it a better experience. This is important to us because we want Auburn University college football to be a positive experience for everyone. To make the experience of game day more positive, more student-focused activities throughout the

football game need to be added. The Auburn University college football game day experience can be enhanced with these changes. Implemented changes will keep students satisfied and continue the happiness of the Auburn University students.

SECONDARY RESEARCH

Introduction

As students at Auburn University, we have found that there is an importance between the connections and relationships formed between Auburn University college football and its fan base/publics. We have found that there are issues with keeping the relationship positive between Auburn college football and its publics after experiencing a loss in a game. College football allows Auburn University students to feel a connection with the university on a deeper and more personal level. "Promoting a college football team's image is a multi-faceted business. Player highlights, major team news and external events are all effective tactics in the PR playbook" (Williamson). The issues being discussed will be the public relations tactics used to always keep the relationship positive between Auburn University football and its publics. These tactics include highlighting athletes and team news, social media updates, and external events offered pre-season, during the season, and post-season.

Public

The public for our research is Auburn University students. Auburn University students are the public that best represents Auburn University college football. This public is a valuable group in conducting research to better understand how Auburn University can build a better relationship with the Auburn University students.

The Issue: Positive Attitudes After a Loss

After looking at similar studies, we found that the first issue centralizes around the idea of increasing positive attitudes amongst Auburn University students following a football game loss. Many students tend to leave the games early. It is our job to keep the fan base engaged and for them to stay the whole time. A scholarly journal written by Martin E.P. Seligman and James O. Pawelski describes the aspects of what causes psychological positivity. The article states, "following Nozick (and Aristotle), positive psychology is principally interested in the emotions that result from the exercise of strengths and virtues" (Seligman & Pawelski, 2017, p-161). Therefore, in this situation, our job as PR practitioners is to hype up the audience with Auburn's strengths and direct their attention to the university's virtues. Compared to a lot of universities, Auburn handles losses well, as the fans love Auburn, not just Auburn football. We need to go a step further in creating positive attitudes amongst the fan base by creating a positive atmosphere following the game. Our approaches in creating a positive fan base are stated below.

a. An emotional/encouraging video from the Auburn football team: Since our research focuses on strengths and virtues, we decided to implement an inspiring video from the Auburn football team. In this video, certain players will state what inspires them and what Auburn means to them. According to The Harvard Business Review titled, "Why Inspiration Matters," people who are more inspired in their daily lives will set goals

and, therefore, become more successful (Kaufman). It goes on to say, “the relationship between inspiration and goal progress was reciprocal: goal progress also predicted future goal inspiration” (Kaufman). The first step it mentions is that it is important to use strategic vision to motivate and inspire. Our approach of releasing a video strives to reach a goal of positivity by inspiring others.

b. Incentives for the fan base: Our next approach focuses on how to keep the fan base engaged and how to keep them from leaving the game early. Most people leave due to a blowout game or wanting to go party. We cannot keep people from leaving, but we can add incentives for people to stay the whole game. College students and Auburn fans adore famous alumni. Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, is a graduate of Auburn University. As an incentive to stay the entire game, we would conduct a drawing for people who attend the game and stay the whole time. The prize would be up to ten people receiving a free iPhone and data plan from Apple. For efficiency purposes, an app could be installed to collect the fans’ information, but the drawing would occur right after the game. This is a strategic way to keep the fan base to stay the entire game.

c. Social media: It is important for the Auburn fans to have stable and friendly relationships amongst each other. Social media is a strategic tool in networking. According to an article published by *The New York Times*, scientists state that our well-being as individuals correlates with social networks (Parker-Pope NY Times). Dan Buettner, a National Geographic fellow and author, states, “I argue that the most powerful thing you can do to add healthy years is to curate your immediate social network” (Parker-Pope). According to a scholarly journal by Dr. K. R. Subramanian titled, “Influence of Social Media in Interpersonal Communication,” “a positive impact of social networking sites is to unite people on a huge platform for the achievement of some specific objective.” He also mentions how important this is to bring “positive change to society” (Subramanian 73). Our goal in social media is to create positive posts on specific networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. This will provide mutually beneficial relationships between our organization (Auburn football) and our public(s).

The Issue: Long Lines and the Heat

Auburn home football games can occur any time during the season. Currently, Auburn hosts four consecutive home games all in the month of September. As we know, the South boasts hot weather and avid college football fans. With this comes high temperatures and long lines. It is our job to provide comfort and efficiency to the Auburn fan base before and during football games. These are some of the ways to accomplish our goal.

- a. Providing more free water stations
- b. Opening more entryways
- c. Cooling fan/mist stations

a. Providing more free water stations: Auburn University already attempts to increase water consumption by setting up water stations around the stadium. Although this attempt helps fans consume more water, Auburn University should hire workers to walk around with free water in plastic cups for tailgating fans. This would ensure to keep the tailgating college football fans more hydrated on a less expensive level.

b. Opening more entryways: Auburn University has a limited number of entryways into Jordan-Hare Stadium, which causes for massive line build-up while entering the stadium. If Auburn University provided more entryways into the stadium, the wait-in-line time would be much less. Long lines discourage fans from entering the stadium, as they do not want to wait in line for 30+ minutes. The addition of new entryways will also increase the number of seats available for students. In our own personal experience, we have found Jordan-Hare Stadium to lack a certain number of seats for its student fan base. The installation of new entryways will improve multiple issues.

c. Cooling fan/mist stations: Auburn University needs to install “cooling stations” around the green space for tailgaters to cool off if they are feeling too hot. Dehydration is a serious issue, especially for fans of a southern college football team. The installation of cooling stations would keep fans from becoming dehydrated, and it would make them enjoy their game day experience more since it provides a place to go to “cool down.”

The Issue: Finances

While focusing on the issue of finances, Auburn University should spend more time on planning fundraisers to provide opportunities for avid Auburn football fans to come to a game. These fundraisers should create positive relationships between Auburn University football and its potential fan base and its current fan base. These fundraisers will be heavily captured on social media so the followers of Auburn University college football can see the positive impact and relationships being formed.

Fundraiser one: This fundraiser would target elementary students. Whichever classroom collects the most canned food items for the Beat Bama food drive will get free tickets to a home Auburn University SEC football game.

Fundraiser two: Our other fundraiser focuses on high school football teams in the state of Alabama. Any high school football team can apply to compete in a fundraising competition to help raise money for Disabled Sports USA, which is an organization that improves the lives of wounded warriors, youth, and adults with disabilities by providing sports and recreation opportunities (Disabled Sports USA). The team that wins the competition will get to tour Auburn’s athletic facility, meet staff members, eat at the Wellness Kitchen, and be featured at an Auburn home football game. This is also good public relations for students who plan to attend Auburn University.

Justification for Primary Research

All three areas of our secondary research, positive attitudes after a loss, long lines and the hot temperature outside, and the finances, call for primary research. It is important to understand the views of Auburn University's college football fan base. Regarding attitudes after a loss: Do they have negative attitudes toward their team after a loss? Are they satisfied with how they feel about Auburn University football at all times? Do they feel included in Auburn University football even after a major loss? Regarding long waiting lines and the hot temperature outside: How does the temperature outside affect an Auburn University football fan's attendance to the game? How long does an Auburn University football fan typically spend in line while waiting to get into the stadium? Have Auburn football fans ever gone home and left the game due to the heat and line lengths? Regarding finances: Would fans be willing to attend fundraisers in support of Auburn University football? Answers to these questions will provide important information, as the opinions of Auburn University's college football fan base are crucial to building a positive relationship between Auburn football and its publics. Positive relationships are the main factor in a successful college football program. This research would be almost unreliable without the thoughts from Auburn University's college football fan base.

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Overview and purpose:

The problems/issues that revolve around Auburn University college football and its fan base, such as keeping a positive attitude after the loss of a game, long waiting times in line while dealing with the hot temperatures outside, and finances affect anyone who is a fan of Auburn University college football. Overall, we wanted to see if this topic was something the students of Auburn University were passionate about and if we were dealing with an active public. After sitting down with a select group of students who attend Auburn University, we found that all of our participants cared about the issue. After confirming that we were dealing with an active public, we wanted to allow the students to speak their own opinions, as well as let them brainstorm and come up with their own solutions to the problems/issues that arise concerning Auburn University college football and its fan base. Allowing our participants to work together to figure out solutions to the issues was something incredible to witness.

Our focus group interviews contained very in-depth, passionate, informative, creative, and unique conversations between the participants. Conducting a focus group like we did was much more efficient because a survey would have been too brief and would not have produced the results we were trying to obtain. The participants we selected communicated well among each other, and they developed a creative and unique environment through their conversations. Our focus group was much more productive than an in-depth interview because it allowed ourselves and our participants to interact among each other and come up with ideas together. Since the topic—Auburn University college football—would not create a change without the voices of current students being heard, our goal was to gather as much information as we could. If all of Auburn University college football's fan base was content with game day, then there would not be any issues. For that reason, a focus group being conducted in a space where our participants felt comfortable to voice their opinions was necessary for our research to continue.

Participants and procedures:

The participants chosen were students of Auburn University. Specifically, four students with an interest and who attended Auburn football games were selected. Each member of the Sporty Gals team recruited people within their own sphere of influence. The participants were recruited by asking friends if they attended Auburn football games and would be interested in a focus group interview about their opinions on anything that can improve the game day experience. The participants for this study were all students at Auburn University and had attended an Auburn football game. The hometowns for all the participants were places in Alabama. The focus group interview took place Sunday evening in Holly Bostick's apartment, and the interview lasted 40 minutes with the four participants. The interview was recorded in order to gather proper quotes from participants. The participants did not have any material to look at while the interview

was being conducted. A brief description of the topic was given to the participants prior to the interview, so they could be prepared to share their thoughts about their game day experiences.

Findings:

During the interview, we took notes and filmed the discussion for specific statements made by the participants. Every participant was between the ages of 20-22, and they were all Auburn students. One of our opening questions was how many home games each participant had attended this season. We wanted to understand how involved our participants were with Auburn football. Half of the group members had only attended one home game, the third member had attended three games, and the fourth member had attended four home games. We sorted the quantitative research by stating that half of the members were minimally involved, and the other half were heavily involved. One of the topics of concern that came up during the discussion was safety following football games. Participant two stated, "I was with someone who caught the stomach virus and Auburn University employees wouldn't help us get her to our car and help get her home." One of the shyer group members agreed with the fact that Auburn should implement cheap take-home services for fans. The pattern of drunk fans and expensive concession food came up in discussion a lot. We came up with the idea that students should get free refills for drinks and that there should be stricter rules enforcing sober policies during a game. Participant one stated, "I don't think they should allow drunk people in the games. They can ruin my experience altogether." We concluded that drunk people should not enter the game. There were a wide range of topics that the participants mentioned when we asked, "Can you all please tell me what could have been done to make the game day better for you?" The answers ranged from not allowing drunk people in games to having a better football team and offering prizes for students. In terms of recent implementations that Auburn has offered, the participants mentioned they like the jumbotron and free shakers.

Another way we collected data was to ask the participants their internal feelings and external actions following a loss. In terms of internal feelings, they experienced annoyance, sadness, indifference, and disappointment. One of the participants said, "I am an Alabama fan, so I could care less." It was interesting to analyze this participant's nonverbal cues. She seemed to care less about the whole topic, and she covered her face when speaking, which we found interesting. Her tone was low and indifferent. In terms of external responses, most of the members said they do not act out on their emotions, but they have witnessed other fans become aggressive with their words and actions following a loss. We followed this question up with a probing question asking what enhances their mood during game day. They said that buffalo dip and the tiger walk can enhance their mood on game day. One last way we collected data was asking, "On a scale of 1-10 how upset are you following an Auburn football loss?" The answers recorded were 1, 1, 4, and 7. We concluded that most Auburn students are either really connected to Auburn football or not connected at all.

We ended the focus group interview by asking the members to come up with a creative idea for Auburn staff to implement to make the college game day experience better. Two of the participants said that providing refills would enhance the game day experience. The other two highlighted the fact that there should be more fan interaction during the games. For example, participant four said, "A random student being highlighted on the field for good grades. They could be put in a 'pool' and get a free pass to the game or win a prize. The friends for that student would feel pride for their friend as well. I think everyone would like to have an Auburn bobble head or something to remember the game." Another participant said that they should have an Aubie meet and greet and photo booth for Auburn students. The data was collected by quantitative answers and qualitative answers. We believe both methods needed to be used in collecting data. The major theme of the session was, "Auburn provides great service, but there could be more implemented to improve the attitudes of Auburn fans."

Interpretations:

Our findings determined that there needs to be changes to create positive and caring Auburn football fans. We realized that we not only want to create positivity, but also a sense of connection to the Auburn football team. Half of the participants mentioned that they did not care at all after a loss. Our next step in this project should focus on ways to get Auburn students to actually care about the football game, but also be positive following losses. In terms of providing new ideas, the participants did a great job with brainstorming ideas that could be implemented during game days. For example, providing refills, photo booths, student spotlights, and prizes were some of the ideas. Our next call for action is to brainstorm ideas of ways to get students to care and then come up with the structure of how to implement the features listed in our focus group interview. It is also important for us to reach out to a larger fan base and collect more data, so we can have a better generalization.

SURVEY REPORT

Overview and Purpose:

After conducting our focus group, we realized that many students at Auburn University had strong feelings about Auburn University college football and the issues as to why they sometimes do not feel positive towards the team and university. They were particularly passionate about these few topics: positive attitudes after a loss, long lines and the hot temperatures, and financial issues regarding Auburn University college football. After reaching this conclusion, we found that conducting a survey was necessary to gather our information and expand our results. Through our survey, we reached out to about 100 Auburn University students and allowed them to answer questions we had provided for them.

The objective of our survey was to expand our data by reaching out to a larger population of students who attend Auburn University. We hope to use this data to create a positive change for Auburn University college football. The survey we provided allowed students to anonymously answer questions – making a survey anonymous makes students feel more comfortable to answer the questions honestly. The survey we created was made so students could be open and honest with their answers. We created this survey through Qualtrics, and students had easy access to the survey through their cell phones and computers.

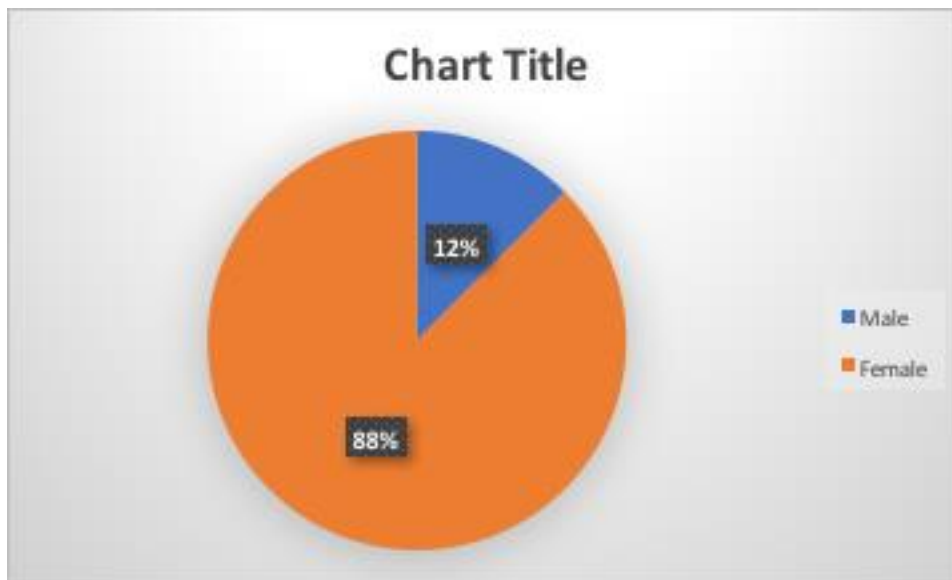
Sampling and Data Collection Procedures:

Our population of interest for our survey was similar to that of our focus group. We attempted to have Auburn University students answer the questions because Auburn home football games primarily affect students. We also had a few recent graduates because they still attend Auburn home football games. We chose to do nonprobability sampling. This form of sampling is based on convenience and availability and does not give all the individuals in the population equal chances of being selected because we did not have access to the entire population. We did snowball sampling because we recruited our participants from our own acquaintances. We believed this was the best way to distribute the survey easily. This sample is appropriate for our survey because Auburn University students are the audience affected by Auburn home football games. Participants were recruited by sending the survey out to friends and peers through texts and GroupMe text messages. We also posted on social media apps such as Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat in order to get a variety of responses. We reached out to class members to take the survey, as well. We started collecting data on November 9, 2018, and finished on November 20, 2018. The survey took place on a program called Qualtrics via our Auburn access pages. We had 111 responses to our survey. Participants took the questionnaire via their own personal laptop or smartphone through a link that we distributed. Overall, the survey took 5-10 minutes to complete.

Description of Participants:

In our survey, the major participants were Auburn students and a few recent graduates. The reasoning behind this demographic was because the questions were geared toward Auburn students and their experience at the football games and in the student section. We knew that focusing on this age range and the requirement of being an Auburn student would allow us to obtain the most accurate data. The requirement of being an Auburn student also kept the age range narrower.

There were 12.5 percent male participants in the survey, and there were 87.5 percent female participants. A majority, 27.4 percent, of the participants were 21 years of age, which provided insight on experiences over a four-year period. Another important part of our participant requirements was if they attend or have attended an Auburn football game. It is an important part of our demographics, since we want our results to be clear and accurate.



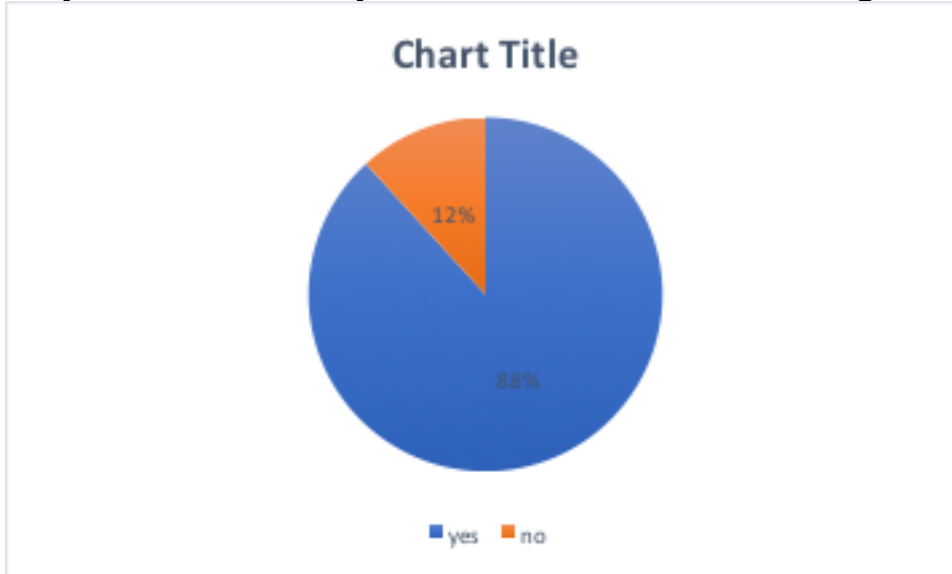
Results: After we collected our responses, the next step was to conduct the SPSS descriptive statistics. This provided us with the comparisons of the differences in answers by participants. We identified independent variables and analyzed the results. The variables included demographics, game attendances, game day experiences, the “Auburn family,” personal Auburn connections, attitudes, and opinions. The independent variable was demographics. The other variables listed were dependent variables because their answers depended on different factors. This is when we ran statistical analysis to determine the relationships amongst these variables and how the answers compared and contrasted.

Age demographics: The ages ranged from 17-25, the majority of ages being 21. The table in the appendix II shows the data.

Question 1: *Reporting data:* A majority of the respondents (88.2 percent) reported that they have attended an Auburn home football game.

Interpreting data: The finding indicates that a majority of Auburn students have attended at least one Auburn home football game.

Do you attend or have you attended an Auburn football game?



Question 2: *Reporting data:* A majority of the respondents reported that they agreed (32.6 percent) and strongly agreed (41.1 percent) that Auburn home football games always create a positive atmosphere.

Interpreting data: The finding indicates that 73.7 percent of participants at some level agreed that Auburn home football games always create a positive atmosphere.

Question 3: *Reporting data:* Of the respondents, 25.3 percent somewhat agreed that Auburn staff members really listen to what they have to say, 23.2 percent reported that they neither agreed nor disagreed, and 14.7 percent reported that they disagreed.

Interpreting data: The finding indicates that $\frac{1}{4}$ of the respondents somewhat agreed that Auburn staff members accommodate students' requests, and a little less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. A pretty good percentage (14.7 percent) of people stated that they do not believe staff members listen to what they have to say.

Question 4: *Reporting data:* A total of 57.9 percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt like the Auburn family is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to them, and 10.6 percent of respondents either disagreed or somewhat disagreed that they felt like the Auburn family is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to them.

Interpreting data: The finding indicates that a little over half of the respondents think that the Auburn family is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to them, but 14 percent neither agreed nor disagreed, and 1/10 of the respondents disagreed.

Question 5: *Reporting data:* The findings show that 41.5 percent of participants stated that they are happy with Auburn home football games, 29.8 percent are very happy, and 10.7 percent replied that they are dissatisfied on some level with Auburn home football games.

Interpreting data: A majority of students are happy with Auburn home football games, but there is still a good bit of people who are not happy with home football games.

Question 6: *Reporting data:* The answers to this particular question had a pretty even amount of percentages in each section. A total of 27 percent of respondents reported that they neither agreed nor disagreed that Auburn University should take game days more seriously and take more actions to prevent issues, 19 percent agreed, 12.4 percent somewhat agreed, 14.6 percent somewhat disagreed, and 12.4 percent disagreed.

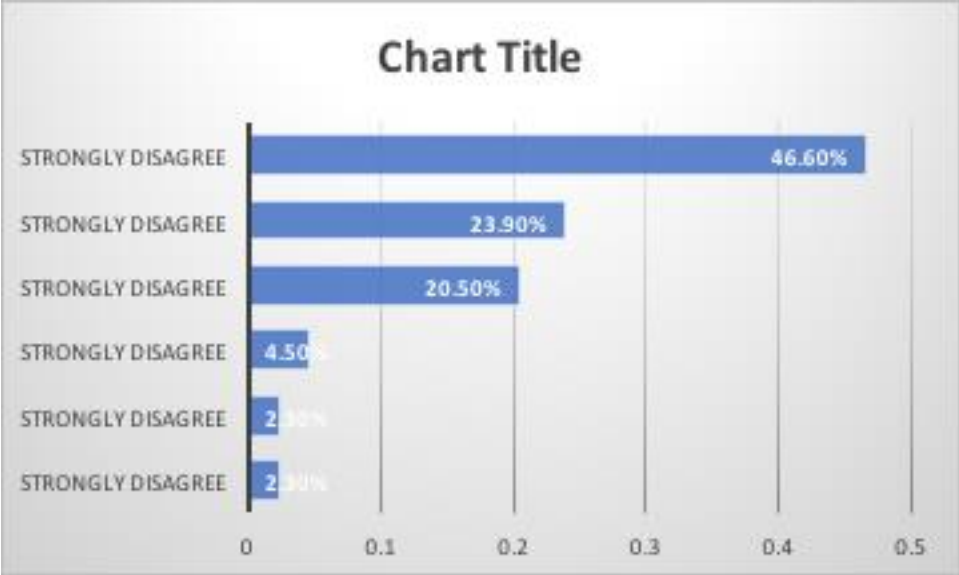
Interpreting data: The finding indicates that Auburn students vary in their opinions when it comes to whether they think Auburn University should take game days more seriously and take more actions to prevent issues.

Question 7: “I realized a strong connection between Auburn football and my happiness.” *Reporting data:* The majority of participants (24.7 percent) agreed to this statement, 16.9 percent neither agreed nor disagreed, and 13.5 percent strongly agreed.

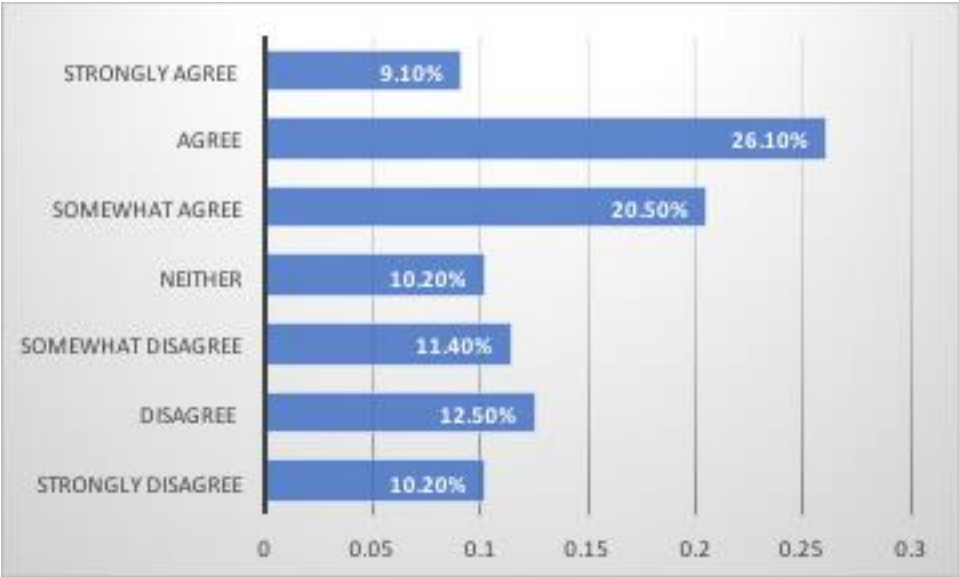
Question 8: “I feel that my opinion would help to prevent game day issues.” *Reporting data:* Of the participants, 8 percent strongly disagreed, 10.2 percent disagreed, 5.7 percent somewhat disagreed, 34.1 percent neither disagreed nor agreed, 23.9 percent somewhat agreed, 13.6 percent agreed, and 4.5 percent strongly agreed.

Interpreting data: 3/10 of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed about their opinions and about 36 percent of the participants agreed that their opinion would help prevent game day issues.

Question 9: “I would say good things to friends and neighbors about positive aspects of Auburn University home football games.” For this specific question, we decided to conduct a graph to show the results.



Question 10: “I would talk to people about the problems of Auburn University football regarding game day issues.” *Reporting data:* We noticed an evenly distributed result pattern for this particular question, so we devised a chart for this question.



Implications and Recommendations for Communication Strategies:

The purpose of this survey was to get student feedback on Auburn University's home football game day experience. Most participants agreed that Auburn home football games are a positive environment. Participants had many opinions when asked what Auburn could do to make the game days more enjoyable.

The results imply that a majority of students feel satisfied at Auburn home football games, but they have recommendations of how to improve the game day experience. Of the 33 participants who gave additional suggestions, one participant pointed out a major issue that should be addressed. The participant is bound to a wheelchair and shared the frustrations of being in the student section while in a wheelchair. Upon entering the stadium, the participant was not allowed to bring in a medical bag. Also, since the student section is so crowded, the participant was not able to sit in a spot designed for someone in a wheelchair. Implementing a change for this participant and similar students is a priority. We should install handicap accessible seating for Auburn University students so they can have a more positive game day experience.

Another focus of the campaign would be to address the current ticketing and points system. Four of our survey participants addressed the points system that subtracts points and penalizes students for not attending games. Two participants specifically addressed their frustration with possible penalty points. Addressing these requests and concerns will play a major role in planning a public relations campaign. Our strategy would be to take away the point system based on the requests from participants. This would increase the relationship between Auburn University and the students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our research mainly focused on collecting information on how Auburn University students feel about Auburn University college football. At the beginning of our research process, we found that during our focus group interview there were several common issues students discussed. These issues pertained to positive attitudes after a loss, long lines and the heat, and finances involving Auburn University college football.

Throughout our research, we also found that there are some aspects on game day that the Auburn University students did not have an issue, specifically how they felt after an Auburn University college football win, the atmosphere when they tailgated, and how they feel as a part of the school when they go to the game.

After speaking with our focus group, we did not feel like enough information had been gathered to release our results to the public. Thus, we decided that we still needed to gather more information about how Auburn University students really felt about Auburn college football game day. The reasoning behind this was because we wanted to reach out more to our target audience and what their thoughts and feelings were on our topic.

We decided to conduct an online survey with Qualtrics.com in hopes to continue our research. After releasing the survey to Auburn University students, the findings we collected were very helpful.

The results that came from the survey appeared very similar to the results of the focus group. The only different is that we went from four participants in a focus group to over 100 opinions from other Auburn University students.

As a result, we can positively say that throughout the research process we now can understand the opinions of our publics, which was Auburn University students. We now know their wants, their needs, and their struggles with Auburn University college football.

Appendix I

FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT AND TRANSCRIPTION

Good evening, and welcome to our focus group session. Thank you all for taking time out of your evening to join our discussion about Auburn University college football. Our discussion will assess the issues that people are aware of between Auburn University college football and its fan base. Our names are Mollie Carter, Preslie Gifford, Holly Bostick, and Susannah Marttila; we are students in Dr. Chon's PR Research Class at Auburn University.

We want to hear you all voice your own opinions about how you view Auburn University college football. Each of you were selected by us because of your background and knowledge of Auburn University college football. We want to begin our research with you all because of your familiarity with the sport on game day, and we want to hear about each of your experiences.

Today, we will be discussing your opinions and thoughts on Auburn University college football and your experiences on game day, after game day has ended, and much more. Based on the discussion of our focus group, a cultural survey will be created and used to collect more information on your own experiences associated with the sport football. There are no right or wrong answers, just different points of view from each participant. Please feel free to share your own opinion even if it is different from what other participants may think. Remember that we are just as interested in negative commentary as we are in positive commentary.

Before we start our focus group discussion, let us suggest some ideas that will make this discussion more productive. Please speak up so we can hear you, but only one person should speak at a time. We're taping and typing this focus group session because we do not want to miss any of the comments that were said. We will be on a first name basis, but in our report, we will not include any names attached to the comments said. You will stay anonymous in our written report. If anyone wishes to withdraw, please do so now.

My position here is to ask you all questions and listen to what you have to say. I will not be participating in the conversation, but please feel free to talk amongst yourselves. I will ask you all about 10 questions, and I will be moving the discussion from question to question. Some questions will require more input than others. It is important that we hear from each of you this evening because you all have had different experiences in regard to Auburn University college football. So, if one of you is sharing too much, I may interrupt and ask you to please let others talk, but if you are not saying much, I may ask you to state your opinion.

Let us begin by finding out some facts about each other by going around the group. Participant 1 let's start with you. Tell us something about yourself that is not related to school and something that gives us an idea as to who you are.

Participant 1: I'm 20 years old and from Andalusia, Ala.

Participant 2: I'm 22 and I'm from Clanton, Ala.

Participant 3: I'm 22 and I'm from Andalusia, Ala.

Participant 4: I'm from Montgomery, Ala.

Moderator: Thank you all for introducing yourself. I am now going to begin with asking the questions for this focus group. I can't wait to hear y'all's opinions.

Moderator: Have you ever attended Auburn University college football games?

All participants: **yes**

Moderator: How often do you attend games during the season?

Participant 4: It depends on how we are doing

Participant 1: one game

Participant 3: one game

Participant 2: three games

Participant 4: four games

Moderator: Thank you for your input everybody. Now onto the next question. Can you please tell me about a game day experience that ended badly for you?

Participant 4: Well usually, if Auburn loses, I consider that a bad day. I left the LSU game after the first quarter because of the heat. It definitely plays a part on my game day experience. If the team is doing badly, I also leave sooner

Participant 3: I got ketchup on me during the game and I was pretty mad. I wish Auburn had some wet wipes, so I could use.

Participant 2: I was with someone who caught the stomach virus and Auburn University employees wouldn't help us get her to our car and help get her home.

Participant 3: I had to walk home in the dark, and no cops or Auburn employees offered to give me a ride home.

Participant 4: Going to the concession stand is a pain because the lines are so long.

Participant 1: The only bad thing that has ever happened to me is dealing with the drunk loud people around me. That type of atmosphere made the game very unpleasant.

Moderator: Can you all please tell me what could have been done to make the bad game day situation better for you?

Participant 4: Have a better football team in any way possible.

Participant 3: There is not much that makes me want to stay at the football game.

Participant 4: I wish they offered prizes to students during the game. That would give me an incentive to stay when we are losing a football game.

Participant 1: I don't think they should allow drunk people in the games. They can ruin my experience altogether.

Moderator: So far, as a student at Auburn University, what has Auburn implemented to improve your game day experiences?

Participant 4: The only thing I can think of is the jumbotron. They also have a DJ that plays music during the games as well. The DJ is a really cool addition to the stadium. The jumbotron also gives off a shadow, which helps with the heat

Participant 2: They provide charging stations, which come in handy when my phone is dying.

Participant 1: I noticed they provided handheld fans for students and fans of the football games.

Moderator: Can you please say how you express your feelings after a win and a loss?

Participant 1: I am sad when we lose. When you walk out of the stadium after a loss, it is upsetting, but I get over it pretty quickly.

Participant 2: When we lose, it is annoying because social media makes me annoyed talking about how bad we did.

Participant 3: I am an Alabama fan, so I could care less.

Participant 4: It definitely affects my mood the rest of the weekend. When you go to a school with a 'powerhouse' football team, you get your hopes up to win, and it is disappointing when we lose.

Participant 4: Wins are fun. It is completely different, and the entire atmosphere changes. You celebrate with your friends, and it is exciting.

Participant 2: After a win, you have bragging rights, and I love it.

Moderator: What specific external actions do you possess following an Auburn football loss?

Participant 1: I feel like it is less of me being in a bad mood, but other people that care more than me will be in a bad mood, and it ruins the environment around you after a while.

Participant 4: I will feel angry, but I do not take it out on anyone or anything. I'm sure we have all seen people who care more and express their feelings differently like fights, throwing things, tantrums. That shows how deep people care for Auburn Football.

Moderator: Please describe what factors enhance your mood during your game day, such as music, food, etc.

Participant 2: My favorite part is tailgating. I love buffalo chicken dip.

Participant 1: I really like the Tiger Walk before the game.

Moderator: How can we make the Tiger Walk a more fan based centered atmosphere?

Participant 1: I think they could give an incentive to go, like prizes.

Moderator: What specific factors annoy you during your college game day experience that does not involve the football team?

Participant 2: Drunk people annoy me

Participant 4: Obnoxious opposing fans and obnoxious Auburn fans as well. The weather also plays a major part.

Moderator: On a scale of 1-10 how upset are you following an Auburn football loss?

Participant 2: 1

Participant 1: 4

Participant 3: 1

Participant 4: 6 or 7. For example, our loss against Tennessee, that was a solid 6. It's at our home field and losing to an unranked team is frustrating.

Moderator: Are there any specific ideas that you are passionate about implementing for football games that would create a more positive atmosphere?

Participant 2: For younger kids, they could host meet and greets with the players and Aubie. They are like celebrities for these kids.

Participant 4: A random student being highlighted on the field for good grades. They could be put in a 'pool' and get a free pass to the game or win a prize. The friends for that student would feel pride for their friend as well. I think everyone would like to have an Auburn bobble head or something to remember the game.

Participant 3: I think you should get refills at concession stands. I am thirsty, and it is frustrating not getting to refill a drink I paid 6\$ for. Or even a photo booth for people to take pictures with.

Participant 1: I feel like getting refills would improve my game day experience.

Moderator: Thank you all for participating. We really appreciate you taking the time out of your evening to contribute to our research

APPENDIX II

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Hello, I am a student in the school of communication and journalism, Auburn University. I am currently conducting a survey of students' perceptions regarding the Auburn University football game day experience. I'd like to ask you a few questions. The survey should only take about 10 minutes.

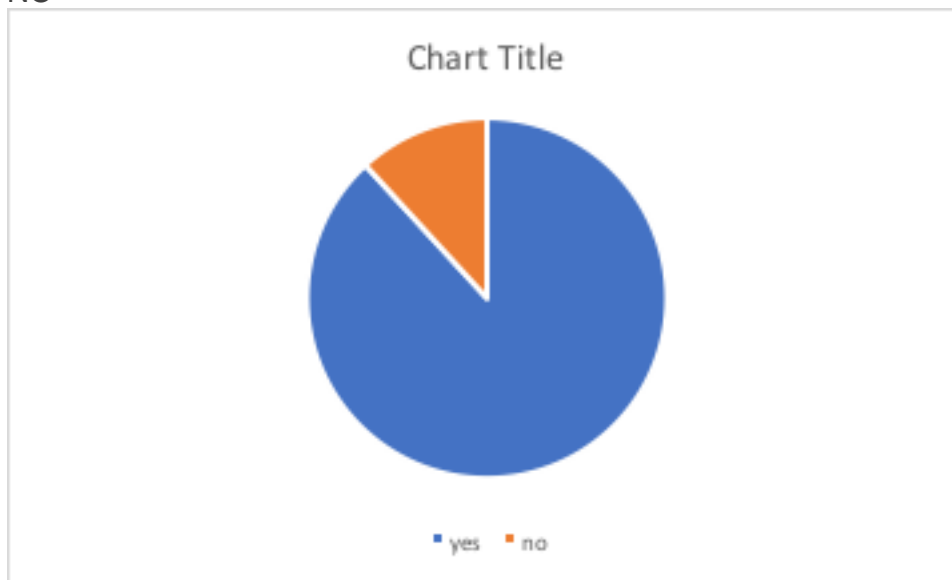
YES

NO

Do you attend or have you attended an Auburn football game?

YES

NO



The following questions are asking about your relationship with Auburn University football game days. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements using the provided 1-7 scale, 1 representing "Strongly Disagree" and 7 representing "Strongly Agree."

Auburn University home football games always create a positive atmosphere.

Auburn staff members really listen to what people like me have to say about game day.

I feel that the Auburn family is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me.

I am happy with Auburn home football games.

Auburn University game days come with several issues for students and their game day experience. Living in Alabama, the extreme heat at the beginning of the football season can hinder students from enjoying the game. Also, when the Auburn football team is losing, students tend to leave the game early. From dealing with the heat to losing in a football game, Auburn fans tend to become discouraged. Here are a few questions that focus on personal opinions.

Auburn University should take game days more seriously and take more actions to prevent issues.

I realized a strong connection between Auburn football and my happiness.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	8	7.1	9.0	9.0
	Disagree	8	7.1	9.0	18.0
	Somewhat disagree	8	7.1	9.0	27.0
	Neither agree nor disagree	15	13.3	16.9	43.8
	Somewhat agree	16	14.2	18.0	61.8
	Agree	22	19.5	24.7	86.5
	Strongly agree	12	10.6	13.5	100.0

I feel that my opinion would help to prevent game day issues.

Valid	Strongly disagree	7	6.2	8.0	8.0
	Disagree	9	8.0	10.2	18.2

	Somewhat disagree	5	4.4	5.7	23.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	30	26.5	34.1	58.0
	Somewhat agree	21	18.6	23.9	81.8
	Agree	12	10.6	13.6	95.5
	Strongly agree	4	3.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	88	77.9	100.0	
Missing	System	25	22.1		

I would say good things to friends and neighbors about positive aspects of Auburn University football game days.

Valid	Strongly disagree	2	1.8	2.3	2.3
	Somewhat disagree	2	1.8	2.3	4.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	4	3.5	4.5	9.1
	Somewhat agree	18	15.9	20.5	29.5
	Agree	21	18.6	23.9	53.4
	Strongly agree	41	36.3	46.6	100.0
	Total	88	77.9	100.0	
Missing	System	25	22.1		

Total	113	100.0		
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I would talk to people about the problems of Auburn University football regarding game day issues.

Valid	Strongly disagree	9	8.0	10.2	10.2
	Disagree	11	9.7	12.5	22.7
	Somewhat disagree	10	8.8	11.4	34.1
	Neither agree nor disagree	9	8.0	10.2	44.3
	Somewhat agree	18	15.9	20.5	64.8
	Agree	23	20.4	26.1	90.9
	Strongly agree	8	7.1	9.1	100.0
	Total	88	77.9	100.0	
Missing	System	25	22.1		
Total		113	100.0		

Do you have any idea or opinion about current issues regarding Auburn University football game day?

What is your gender?

MALE

FEMALE

How old are you?

Valid	25	22.1	22.1	22.1
17	1	.9	.9	23.0
18	3	2.7	2.7	25.7
19	13	11.5	11.5	37.2
20	17	15.0	15.0	52.2
21	31	27.4	27.4	79.6
22	12	10.6	10.6	90.3
23	3	2.7	2.7	92.9
24	1	.9	.9	93.8
25	1	.9	.9	94.7



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