

Investigating How the NFL Network Uses Social Media to Increase Fan Engagement

Final Report

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PRCM 4400-003: Public Relations Research
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April 25, 2024



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Significance of Topic

Our group chose this topic as we felt that the NFL's popularity has had a major resurgence this past season. We felt that since we were part of the group of people that were not used to seeing the NFL's social media, and then suddenly were seeing multiple posts frequently throughout the previous season, we were fascinated with how social media played such a big role in people's interest and awareness of the NFL. Therefore, we decided to research how the NFL uses social media to increase fan engagement.

Overall Purpose

NFL Network is a huge company that influences so many factors nationally and internationally. They contribute to so much of our culture, society and daily lives. Whether it be on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook or X, you are bound to see their content. The overall purpose of this research study was to understand and investigate where NFL Network holds its strengths and weaknesses with social media. We want to know who their primary audience is, where their audience is most active and how they can further reach out to their audience. We conducted secondary research, a focus group interview and a survey to gather this information and reach a conclusion. Investigating how the NFL Network uses social media to increase their fan engagement helps us understand how they can increase game attendance and television views.

Major Findings in Secondary Research

While conducting our secondary research, we found that there are many factors that play into the NFL Network's success and their fan engagement. They use social media tactics like hashtags that get fans to collaborate with them and use the hashtags to create traffic. We researched the new fandom with Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce dating and how that is driving new fans to watch games. We also looked into their TikTok account, X account and Instagram account. By researching these and understanding the different types of audiences that follow and engage back, we can better understand how they can continue to improve their engagement with fans across platforms.

Major Findings in FGI

The focus group interview served to analyze the NFL Network's social media usage and engagement strategies with Generation Z, who serve as the bulk of their online audience. Participants of the FGI were members of Generation Z who varied in terms of NFL consumption and social media participation. Several major findings prevailed proceeding the FGI, primarily how the FGI segments its audience. The participants revealed they primarily engage with NFL Network's Instagram, X, and TikTok accounts, consistent with the fact that these are their generation's most frequented apps. The FGI revealed how the NFL network is leveraging these account's for different purposes based on the app's demographics. For example, the NFL Instagram features in-depth analysis appealing to seasoned fans, while TikTok targets a newer audience with trending content like Taylor and Travis Kelce's famous relationship. Recognizing these preferences allows the NFL Network to tailor campaigns effectively, evident in their emphasis on platforms popular among Gen Z, like Instagram and TikTok, during events such as the Super Bowl.

Another major finding of the FGI was the short-term and long-term engagement strategies. Participants revealed they are most frequently exposed to NFL Network posts during important events in the NFL, such as the draft, Super Bowl and major games. NFL network frequently posts real-time informational posts to sustain a short-term audience during these times. Many of the participants revealed they were briefly exposed to the NFL Network when these accounts participated in viral social media trends. However, the NFL's commitment to long-term engagement was evident through initiatives like streaming on Nickelodeon, fostering a sense of community among younger generations. All of the participants were aware of the steps the NFL Network is taking to increase life-long online engagement. This proactive approach to social media engagement reflects the NFL Network's dedication to staying relevant and increasing brand visibility amongst younger users.

Major Findings in Survey

The survey conducted by researchers at Auburn University served to investigate the effectiveness of the NFL's social media strategies in engaging individuals aged 19-22 years olds. The major findings of the survey revealed the participants primarily engage with the NFL Network on Instagram and Tik Tok. Instagram prevailed as the preferred platform for NFL-related information while Facebook was determined to be the least used site. This implies that the NFL Network should be focusing their campaign and image efforts to Instagram, rather than Facebook or X, to most effectively reach their target audience, Gen Z.

Another major finding of the survey revealed that while a significant number of participants are aware of or follow NFL Network accounts, a segment is disengaged. This highlights the need for increased content which both retains current followers and attracts new ones. Social media strategies should include a balance of extensive game insights for knowledgeable fans and introductory content for newcomers.

The survey also informs researchers of the importance of strategic campaigns that align with current social media trends and major events. Through strategic content that informs the public, strategic partnerships with influencers that resonate with current and potential consumers and interactive campaigns such as giveaways, the NFL Network can effectively engage its audience, expand its reach, and enhance brand awareness.

Overall Implications

Our overall implications have shown us that social media does in fact play a major role in fan engagement for the NFL. We found that Instagram and Tiktok are typically the most popular forms of social media and apply to Gen Z and Millennial audiences because these younger generations largely rely on social media to give them information regarding the NFL. We also found that the NFL uses their social media to increase fan engagement with different publics ranging from huge NFL fans to people with little to no interest in the NFL by tailoring their social media posts to these different publics. We believe that this is the main reason the NFL had such success in social media the past season because not only were they posting content having to do with the NFL like teams, players, and games, but they were also creating social media having to do with current trends and audience interests like Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce, the Super Bowl, etc.

SECONDARY RESEARCH REPORT

Introduction

NFL Network, owned and operated by the National Football League, is the sport-oriented media company focused primarily on professional football streaming. NFL Network is a part of NFL Media which also includes NFL.com, NFL Films, NFL Mobile, NFL Now and NFL RedZone. According to Fortune magazine, NFL regular season games average 17.9 million views via NFL Network TV channel (Reedy, 2024). Apart from regular streaming services, NFL network utilizes social media channels including Instagram, Facebook, X and Tik Tok to reach football fans across the world. In an effort to better understand effective entertainment public relations strategies, our team chose to investigate how the NFL Network uses social media to increase fan engagement.

Although younger generations may not watch live NFL games, many utilize social media for player and game updates, sweepstakes and season announcements. Therefore, it is extremely important that NFL Network ensures they are appealing to their target audience. To investigate if the NFL Network social media accounts are engaging effectively with their online audience, we need to ask tactful questions. Our guiding research questions are: how can the NFL increase fan engagement using social media, has the NFL utilized the growth of social media for their benefit or have they fallen behind, has the NFL attracted new audiences through social media, what are some specific ways the NFL is using social media and how has Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift's relationship improved fan engagement? To ensure we conduct thorough research, we will be focusing our research to NFL engagement on X, Instagram, Tik Tok and Facebook. It is crucial that we answer these questions to get an understanding of how the NFL Network is currently using their accounts and to investigate if their tactics are successful.

Publics

The NFL (National Football League) engages with various key publics on their multiple social media platforms to reach its audience and stakeholders. A majority of the people that make up these key publics are part of Gen Z or are Millennials, as they make up the largest part of social media users. Our research will consist of Generation Z because they are the primary audience on our designated social media networks and make up the main demographic of our research which is to be conducted on a college campus. One of the primary key publics would be the fans who follow the NFL's social media accounts to stay updated with players, teams, highlights, and news about the organization. They are responsible for the engagement, discussions, shares, and fandom across the multiple platforms. More key publics would include the people who don't necessarily follow the NFL but are interested in current events happening in the NFL and therefore have viewed the NFL's social media posts. This could include people who become a part of the NFL's social media algorithm because they have shown interest in things like the Super Bowl, Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce, a specific team or player, etc. The players and teams within the NFL also function as key publics as they are the main reason for amplifying fan engagement for the NFL's social accounts. Lastly other key publics for the NFL's social media engagement could include media outlets, journalists, and sponsors as they are working to promote the NFL in different ways.

Background Research and Literature Review

NFL Network has utilized the growth of social media to engage with their fans and even bring more audiences into following the NFL. They have grown on Tiktok, X, Instagram, and more social media outlets through posting entertaining content, commenting on posts, and staying up to date with the trends. Many studies have found the NFL increasing with fan engagement and relevance to younger audiences and other audiences that do not usually engage with NFL football.

Social Media Tactics

One tactic that the NFL has utilized is hashtags. They recognized that hashtags can create more engagement and can catch on for fans to use. One example of a trending hashtag is #TomTuesday. This hashtag was for Tom Brady and would offer fans the opportunity to get signed merchandise depending on how many reposts and uses of the hashtag there are (Bradley, 2018).

Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce

The new power couple, Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce, has created so much engagement for NFL Network on many media channels. With Taylor Swift attending Chiefs games, viewer ratings have been up and the Swifties are watching. NFL Network has also posted many Tik Toks showing off the couple (Blatt & Paris, 2024). With Taylor Swift becoming so popular as she attended many big NFL games throughout this season, this allowed for the NFL to reach a new audience and engage with new fans on social media. While receiving a bit of backlash for putting so much social media focus on Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce this past football season, the NFL has discussed how they change their social media to focus on what's happening around their games and culture. They continued to explain how they saw it as a pop cultural moment to intersect sports and entertainment, as well as engage and grow a new audience. (Thomas, 2023)

TikTok Engagement

With TikTok becoming one of the biggest and most valuable platforms, the NFL has used TikTok in creative ways to increase fan engagement. TikTok is being used as a way to illustrate the value of posting high-quality, frequent, and relevant content to successfully engage with fans and boost followers (Pr Newswire, 2020). One of the more unique ways they have done this the past four years is with TikTok Tailgate at the Super Bowl. The TikTok Tailgate allows the NFL's followers and fans to go on TikTok and watch a livestream of the pre-game tailgate with live performers such as this year's Gwen Stefani, NFL special guests, and other TikTok creators. This experience offers a unique way for the NFL to interact with its social media followers and build fan engagement before its largest event of the year (Nfl, 2024).

X Engagement

NFL teams used to discourage the use of social media for players, because of hate comments and wanting to prevent engagement between the fans and the players. However, since the rise in social media, most players keep X accounts for personal branding and engagement. NFL X accounts have also made it easier for teams to control their image to their audiences. They can quickly address questions and rumors upfront (Mdg, 2011).

Instagram Engagement

According to an online statement published by NFL Network for the Annual Shorty Awards, NFL Network aims to stay social. As social media platforms continue to develop, NFL Networks wants to ensure that they push ahead in developing media, understanding their audience and digital trends (“NFL Network Social Experience”, 2018). The NFL Network currently has 3.9 million Instagram followers. However, according to data gathered from online analytics site, Hype Auditor, the NFL Network averages only 10k likes per post (“Instagram Stats & Analytics for NFL Network (@nflnetwork)”, 2024). It is clear to see when viewing the NFL Network Instagram that their feed primarily consists of user-generated and post-game curated content that do not receive many likes or comments. This insinuates that their account lacks gametime information which is valuable to their target audience.

Research Questions

These questions all relate to the NFL and social media. With the growth of social media, many organizations have had to grow and learn to embrace social media if they are going to last. NFL Network, teams, and players have all learned to do this. They use social media to create fan engagement and boost excitement for past wins or upcoming games. Our questions are connected because they all address how the NFL has used social media. They open the table for secondary research to give us answers on engagement numbers and whether they have truly increased or not. The questions also ask what social media tactics the NFL is using. These questions are all important in the eyes of public relations because they can get the answers that are needed to grow the NFL Network. If social media engagement is not working, then the PR specialists can try another platform or try to appeal to a different audience. By asking these questions, we can better understand who is using what social media platform, if the NFL is doing it correctly, are new audiences being brought in, and what more can be done to continue this trend.

Questions

1. How can the NFL increase fan engagement using social media?
2. Has the NFL utilized the growth of social media for their benefit or have they fallen behind?
3. Has the NFL attracted new audiences through social media?
4. What are some specific ways the NFL is using social media?
5. How has Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift’s relationship improved fan engagement?

Justification for Primary Research

By utilizing social media, the NFL Network has transformed their engagement, following, and relevancy. This research opens up a new area of research on the power of social media. The data and research used to report on social media platforms such as Tik Tok and X, as well as tools on these platforms such as hashtags, we can track what people are interested in and what works, as well as what doesn’t. Allowing for a whole new demographic to become interested in the NFL through the introduction of Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift opens up another opportunity for learning from primary research. This may lead to an increase in interest in sports in general, which would lead to more interaction on social media, and so on and so forth. This information would be valuable, because it can show analytics and give more data on effective social media tactics, in this case, used by the NFL Network. The NFL Network is one of the most

widely-known sports and entertainment broadcasts today, and this information and data on their social media diagnostics is necessary to contribute to and help plan future strategies or campaigns. Conducting FGI interviews was necessary for our research, due to the information the interviews provided. These interviews provided responses that garnered more responsive replies. Our selected group offered a wide range of responses, insights and background feedback, which was vital in our research documentation.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW REPORT

Overview and Purpose

Through our research, we wanted to observe how the NFL Network utilizes social media to interact with fan engagement in order to increase involvement on various platforms.

The NFL has a large following, and utilizes multiple social media platforms, such as Instagram, X (Twitter), and Tik Tok. These platforms are vital to allow interaction between the network and fans of the various teams of which the NFL encompasses.

A focus group was the best way to observe this research, because we were able to pick participants from various backgrounds, in order to get a full spectrum of answers and opinions about the topic at hand. The NFL Network has an incredibly diverse following, so it was important for us to try to get lots of different viewpoints in our research, to get the most accurate results possible.

This research is essential, because the NFL is one of the largest and most influential corporations in today's media. They have a huge following, and have a large sway over the media today, and our society as a whole. In order to discover how they use this influence, we have to first figure out from their audience what it is that they see that impacts how they see and interact with the NFL network and their constituents.

Participants and Procedures

To research NFL Network's use of social media to engage with their audience, we defined our population of interest as users of social media that are familiar with the NFL. The NFL attracts mainly male viewers. Typically, a fan of the NFL will keep up with trades, scores and player updates through social media, by following their preferred team. The users of social media are younger audiences, like the Gen Z and Millennial demographics. With these facts in mind, we thought about participants that we can recruit. We gathered more males than females, because they would be more familiar with the NFL Network on social media and be able to provide more detailed answers to our questions. We gathered a few females to give us insight into their experience with the NFL, being familiar with it, but not an engaged fan. The age range of our participants was between 18-22. This age is very active on social media, especially forums like TikTok, X and Instagram.

One characteristic of our study participants is that they are all students at Auburn University. Each researcher contacted a few friends that could participate in the focus group interview because of time and convenience. The participants we gathered included three males and two females. Choosing these participants made sense for our research, because this age is heavily into social media and would be familiar with NFL Network's engagement and trends.

To conduct the focus group interview, we first designated a location and time. The interview was conducted via Zoom for convenience and time management. It was easy to record using zoom and made it possible to conduct the interview efficiently and effectively. The time was selected based on convenience for the researchers and the participants. We chose to do it later in the afternoon when everyone was done with classes. After deciding the location and time, we were

able to send the Zoom link out to the participants to get the interview started. It was conducted in a professional way, yet casual to make the participants feel comfortable to respond and engage.

Findings

For our first topic we asked participants how often they tend to see posts from the NFL on their social media. We found some people in the focus group only saw posts 1-2 times a day, whereas other people in the group would see posts multiple times throughout the day.

Next we wanted to have a better idea of why the people in the focus group were more likely or less likely to see posts from the NFL based on if they follow any of the NFL's social media accounts. We found that the members in the focus group who only saw 1-2 posts a day were not following any of the NFL accounts because they did not have any prior interest in the NFL. The people who saw multiple posts a day were the people who followed the main NFL social media accounts and the social media of their favorite teams, including the New York Giants and the Atlanta Falcons.

We then asked which of the NFL accounts seemed to be most engaging from the perspective of NFL followers and non NFL followers. The member of the focus group who didn't follow any of the accounts discussed how they found the NFL's main account to be the "most engaging on random social media including Tiktok" even though they didn't follow them on any of the Tiktok accounts. Another member found the team they followed and were a fan of to be the most engaging because they were the most focused on those posts when going on social media. Another member who followed multiple accounts agreed that the NFL's main account on different social media platforms seemed to be the most engaging with everything going on in the NFL currently.

After that, we asked what the members of the focus group's favorite promotion from the NFL network was on social media if they had an example to share. One member shared an example of how the NFL used a popular movie like Toy Story to explain the games and reach a younger audience. Another member discussed how the NFL was using Nickelodeon during the Super Bowl as a funny alternative to the game that attracted a lot of attention.

The last question we asked the members of the focus group was if they were aware of any initiatives or incentives from the NFL network that encourages them to engage with their social media. All members answered no, that they were not aware of any initiatives or incentives that encouraged people to engage with their social media.

We finished the focus group interview by talking about what is the most important thing to each member regarding the NFL network's social media. Some members talked about the power of the NFL's TikTok and how that has been grown by the Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce posts throughout the past season. One member stated how they "see a lot on Instagram" in which multiple other members agreed because they believe that is the most important aspect of the NFL's engagement on social media, and how it reaches the most people.

Interpretations

The focus group interview served to provide insight into how the NFL network is engaging with their online audience. Prior to conducting the FGI, we determined the NFL Network targets millennials and Gen Z in the digital landscape as they constitute the majority of the network's viewers. Our group, which consisted of three males and two females, were all members of Generation Z. The participants varied in terms of how often they watched NFL games and how many NFL Network accounts they followed. The focus group interview revealed important insights into how the NFL Network is appealing to their target audience through social media accounts, trends, campaigns and posting schedules.

A significant portion of the focus group interview was spent discussing how the NFL Network's online engagement is heavily dependent on seasonal relevance. The participants agreed that NFL Network accounts are the most active during key moments of the season. This information highlights how the NFL Networks aligns their social media strategy with events such as playoffs, the draft and Super Bowl to maximize visibility among its audience when the season is at its peak. For example, the participants who don't consistently follow and view NFL Network accounts stated that during this year's superbowl and current trading season, their timeline was filled with NFL posts. However, these same participants are rarely reached by the NFL throughout the regular season. Therefore, we can conclude that the NFL Network focuses more on engaging their target audience during times of relevance rather than attracting new followers throughout the off season.

Several questions emerged after conducting our focus group interview (FGI), prompting us to address them in our survey. First, we wanted to explore the correlation between individuals' social media usage and their engagement with the NFL network, investigating whether time spent on social platforms affects exposure to NFL network accounts. Additionally, we sought to determine if there is a gender discrepancy in NFL Network account's following. Furthermore, we wanted to identify which platforms are most effectively reaching their target audience through which types of content.

The insights gathered from the focus group interview provided valuable insights into how the NFL network segments its audience. During the FGI, it emerged that participants primarily engage with the NFL Network's Instagram, X, and TikTok accounts, given that these platforms are most frequently used by their generation. It became evident that the NFL Network acknowledges these platforms as the optimal channels to reach its target audience and has directed its campaign efforts accordingly. However, each platform caters to a distinct audience based on their level of knowledge towards the NFL. Instagram, for example, features in-depth game and player analysis, appealing to seasoned veterans who enjoy engaging in discussions with fellow fans in the comments section. FGI participants who are NFL enthusiasts demonstrated the highest engagement on Instagram. On the other hand, TikTok aims to attract a new audience by leveraging current trends, such as Taylor and Travis Kelce hype, to appeal to individuals who may not previously follow the NFL. This was evident from participants who are not actively involved in the NFL but had encountered campaigns on TikTok.

Recognizing the unique preferences and behaviors of their users enables the NFL Network to tailor campaigns that resonate with their target demographic effectively. Given that the majority

of the NFL Network's followers belong to Gen Z, most participants follow the network on Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. Consequently, the NFL Network customizes its content on these platforms to appeal to this demographic, as exemplified by their emphasis on Taylor Swift-related content during the Super Bowl.

Another significant interpretation derived from the focus group interview was the NFL's commitment to long-term engagement. All of the participants were aware of the NFL's streaming on Nickelodeon. This adaptation to the evolving digital landscape is an intentional effort to begin a sense of community among younger generations who will continue to follow the NFL as they age. The network's proactive approach to social media engagement reflects its commitment to staying relevant and increasing brand visibility among younger users. In terms of short-term engagement, the NFL Network increases their posting frequency and trend participation during the season, inviting fans and curious web-surfers to their sites.

SURVEY REPORT

Overview and Purpose

Through the data gathered by the survey, we wanted to find out how much the NFL Network is prominent in the everyday lives of their fans. As researchers, we wanted to understand how the NFL Network utilizes their social media platforms to interact with fans and increase engagement across all platforms that they are prominent on.

The NFL Network has a large following on many social media platforms. They utilize Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), YouTube and Facebook. Because of their audience's wide variety of demographics, having various platforms to interact with fans on is imperative.

To understand and gather research about the different platforms that the NFL Network uses to engage with fans, a survey was the best way to gather this information. With a survey we are able to gather results that include straightforward answers and results that tell us the demographics of our participants. We were able to understand the background of the participant and use that data to interpret their answers. The NFL Network has a huge, diverse following. Because of this, it was important for us to gather information from participants of different types of backgrounds for the most accurate results.

It is important for us to gather these results and conduct the survey because the NFL is one of the biggest influences in our media and society. To discover how they use their influence and how they can continue to increase their fan engagement, we have to see what platforms are being used by what demographics. By doing this, we can target specific content to the appropriate audiences.

Sampling Data and Collection Procedures

Sampling and data procedures for our survey was a vital portion of completing our research. The population of interest for our research was male and female Auburn University students, all of whom knew about the NFL Network in one way or another.

We used convenience sampling in order to achieve our research. Convenience sampling was most applicable to our research because of the accessibility to Auburn University students, as well as them being our main target demographic. We reached out to various groups of known Auburn students to gather our research. We sent a link to these groups, which participants would follow to our survey. We chose this route to gather research, due to the ease of gathering participants. Convenience sampling was a way for our team to get reliable, quick answers from our targeted demographic.

We started gathering data on April 2, 2024 and stopped gathering data on April 12, 2024. We gathered information and data for 10 days, and we had 52 participants. The survey was completely online, so participants were allowed to take the survey at their convenience. The survey took less than five minutes to complete for all participants. Establishing our survey as a quick, efficient array of questions was vital for our research, as well as gaining participants. Surveying was vital to our research, and we made sure to thank all participants and allow for them to contact us with any questions or concerns after the survey was completed.

Description of Participants

To research how the NFL Network uses social media to engage with their audience and increase that engagement, we defined our population of interest as people that often use social media and would be active on each platform. We were able to gather a total of 52 responses to review and contribute to our results.

Typically, the NFL attracts male viewers. To gauge this audience, we sent the survey out to males that would be interested in the NFL. We focused on gathering data from mainly males, but it turned out to be primarily females. However, this did not hinder the survey results because females are also active on social media and would prefer to keep up with NFL Network in that way, as opposed to watching the games.

We came to the conclusion that fans of the NFL would use social media to keep up with new things that are happening, like trades, scores and player updates. They would do this by following NFL Network accounts and their preferred team's social media pages. The main age demographic that uses social media is Gen Z and Millennials. Keeping this age range in mind, we sent the survey out to students at Auburn University. This age would range from 18-22. We knew that this range is the audience that uses social media most often and would be able to provide helpful responses to the survey questions.

Results

Reporting Data for "Do you want to participate in this survey?": The results were that more than 95% of participants said yes and less than 5% said no. The graph had a visible difference between yes or no and you could see that the no was extremely small compared to the yes.

Implications for "Do you want to participate in this survey?": These results show us that almost everyone who clicked on this survey continued to participate in the rest of the survey questions.

Reporting Data for "Do you follow any NFL Network accounts currently?": The results for this data were visibly split on our graph, almost split 50/50. About 45% of participants said No and 55% of participants said yes.

Implications for "Do you follow any NFL accounts currently?": These results state that out of about 50 people, about half of those people know that they follow NFL accounts and the other half of those people know that they don't follow any NFL accounts.

Reporting Data for "The NFL Network has engaging social media accounts": Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement 1-5 (1 is strongly disagree to 5 which is strongly agree). 1 (2%) participants said 1, 3 (7%) participants said 2, 13 (30%) participants said 3, 13 (30%) participants said 4, and 14 (32%) participants said 5. The graph clearly showed a lot of range between the 1-5 options but the mean was close to 4.

Implications for "The NFL has engaging social media accounts": This data shows us that a majority of the participants agreed that the NFL has engaging social media accounts.

Reporting Data for "I enjoy following NFL Network accounts": Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement 1-5 (1 is strongly disagree to 5 which is strongly agree). 4 (9%) participants said 1, 8 (19%) participants said 2, 14 (33%) participants said 3, 7 (16%) participants

said 4, and 10 (23%) participants said 5. The graph clearly showed a lot of range between the 1-5 options, but the mean was close to 3.

Implications for “I enjoy following NFL Network accounts”: These results show us that responses range for whether participants found that they enjoy following the NFL’s social media accounts, but more people enjoy following the social media accounts than people who don’t enjoy following the social media accounts.

Reporting Data for “I get most of my news about the NFL from their accounts”: Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement 1-5 (1 is strongly disagree to 5 which is strongly agree). 8 (19%) participants said 1, 6 (14%) participants said 2, 14 (33%) participants said 3, 6 (14%) participants said 4, and 9 (21%) participants said 5. This graph had a visible range between the 1-5 options that participants selected, but the mean was close to 3.

Implications for “I get most of my news about the NFL from their accounts”: Similar to the last question, responses range for whether or not participants find most of their news from the NFL accounts. These responses were split more evenly between they don’t get news (1 & 2), they somewhat get news (3), and they get a lot of news (4 & 5) from the NFL’s social media accounts.

Reporting Data for “In general I consider myself”: Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement 1-5 (1 is Not a fan of the NFL to 5 which is A fan of the NFL). 7 (16%) participants said 1, 4 (9%) participants said 2, 15 (34%) participants said 3, 8 (18%) participants said 4, and 10 (23%) participants said 5. This graph also had a wide range between the 1-5 options participants selected.

Implications for “In general I consider myself”: These results also showed a wide range of whether participants considered themselves fans of the NFL. Many considered themselves fans, somewhat fans, and not fans at all.

Reporting Data for “Choose the proper amount of time you spend checking different types of social media a day”: Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement 1-5 (1 is never to 5 which is often) for TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, and X. About 75% of participants stated they use Tiktok somewhat often or often, almost 90% said that they use Instagram somewhat often or often, about 75% said that they use Facebook never or rarely, 50% of participants said they use Youtube never or rarely and the other 50% said they use Youtube somewhat rarely or often and often, and about 70% said that they use X never or rarely. You could see in this graph how Instagram and Tiktok had greater graphs for 3-5, while X and Facebook had greater graphs for 1-3, and Youtube had a wide range.

Implications for “Choose the proper amount of time you spend checking different types of social media a day”: These results show us that Instagram and Tiktok are used the most often by participants. The results also show us that Facebook and X are not as popular and most participants never use them or rarely use them. Youtube responses ranged and is almost 50/50 between rather or not they use Youtube.

Reporting Data for “Describe what NFL Network social media platform is your favorite”: 16 participants stated that Instagram, 8 participants said Tiktok, 2 people said X, 1 person said none, 2 people said they see NFL content on ESPN rather than NFL Network, and 3 people said they see NFL content only on the teams they follow such as the Atlanta Falcons and Tennessee Titans.

Implications for “Describe what NFL Network social media platform is your favorite”: This shows us that, similar to the last question, since most participants check Instagram and Tiktok often, that also correlates with how most participants’ favorite NFL Network social media account is on Instagram and Tiktok. These results also show that some participants get NFL content from non-NFL Network accounts such as team accounts.

Reporting Data for “How old are you?": About 70% of participants are 21 and the other 30% is made up of 20 and 22 year olds, with an exception of 1 participant who is 19.

Implications for “How old are you?": This shows us that the age range of participants are 19-22, with a majority being 21.

Reporting Data for “What is your gender?": About 25% of participants were males and 75% were females. We can see with this graph that the female is much larger on the graph than the male.

Implications for “What is your gender?": These results show us that a majority ($\frac{3}{4}$) of participants were females and only $\frac{1}{4}$ of participants were males.

Survey Questionnaire

Figure 1:

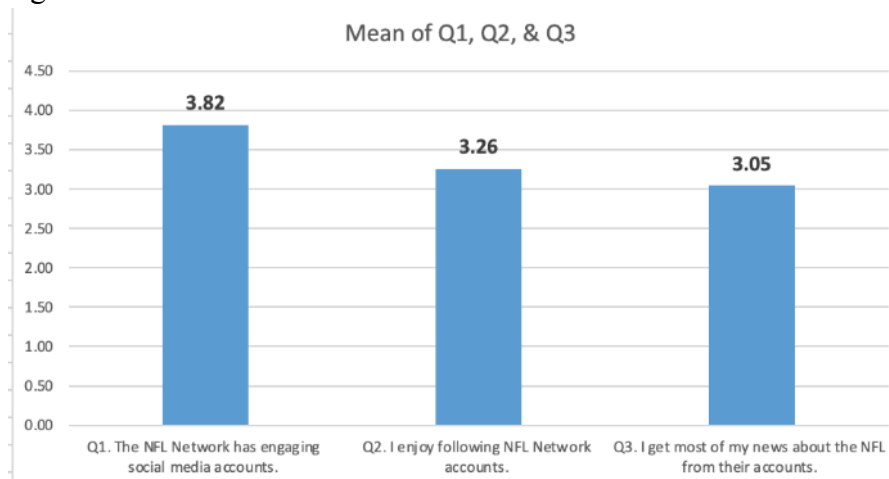


Figure 2:

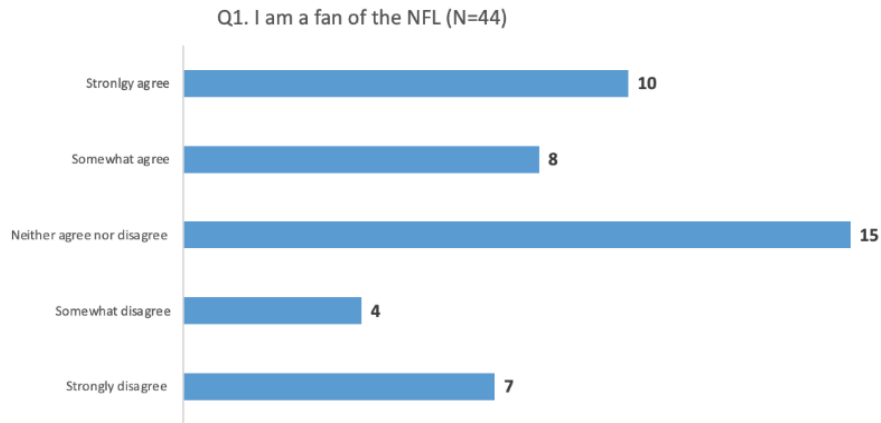


Figure 3:

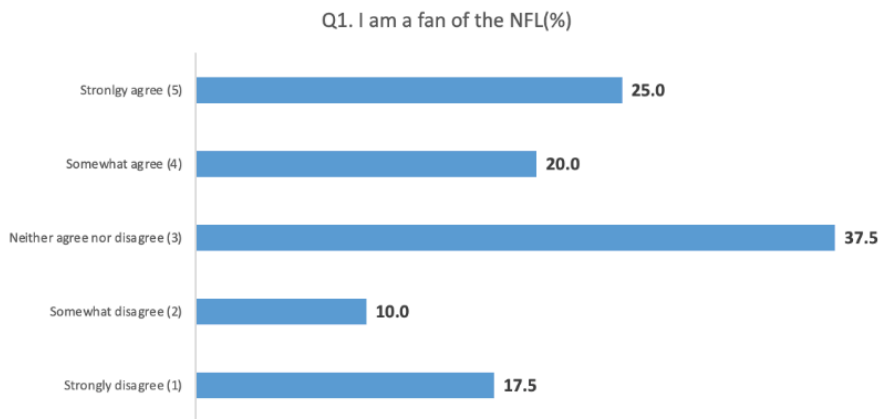


Figure 4:

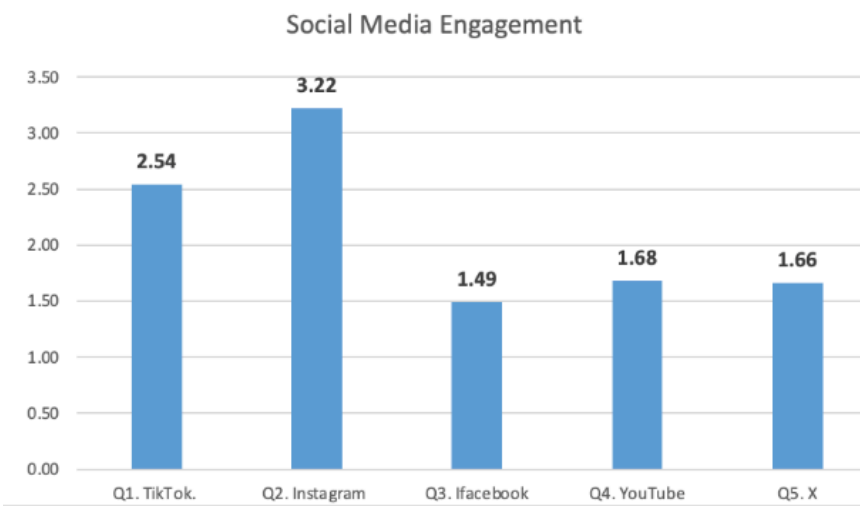


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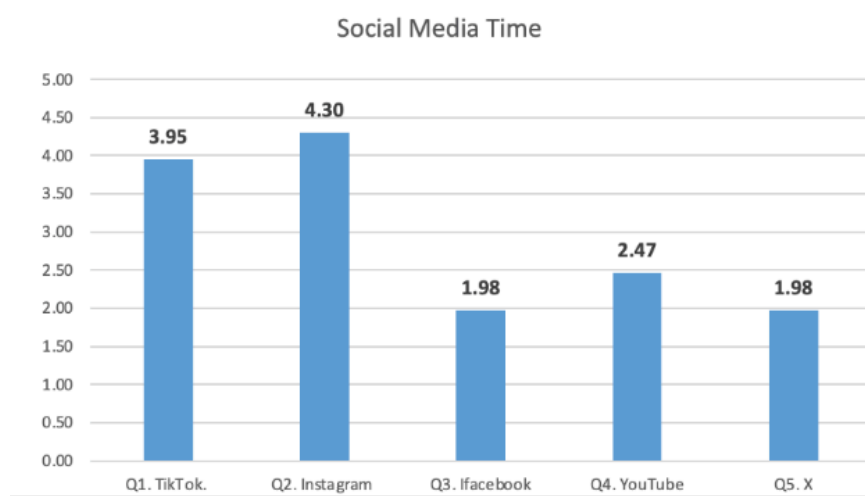


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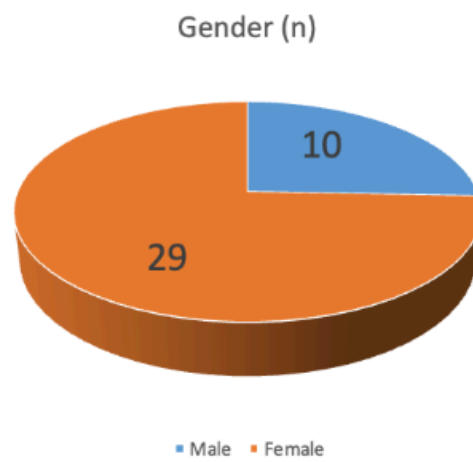


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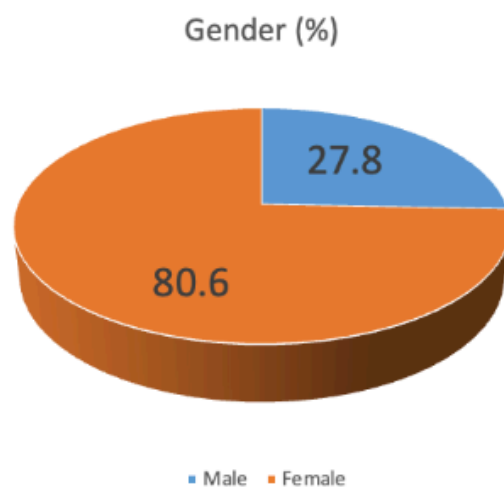


Figure 8:



Implications and Recommendations for Communication Strategies

The objective of this survey was to evaluate NFL Network's utilization of social media for engaging with its online audience. Conducted by students at Auburn University, this survey provided researchers with valuable insights into the current implications of NFL Network's strategies and potential areas for improvement.

The survey indicated that the participating individuals, ages 19-22, predominantly engage with the NFL Network on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, while demonstrating lesser participation and engagement on Facebook. Participants showed consistent and frequent engagement with Instagram, demonstrating a strong affinity for the platform. These findings imply that for the NFL Network to connect and create a sustainable relationship with their target online audience, Generation Z, they should be communicating and facilitating campaigns through Instagram and Tik Tok.

The survey implies that to most directly reach their online audience, the NFL network should leverage Instagram's popularity among Gen Z-Millennials. The majority of survey participants agreed that they receive most of their information about the NFL via their social media accounts, one expanding on the prominent comment section of Instagram. Maintaining a strong presence on Instagram and Tik Tok is crucial for the NFL to establish brand relevance.

While the survey revealed a considerable number of users who follow the NFL Network's social media platforms, it also identified a segment of individuals who do not engage with these

accounts at all. It is crucial for the NFL Network to produce content that retains its current followers while also attracting a new demographic. Examples of this include sharing posts that offer insights into recent games, player and team updates for a knowledgeable audience, followed by supplementary content or links for followers who are new to the NFL scene and want to seek additional context. The amount of time Generation Z spends on Instagram indicates that in trying to enter the football realm, this audience would first visit the network's social media accounts for foundation knowledge and updates. It is crucial that the NFL Network is inviting to this new audience while also ensuring their posts are informative enough for seasoned fans.

The findings revealed in this survey are crucial to plan a successful campaign for the NFL Network. This survey allowed researchers to describe their target demographic and pinpoint what platforms will ensure their campaign makes the most significant impact. The results implied that to make an impact on their target audience, 19-22 year olds, the NFL network should conduct their campaign via Instagram and Tik Tok. These campaigns should align with current social media trends and ramp up during popular events such as the Super Bowl, which is watched by viewers outside of the regular audience. Through strategic content that informs the public about game, institution and player information, strategic partnerships with influencers that resonate with current and potential consumers, and interactive campaigns such as giveaways, the NFL Network can effectively engage its audience, expand its reach, and enhance brand awareness through its social media campaigns.

CONCLUSION

The NFL Network has a vast reach through their social media platforms. Through this survey, we asked our participants a series of questions that pertained to the relatability, knowledge, and awareness of the NFL Network's presence from their personal social media perspectives.

We took care in establishing this survey as a necessary, yet flexible questionnaire for our group to partake in. This survey research was vital to our completion of our reporting, due gaining information regarding how the NFL Network interacts with its audience, as well as how efficient they are within their realm of influence.

The responses from this survey showed us that maintaining relevance among their target demographic, Gen Z, is pivotal for the NFL Network in the digital landscape today. Keeping up with this ever-changing landscape is essential for the NFL to reach their followers, and to expand their audience. Forming these relationships with Gen Z has been a huge contributor to their influence in social media platforms. The questions we asked our group allowed us to be able to track the amount of engagement our group experienced from the NFL Network.

The responses to the research depicted is vital to creating campaigns for the NFL Network, and to its overall success. This survey was crucial to the overall success of defining our original goal: how the NFL Network uses social media to increase fan engagement.

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APPENDIX

FGI Script

Welcome

Good afternoon, and welcome to our session. Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion of how the NFL network uses social media to increase fan engagement.

Introduce moderator (and assistant)

Our topic is how can the NFL increase fan engagement using social media. The results will be used for our research project. You are selected because you utilize social media. My role here is to ask questions and listen. I won't be participating in the conversation, but I want you to feel free to talk with one another.

Guidelines

No right or wrong answers, only there would be different viewpoints. We are typing a script and recording the conversation.

Opening question

Tell us something about yourself that is not work-related, something that gives us an idea of who you really are.

Key questions

1. How often do you see a post/video from the NFL Network?
2. How many social media accounts do you follow that are run by the NFL network?
3. If you follow any of the accounts, what NFL network account in your opinion do you think is the most engaging?
4. What is your favorite promotion that you remember from the NFL Network?
5. Are you aware of any existing initiatives or incentives from the NFL Network encouraging you to engage with their social media?

Ending

Of all the things we discussed regarding the NFL social media culture, which one is most important to you?

Summary

We will quickly summarize the key points made in our discussion.

Final question

Have we missed anything?

Survey Questionnaire

Figure 1:

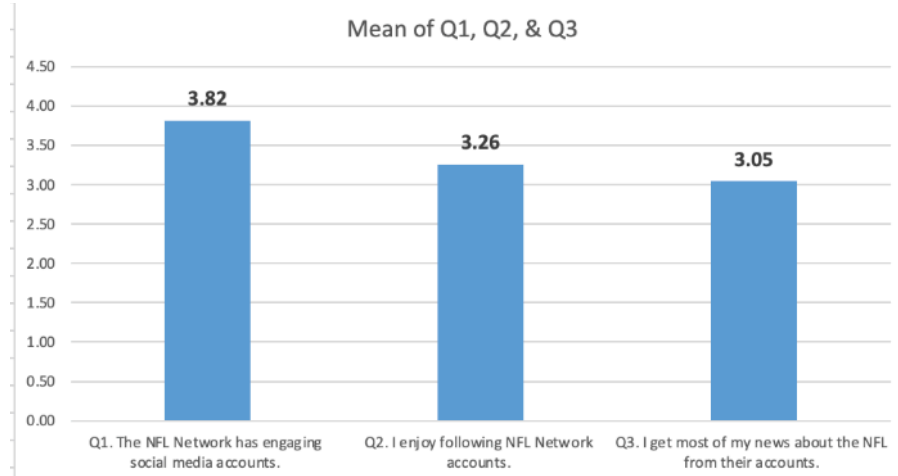


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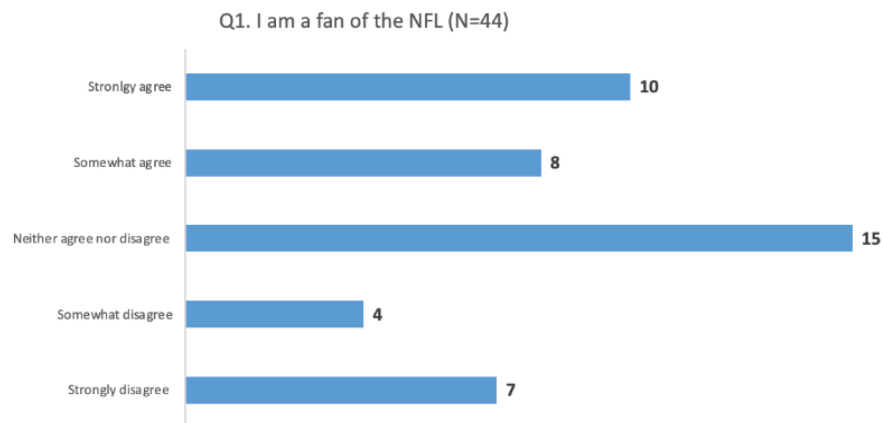


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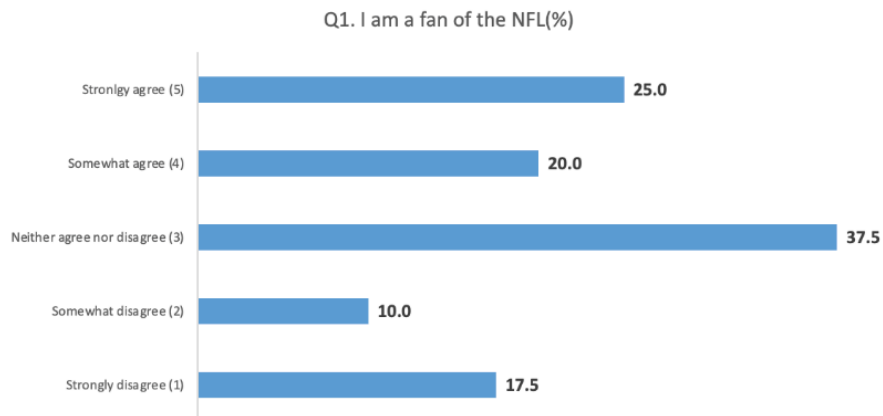


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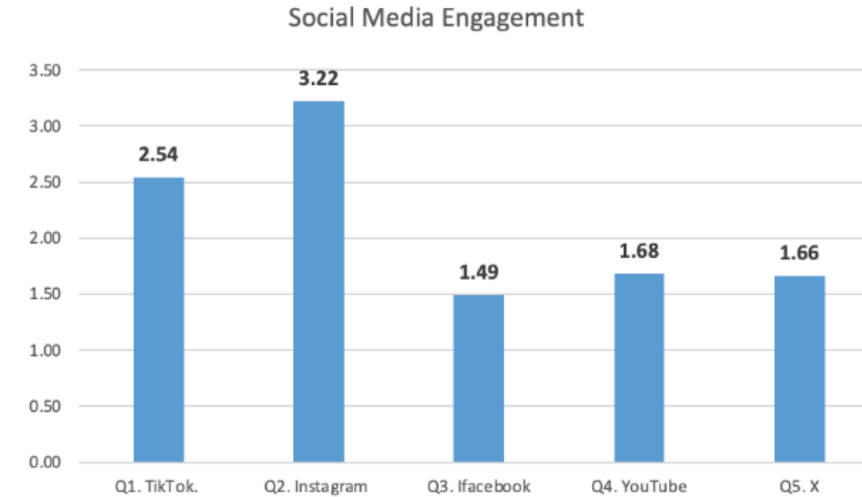


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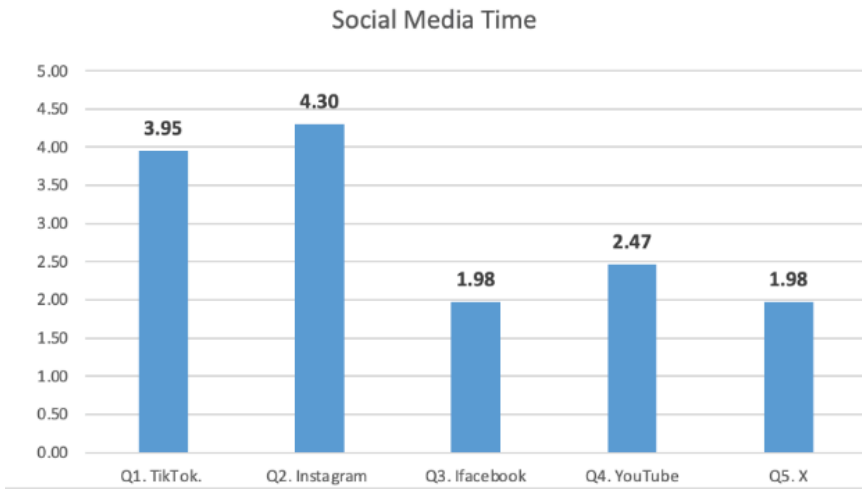


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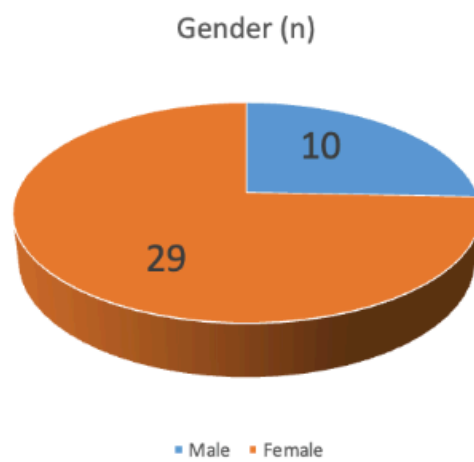


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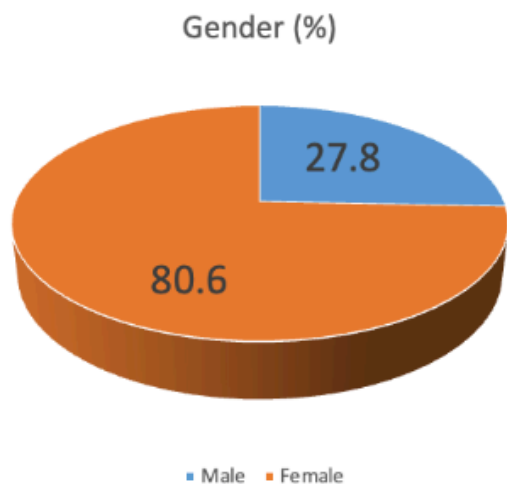


Figure 8:

