Increasing Universal Change Room Usage

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METHODS

The methodology of this study follows a mixed methods design where we gathered qualitative and quantitative information in the form of electronic surveys through Qualtrics Survey Software.

Students who were not found to use the UC at The ARC, located at UBC – Vancouver were chosen as our study population. We sampled a total of 12 individuals (6 males, 6 females) where they were 33.33% White, 50% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 16.67% identified as other.

DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Qualitative Data

Content Analysis: Identified the most frequent response and used to quantify each individual’s experience and perception of The ARC’s UC using a Likert-type scale question.

Thematic Analysis: Recognized 3 recurring themes: Inclusivity, comfortability, and privacy. These were used to help distinguish specific barriers and recommendations for improving patronage of the UC at The ARC.

Quantitative Data

Descriptive Statistics: Used to indicate background information of the participants age, gender, and ethnic background. Pie charts and tables were used to illustrate the frequency of the responses for both students and staff surveys. From this, standard deviation was used to determine variation of each participants’ responses from each other.

RESULTS

An analysis was done on responses from 12 users from the University of British Columbia’s fitness centers: The ARC. In addition to the 12 survey responses from the users, we collected responses from 4 staff members regarding any training of information provided prior to the opening of the universal change rooms. Questions include, their age, ethnic background, and quantitative and qualitative questions about the opinions of the universal change rooms.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Our findings suggest that out of the 12 participants surveyed, the percentage of individuals that had used the universal change rooms “more than once” was 41.67%, males made up 33.33%, and females 8.33%. This statistic could be related to the fact that the females surveyed stated they felt less comfortable seeing someone of the opposite gender in the same change room.

Although the individuals who were surveyed were well aware of the layout of the universal change room, these individuals still chose the gender specific change rooms as their preferred space. Regarding the genderless change room, participants that stated they had never used the universal change room, or only used it once, had shared that they see the importance and value in the building of a universal change room. These same individuals stated the importance of the universal change room for the inclusivity of those in the LGBTQ+ community. They did not indicate the universal change room as a space the binary, thus, we can assume that they do not have enough knowledge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Posters or signage that celebrates the universal change rooms inclusivity for all, including members of the LGBTQ+ community and binary men and women

The importance of language and communication was answered by many as participants assumed that the UC’s were only meant for users that considered themselves as part of the LGBTQ+ community. Throughout findings, we recommend the implementation of an improved marketing strategy that employs the use of physical and digital media.

2. Additional universal change room signage

Placing additional signage and including symbols indicating that it is a universal facility would potentially remove confusion. This recommendation comes from first-hand experiences using the UC as confusion can be elevated if the first person one may see is walking in is of the opposite gender. By placing additional signage, it can ensure confidence into first-time users or individuals who want to be sure they have walked into the UC.

3. Universal change room training

When discussing with staff, only 1 out of 4 employees received UC training. Thus, indicating that employees may not have adequate knowledge to be able to answer questions members may have about the UC. We recommend training for all staff members during their first few shifts or for training sessions during their shift. These can be brief and very informative.

4. Informing females that UC are a safe space due to private stalls

2 out of the 6 females surveyed indicated they felt uncomfortable using UC’s. These findings can be attributed to women feeling intimidated and have a reduced sense of comfort by the presence of men in a change room area. As a result, this could be linked to the lower rates of physical activity compared to their male counterparts. Therefore, we recommend The ARC staff to target female users by promoting the increased privacy the UC layout provides.