



A STUDENT HOSTED CATTLE SALE AS AN APPROACH TO EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

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STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY PURPLE PREMIUM SALE



ABSTRACT

Experiential learning is a teaching approach that can be beneficial to students. First-hand learning experiences engage students in ways that tend to be impactful on their education. Agriculture is a hands-on field that offers many opportunities for students to get outside of the classroom and participate in the industry. Advanced beef cattle students at Stephen F. Austin State University host the Purple Premium Cattle Sale each year. Students are responsible for obtaining consignment lots, renting facilities, and preparing the cattle for the sale. The sale exposes students to agriculture outside of the classroom and introduces proper care and marketing of cattle. Students ($n = 22$) completed two post-event surveys to reflect their learning experiences; one survey directly after the sale and the same survey 30 days later. Student responses determined that participation in the sale improved their leadership skills (76%), built their teamwork skills (96%), and reinforced the information taught in class (80%). Directly after the sale experience, 52% of students would recommend this course to others compared to the 30 day post-survey response of 90.9%. A similar comparison resulted when the students were asked to rate their overall experience. Post-survey results immediately after the sale indicated that 36% of the students noted an overall positive experience compared to post-survey response of 95.45%. In conclusion, a student hosted cattle sale is an effective approach to experiential learning.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to determine if a student hosted cattle sale resulted in a beneficial learning experience and if a 30-day reflection period would change student perspective.

- The Purple Premium is a registered and commercial cattle sale put on by students enrolled in an advanced beef cattle course. Students communicate with consignors, take care of pens and the facilities, edit the catalog, and participate in every component of a production sale.
 - Student participants ($n = 22$) were given the same survey directly after the sale and 30 days post-sale.
 - Data was analyzed using Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS).
- Paired-sample t-tests were used to determine mean values, standard deviation, and significant differences ($p < .05$) between initial and 30-day responses.

Methods

Data

Survey Question	Initial Response		30-Day Response		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
My participation in the SFA Purple Premium Sale...						
helped to improve my leadership skills.	1.95	1.09	1.59	0.80	1.449	0.162
improved my written communication skills.	2.77	1.23	2.41	1.10	1.191	0.247
was a valuable part of my agricultural education.	1.55	0.86	1.36	0.58	1.164	0.257
increased connections with potential future employers.	2.77	1.31	2.50	1.06	0.946	0.355
improved my oral communication skills.	2.09	1.06	1.86	0.83	0.839	0.411
created ways for me to think outside of the box.	1.77	0.69	1.68	0.57	0.491	0.628
reinforced the information taught in class	1.59	0.91	1.50	0.67	0.400	0.693
*How would you rate your overall experience with the SFA Purple Premium Sale?	2.00	0.82	1.05	0.21	5.700	0.000
*After this Experience, how likely would you be to recommend this class to others?	1.86	0.89	1.14	0.47	3.648	0.002

Note: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Somewhat Disagree, 5 = Disagree;

* 1 = Promoter, 2 = Passive, 3 = Detractor

Results

Directly after the sale experience, 52% of students would recommend this course to others compared to the 30 day post-survey response of 90.9%.

A similar comparison resulted when the students were asked to rate their overall experience. Post-survey results immediately after the sale indicated that 36% of the students noted an overall positive experience compared to post-survey response of 95.45%.

The students were able to have an adequate amount of reflection time due to the difference in mean values.

Although there is no statistical significance in the initial and 30-day response data for the participation questions, the student responses to the recommendation and experience questions showed a significant difference in means ($p = .000$ and $p = .002$, respectively).

After a time of reflection, the students had an overall positive experience and they would recommend this class to others.

SUMMARY

Experiential learning projects such as the Purple Premium Sale can result in an overall positive experience. The 30 day reflection period gave students the opportunity to step back and think about the experience gained through this alternative class project. There is no significant data to support that the Purple Premium Sale benefited their learning experience, but the overall experience was positive and one that they would recommend to others. The presence of positive mean changes in response, although not significant, indicates that the Purple Premium Sale was an effective approach to experiential learning.