

PERCEPTIONS OF INTERSCHOLASTIC EQUESTRIAN
ASSOCIATION MEMBERS REGARDING THE
TAKE THE REINS MAGAZINE:
A READERSHIP STUDY

By

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Abstract: Guided by the uses and gratifications theory, the researcher sought to determine the Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) members' self-reported readership behaviors and perceptions of the *Take the Reins* magazine. The population included dues-paying members of the IEA who reported an accessible email address ($N = 9,203$). The initial email was sent to the population of which 463 were invalid due to frame errors, leaving the accessible population of $N = 8,740$. A total of 1,043 individuals participated in the questionnaire for a response rate of 11.9%. Descriptive survey research methodology was used to collect and analyze perceptions of readers regarding content, design, utility, and overall perception of the magazine. Data was collected via an online Qualtrics instrument in March 2014. The typical respondent is a 17-year-old female member who receives *Take the Reins* magazine and is primarily active in Hunt Seat equitation. IEA members perceive the magazine's general appearance and quality of photos and illustrations to be good. They perceive the magazine's content to be good in regard to the range and variety of topics, understandability of information, and quality of writing. To some degree, IEA members perceive the magazine to portray information accurately and objectively. They are most interested in stories about IEA events and horses. Overall, they are impressed with the magazine. IEA members do not wish for the magazine to be offered via the Internet. Additional research should be conducted to evaluate why the members have these perceptions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Magazines are the most successful media format ever to have existed” (Holmes & Nice, 2011). According to Johnson and Prijatel (2012), magazines are a vibrant medium and are considered the voice of the country. Magazines are unique in that they are diverse with a rich past and limitless future, are produced for all types of individuals, and are offered in all media from print to digital (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012).

Even though magazines are produced for all types, niche magazines connect to narrow audiences, unlike general newspapers (McMindes, 2010). According to McMIndes (2010), “Niche publications are those that publish to a specific group of people; a specialized audience.”

Specifically, association magazines are essential components to the association (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). Members look forward to receiving their monthly, or even weekly, periodical (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). “The association magazine can unify an industry, profession or interest group. Tightly drawn, a periodical can have remarkable influence for the association and can be a powerful force in support of members” (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012, p. 13). According to the American Horse Publications website (2014), about 100 United States equestrian association publications currently exist.

Take the Reins magazine (see Figure 1), an association magazine for the Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA), was developed to gain visibility and recognition of the IEA members (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013). The IEA staff thought

creating a magazine was a fun way to help honor and recognize its riders and its association internally (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013). The National Reining Horse Association took on full production of the IEA's magazine in the fall of 2012 (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013).



Figure 1. Cover from Take the Reins, Spring 2014.

The IEA, formed in 2002, was organized to allow students the opportunity to compete in equestrian disciplines as well as to promote the overall quality of the disciplines (IEA, 2013). The IEA is comprised of 10 zones, categorized by area, and members may participate in Hunt Seat, Western, and Saddle Seat equitation competitions (IEA, 2013). Youth rider member qualifications include the member being in the sixth through twelfth grade, the member being able to canter, and the member having at least one year of riding instruction (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 22, 2013).

The youth generation involved in the IEA – Generation Z – was born in the 1990s and raised in the 2000s (Tulgan, 2013). They currently are in the age groups from 11 to 19 years old and are more connected to technology than any other generation (Looper, n.d.). According to Raymond (2012), Generation Z is best reached through the Internet or other social media platforms. Additionally, they enjoy more thorough and engaging stories to deal with their many life challenges (Anatole, 2013).

Although several equestrian magazines are produced, through a review of literature, the researcher was unable to obtain any literature regarding the survey of a membership similar to the IEA's magazine, *Take the Reins*.

Statement of the Problem

Although the IEA was established in 2002, its magazine, *Take the Reins*, was created in the summer of 2010. Since that time, neither the IEA nor the National Reining Horse Association, which produces the publication, has conducted any formal research about their readers' perceptions for improvement of the publication.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the IEA members' self-reported perceptions of the *Take the Reins* magazine.

Objectives

The following objectives were used to guide this study:

1. To describe selected characteristics of IEA members.
2. To describe the perceptions of IEA members concerning the content of the *Take the Reins* magazine.
3. To describe the perceptions of IEA members concerning the design of the *Take the Reins* magazine.
4. To describe the perceptions of IEA members concerning the utility of the *Take the Reins* magazine.

5. To describe IEA members' overall perception of the *Take the Reins* magazine.

Scope

The scope of this study included email-accessible members of the IEA who had provided accurate email addresses in March 2014.

Significance of the Study

The IEA needs information attained through the study to better understand the IEA members' wants and needs. This study provides the IEA with information as to how the publication should continue. By determining the self-reported perceptions of readers, this study will assist the magazine's editors, writers, and sources in coordinating an efficient, effective flow of information. Additionally, the study can help facilitate an improvement of the magazine's overall content, utility, and design. When producing a magazine, the staff must consider the content, design, and utility of the piece as well as its overall effectiveness to satisfy readers' wants and needs (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012).

Limitations

The following limitations were noted in this study:

1. The study cannot be generalized to other publications.
2. The study cannot be generalized to the same audience in the future.
3. The respondents were limited to anchored responses for six items.
4. Only IEA members with valid email addresses could be reached through this study's methodology.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were present in this study:

1. IEA members whose email addresses were provided by the IEA received *Take the Reins* magazine.
2. The email addresses provided by the IEA were current.

3. The IEA members who provide their email addresses to the IEA are no different in their perceptions of *Take the Reins* magazine than those who do not.
4. Respondents were honest regarding their perceptions of *Take the Reins* magazine while answering the questions.
5. The content, utility, and design of the magazine could be measured with a questionnaire.

Definitions

Content – “the topics or matter treated in a written work” (Content, 2014, para. 27).

Design – “the way the parts of something are formed and arranged for a particular use, effect, etc.” (Design, 2014, para. 22).

Equitation – “the art and practice of horsemanship and horse riding” (Equitation, 2014, para. 1).

Hunt Seat Equitation – “a division that is judged on the ability and the style of the rider; the riders can be judged both over fences and on the flat” (About hunter seat equitation, 2013, para. 1).

Niche – “the situation in which a business’ products or services can succeed by being sold to a particular kind of group of people” (Niche, 2014, para. 2).

Association Magazine (Organization Magazine) – “a magazine published by an association, company, university, religious group or other organization for its members” (Sumner & Miller, 2013, p. 320).

Readership – “the mass or a particular group of readers” (Readership, 2014, para. 5).

Saddle Seat Equitation – a division of equitation judged on the overall ease and effectiveness of the rider (About saddle seat equitation, 2013).

Utility – “fitness for some purpose or worth to some end” (Utility, 2014, para. 4).

Western Equitation – a division of equitation, specifically the working ranch horse, judged on various occasions such as pleasure, trail, and the working cow horse (Western, 2013c).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the appropriate literature, which affords a framework to the study. Topics include the history of the history of *Take the Reins* magazine, the history of the Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA), overall perceptions of Generation Z, uses of readership studies, considerations of magazine production, and the uses and gratifications theory.

History of *Take the Reins* Magazine

The *Take the Reins* magazine was first compiled and printed in the summer of 2010 (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013). An IEA member's parent, Wilson Cole, through his company, Solutions Media, published and produced the magazine for one-and-a-half years (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013). The magazine began as and has continued as a full-color publication (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013).

After Cole could no longer publish and produce the magazine, the IEA came into a main agreement for publishing and producing the magazine with the National Reining Horse Association in the fall of 2012 (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013). In the following months, the National Reining Horse Association partnered with the Oklahoma State University Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership for production of the magazine (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013).

Shelly Sitton, OSU agricultural communications adviser and professor, along with Jamie Trissel, OSU agricultural communications master's student, produced the magazine from the

summer of 2012 until the fall of 2013 (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013). In the fall of 2013, the National Reining Horse Association took on full production and publication of the magazine (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013).

The magazine is disseminated quarterly on the 15th day of February, May, August, and November (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013). The magazine is mailed to dues-paying members, coaches, and staff of the IEA (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013). The mailing list is maintained by Jennifer Eaton, the IEA membership marketing coordinator (J. Eaton, personal communication, February 28, 2014).

The magazine's content includes, but is not limited to, information about horse health, prominent horse organizations, IEA awards, IEA show winners, and success stories of members (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 10, 2013). The editorial content of the magazine is normally 60% to 62%, and the advertising percentage of the magazine is on the low end with 38% to 40% (B. Harris, personal communication, May 28, 2014). IEA members, coaches, staff and parents submit stories for the publication (C. Trimmer, personal communication, October 10, 2013). The photographs are a variety of personal photos provided by members, staff, and professional and event photographers (C. Trimmer, personal communication, October 10, 2013). Additionally, the magazine typically consists of 24 to 28 pages (B. Harris, personal communication, May 28, 2014).

Bucky Harris, in conjunction with Jana Thomason, both National Reining Horse Association staff members, produces the layout and design of the magazine in-house (C. Trimmer, personal communication, October 10, 2013). Sponsorship for the magazine is solicited through Chris Maedche, NRHA advertising account executive (C. Trimmer, personal communication, October 10, 2013). Additionally, Carol Trimmer, NRHA senior director of publications editor, and Sara Jensen, NRHA editorial assistant, edit the magazine (C. Trimmer, personal communication, October 10, 2013).

History of the Interscholastic Equestrian Association

Founded in the spring of 2002, the IEA was created to “promote and improve the quality of equestrian competition and instruction available to middle and secondary school students” (IEA, 2013, para. 3). Wayne Ackerer, Timothy J. Boone, Ollie Griffith, Roxane Lawrence, and Myron Leff initiated the idea of the organization (IEA, 2013). As a non-profit organization, the IEA sponsored its first national finals equestrian event the following year in Willoughby, Ohio (IEA, 2013). The IEA began with 200 members and has expanded to more than 8,000 members in 32 states (IEA, 2013).

According to the IEA (2013), the mission of the IEA is “to introduce students in private and public middle and secondary schools to equestrian sports and to promote and improve the quality of equestrian competition and instruction” (para. 3).

Additionally, the IEA purpose is

to set minimum standards for competition, provide information concerning the creation and development of school associated equestrian sport programs, promote the common interests of safe riding instruction and competition and education on matters related to equestrian sport at the middle and secondary school levels (primarily ages 11 through 19). (IEA, 2013, para. 4)

The IEA promotes the disciplines of Hunt Seat, Western, and Saddle Seat (IEA, 2013). All disciplines offer a variety of competition levels from beginner through advanced (IEA, 2013). The IEA is unique compared to other competitions in that the riders do not supply their own horses or equipment (IEA, 2013). Rather, the host team makes arrangements for horses and gear for each rider (IEA, 2013). Because the riders and horses are new to each other, the scores are based upon horsemanship and equitation (IEA, 2013).

The IEA is comprised of 10 zones, categorized by area (IEA, 2013). Riders can compete individually or in team format (IEA, 2013). According to the IEA (2013), an IEA team consists of

at least one coach and three rider members. Riders are organized into competition sections in reference to their grade level and then their ability (IEA, 2013).

Membership Qualifications of the Interscholastic Equestrian Association

The IEA offers several categories of individual membership (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 22, 2013). A Coach-Open class is accessible to professional riding instructors at the age of 21 years or older (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 22, 2013). The instructors must present proof of liability insurance and the membership fee is \$50 per year (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 22, 2013).

A Rider-Open category is offered to youth riders in grades six through twelve, approximately ages 11 to 19 (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 22, 2013). According to Lawrence (personal communication, October 22, 2013), “the riders must be able to canter and have a minimum of one year of instruction to participate.” IEA offers four ability levels: beginner, novice, intermediate, and open (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 22, 2013).

The individuals may participate in any of the three offered disciplines (Hunt Seat, Western, or Saddle Seat) or they can compete in any combination (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 22, 2013). The riders must pay a \$45 membership fee per person per discipline per year (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 22, 2013).

Adult members, usually parents, who would like to be voting members of the IEA can participate in a Contributing-Open category (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 22, 2013). The individual may not be a coach, but they can act as a team communicator or team secretary (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 22, 2013). The membership fee is \$45 per year (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 22, 2013).

Membership Demographics of the Interscholastic Equestrian Association

Zone 4, hosting the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee, has the largest population of the 10 zones with 1,851 members (J. Eaton, personal

communication, May 28, 2014). From this zone, Florida and Georgia have the most members with Florida having 514 members and Georgia having 777 members (J. Eaton, personal communication, May 28, 2014). The second largest zone is Zone 1, consisting of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island, and has 1,794 members (J. Eaton, personal communication, May 28, 2014). From this zone, Connecticut and Massachusetts have the most members with Connecticut having 466 members and Massachusetts having 902 members (J. Eaton, personal communication, May 28, 2014).

Additionally, the primary discipline is Hunt Seat and the primary sex of members is female (J. Eaton, personal communication, May 28, 2014). The primary age is 15 with 1,419 members, 1,382 16 year olds, 1,372 17 year olds, and 1,311 14 year olds (J. Eaton, personal communication, May 28, 2014).

Perceptions of Z

According to Somerville (2011), age has the most profound impact on readership. As cited by McCrindle (2014), two generational experts said “A generation is a group of people who share a time and space in history that lends them a collective persona” (p. 2). Generation Z members were born between 1995 and 2010 (McCrindle, 2014). The current age group ranges from 14 to 19 years old (Looper, n.d.). The generation enjoys more serious stories to deal with life challenges (Anataloe, 2013).

McCrindle (2014) suggested seven factors that define members of Generation Z: “(a) demographically challenged, (b) generationally defined, (c) digital integrators, (d) globally focused, (e) visually engaged, (f) educationally reformed, and (g) socially defined” (p. 17). This generation has been shaped by several tragic events such as the attacks at the World Trade Center on September 11, the Columbine school shooting in Colorado, and the War on Terror in Afghanistan (Looper, n.d.). Additionally, Generation Z has gained a certain sense of entitlement due to their independence gained from technology along with the constant affirmation from their parents (Looper, n.d.).

Generation Z is often dismissed as the “Silent Generation” because of the plethora of time they spend online, but they could actually be more imaginative than some believe, according to Matthews (2008). These members have never known a world without Internet, cellphones or iPods (Looper, n.d.). “To sell this generation you must reach them online through social media and other tools” (Raymond, 2012, para. 17). Generation Z’s life will be lived primarily via the web (Matthews, 2008). According to Matthews (2008), technological access as children, but limited physical freedom, forces Generation Z to grow up quickly.

Uses of Readership Studies

In an ever-changing world of media, the research focus is changing from simply counting the circulation of a magazine to understanding the habits of new consumers (Somerville, 2011). “The reasons people read magazines, not the deep-seated psychological reasons, but the self-ascribed reasons readers give their selections, are predictable” (Peck, 1977, p. 36). Peck (1977) found that education, reading skill, time, and gender among many other areas strongly affected the readership of an individual. These statements still hold true, as a study conducted by the Media Management Center of Northwestern University (2003) suggested that “reader experiences can be measured for different consumer segments to inform magazine and advertising executives about how best to connect with various groups” (p. 7).

“Magazine readership grew by 3.8 percent from 2006 to 2010” (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012, p. 48). Therefore, many national readership surveys report magazines that desire to be measured wish to fulfill readership respondents’ needs without burdening them (Page, 2000).

According to Page (2000), the primary objective of readership research is to provide frequency of readership estimates. Redding (1982) suggested the top reasons behind readership or audience research should consist of one or more of the following: (a) open the outlets of opinion, (b) obtain instantaneous reader actions to particular areas of a publication, (c) conduct a complete assessment so dependable estimates may be made of usefulness, and (d) determine if change is acceptable.

The American Horse Publications (2013) suggested 10 magazine production strategies to increase readership:

(a) covers that create a great first impression, (b) terrific table of contents, (c) editor's letters readers will love, (d) fabulous front-of-books, (e) use the celebrities connected to or within the industry, (f) stimulate [the audience] visually, (g) involve your readers, (h) deliver basic how-to or explanatory information, (i) edit to be friendly to readers, and (j) have some fun. (para. 1)

According to Lawson (2012), who studied Oklahoma State University's College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) magazine the *Cowboy Journal*, readers are most interested in reading about issues within their specific industry. Lawson (2012) noted readers felt as if the magazine strengthened their personal connection to OSU's CASNR.

Ned Browning (1999) conducted a study regarding the magazine readership of the *Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Research Station Highlights*. Browning (1999) found all respondents favored a four-color magazine format rather than a tabloid newspaper. Additionally, the respondents were split 50-50 in comparing the magazine to other similar publications (Browning, 1999). Browning (1999) also found respondents preferred a higher publication frequency of either monthly or quarterly, but differences in opinion between Mississippians and out-of-state residence were quite significant. In-state readers preferred more frequent publication (Browning, 1999).

According to Melinda Norton (2007) who studied the *Angus Journal*, readers had many reasons for reading the articles, but they were less motivated to read for the purpose of staying informed. Overall, respondents were pleased with the *Angus Journal* design, but they were not interested to read the articles by a visual determinant (Norton, 2007). Additionally, the publication fulfills the expectations of the respondents (Norton, 2007). Norton (2007) also found readers preferred to receive a hardcopy of the magazine rather than view it online.

According to a current readership study, “nearly two in five U.S. tablet owners read newspapers and/or magazines on their device ... with one in ten reading publications almost daily” (Aquino, 2012, para. 1). High readership rates of 39.6% displayed tablet owners reading magazines and periodicals on their device during the month (Aquino, 2012). However, according to Schwartz (2002), magazine publishers who are anticipating a shift from traditional print to online print are wasting their time. Schwartz’s (2002) study found of the 22% who read magazines via the Internet regularly, 73% said they would not give up their print product for an online source, even at half the original price.

Research indicates most agriculturalists prefer to receive information in printed forms, such as newsletters and magazines, but the use of these forms of media are decreasing (McCarthy, Beede, & Edgecomb, 2008). In a readership study conducted by McCarthy et al. (2008) of the *Michigan Dairy Review*, respondents did not favor the Internet over print sources. More than 36% of respondents said they use the Internet very often; however, 88% of respondents said they use magazines, newsletters, and bulletins just as often (McCarthy et al., 2008).

Considerations of Magazine Production

Sumner and Miller (2013) suggested the magazine industry is changing in aspects from magazines discontinuing to magazines downscaling, while some are switching to Internet-only magazine subscriptions. Specifically, association magazines “create an essential link between sponsoring associations and their members” (Sumner & Miller, 2013, p. 303). With large organizations such as IEA, membership magazines are sometimes the only contact members have to their association (Sumner & Miller, 2013).

According to Johnson and Prijatel (2012),

A magazine is like no other medium for the simple reason that it isn’t a daily routine.

Depending on its scope and its point of view, it may be published once every week, once

every two weeks, or once every three months. Its subject matter may be the world at large, but more often, it's a study in depth of a vital part of someone's world. (p. 5)

Audience and content are a paired entity when applied to magazines (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). Readers of a successful publication feel as if the magazine is their own (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). Additionally, Sumner and Miller (2013) suggested a magazine's dominance is its color, design, and editorial tone.

“Magazine editors target a precise niche – a narrowly defined focus – and study the characteristics of the individuals in that niche” (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012, p. 6). The editors then direct the magazine at those individuals' wants and needs (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012).

According to Johnson and Prijatel (2012), the survival of a magazine is determined by the vitality of the audience and the magazine's capability to serve that audience. Agricultural magazines particularly seem to target their audiences' needs and provide more useful information than other types of magazines (Naile, 2006).

When producing a magazine, the staff must consider the content, design, and utility of the piece as well as its overall effectiveness to satisfy readers' wants and needs (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). Lawson (2012), who conducted a similar readership study on the *Cowboy Journal*, found the areas of content, design, and utility to be most effective when evaluating readership perceptions.

Content

“Content remains king in any medium,” (Sumner & Miller, 2013, p. vii). According to Johnson and Prijatel (2012), magazines are highly specialized in content and audience; therefore, magazines do not try to be all things to all people. “A reader is drawn to a magazine's content and appearance for a variety of reasons: aesthetic, pragmatic, whimsical, sensational, or ideological” (Johnson & Prijtal, 2012, p. 78). The characteristics that pose an interesting story are originality, sustaining the reader's attention, and unusual information (Sumner & Miller, 2013).

“When most people read an article, they seek diversion, entertainment or information” (Sumner & Miller, 2013, p. 6). Non-verbal communication plays a large role in communicating face-to-face with individuals, which consists of facial expressions, tones, and pitch (Mills, 2012). However, non-verbal communication is non-existent in publications (Mills, 2012). Therefore, a tone must be used in writing that is “distinct, clear, consistent, and relevant to the target audience” (Mills, 2012, para. 2). Additionally, magazines today are extremely colorful with glamorous editorial pages, as well as filled with several photographs and illustrations (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012).

DeMers (2013) suggested magazines should focus on an evolving content marketing strategy. According to DeMers (2013), content marketing is defined as:

providing valuable information or content to current and potential customers for the purpose of building trust, branding, awareness, and positive sentiment. A successful content marketing campaign establishes you as an expert in your field, and that sets the groundwork for a long-term business relationship. (para. 4).

Utility

“Magazines are the most intimate form of media because they establish a relationship with their readers unequalled by newspapers, television, or radio,” (Sumner & Miller, 2013, p. vii). Readers use magazines to seek emotional, pleasurable, or aesthetic experiences, and some individuals use magazines as an escape or diversion from life (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). Sumner and Miller (2013) suggested a magazine imitates a reader’s life in its entirety. Johnson and Prijatel (2012) stated magazines help readers acquire information, knowledge, and understanding.

Therefore, readers keep magazines for longer periods of time than other forms of media (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). “Magazines are created to last” (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012, p. 9). Peck (1977) stated media consumers read magazines for entertainment, increase in knowledge, conversational material, escape, practical information, and inspiration.

According to the Bauer Media Group (n.d.), there are essentially 10 reasons to love magazines:

(1) magazines are thriving, (2) magazines are adored by the youth market, (3) magazines understand and meet consumers' needs, (4) magazines command trust and greater attention, (5) magazines drive word of mouth, (6) magazines provide a bridge to further interaction, (7) magazine advertising is valued and absorbed, (8) magazines drive online behavior, (9) magazines deliver more cost effective marketing, and (10) magazines can optimize audience reach. (para. 17)

Design

A magazine's look is crucial to its audience's perception (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). "Articles or photos that miss the mark in terms of audience are ineffective, no matter how brilliantly composed and technically elegant they might be" (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012, p. 5).

The elements of eye movement, grid, typography, color, and the basic design principles of unity, balance, proportion, sequence, and contrast must be considered when developing a magazine (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012).

Eye movement flows in a "Z" pattern on the page, beginning from the top left section following down to the bottom right section (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). "By placing emphasis on the appropriate elements, a designer can control the composition's focal point, set up a visual hierarchy between the design elements, and in the process help direct the reader's eye" (Conover, 2011, p. 6). The grid outlines margins, number of columns per page, widths of columns, cutline and photo placement, title placement, and the use of white space in the layout (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012).

According to Johnson and Prijatel (2012), typography is considered the primary visual component on the designed page. "No element is more integral to a design's ability to communicate than type" (Conover, 2011, p. 19). Typeface can do several different things: shout, whisper, stammer, bawl, growl, or converse (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). When choosing a

typeface, legibility, suitability, font, size, line length, and spacing of letters and lines must be taken into consideration (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012).

“The use of color adds visual excitement to pages, and readers say they prefer a page with full color to one with just black and white” (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012, p. 263). Color creates identification and attracts attention (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). In reference to the “Z” pattern, designers specifically place certain colors along the pattern to attract readers’ interest when scanning (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). Johnson and Prijatel (2012) state color should be meaningful with tints and shades depicting certain information to assist readers with interpreting material.

Theoretical Framework: Uses and Gratifications Theory

Early in the history of communications research, an approach was developed to study the gratifications that attract and hold audiences to the kinds of media and the types of content that satisfy their social and psychological needs (Ruggiero, 2009). Payne, Severn, and Dozier (1988), suggested “uses and gratifications research indicates some consistent motives across populations for using a wide range of media, including newspapers, radio and television” (p. 1). Early research adopted the experimental or quasi-experimental approach, in which communication conditions were manipulated in search of general lessons about how better to communicate or about the unintentional consequences of messages (Ruggiero, 2009).

Studies relevant to the uses and gratifications approach began in the early 1940s (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Analysis included such studies as Herzog’s quiz programs and the gratifications from listening to soap operas in 1942, Schuman’s motives for becoming interested in serious music or radio in 1942, Wolfe and Fiske on the development of children’s interest in comics in 1949, and Berelson’s on the function of newspaper reading in 1949 (Katz et al., 1974).

Each of the listed studies had close similarities, which linked them to the uses and gratifications approach. First, each study examined the respondents with open-ended questions (Katz et al., 1974). They also shared a qualitative approach and they did not attempt to examine

the links among the gratifications (Katz et al., 1974). Katz et al. (1974) stated each of these studies formulated a list of functions:

to match one's wits against others, to get information and advice for daily living, to provide a framework for one's day, to prepare oneself culturally for the demands of upward mobility, or to be reassured about the dignity and usefulness of one's role. (p. 509)

Ruggiero (2009) categorized uses and gratifications approach research into decades. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, according to Ruggiero (2009), "Researchers identified and operationalized many social and psychological variables that were presumed to be the precursors of different patterns of consumption of gratifications" (p. 5).

Studies conducted during this period reflected a shift from the traditional effects of mass media research to a more functionalist perspective (Ruggiero, 2009). From the 1950s forward, uses and gratifications researchers and psychologists worked hand-in-hand to research the ways human beings interact with the media (Ruggiero, 2009).

According to Ruggiero (2009), "During the 1970s, the uses and gratifications researchers intently examined audience motivations and developed additional typologies of the uses people made of the media to gratify social and psychological needs" (p. 6). During the 1980s, research continued to develop and researchers evaluated the active audience (Ruggiero, 2009).

After several years of research, the uses and gratifications approach was coined in the 1970s (Ruggiero, 2009). Early uses and gratifications studies were primarily descriptive, seeking to classify the responses of audience members into meaningful categories (Ruggiero, 2009). Most scholars agreed that early research had little theoretical coherence (Ruggiero, 2009).

Overview of the Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications approach is known as one of the most influential theories in the field of communication research (Ruggiero, 2009). Katz et al. (1974) stated mass communication is used by individuals to connect, or sometimes to disconnect, themselves via

instrumental, affective or integrative relations with different kinds of family and friends. Katz et al. (1974) sought to describe which media researchers studied human needs to discover how much the media did or did not contribute to their satisfaction.

The uses and gratification approach assumed audiences were active communicators with self-aware needs, motivating them to choose media content instead of experiencing incidental or passive media exposure (Tsao & Sibley, 2004). It also assumed media usage competed with other bases of need gratifications (Tsao & Sibley, 2004). It attempts to examine how and why audiences are motivated to consume certain kinds of media (Krcmar et al., 2009).

Krcmar et al. (2009) stated, “To understand certain motives, we should continue to explore audiences’ choices of media and specific content, *we should explore their enjoyment of content*, and we should examine personality correlates of these variables” (p. 401).

According to Katz et al. (1974), older studies paired with more recent studies have formed seven main areas in which uses and gratifications is centered:

(a) the social and psychological origins of (b) needs, which generate (c) expectations of (d) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (e) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (f) need gratifications and (g) other consequences, perhaps only unintended ones. (p. 510)

Calapkulu (2011) broke the uses and gratifications theory into four main concepts for better understanding: (a) active audience, (b) satisfaction sought, (c) needs and motivations, and (d) satisfaction obtained. According to Calapkulu (2001), “The active audience is assumed that people are aware of their needs, they evaluate several communication channels and their context, and they select the channel which will provide the satisfaction they seek” (p. 27).

The satisfaction sought adopts the fact people guide themselves toward their own expectations and progress (Calapkulu, 2011). Needs and motivations are the general compulsions that affect people’s actions and the basic underlying reason why people use mass communication

tools is to satisfy needs (Calapkulu, 2011). Lastly, satisfactions sought or the satisfactions expected and the satisfactions obtained are different things (Calapkulu, 2011).

Katz et al. (1974) also wanted to clarify the extent to which certain kinds of media can gratify someone's needs; not just any kind of content can be formed to any kind of need.

According to Katz et al. (1974), "The uses and gratifications approach should highlight the audience as a source of challenge to producers to cater more richly to the multiplicity of requirements and roles that it has disclosed" (p. 521).

According to Ruggiero (2009), the uses and gratifications approach focused on humans' needs and what media can do to gratify them. This also is a common denominator for several other theories. Ruggiero (2009) suggested physiological and psychological needs such as self-actualization, cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, and expressive needs are inherent in every individual and central to human experience. Human needs are influenced by culture, not only their formation, but also how they are gratified (Ruggiero, 2009).

Ruggiero (2009) concluded:

The uses and gratifications approach should prove effective in ascertaining the importance of social context as a factor in the communication experience. Significantly, the way individuals choose to use media differs accordingly with their position in the social structure. (p. 24)

One basic question asked in the uses and gratifications approach: "Why do people become involved in one particular type of mediated communication or another, and what gratifications do they receive from it?" (Ruggiero, 2009, p. 29).

The uses and gratifications approach is to be considered both for qualitative and quantitative studies. Several scholars wished to dismiss quantitative methods in the early 1990s (Ruggiero, 2009). However, Leeds-Hurwitz, as cited by Ruggiero (2009), suggested "a revolution was occurring in all the fields that study human behavior, including communication" (p. 24).

Ruggiero (2009) noted quantitative methodologies could be used effectively to inform. Different levels of analysis, including individual, small group, organizational, societal, and cultural, may require the use of multiple methods in single studies (Ruggiero, 2009). Communication researchers should be encouraged to employ uses and gratifications frequently in conjunction with qualitative methodologies (Ruggiero, 2009).

According to Ruggiero (2009), “Historically, the uses and gratifications approach focus has shifted from a mechanistic perspective’s interest in direct effects of media on receivers to a psychological perspective that stresses individual use and choice” (p. 25). In addition, uses and gratifications researchers also have moved from a microperspective toward a macroanalysis approach (Ruggiero, 2009). Therefore, although the microunit of data collection has primarily remained the individual, the focus of inquiry has been transformed over time (Ruggiero, 2009).

Ruggiero (2009) said, “Interpretation of the individual’s response by researchers has shifted from the sender to the receiver, from the media to the audience” (p. 25). He also stated, “the primary unit of data collection of uses and gratifications continues to be the individual, but that individual’s activity is now analyzed in a plethora of psychological and social contexts” (Ruggiero, 2009, p. 26).

Revival of the Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications theory always has been the most commonly considered approach in the initial stages of each new mass communications medium: newspapers, radio, television, and now Internet (Ruggiero, 2009). As new communication technologies rapidly come to the surface, the assortment of conceivable topics for uses and gratifications research also multiplies (Ruggiero, 2009).

Ruggiero (2009) stated, “This is particularly important as we enter an information age in which computer-mediated communication permeates every aspect of our individual and social lives” (p. 28). The theory has recently been reformulated to stress the importance of comparisons

between the gratifications sought from a medium with gratifications obtained (Larose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001).

Scholars put the uses and gratifications theory to rest for several years; however, with the technological advancements in recent years, it has been revived (Ruggiero, 2009). According to Ruggiero (2009), as new technologies present people with more and more media choices, motivation and satisfaction become even more crucial components of audience analysis. In fact, researchers have applied the uses and gratifications approach to a wide range of newly popularized video technologies (Ruggiero, 2009).

In several recent studies, researchers examined whether new telecommunications media is used to satisfy the same needs they had been theorized to satisfy with traditional communication media (Ruggiero, 2009). One of the major strengths of the uses and gratifications approach perspective has been its capacity to develop over time into a more sophisticated theory (Ruggiero, 2009).

Carter (2013) conducted a recent study regarding leisure travel magazines readership using the uses and gratifications theory. Even though the uses and gratifications theory is constantly used in magazine research, a large gap exists explaining why travel magazine readers read travel magazines (Carter, 2013). Carter (2013) determined people who frequently travel nationally are more likely to be motivated by inspiration to read leisure travel magazines, and that people who have high interest in transcontinental places are motivated to read as a form of entertainment and to receive guidance.

Pearson (2011) used the uses and gratifications approach to guide her study analyzing the evolution of content, style, and structure of two regional shelter magazines. Pearson (2011) found an increase in the type and amount of content created. “For instance, in terms of type of content, *At Home*’s print issue now serves as a conduit for promoting *At Home*’s online presence” (Pearson, 2011, p. 44). As far as style, Pearson (2011) discovered the style of both the print and online content is focused toward quickly capturing the attention of an audience. The study also

suggested that the structure of the magazine, or an action plan for strategy execution, has evolved from an “economic model involving only print advertising to one that is placing increasingly more emphasis on monetizing online content” (Pearson, 2011, p. 46).

Additionally, Payne et al. (1988) found the uses and gratifications approach best directed their study by finding that scores on environmental diversion, interaction, and surveillance scales are consistent with respondents’ choice of magazines (Payne et al., 1988).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter explains the methods used to conduct this study, including approval by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board, research design, instrumentation, validity, reliability, population, data collection, and data analysis.

Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University policy and federal regulations require approval of all research related to human subjects before the researchers can begin investigation. The Oklahoma State University Office of University Research Services and Institutional Review Board (IRB) review research methods to protect the welfare of human subjects involved in biomedical and behavioral research. The OSU IRB reviewed the study and needed revisions were received on Dec. 20, 2013. After resubmission, final approval was granted on Jan. 16, 2014. The application number assigned to this study was AG-13-59 (see Appendix A).

Research Design

This descriptive study was conducted using a survey research design. The study was designed to obtain the perceptions of accessible Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) members who received the *Take the Reins* magazine.

Instrumentation

A web-based instrument created by Lawson (2012) was used to develop the foundation of

the researcher's electronic questionnaire built in and hosted at www.Qualtrics.com. The questionnaire assessed the self-reported readership perceptions of IEA members. The questionnaire consisted of 22 items. Readership areas were measured using a variety of five-point summated rating scales, dichotomous items, and order-ranking items. The questionnaire specifically addressed five major areas: personal characteristics, content, design, utility, and overall quality.

The questionnaire defined personal characteristics and addressed four major areas of readership, including (a) 11 items regarding utility, (b) four items regarding content, (c) one item regarding design, and (d) one item regarding overall quality. Not all participants received all questions; inapplicable questions were not shown to participants by use of skip logic, which allows researchers to send respondents to a future point or straight to the end of the survey, based on specific conditions set by the researcher (Qualtrics, 2014).

The questionnaire included demographic items on the members who chose to participate. The five demographic questions were (a) *age*, (b) *sex*, (c) *location of respondent's primary residence*, (d) *IEA zone*, and (e) *primary IEA discipline*. The location of the respondent's primary residence also was asked to allow the researchers to confirm the member's IEA zone.

Because the researcher knew some of the respondents would be younger than 18, the first question asked the age of the participant. If a respondent reported being younger than 18, a consent form box appeared (see Appendix B). By continuing the questionnaire and choosing (a) *I agree to this freely and voluntarily*, the respondent accepted the terms and conditions. However, if the respondents wished not to continue with the survey, they could choose (b) *I do not agree* and were taken to the classification questions at the end of the questionnaire.

One item in the questionnaire asked if the respondents received *Take the Reins*. If the respondents selected (a) *Yes* then they continued with the following questions. However, if the

respondent answered (b) *No* then skip logic was used to send them to the classification questions as the end of the instrument.

The item asking why the respondent reads the magazine was a choose-all-that-apply question. The respondents' choices were (a) *To be entertained*, (b) *To pass the time*, (c) *To learn about equestrian sport*, (d) *To keep up-to-date on all IEA events*, (e) *I do not or would not read Take the Reins*, and (f) *Other*, which gave the respondents the opportunity to list the "Other" item.

One item in the questionnaire asked how much of the *Take the Reins* magazine a member typically reads with the following options: (a) *I read it cover to cover*, (b) *I read most of the articles*, (c) *I only read one or two articles*, (d) *I scan rather than read the articles*, (e) *I just scan the headlines and photographs*, and (f) *I don't read much of it at all*. If the respondents selected *I read it cover to cover* then skip logic was used and the following question was skipped. However, if any answer other than *I read it cover to cover* was selected, they were taken to the following question.

A choose-all-that-apply question asked why respondents do not read all of the articles in the magazine. Answers were as follows: (a) *I do not have enough time*, (b) *The topics do not interest me*, (c) *The articles are too technical*, (d) *The articles are too basic*, (e) *The articles are too long*, and (f) *I read all of the articles*.

A question indicating level of agreement with interest in the selected areas were anchored as (a) *Strongly Disagree*, (b) *Disagree*, (c) *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, (d) *Agree*, and (e) *Strongly Agree*. This question asked the members about their level of interest in events about the IEA, updates about the IEA, stories about IEA members, stories about IEA staff, stories about IEA coaches, and stories about horses.

The instrument contained a question indicating level of agreement with the overall magazine in selected areas using the following anchors: (a) *Strongly Disagree*, (b) *Disagree*, (c) *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, (d) *Agree*, and (e) *Strongly Agree*. This question asked the members

about the level of the overall magazine to strengthen their personal connection to the IEA and the magazine's utility.

The members were asked to rate three content-related items and three design-related items using the following anchors: (a) *Strongly Disagree*, (b) *Disagree*, (c) *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, (d) *Agree*, and (e) *Strongly Agree*. These questions were in reference to the quality of writing, understandability of information, range and variety of topics, quality of photos and illustrations, design and presentation of stories, and general appearance of the magazine.

The questionnaire contained one ranking question. The members were asked to rank the story types from most interesting to least interesting. The story types included (a) *IEA staff*, (b) *IEA coaches*, (c) *IEA members*, (d) *IEA events*, (e) *IEA updates*, (f) *IEA zone information*, (g) *Education*, (h) *"How-to,"* and (i) *Horse*.

The item that asked the respondents to indicate their level of agreement with their overall impression of *Take the Reins* magazine was anchored as (a) *Strongly Disagree*, (b) *Disagree*, (c) *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, (d) *Agree*, and (e) *Strongly Agree*.

The members were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement: I would read *Take the Reins* magazine if it was only offered via the Internet. It was anchored (a) *Strongly Disagree*, (b) *Disagree*, (c) *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, (d) *Agree*, and (e) *Strongly Agree*.

The item that asked respondents to indicate how much time they spend with an issue of *Take the Reins* was anchored as (a) *90 minutes or more*, (b) *60 to 89 minutes*, (c) *30 to 59 minutes*, (d) *10 to 29 minutes*, (e) *1 to 9 minutes*, and (f) *I do not read it*.

One item asked the members how long they keep the magazine. It was anchored (a) *I do not keep it*, (b) *I keep it for less than a week*, (c) *I keep it one or two weeks*, (d) *I keep it for three or four weeks*, (e) *I keep it for more than a month*, (f) *I keep it until the next issue is available*, and (g) *I save it as part of a Take the Reins collection*.

The dichotomous item was a yes or no question asking if the respondent ever passed along an issue of *Take the Reins* to share an article with someone. If the respondents answered yes, they were then asked a question about to whom they passed the magazine. It was a choose-all-that-apply question and was anchored as (a) *Parents*, (b) *Grandparents*, (c) *Siblings*, (d) *Other relatives*, (e) *Friends*, and (f) *Others*. If the respondent answered no, the question was skipped using skip logic.

The members were asked if they consider the *Take the Reins* magazine to be a credible source of information about the IEA. This question was anchored as follows: (a) *Consistently portrays the program accurately and objectively*, (b) *Contains some “spin” but is generally accurate and objective*, (c) *Usually portrays the program in a positive light*, and (d) *Not a good source of objective information*.

Respondents also were asked to complete a short-response question of what story types or changes they would like to see in future issues of *Take the Reins* magazine.

Validity

Validity is the development of thorough evidence to demonstrate that the intended test matches the planned purpose of the test (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) suggested there are five specific types of evidence to be sought to established validity: “evidence based on test content, response process, internal structure, relations to other variables, and the consequences of testing (p. 162).

Face and content validity were assessed using a panel of experts. The panel consisted of the IEA executive director, the IEA chief operating officer, and the NRHA senior director of publications editor. Upon completion of review, the panel of experts critiqued and discussed the necessary edits for the instrument via email with the researcher.

Primary edits of the instrument included specific word choices for clarity and additions of answer choices. Only the researcher and faculty chair made changes to the instrument using Qualtrics.

Reliability

Reliability is considered the administration of an instrument with repeated or constant scores (Creswell, 2012). “Questions on instruments being ambiguous or unclear, procedures of test administration vary and are not standardized, and participants are fatigued, are nervous, misinterpret questions, or guess on tests” are all factors to results in unreliable data (Creswell, 2012, p. 159).

However, according to Creswell (2012), reliability and validity overlap. Validity is the larger term when assessing the choice of an instrument (Creswell, 2012). Reliability is a general measure of consistency (Creswell, 2012).

To address reliability, the researcher conducted a pilot study using the Oklahoma State University horse science class taught by Steven Cooper. The horse science class was chosen due to ease in accessibility, similar horse interests among the students and IEA members, and the age of respondents. An initial email was sent to students in the class on Feb. 7, 2014. A face-to-face reminder with an additional email was completed on Feb. 18, 2014. Of the students who were asked to participate ($n = 70$), 31.43% completed the questionnaire.

A Cronbach’s alpha was calculated on the pilot study to ensure reliability of the instrument by testing internal consistency or average correlation of the questionnaire’s items (Santos, 1999). “When you have a variable generated from such a set of questions that return a stable response, then your variable is said to be reliable” (Santos, 1999). According to Santos (1999), a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient should be now lower than 0.70 to be acceptable; however, “the higher the score, the more reliable the generated scale is.”

A Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for each individual set of scaled items related to content and design with scores ranging from 0.70 to 0.89. Items related to utility were not scaled; therefore, no statistical analysis could be performed.

Population

The population for this study included all dues-paying, email-accessible members of the IEA as of March 3, 2014 ($N = 9,203$). The IEA allows students, coaches, and contributing riders to become members (R. Lawrence, personal communication, October 14, 2013).

Data Collection

Because the population was large, it was not practical to obtain a parent's consent for minors. Instead, the first question of the questionnaire asked the respondents their age. If younger than 18 was selected, a consent form box appeared (see Appendix B). By continuing with the questionnaire, the respondents gave their consent.

The questionnaire (see Appendix B) was administered to the members via email from the IEA to ensure confidentiality of the members. The email stated the purpose of the research study, contained a link to the Qualtrics instrument, and provided the researcher's contact information. The IEA sent the introductory email (see Appendix C) on March 3, 2014. If respondents submitted their email address at the end of the questionnaire, their email address was removed by IEA from the master mailing address list in Constant Contact, an email marketing system.

The initial email was sent to 9,203 email addresses. Of those, 463 were returned as invalid email addresses, which were considered as frame errors from the original population and were removed. The resulting population ($N = 8,740$) was used for this study. Additional frame errors from inactive email addresses, unmaintained email addresses, and emails quarantined by spam filters could not be eliminated.

On March 11, 2014, a follow-up email (see Appendix D) was sent to members who had not responded. The email included a reminder message as well as the link to the questionnaire. The same follow-up email was sent on March 18, 2014, to those who had not responded, asking them to complete the questionnaire. The last reminder email was sent on March 25, 2014. No incentives were used.

At the end of the collection period, 1,043 individuals had participated in the survey for a response rate of 11.9%. According to Langer (2003), although the response rate was low, it was determined acceptable. “Recent published research has shown no substantial effect of lower response rates on measurements of opinion” (Langer, 2003, p. 17). It could be argued that nonresponse bias occurs with such a low response rate; however, “lower response rates do not necessarily indicate nonresponse bias in survey results” (Myers & Irani, 2011, p. 53). Additionally, according to Langer (2003), “a higher response rate is not automatically indicative of better data” (p. 18).

Miller and Smith (1983) found that “if the respondents are typical of the population (statistical tests can be done), this similarity can be reported and the evaluator can then generalize from the respondents to the sample” (p. 47). However, if differences occur, the researcher must conclude only to respondents (Miller and Smith, 1983). Also, the variables must be similar which are being compared (Miller and Smith, 1983). However, from a statistical standpoint, the respondents of this study are not similar to the population; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all IEA members.

Additionally, an analysis of early and late respondents was conducted to evaluate nonresponse error. According to Lindner and Wingenbach (2002), evaluating nonresponse error is essential, especially in social science research, to control its potential threat to the external validity of a research study. In this study, the researcher, using a chi-square analysis, determined that question 11, answer stem 7, yielded the only significant relationship between early and late responders and a response stem ($\chi^2 = 3.84, p < .02$). Analysis of variance was used to analyze response bias for scaled items, none of which yielded significant differences. As such, it was determined that early and late response bias was minimal.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0 for Macintosh™. Nominal data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. All ordinal data were analyzed using mode and

range. According to Heinzen and Nolan (2012), “ordinal variables are observations that have rankings as their values” (p. 4). Therefore, the range of scores was calculated, and the mode summarized the members’ perceptions.

Further, one question yielded interval data regarding the respondent’s age and was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. According to Heinzen and Nolan (2012), “Interval variables are used for observations that have numbers as their values; the distance (or interval) between pairs of consecutive numbers is assumed to be equal” (p. 5).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter exhibits and describes the findings of the *Take the Reins* readership research study. At the end of the collection period, 1,043 individuals had participated in the survey for a response rate of 11.9%.

Findings as Related to Objective 1

Objective 1 sought to describe selected characteristics of Interscholastic Equestrian Association members. In reference to members' receipt of the *Take the Reins* magazine ($n = 978$), 76.79% ($f = 751$) responded *Yes* and 23.21% ($f = 227$) responded *No*.

Of those who responded to the question concerning classification ($n = 989$), 88.45% ($f = 677$) reported they were members of the IEA, 15.77% ($f = 156$) reported they were parents of IEA members, 12.94% ($f = 128$) reported they were coaches in the IEA, and 2.83% ($f = 28$) were *Other*.

The researcher found two major themes from the respondents' answers to the *Other* classification question (see Table 1). To support these found themes, the researcher established illustrative quotes.

Table 1

Selected “Other” IEA Self-Reported Classifications

Theme	<i>f</i>	Illustrative Quotes
Parent	7	“Parent” “Employee and parent”
Rider	4	“IEA member” “Student”

Regarding sex ($n = 798$), 96.87% ($f = 773$) of respondents indicated they were *Female* and 3.13% ($f = 25$) indicated they were *Male*.

The modal age of respondents was 17. The youngest respondent was 10 and the oldest was 66 (see Table 2).

Table 2

Age of Respondents (n = 1,041)

Variable	<i>Mode</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	17	16	23.95	14.49

Of the respondents ($n = 1,041$), 728 (69.93%) were younger than or equal to 18 and 310 (29.78%) were older than 18.

Thirty-three states were represented as a primary state of residence among the respondents; 12.45% ($f = 98$) indicated they lived in *New York*, 11.94% ($f = 94$) lived in *Ohio*, and 9.40% ($f = 74$) lived in *Massachusetts* (see Table 3).

Table 3
Primary Residence of IEA Members (n = 787)

	<i>f</i>	%
New York	98	12.45
Ohio	94	11.95
Massachusetts	74	9.40
Georgia	60	7.62
Pennsylvania	50	6.35
Connecticut	44	5.59
Virginia	42	5.34
California	40	5.08
Florida	40	5.08
Maryland	40	5.08
Texas	25	3.18
Colorado	24	3.05
South Carolina	23	2.92
Tennessee	20	2.54
Indiana	18	2.29
North Carolina	14	1.78
Rhode Island	14	1.78
Kentucky	9	1.14
Arkansas	7	0.89
Arizona	6	0.76
Illinois	6	0.76
New Jersey	6	0.76
Michigan	5	0.64
New Hampshire	5	0.64
Vermont	5	0.64
Maine	4	0.51
West Virginia	4	0.51
Alabama	3	0.38
Louisiana	2	0.25
Missouri	2	0.25
Nevada	1	0.13
New Mexico	1	0.13
Oklahoma	1	0.13

Of the 10 IEA Zones represented, 141 (18.55%) of respondents indicated *Zone 1*, which includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont; 141 (18.55%) of respondents indicated *Zone 2*, which includes New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania; 134 (17.63%) of respondents indicated *Zone 4*, which includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee; and 124 (16.32%) indicated *Zone 5*, which includes Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio (see Table 4).

Table 4

IEA Members' Primary IEA Zone (n = 760)

Zone	<i>f</i>	%
Zone 1	141	18.55
Zone 2	141	18.55
Zone 4	134	17.63
Zone 5	124	16.32
Zone 3	93	12.24
Zone 7	43	5.66
Zone 10	37	4.87
Zone 8	32	4.21
Zone 6	13	1.71
Zone 9	2	0.26

Of total respondents ($n = 792$), 699 (88.26%) indicated their primary IEA discipline was *Hunt Seat*, 78 (9.85%) indicated *Western*, and 15 (1.89%) indicated *Saddle Seat* (see Table 5).

Table 5

IEA Members' Primary IEA Discipline (n = 792)

Discipline	<i>f</i>	%
Hunt Seat	699	88.26
Western	78	9.85
Saddle Seat	15	1.89

Findings as Related to Objective 2

Objective 2 sought to describe the perceptions of the IEA members regarding the content of *Take the Reins* magazine.

The respondents strongly agreed they are interested in stories about horses ($f = 461$, 60.50%). The largest percentage of respondents strongly agreed they are interested in events

about IEA ($f = 372$, 48.75%), IEA updates ($f = 346$, 45.35%), and IEA members ($f = 310$; 40.63%). The largest percentage of respondents (41.13%, $f = 313$) agreed they are interested in stories about IEA coaches (see Table 6).

Table 6

IEA Members' Perceived Level of Interest in Selected Topic Areas

Topic Area	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I am interested in stories about horses. (<i>n</i> = 762)	23	3.02	7	0.92	49	6.43	222	29.13	461	60.50
I am interested in events about IEA. (<i>n</i> = 763)	25	3.28	3	0.39	39	5.11	324	42.46	372	48.75
I am interested in updates about the IEA. (<i>n</i> = 763)	24	3.15	5	0.66	51	6.68	337	44.17	346	45.35
I am interested in stories about IEA members. (<i>n</i> = 763)	26	3.41	34	4.46	102	13.37	291	38.14	310	40.63
I am interested in stories about IEA coaches. (<i>n</i> = 761)	31	4.07	46	6.04	168	22.08	313	41.13	203	26.68
I am interested in stories about IEA staff. (<i>n</i> = 760)	40	5.26	103	13.55	246	32.37	246	32.37	125	16.45

Note. Modal response in boldface.

Respondents were asked to rank the following nine *Take the Reins* topic areas by level of interest, including (a) *IEA staff*, (b) *IEA coaches*, (c) *IEA members*, (d) *IEA events*, (e) *IEA updates*, (f) *IEA zone information*, (g) *Educational*, (h) “*How-to*,” and (i) *Horse*.

Regarding interest in story types, 192 (32.32%) respondents ranked *Horse* stories as their first choice. Of the respondents, 144 (24.12%) find “*How-to*” articles second most interesting. *Educational* stories ($f = 99$, 16.53%) and *IEA zone information* ($f = 90$, 15.15%) shared a same response of third. The fourth most interesting story type according to respondents ($f = 118$, 19.44%) was about *IEA events*. Stories about *IEA updates* were ranked fifth by respondents ($f = 89$, 14.93%) (see Table 7).

Table 7

IEA Members' Level of Interest in Take the Reins Topics

Topic	Rank																	
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Horse (<i>n</i> = 594)	192	32.32	82	13.80	67	11.28	52	8.75	58	9.76	63	10.61	29	4.88	32	5.39	19	3.20
“How-to” (<i>n</i> = 597)	72	12.06	144	24.12	72	12.06	69	11.56	68	11.39	60	10.05	33	5.53	48	8.04	31	5.19
Educational (<i>n</i> = 599)	57	9.52	66	11.02	99	16.53	78	13.02	66	11.02	70	11.69	74	12.36	43	7.18	46	7.68
IEA zone information (<i>n</i> = 594)	64	10.77	64	10.77	90	15.15	77	12.96	77	12.96	81	13.64	58	9.76	33	5.56	50	8.42
IEA events (<i>n</i> = 607)	81	13.34	83	13.67	84	13.84	118	19.44	95	15.65	80	13.18	37	6.10	18	2.97	11	1.81
IEA updates (<i>n</i> = 596)	52	8.72	86	14.43	83	13.93	82	13.76	89	14.93	73	12.25	76	12.75	41	6.88	14	2.35
IEA members (<i>n</i> = 594)	84	14.14	56	9.43	68	11.45	77	12.96	71	11.95	75	12.63	105	17.68	39	6.57	19	3.19
IEA coaches (<i>n</i> = 586)	7	1.19	25	4.27	41	6.99	46	7.85	67	11.43	69	11.77	109	18.60	197	33.62	25	4.27
IEA staff (<i>n</i> = 559)	2	0.36	5	0.89	7	1.25	10	1.79	16	2.86	25	4.47	60	10.73	104	18.60	330	59.03

Note. Modal response in boldface.

Respondents agreed they considered the quality of writing in *Take the Reins* magazine to be good ($f = 426, 59.17\%$) and the information provided in the magazine to be easily understood ($f = 434, 60.28\%$) (see Table 8).

Table 8

IEA Members' Perceptions Regarding the Content of Take the Reins

Topic Area	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I consider the information provided in <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be easily understood. (<i>n</i> = 720)	4	0.56	9	1.25	76	10.56	434	60.28	197	27.36
I consider the quality of writing provided in <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be good. (<i>n</i> = 720)	8	1.11	26	3.61	135	18.75	426	59.17	125	17.36
I consider the range/variety of topics provided in <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be good. (<i>n</i> = 720)	16	2.22	80	11.11	147	20.42	353	49.03	124	17.22

Note. Modal response in boldface.

Respondents were asked an open-ended question regarding story types or changes they would like to see in future issues of *Take the Reins* magazine (see Appendix E). The researcher found 10 major themes among the respondents' answers of different story types: coach/team, college riding, discipline specific, educational/how-to, horse, IEA overall, judges perception, rider/member, show/competition, and zone. To support these themes, the researcher established illustrative quotes (see Table 9). Additionally, the researcher found a major theme for overall content of the magazine (see Table 10).

Table 9

Overall Comments Related to Story Types in Take the Reins

Theme	<i>f</i>	Illustrative Quotes
Horse	69	“More articles on the care and keeping of a horse.” “Special horses in IEA. How IEA has helped kids that do not own their own horses.”
Rider/member	61	“Talk about the ‘rookies’ as well, not only the best of the best.” “Stories about IEA participants and their journey through the IEA world.”
Educational/ How-to	47	“Educational for coaches, as well as judges, in respect to the differences between regular horse showing and the IEA.” “More “How-to” articles, especially concerning bettering yourself as a rider.”
Coach/Team	27	“I would love to read about the coaches and all they have to do.” Interviews from more than just champion teams. The new teams and growing teams need to be shown too.”
Judges’ perception	24	“More ‘what the judges are looking for’ articles.” “I would like to see more judges’ opinions and how they score.”
Discipline specific	24	“Less focus on the Western and reigning aspects of IEA. The English Hunt Seat discipline does not get enough attention.” “Any stories about the Western side of the association would be welcome.”
Zone	17	“More information about all the zones in each magazine.” “Would like to see stories from each zone, and to distinguish which zone, city, local the story is about.”
IEA overall	8	“Articles about rule change proposals, a forum, letters to the editor.” “Focus on rules, progression from regionals, zones, finals.”
College riding	5	“More information about college opportunities with schools.” “Transitions of IEA riders to college riding/career to share with students.”
Show/ competition	5	“Stories about individual zone shows.” “Information or highlights from specific shows.”

Table 10

Overall Comments Related to Content of Take the Reins

Theme	<i>f</i>	Illustrative Quotes
Overall content	14	“Your editorial staff needs to do a better job of editing for typographical errors.” “Verify the information is accurate!”

Findings as Related to Objective 3

Objective 3 sought to determine the perceptions of IEA members regarding the design of *Take the Reins* magazine. Respondents agreed they considered the quality of photos/illustrations in the magazine to be good ($f = 388, 53.89\%$), the design/presentation of stories provided in the magazine to be good ($f = 397, 55.37\%$), and the general appearance of the magazine to be good ($f = 414, 57.66\%$) (see Table 11).

Table 11

IEA Members' Perceptions Regarding the Design of Take the Reins

Topic Area	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I consider the quality of photos/illustrations in <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be good. (<i>n</i> = 720)	7	0.97	16	2.22	77	10.69	388	53.89	232	32.22
I consider the design/presentation of stories provided in <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be good. (<i>n</i> = 717)	7	0.98	39	5.44	105	14.64	397	55.37	169	23.57
I consider the general appearance of the <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be good. (<i>n</i> = 718)	8	1.11	17	2.37	89	12.40	414	57.66	190	26.46

Note. Modal response in boldface.

Respondents were asked an open-ended question regarding story types or changes they would like to see in future issues of *Take the Reins* magazine (see Appendix E). The researcher identified one major theme among the respondents' answers about design: overall design. To support this found theme, the researcher established illustrative quotes (see Table 12).

Table 12

Overall Comments Related to Design of Take the Reins

Theme	<i>f</i>	Illustrative Quotes
Overall design	6	"Better graphic design and layouts." "Design needs to be more interesting for the current audience, including photos which at times are awkward." "Better photos."

Findings as Related to Objective 4

Objective 4 sought to determine the perceptions of IEA members regarding the utility of *Take the Reins* magazine. Respondents were asked to choose all that apply when asked why they would read the magazine. *To keep up-to-date on all IEA events* was the most frequent answer (*f*= 658, 63.88%), followed by *To learn about equestrian sport* (*f*= 411, 39.40%), *To be entertained* (*f*= 394, 37.77%), and then *To pass the time* (*f*= 232, 22.24%) (see Table 13).

Table 13

Reasons IEA Members Read Take the Reins (n = 1,043)

Reasons to read	<i>f</i>	%
To keep up-to-date on all IEA events.	658	63.88
To learn about equestrian sport.	411	39.40
To be entertained.	394	37.77
To pass the time.	232	22.24
Other	40	3.83
I do not or would not read <i>Take the Reins</i> .	23	2.20

Note. Respondents were asked to choose all that apply.

The researcher found two major themes from the respondents' answers found in the *Other* response data for the instrument question regarding why respondents read *Take the Reins* magazine. The themes were: "To learn" and "To see various teams and members I know." To support these found themes, the researcher established illustrative quotes (see Table 14).

Table 14

Selected "Other" Response Pertaining to Reading Take the Reins

Theme	<i>f</i>	Illustrative Quotes
To see various teams and members I know.	13	"I read it to see things from events I participated in and pics." "To see the student riders and their successes and involvement."
To learn.	7	"For riding tips and suggestions." "To learn more about other teams so I can improve my own team's experience."

In reference to the amount of *Take the Reins* read by the respondents, 37.16% ($f = 301$) of respondents signified they read most of the articles, 18.40% ($f = 149$) signified they only read one or two articles, and 18.02% ($f = 146$) signified they read it cover to cover (see Table 15).

Table 15

Amount of Magazine Read by IEA Members (n = 810)

Amount	<i>f</i>	%
I read most of the articles.	301	37.16
I only read one or two articles.	149	18.40
I read it cover to cover.	146	18.02
I scan rather than read the articles.	98	12.10
I just scan the headlines and photographs.	65	8.02
I don't read much of it at all.	51	6.30

Respondents were asked to choose all that apply when indicating why they do not read all the articles offered in *Take the Reins* magazine. Of the respondents, 324 (31.06%) indicated the

topics do not interest them, 278 (26.65%) indicated they do not have enough time, and 98 (9.40%) indicated the articles are too long (see Table 16).

Table 16

Reasons for Not Reading Take the Reins (n = 1,043)

Reasons	<i>f</i>	%
The topics do not interest me.	324	31.06
I do not have enough time.	278	26.65
The articles are too long.	98	9.40
The articles are too basic.	67	6.42
The articles are too technical.	46	4.41
I read all of the articles.	43	4.12

Note. Respondents were asked to choose all that apply.

The largest percentage of respondents agreed they considered *Take the Reins* to be useful ($f = 328, 44.15\%$) and considered the magazine to strengthen their personal connection to IEA ($f = 268, 36.07\%$) (see Table 17).

Table 17

IEA Members' Perceived Level of Personal Usefulness

Topics	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I consider <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be useful. (<i>n</i> = 743)	23	3.10	56	7.54	206	27.73	328	44.15	130	17.50
I consider <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to strengthen my personal connection to the IEA. (<i>n</i> = 743)	36	4.85	60	8.08	246	33.11	268	36.07	133	17.90

Note. Modal response in boldface.

Of the respondents, 36.49% ($f = 250$) indicated they disagreed with the question concerning *Take the Reins* only being offered via the Internet ($n = 685$). Additionally, 23.80% ($f = 163$) of respondents signified they neither agreed nor disagreed, and 18.69% ($f = 128$) signified they strongly disagreed (see Table 18).

Table 18

IEA Members' Support for Offering Take the Reins Only Via the Internet (n = 685)

Level of Agreement	<i>f</i>	%
Strongly Agree	37	5.40
Agree	107	15.62
Neither Agree nor Disagree	163	23.80
Disagree	250	36.49
Strongly Disagree	128	18.69

When respondents were asked how much total time they typically spent with an issue of *Take the Reins* magazine, the modal response was *10 to 29 minutes* ($f = 315$, 45.39%). Of respondents, 196 (28.24%) indicated they spend *30 to 59 minutes*, and 112 (28.24%) of respondents spend *one to nine minutes* (see Table 19).

Table 19

Time Spent by IEA Members With an Issue of Take the Reins (n = 694)

Time	<i>f</i>	%
10 to 29 minutes	315	45.39
30 to 59 minutes	196	28.24
1 to 9 minutes	112	16.14
60 to 89 minutes	41	5.90
I do not read it	19	2.74
90 minutes or more	11	1.59

In reference to how long respondents keep a copy of *Take the Reins* magazine, 203 (29.46%) respondents identified they save it as part of a *Take the Reins* collection, 126 (18.29%) respondents identified they keep it until the next issue is available, and 111 (16.11%) respondents identified they keep it for one to two weeks (see Table 20).

Table 20

Length of Time IEA Members Keep Take the Reins (n = 689)

Timeframe	<i>f</i>	%
I save it as a part of a <i>Take the Reins</i> collection.	203	29.46
I keep it until the next issue is available.	126	18.29
I keep it for one to two weeks.	111	16.11
I keep it for less than a week.	82	11.90
I keep it for more than a month.	74	10.74
I keep it for three to four weeks.	55	7.98
I do not keep it.	38	5.52

Of those who responded to the question regarding passing along *Take the Reins* magazine to someone else ($n = 686$), 50.29% ($f = 345$) indicated *Yes* and 49.71% ($f = 341$) indicated *No*.

Respondents were asked to choose all that apply when indicating with whom they share the magazine. They indicated *Friends* ($f = 233$, 22.34%) as the most frequent response.

Additionally, respondents indicated they share the magazine with *Parents* ($f = 132$, 12.66%) (see Table 21).

Table 21

Persons With Whom IEA Members Share Take the Reins (n = 1,043)

Persons	<i>f</i>	%
Friends	233	22.34
Parents	132	12.66
Others	107	10.26
Siblings	42	4.03
Other relatives	38	3.64
Grandparents	37	3.55

Note. Respondents were asked to choose all that apply.

The researcher found four major themes from the respondents' answers to the *Other* response data for the instrument question regarding sharing *Take the Reins*. The themes were barn copy, prospective students, students/riders, and trainer/coach/instructor. To support these found themes, the researcher established illustrative quotes (see Table 22).

Table 22

Selected "Other" Response Pertaining to Sharing Take the Reins

Theme	<i>f</i>	Illustrative Quotes
Students/Riders	38	"My daughter, who wouldn't look at it unless I pointed out an article that would interest her." "Members who don't get it"
Barn copy	11	"I keep a copy in the visitors lounge at my stable." "I leave it in the tack room at my farm."
Trainer/Coach/Instructor	7	"Instructors if there is an article related to tests" "Other coaches"
Prospective students	6	"IEA members and students that are considering becoming members." "Potential team members and/or their parents."

In reference to the *Take the Reins* magazine being a credible source of information, 309 (45.98%) respondents signified it consistently portrays the association accurately and objectively,

194 (28.87%) respondents signified it contains some “spin” but is generally accurate and objective, and 142 (21.13%) respondents signified it usually portrays the association only in a positive light (see Table 23).

Table 23

IEA Members’ Perceptions Regarding the Credibility of Take the Reins (n = 672)

Item	<i>f</i>	%
Consistently portrays the association accurately and objectively	309	45.98
Contain some “spin” but is generally accurate and objective	194	28.87
Usually portray the association only in a positive light	142	21.13
Not a good source of objective information	27	4.02

Respondents were asked an open-ended question regarding story types or changes they would like to see in future issues of *Take the Reins* magazine (see Appendix E). The researcher found one major theme among the respondents’ answers of utility: frequency. To support this found theme, the researcher established illustrative quotes (see Table 24).

Table 24

Overall Comments Related to Utility of Take the Reins

Theme	<i>f</i>	Illustrative Quotes
Frequency	5	<p>“More issues throughout the year.”</p> <p>“Doesn’t come out very frequently, maybe more frequent during the IEA competition season.”</p> <p>“More frequent.”</p>

Findings as Related to Objective 5

Objective 5 sought to determine IEA members’ overall perception of *Take the Reins* magazine. Of the respondents, 337 (48.28%) agree they are impressed by *Take the Reins* magazine (see Table 25).

Table 25

IEA Members' Level of Agreement Regarding Overall Impression of Take the Reins (n = 698)

Level of Agreement	<i>f</i>	%
Strongly Agree	87	12.46
Agree	337	48.28
Neither Agree nor Disagree	201	28.80
Disagree	55	7.88
Strongly Disagree	18	2.58

Respondents were asked an open-ended question regarding story types or changes they would like to see in future issues of *Take the Reins* magazine (see Appendix E). The researcher found two major themes among the respondents' answers of overall perception: unsure and no change. To support these found theme, the researcher established illustrative quotes (see Table 26).

Table 26

Overall Comments Related to Overall Perception of Take the Reins

Theme	<i>f</i>	Illustrative Quotes
No change	25	"I am happy with it as is." "Take the Reins magazine is awesome and IEA should not do anything to change them!" "I like the stories and the format."
Unsure	10	"I have no idea." "Beats me." "I don't know."

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter provides the conclusions of the researcher concerning the study as well as implications, recommendations for practice, recommendations for future research, and a related-discussion section.

Conclusions for Objective 1

Objective 1 sought to describe selected characteristics of Interscholastic Equestrian Association members. The typical respondent is a 17-year-old female member who receives *Take the Reins* magazine and is primarily active in Hunt Seat equitation. In terms of primary state of residence and primary IEA zone, the respondents vary greatly.

Conclusions for Objective 2

Objective 2 sought to describe the perceptions of the IEA members regarding the content of *Take the Reins* magazine. The respondents agree stories about horses, IEA events, IEA updates, IEA members, and IEA coaches interest them. However, respondents are less interested in stories about IEA staff. Additionally, when ranking and in open-ended responses, respondents are most interested in horse, “how to,” educational, and rider/member stories. This information supports Lawson’s (2012) findings that readers are most interested in reading about issues within their specific industry. Additionally, in accordance with the uses and gratification approach, because the respondents are active communicators with self-aware needs, they are motivated to choose media content that suits them instead of experiencing incidental or passive media

exposure (Tsao & Sibley, 2004).

Respondents consider the information provided in *Take the Reins* to be easily understood. They also consider the quality of writing provided in the magazine and the range/variety of topics provided in the magazine to be good.

Because those who responded consider the magazine to have a good variety/range of topics, this lends itself to a variety of needs as defined by the uses and gratifications theory including cognitive, social and tension release (Lawson, 2012). Understandability of information and quality of writing both address the cognitive needs of the reader (Lawson, 2012). Therefore, because respondents consider themselves to understand the information provided and agree with the quality of writing provided in *Take the Reins*, they are satisfying their cognitive needs by acquiring their desired knowledge through the magazine.

Conclusions for Objective 3

Objective 3 sought to determine the perceptions of IEA members regarding the design of *Take the Reins* magazine. The respondents agree they consider the quality of photos/illustrations, the design/presentation of stories provided, and general appearance of the magazine to be good. These conclusions provide verification for Johnson and Prijatelj's (2012) statement that a magazine's look is crucial to its audience's perception.

Conclusions for Objective 4

Objective 4 sought to determine the perceptions of IEA members regarding the utility of *Take the Reins* magazine. Those who responded read the magazine to keep up-to-date on all IEA events. When those who responded read the magazine, they characteristically spend 10 to 59 minutes. They also tend to share the magazine with others, typically friends. However, the amount of the magazine read by the respondents and the reasons for not reading *Take the Reins* varied, as did the length of time IEA members keep the magazine.

Those who responded consider the magazine to be useful. They also consider it to

strengthen their personal connection to the IEA. This lends itself to Johnson and Prijatelj's (2012) statement that an "association magazine can unify an industry, profession or interest group" (p. 13). To some degree, those who responded to the instrument believe *Take the Reins* magazine to be a credible source by consistently portraying the IEA accurately and objectively.

The respondents do not want to receive *Take the Reins* only via the Internet. This is supported through Norton's (2007) study that also found readers preferred to receive a hardcopy of the magazine rather than view it online. According to McCarthy et al. (2008), most agriculturalists prefer to receive information in printed forms, such as newsletters and magazines, which is reinforced through these findings. However, the provided results do not match Raymond's (2012) conclusions that Generation Z is best reached through the Internet or other social media platforms.

Conclusions for Objective 5

Objective 5 sought to determine IEA members' overall perception of *Take the Reins* magazine. Of those who responded, they agree they are impressed overall with *Take the Reins* magazine.

Recommendations for Practice

The respondents like *Take the Reins* as it is currently published. Therefore, the *Take the Reins* staff should continue to seek writing for high-quality, objective, and accurate stories for the magazine. The editor should continue to understand the magazine's audience and the topics that interest those individuals. This includes recognizing that not all of *Take the Reins*' readers are teenage girls. The magazine should showcase articles about the IEA and the equestrian industry, and should include quality content and photos.

The magazine should continue to be produced in a hardcopy format, for the respondents do not wish to view the magazine electronically. Because a large portion of the respondents said they did not receive *Take the Reins*, the IEA staff should consider updating its member address database by seeking address correction via the post office. This will reduce the number of

magazines sent to incorrect addresses.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further readership studies should be conducted on the *Take the Reins* magazine and other equestrian-related and membership-based publications. In addition to survey research, the IEA staff should consider using focus group research to help the magazine by addressing issues that may not have surfaced in a questionnaire.

Further research should be conducted to evaluate why respondents do not wish for *Take the Reins* magazine to be offered online. The IEA staff should also conduct a cost/benefit analysis on the expenses of producing a magazine via the Internet versus a hardcopy version to evaluate if transferring to an Internet-only based magazine is more cost beneficial. Factors such as HTML coding and postage should be evaluated. Therefore, it is beneficial for future research to be conducted about offering *Take the Reins* via an online source to assess which method is more profitable.

Additionally, the most accurate way to sell to Generation Z is through social media (Raymond, 2012). The *Take the Reins* staff should heavily investigate other forms of media to evaluate which methods best reach their target audience. Even though the respondents do not wish to view the magazine only via the Internet, other possible media could be tapped into.

A factor analysis could be conducted on the questionnaire to determine which items most accurately measure content, design, utility, and overall quality. This procedure would assist in modifying the questionnaire to measure the variables of interest better.

Discussion

The respondents are least interested in reading stories about IEA staff. Maybe this is attributed to the audience's age, considering the fact that age has the most profound impact on readership (Somerville, 2011). Or, maybe it is because youth wish to read about issues affecting them directly such as equestrian or IEA events, which aligns with Anataloe's (2013) findings that Generation Z enjoys more serious stories to deal with life challenges. However, it could also be

attributed to Sumner and Miller's (2013) findings that with large organizations such as the IEA, membership magazines are sometimes the only contact members have to their association. In turn, the respondents want to feel connected as possible to the IEA and equestrian sport, not specifically the IEA staff.

The amount of the magazine read by the respondents and the reasons for not reading *Take the Reins* varied greatly. How do we interpret these findings? Perhaps, like before, the amount of magazine read can be attributed to age. Possibly respondents are not reading *Take the Reins* magazine because the topics do not interest them. Additionally, readers typically use magazines to seek emotional, pleasurable, or aesthetic experiences, and some individuals use magazines as an escape or diversion from life (Johnson & Prijatel, 2012). Perhaps the respondents consider the articles too technical, too long, or even boring, which lends itself to Johnson and Prijatel's findings.

The respondents do not want to view *Take the Reins* magazine via the Internet or the IEA website. According to Schwartz's (2002) study, of the 22% of respondents who read magazines via the Internet regularly, 73% said they would not give up their print product for an online source, even at half the original price. Could this be because a tangible item is more appreciated and valued than an online copy, which cannot be held? Or, are respondents sharing the magazine often and wish to continue doing so, knowing if it was offered via the Internet that would not be possible.

It is interesting the respondents do not wish to view the magazine online, but the best way to access Generation Z is through social media (Raymond, 2012). Is it possible, however, this generation views the Internet as a dated form of media. With all of the technological advancements, they may rather have access to an online copy through an application on their Smartphone.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Approval of Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Thursday, January 16, 2014
IRB Application No AG1359
Proposal Title: Perceptions of Interscholastic Equestrian Association Members Toward the "Take the Reins Magazine": A Readership Study
Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 1/15/2015

Principal Investigator(s):
Jamie L. Trissel Shelly Sitton
2901 S Eagle Summit Dr 435 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74074 Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,


Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

Take the Reins Readership Questionnaire		Block Options
Q1	<p>Thank you for agreeing to share information about your use of <i>Take the Reins</i>, a magazine produced for the Interscholastic Equestrian Association by the National Reining Horse Association.</p> <p>What is your age?</p> <input type="text"/>	
<p>If Thank you for agreeing to s... Is Greater Than or Equal to 18, Then Skip To What is your classification?</p>		
Q2	<p>I understand that my participation is voluntary, there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and I am free to withdraw at any time. I have been fully informed about the procedures listed and I am aware of what I am being asked to do and the benefits of my participation.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I agree to this freely and voluntarily.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I do not agree.</p>	
<p>If I agree to this freely and ... Is Selected, Then Skip To What is your classification?</p> <p>If I do not agree. Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey</p>		
Q3	<p>What is your classification?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Member</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Coach</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Parent</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Other</p> <input type="text"/>	
Q4	<p>Do you receive <i>Take the Reins</i>?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>	
<p>If No Is Selected, Then Skip To The following questions are for class...</p>		

Q5

Why do you (would you) read the *Take the Reins* magazine? Please choose all that apply.

To be entertained.

To pass the time.

To learn about equestrian sport.

To keep up-to-date on all IEA events.

I do not or would not read *Take the Reins*.

Other

Q6

How much of the *Take the Reins* magazine do you typically read? Please choose only one.

I read it cover to cover.

I read most of the articles.

I only read one or two articles.

I scan rather than read the articles.

I just scan the headlines and photographs.

I don't read much of it at all.

Q7

Display This Question:
 If How much of the *Take the Reins* magazine do you typically read? Please choose only one. I read it cover to cover. Is **Not Selected**

Why do you not read all the articles in the *Take the Reins* magazine? Please choose all that apply.

I do not have enough time.

The topics do not interest me.

The articles are too technical.

The articles are too basic.

The articles are too long.

I read all of the articles.

Q8

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am interested in events about the IEA.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in updates about the IEA.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in stories about IEA members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in stories about IEA staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in stories about IEA coaches.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in stories about horses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q9

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I consider <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to strengthen my personal connection to the IEA.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be useful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider the advertisements in <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine before making a purchase.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q10

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I consider the quality of writing provided in <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider the information provided in <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be easily understood.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider the range/variety of topics provided in <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider the quality of photos/illustrations in <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider the design/presentation of stories provided in <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider the general appearance of the <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11

Please rank the following *Take the Reins* magazine story types from most interesting (1) to least interesting (9). Click the items and drag them into the rank box in the order you would like to rank them. You can rearrange the order of the items within the rank box, as well.

Items	Please rank story types from most interested to least interested.
IEA staff	
IEA coaches	
IEA members	
IEA events	
IEA updates	
IEA zone information	
Educational	
"How-to"	
Horse	

Q12

Please indicate your level of agreement with this statement: I am impressed with *Take the Reins* magazine.

Strongly Disagree
 Disagree
 Neither Agree nor Disagree
 Agree
 Strongly Agree

<p>Q13</p> <p><input type="text" value=""/></p>	<p>Please indicate your level of agreement with this statement: I would read <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine if it was only offered via the Internet.</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> Disagree <input type="radio"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="radio"/> Agree <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree </p>
<p>Q14</p> <p><input type="text" value=""/></p>	<p>Please indicate your level of agreement with this statement: I would read <i>Take the Reins</i> if it was offered on the IEA website</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> Disagree <input type="radio"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="radio"/> Agree <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree </p>
<p>Q15</p> <p><input type="text" value=""/></p>	<p>How much total time do you typically spend with an issue of <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine?</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> 90 minutes or more <input type="radio"/> 60 to 89 minutes <input type="radio"/> 30 to 59 minutes <input type="radio"/> 10 to 29 minutes <input type="radio"/> 1 to 9 minutes <input type="radio"/> I do not read it. </p>
<p>Q16</p> <p><input type="text" value=""/></p>	<p>How long do you keep a copy of <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine?</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> I do not keep it. <input type="radio"/> I keep it for less than a week. <input type="radio"/> I keep it for one to two weeks. <input type="radio"/> I keep it for three to four weeks. <input type="radio"/> I keep it for more than a month. <input type="radio"/> I keep it until the next issue is available. <input type="radio"/> I save it as part of a <i>Take the Reins</i> collection. </p>
<p>Q17</p> <p><input type="text" value=""/></p>	<p>Do you ever pass along the <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to share an article with someone else?</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No </p> <p style="text-align: center;">If No Is Selected, Then Skip To To what degree do you consider the Ta...</p>

Q18 <input type="text"/>	<p>Whom do you pass <i>Take the Reins</i> along to? Please choose all that apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Parents <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparents <input type="checkbox"/> Siblings <input type="checkbox"/> Other relatives <input type="checkbox"/> Friends <input type="checkbox"/> Others <input type="text"/>
Q19 <input type="text"/>	<p>To what degree do you consider the <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine to be a credible source of information about the IEA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Consistently portrays the association accurately and objectively. <input type="radio"/> Contain some "spin" but is generally accurate and objective. <input type="radio"/> Usually portray the association only in a positive light. <input type="radio"/> Not a good source of objective information.
Q20 <input type="text"/>	<p>What story types or changes would you like to see in future issues of <i>Take the Reins</i> magazine?</p> <input type="text"/>
Q21 <input type="text"/>	<p>The following questions are for classification purposes only. Your responses will allow the researchers to group the answers of all respondents and will never be associated with you as an individual.</p>
Q22 <input type="text"/>	<p>What is your sex?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female
Q23 <input type="text"/>	<p>Where do you consider your primary state of residence?</p> <input type="text" value="Alabama"/>
Q24 <input type="text"/>	<p>What is your IEA zone? (Or the zone of the IEA member(s) with whom you are affiliated)</p> <input type="text" value="Zone 1"/>

Q25

What do you consider your primary IEA discipline?

- Western
- Saddle Seat
- Hunt Seat

APPENDIX C

Introductory Email Text

Introductory email text:

Hello! As a member of the Interscholastic Equestrian Association, you have been selected to participate in a research project titled "Perceptions of Interscholastic Equestrian Association Members Toward the *Take the Reins* Magazine: A Readership Study."

The purpose of this web-based questionnaire research study is to determine selected characteristics about members who read *Take the Reins* magazine to improve future issues. If you choose to participate, you will be asked questions about your experience with *Take the Reins* magazine as well as selected discipline and personal characteristics to aid in research analysis.

By determining the self-reported readership behaviors and perceptions of readers, this will allow editors, writers, and sources of the equestrian field in coordinating an efficient flow of information from the IEA to the *Take the Reins* magazine.

The amount of time to complete the survey will be approximately 15 minutes. To complete the questionnaire, please click on the link below. To access the online survey, please use your Internet browser of choice and go to _____.

Your immediate response would be appreciated greatly.

You may choose at any time to withdraw from the study without penalty. The risks associated with this project are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. Your responses are voluntary and anonymous. We will not have future access to your email address IP address.

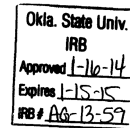
All answers will be stored online in a password-protected account until the survey is closed; then, they will be transferred to a password-protected computer to be analyzed. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not release any information that could possibly identify you as an individual. The data will be kept for up to five years on a password-protected computer.

By completing this survey, the researchers are assuming you are giving consent to participate in this study.

We would appreciate your assistance with this survey. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please contact Jamie Trissel, M.S. student, at 580-334-6916 or jamie.trissel@okstate.edu or Shelly Sitton, professor, at 405-744-3690 or shelly.sitton@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Jamie Trissel
Graduate Student Oklahoma State University



APPENDIX D

Follow-up Email Text

Introductory email text:

Greetings! Last week, you received a message asking for your opinions of the *Take the Reins* magazine.

As a member of the Interscholastic Equestrian Association, you have been selected to participate in a research project titled "Perceptions of Interscholastic Equestrian Association Members Toward the *Take the Reins* Magazine: A Readership Study."

The purpose of this web-based questionnaire research study is to determine selected characteristics about members who read *Take the Reins* magazine to improve future issues. If you choose to participate, you will be asked questions about your experience with *Take the Reins* magazine as well as selected discipline and personal characteristics to aid in research analysis.

By determining the self-reported readership behaviors and perceptions of readers, this will allow editors, writers, and sources of the equestrian field in coordinating an efficient flow of information from the IEA to the *Take the Reins* magazine.

The amount of time to complete the survey will be approximately 15 minutes. To complete the questionnaire, please click on the link below. To access the online survey, please use your Internet browser of choice and go to _____.

Your immediate response would be appreciated greatly.

You may choose at any time to withdraw from the study without penalty. The risks associated with this project are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. Your responses are voluntary and anonymous. We will not have future access to your email address IP address.

All answers will be stored online in a password-protected account until the survey is closed; then, they will be transferred to a password-protected computer to be analyzed. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not release any information that could possibly identify you as an individual. The data will be kept for up to five years on a password-protected computer.

By completing this survey, the researchers are assuming your given consent.

We would appreciate your assistance with this survey. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please contact Jamie Trissel, M.S. student, at 580-334-6916 or jamie.trissel@okstate.edu or Shelly Sitton, professor, at 405-744-3690 or shelly.sitton@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Jamie Trissel
Graduate Student Oklahoma State University



APPENDIX E

Open-Ended Response for Story Type or Overall Changes

Coaches/Team stories.

Coach/Team

I would love to read about the coaches and all they have to do

More stories about coaching teams for success

About IEA teams success

About particular teams - how they began etc

Feature more teams

Articles about teams/coaches sharing ideas are of interest.

Highlights about different teams, struggles of team, overcoming struggles. Highlights of judges. Shows that have been unique in some way. Fundraising ideas for smaller teams

Typical IEA Team information such as cost, benefits, quality of horses etc. /

To hold a "spotlight" page on a different team and rider each month.

The experiences of young teams and their challenges for members, fitting in practice due to the weather, and cost

The budget people the small teams if take the reins could draw interest to the new up & coming zones maybe the kids who came through IEA and are now in college doing well or working for a trainer or competing well in NRHA! Last year there was a girl at NR in barrels who showed IEA there was a skier in Olympics who rode Reiners. There's the goth kid who joins a team and flips her life and is college team captain. Or the learning disabilities kid with bad grade who joined a team and is an honor roll while fighting. Cancer and being a core person on a college team. Youth programs are about helping kids be who they will choose to be and how they will influence their bit of the world!

More stories about successful teams, more stories about teams that are involved with community service. More stories in general, I was left wanting more after I read the first issue I was sent. (Enjoyed all the stories in magazine, just wanted to read a bit more.)

More stories about teams

More stories about team work and strategy

more stories about individual teams on IEA

More articles and information about teams and whatnot. I think it should be monthly, not biannually or quarterly like it is now

more about teams across the US

More about teams the good the not so good and those in the middle from around the country

Interviews from more than just champion teams. The new teams and growing teams need to be shown too. It may help make the IEA bigger and more teams might join in.

In the last issue, there was a great article about how a team practices and works on the mental aspects of competing. I would like to see more articles about the way teams work together and practice.

I would like to see stories about IEA teams across the nation, not just mostly eastern teams. It'd be nice to see some about western teams also.

More about all of the teams and the different disciplines. All the disciplines should be covered especially the new ones as they are trying to get up and going.

maybe all the teams that make it to regionals, zones and, nationals! that would be awesome! I went to nationals for the team last year and I was third and the team was over all 8th! :) / nationals were so fun for hunters! Syracuse was such a fun and learning experience for all of the tulip pond IEA team and we all have our game faces on and are ready and hopeful to make it again this year!

maybe even more about individual teams!

More articles on specific riders and horses

I would like to have more issues for like each region and I would like to see a little story of all of the IEA teams so that everyone's stories can be shared

College riding

would like to see more information about college riding programs

Since my IEA member is a senior in high school I would like to see more info about college opportunities with schools where she can continue to compete in Reining and horsemanship.

I'm interested in which colleges need what type of level of shows they want to be interested in a potential rider for a college team

more information on colleges (which ones have teams, how to get on those teams, how to prepare in high school to get on the teams, is there scholarships, etc.)

transitions of IEA riders to college riding/career / educational tips to share with students

Educational

Educational for coaches, as well as judges, in respect to the differences between regular horse showing and the IEA.

More educational aimed at making the coaches better professional examples to the students and IEA public

Less from the executive director. More educational information from CREDIBLE industry professionals

I would like to see more educational articles for varsity level riders. For example, interviews with judges to see exactly what they look for when judging an IEA class. Also, I would appreciate it if y'all had horse care tips, even though you do not necessarily need to own a horse in IEA. Thank you.

I would like to see more educational things and opportunities. Things such as clinics. I don't care much for info on people however

More self improvement articles,

more articles on instruction

More about riding issues and things that IEA likes to see in riders riding techniques and clothing

How do articles and educational things - reviews of products

How to articles

How to host and get a team started

How to's

I would love to see more how to articles- the one about show attire that appeared most recently was extremely helpful. I also enjoyed reading the story about the Chatham Hall team's coaching techniques.

I'd love to see some "how to" columns about what specifically IEA judges are looking for in certain classes, and also maybe some riding tips for how to improve your own equitation. You could also include horse of the month where you profile an IEA horse, and you could talk about things such as how to calm show nerves.

Like to see more ways to improve your own horse (step by step tutorials), or articles on what judges look for.

More "How to" articles, especially concerning bettering yourself as a rider

More "How To"s and rider stories please!

more "how tos" or fun articles / maybe a q&a section

More articles as a how to from judges to riders or a how to about different things involved in the horse world.

More educational and "How-To" articles.
More fun articles, how to articles, do and don't articles, etc.
More how to and educational articles. Articles about transition from middle to high school to college.
more how to and more things on brand names review do a selected barn each issues and spend a week there record your experience interview the members and coach on team
More how to articles for jumpers and equitation.
More how to articles.
More showing and judging how to win how team work
Human interest and how-to
Something that gives me advise on how to do things or how to improve on things
more insight into showing strategies, team planning, etc. In other words - I want to know how other teams/riders/coaches function so that I can implement their ideas to improve my own coaching.
More articles about becoming better riders, instead of only about certain rides who are doing well.
More articles about become better horsemen PLEASE
I would like to see more articles on how to improve my riding, less advertisements, and a better set up/table of contents
More coaching and riding advice and "how to" / More spotlights on individual riders or teams and local stories / More info on upcoming events and previews of the zone and national finals /
More information would be nice and more how to or educational stories to further the youth of the horse world
Less technical. an easy read with pictures, how-tos, and maybe even news about the previous show's winners and events.
I would like to see more information on how to get scholarships thru IEA. I also would like to know how much of the money taken in by the IEA, is used for scholarships. It would also be nice to give ideas for fundraising. Many families are not able to afford the costa of travel, entry fees... / I just received the magazine for the 1st, time yesterday. We just heard of the IEA, organization this past fall and quickly signed up before the deadline. People in northern IL, hadn't heard of it. I'm trying to spread the word and encourage new teams! Our daughter has met many new friends and has had a very positive experience. / / Pam Edwards
How to deal with trouble in the show arena or when the odds of winning aren't in a rider's favor.
Event tips, human interest stories including horses.
Help with flat and jumping. Riding tips.
Tips on showing, etc
Riding tips
Riding tips and how-to's about the show ring.
More riding articles
More riding tips and things to that degree
More helpful hints on riding in the IEA.
A broader coverage of all disciplines and teams. / More coaching riding tips less fluff /
I would like to see more stories about riding and riding style.

Discipline specific

there are too many stories about WEstern events and riders. I would read the magazine more if there were more stories about English events and riders. Would be great to get info about what judges look for in riders and events to know how I could improve.

More English equitation tips

More English, less Western.

I would like to see more English riding advertisements because I've been seeing a lot of western

I would like to see more articles about English riding, what judges think and like, and updates about what is going on in the zones.

I feel that the Take the Reins magazine is often a little too directed towards its western riders in the IEA, and as an English rider (hunter/jumper) this is a bit frustrating.

Less focus on the western and reigning aspect of IEA, the English hunt seat discipline does not get enough attention

More hunt seat articles

More hunt seat articles

More articles on hunt seat riders and stories

More information about Hunter/Jumper shows and Eventing where to and when

Make the issues discipline specific. I am a hunt seat rider so I do not care about saddle seat or reigning news.

More on the Saddleseat division

Any stories about the western side of the association would be welcome. Currently it appears to be extremely one sided. Every issue should feature all three of the competition types in one way or another. Aside from some NRHA advertisements there wasn't a single image of the western events/riders.

As a coach of a western team, my kids say they don't read it because there are only stories about English riders, I am sure the saddle seat kids feel the same way. / The most useful articles are 'from the judges perspective' I like that they do this with a judge from each discipline and I recommend the kids to read all of these articles.

Less stories about English riding, more about Western. Less stories about members, more stories about horses and riding techniques. More informational and applicable stories, less human interest stories. Maybe an article or two from judges about what they are looking for in a rider?

Maybe more WESTERN stories and a lot more education. The ones now are mainly English there are more western ads than English but the stories are mostly English. The IEA is also a saddle seat thing as well there are hardly any if any stories in the magazine. Give more thought to more than just the English and add some education and it might be more than just a page flipper. Also when there are stories about IEA teams maybe you should consider the teams that may not have as much money as others and do stories on them as well.

More content and definitely more about the western discipline

More western stories and advertisements. I think the Take the Reins magazine favors the hunt seat stories and advertisements

I would like to see more western horsemanship and reining articles in the issues. Most articles are hunt seat and with the growing western population I would like to see more represented in the issues. I would also like to know more about Saddle Seat and how they are doing in the IEA world.

I would like to see more articles about western riding, and more articles about horses.

I would like to see more articles focused on western riders, as there is very few now. I do not participate in the English part of IEA so it is disheartening to see only articles on that subject. Please change this for the future.

I am a Coach for a western team and each of the issues that I have received and read have had only photos of western riders – most of which were in advertisements. Our horse program is very diverse – we provide horse therapy with english tack and principles, and teach western reining and riding to our team. Most of our horses are wenglish (western-english) and we have learned to use the best principles for teaching rider balance and horse handling from both worlds. Because our program is very diverse, it would be nice to see more variety in the articles and topics within the magazine.

we have received only 2 issues so far and they tend to shine mostly on the hunt seat world of IEA in articles and western seems to only be highlighted in adds. I feel this magazine should look at both worlds of IEA and also discuss more about what goes on at events, something to pull more members in. This magazine does not pull me in and my daughter is a member. not from this mag. but rather word of mouth. sorry if I'm sounding harsh but this is a survey.

Horse

articles about top voted horses from IEA shows.

Horse cartoons /

Horse stories

Horse story's or rider story's

HORSES

horses

I am interested in reading about horses (including care and ownership).

I have only seen one, but that one was almost all about model horses. I am more interested in real horses than models.

I prefer to read more about the horses in IEA rather than members or events.

I would like to continue to see articles about the horses in the future issues of Take the Reins magazine.

I would like to see more about horses in IEA shows.

I would like to see more articles like those of "horse and rider" and less about zone information

I would like to see more stuff about horses in it. Currently it is mostly stories about other riders, and while that is interesting, we are in the sport for the horses. Good tips on grooming, riding and other things would be awesome.

I would like to see more things about the horses and riders and take out The stuff about collage horse shows and riders

I would love to see more stories about some of the horses and riders in the association!

I would love to see some more "horse beginnings" type stories and "where they are now" type stories.

Lots of horse oriented stories and how-tos

More about horses and actual member experiences.

More about horses and how to and equipment less about riders

More about horses in IEA

More about horses! thos are the most interesting and educational! (and the most fun:)

More about horses.

More about horses.

More about ponies and competing

more about the horse industry / future options in equine related fields

more about the horses and how to articles.

More about the horses and members, less about the staff and coaches.

More about the horses!

more articles about the IEA horses

More articles about the IEA horses.

More articles on the care and keeping of a horse

More articles on the horses in each zone and more personal experiences of members and coaches. less ads

more best horse awards

More horse and educational/how to stories

More horse and how to tips

More horse and rider stories please.

More horse stories

More horse stories

More horse stories

More horse stories. /

More information about horses

more stories about horses

More stories about horses and riders

more stories about the horses

More stories about the horses and less about teams that i might never even meet. Also the fact that there are a lot of stories on coaches staff or members of tge association and less. Of its even bores me a bit... I have only gotten a view issues but thar is the inpression i am left with.. I would be very interested in seeing more articles on how toos : such as riding tips figuring out the horse you are going to ride just by looking at its body structure and stuff like this.

More stories about the horses of IEA!

More stories about the horses used in IEA.

More stories about the horses, such as one story of a horse per zone per issue.

More stories about the riders and horses

More stories and information revolving around the horses (that's why we- the members- joined IEA in the first place)

More stories on training and horses in general. Overall well being and how about some alternative methods of medicine to prevent calling the vet for any little problem. For example, ulcers, massage therapy or chiropractor for back issues. How to identify these issues on our own before they become major problems, stuff like that.

Overcoming issues with your horse

Special horses in IEA / / How IEA has helped kids that do not own their own horses

Stories about great horses/still alive.

Stories about iea horses

Stories about IEA horses

Stories about IEA horses

The horses side of view, how they are able o last the maximum / 12 hours at the shows. Also news along with the students and / Charity rides that are possible to go to?

Would like to see info on pony jumpers as this event is for under 18.
Focus more on horses, coaches, riders
More high quality educational features especially specific to equitation.
More Equitation specific educational articles
More about specific horses and events. Results from shows, sportsmanship articles.
I would like to see more horsemanship articles in Take the Reins. The IEA is great about promoting horsemanship at the post-season horseshows and on Facebook, so I believe that the tests and trivia can be promoted a little more in the magazine.
More of the barns that participate in IEA. I would like to read more about the barns and horses that are involved in IEA. Also, I would like to see more information and how-to articles! :)
There should be different issues for each discipline (I am in the hunt seat portion of IEA so I'm really not interested in the news about western IEA members). There should be feature sections like you ask teams to send in pictures and bios of one of their horses, or do a poll of members favorite qualities in IEA horses. You could do an article on what judges look for in a rider, etc.
More information on future events, and maybe do a IEA horse of the month
More information and facts about the IEA members, horses, teams and coaches. And more educational articles. I love reading articles about horses that started out in a really bad place and ended up becoming a really good show horse, it warms my heart. :)
training articles / articles from riders who have graduated and gone to college riding / steward and coach education

IEA overall

articles about rule change proposals, a forum, letters to the editor
Focus on rules, progression from Regionals, Zones, Finals. More information on how show sponsors are guided on selection of mounts at shows. Talent and temperament of mounts has been very inconsistent in our region and it impacts rides and progression. It would be a good topic for an article.
How IEA has helped and affected other riders
Tougher stories concerning issues in IEA, such as cheating and riding in levels not eligible for.
Stories about where the organization is headed and changes in IEA that we will see in the near future. /
I love the stories about the horses.
more information about rule change proposals and the running of association, member surveys to find out what the membership likes and does not like about association
I think Take the Reins should highlight the reason we have IEA. As IEA is a great way for those who don't own horses to ride and participate in shows, I think more riders who don't own a horse should be featured. I don't like it when I see articles about the riders who are excelling because they own the horses and have the money. I think Take the Reins should have more articles about horses and about the riders who no one hears about, the humble ones who don't do a lot of fancy showing but are connected to IEA by their love for horses and hard work.
how IEA differs from other horse showing experiences, building camaraderie on the team, holding a horse show, how to get better at it especially if you don't have a horse.

Judges perception

I prefer to see articles from Judges on their perspective of what they are looking for. I think the magazine could help to get a more cohesive standard across the nation. I find that even in our Zone that Judges misinterpret the rules and judge very differently than they do for regular shows. Judges could benefit from reading the magazine since they are the ones determining who places. / Articles on who the staff are outside of our Zone are great but some Zones are big and more staff articles or input from Zones would be great. Maybe have a Zone section for each Zone and results or articles separately from each Zone so all the Zones feel included.

I would like articles stating what judges look for in classes especially over fences, clinicians with IEA backgrounds, exercises for riders, summer camps, IEA tips and tricks for showing, zone facebook pages with news for riders, optional horsemanship quizzes at shows to earn some type of prize or award.

I would like more articles about the way that judges evaluate riders and stories about IEA events.

I would like to hear more from the judges and what they look for in a course or flat class.

I would like to see more judges opinions and how they score as well as more on the different coach styles

i would like to see more of what the judges look for and how to really figure out a horse by watching others ride it

I would put in more information given by credible judges to help riders do better and fix equitation problems for upcoming shows. So more judge feed back. If the article had a picture of what they were looking for that would be very helpful.

Information on what judges look for from each rider when Judging a class.. Information on what advantages for college being in IEA offers. Information on horse care? General information on importance of care of lesson horses. Information on general horse care and horse training. Advantages of Group vs individual lessons. Finding a certified instructor or is being a certified instructor important. Refer to Horse magazines for ideas!! Try to find an article that can tell us why we have to spend 80 a week for August to March and then also pay 225-250 per show in entry fees, for a sport that is trying to make it affordable 500-550 month using lesson horses, not to mention buying show clothes, raffles, fundraising etc. how is this viewed as affordable??

Judge interviews, the process of the sportsmanship awards, what makes a successful team, coaches view points. College recruiting info not just ads. Other areas to compete such as talent search and CPI.

Judges comments.

Like to hear from judges perspective-what they continue to look for in riders. / Articles on how to better your ride.

more "what the Judges are looking for" articles.

More about judge's perspective

more information on judges and judging IEA

More judging input / showing tips / individual or team Member showcase stories

More of what judges want to see. / It seems to be different with every judge and can be confusing

Pointers on what Judges are looking for in Equitation and Jumping. What Judges see as major faults.

Explanation of why IEA shows cost 225.00- 250.00 a piece on top of need to take an IEA group lesson and a regular riding lesson each week. Many riders see IEA as political in terms of Judging and expensive.

What the judges are looking for. /

what the judges want to see / recommended show clothing

Would like to see some articles about judges points of view. / More photos of teams and riders. More western you seem to have more english.

Would like to see some articles on judges opinions and see updated information on what they are looking for in a rider
Feedback from judges / input from coaches / a list of what ur horse needs to be to be an IEA horse /
Common faults of the IEA rider/coaching / rules thst get broken often
More instructional articles on how participants can improve/excel in IEA competition, more information on what coaches and judges are looking for
It would love to see coaches and judges of IEA interviewed for articles. I was very frustrated to read an article that was done with a judge that had nothing to do with IEA and didn't know anything about the league. Judging IEA and IHSA is different then judging other open USEF shows.

Rider/Member

A day in the life of an IEA rider

About riders injuries during shows

I like reading all story types in Take the Reins Magazine but i especially like reading stories about IEA members because it kind of gives me a sense that there are other people like me who share the common love of the most beautiful creature on earth that we call a horse.

I love hearing stories of riders hard work to make it to nationals. Also being a competitor in hunter/jumper I sometimes find the western stuff not as interesting. Maybe do 2 different magazines so you don't have a cross over!

I love reading about the kids' backgrounds, what their ambitions are. I am a former coach so am also interested in the backgrounds of the coaches.

Would enjoy seeing highlighted member each month. Also as I have a daughter entering High School, so I would love to have some information about "how-to's" for riding on college teams. I think IEA is a valuable experience for her for future opportunities, but there is so much to learn about the best way to "market" yourself to colleges.

Wining rider profiles (of all divisions), focus on zones and winning teams in your zones, IEA members who also have victories outside of IEA, college profiles

What is purpose? What about the kids who join in hopes that they will ride in college. Do they?? How are judges chosen do they have IEA. Or IHSA background.. What does a judge look for at an IEA show... High light some colleges and riders from IE a programs that now ride on college. Interviews.. More regions written about.. Also a spotlight in each issue of rier

When applicable - I would like to see you not only recognize the top individual in a category/class but rather the top few. If contest includes an essay, perhaps publish the top two not just the winning one. If it is a riding championship, note the top and 2nd place rider or top and 2nd place team.

Those of the riders and coaches both good and bad storys

Stories on the students

Student/rider articles, more stuff from different zones, (seems that many of the articles are written by the same folks from the same places)

Stories geared more toward IEA members and the horses involved

Stories about members who've had to work hard to ride, / the smaller teams that don't get that much recognition, / the horses of IEA

Stories about riders and their horses, stories about college riding, showing tips, horse tips

Stories about some of the kids or spe ific horse always warm the heart

Stories about IEA participants and there journey through the IEA world. Results from Regionals/Zones/Nationals for Western and English

See more interviews or personal stories

Personal member stories. Why the member started ridding. Etc.

Questions you asked riders and their answers

Rider profiles of the winners from IEA nationals

more things about riders and horses

more stories from the riders themselves. / how other zones handle events / suggestions for team parents / managing your team / recruiting / how schools support the program / do riders letter at their schools

More stories on actual IEA riders

More stories that relate to what I know and do as an average iea member

More stories about Hunter Jumper riders and horses.

More stories about IEA members, seniors, etc.

More stories about everyday IEA riders and teams. Perhaps a draw out of a hat to feature a differnt team each issue. Also have people submit horses from their barn to be featured in the issues.

more on the members and their stories and about those who graduate -where are they now

More on the members

More member stories from girls in every state. / More horse stories. / And an article on someone in my riegon and zone

More member involved. Maybe some interviews or a how to section. Maybe make it more interesting for the members.

More IEA members interacting

More iea riders in the spotlight

more geared towards kids who do not own there own horse. In our part of the country it is really expensive.

More general rider focus. Making it or EVERYONE

More about members and horses, people want to read about the stories of members and horses and teams because they can relate

Just about girls and there horses. Maybe feature some of the actual members at a show:)

It is often discussed on our team that it seems like only first place members are written about. We would love more articles on people that we know.

I would like to see some articles about the members and there experiences in the IEA.

I would like to see more on members & their experiences. Any info helpful to the riders, suggestions on clothes, styles, improving their riding, rules & tips. Overall, I feel the magazine should be helpful to the members (riders) & focus on them also.

I would like to see interviews with the competitors more. (especially at Nationals) / What riders in IEA accomplish outside the IEA ring. / Qualifiers for Nationals, Zones, Etc..

I would like to see biographies on the IEA National Finals champions added in at some point after the finals have occurred.

I would like more stories about members and their coaches. I would also like stories about teams coming together and really being a team and working together. Maybe also appreciating the coaches, captains, co captains, ect. Maybe some success stories and stories about successful teams and individual riders or interviews of coaches, a whole team or a individual.

I would be interested in follow-up stories on what IEA riders do after they've graduated, as well as articles describing the opportunities afforded to IEA riders who participate through a college program (whether sponsored by a college/university or by showing at a college/university facility.) The IEA does a great job of portraying itself as a stand-alone association for interscholastic competition but realistically many of its members are using the IEA as an intercollegiate prep program and I hope the magazine will reflect and support this fact.

I would do more stories on the IEA riders. Short stories and more of them. There is long stories of four or five things that people may or may not care to read about.

I think they should focus on the kids. Their struggles to get where they r. So tired of seeing the same people because they have the \$ to get that perfect horse vs the kid who is at the barn 7 days a week, isn't in full grooming, tacks, feeds and cares for their own horse, has to braid their own horse for shows. These r the stories I want to read about. Not how someone has bought their way up in this sport!

I like the personal stories of the members, their coaches, and horses; challenges and obstacles and the human interest stories are my favorite. I would like to see some more historical information about the founding of IEA, it's growth, it's goals, and how it is similar/different than the college version (Intercollegiate) / / We ride in our family and my daughters ride and I would like to also see some more comparisons/discussions about rated shows, how IEA compares, how riders do both, how coaches structure their teams, how it's no longer only school-related, etc.

I realize that I am probably being unfair to compare it to a professional publication that covers the horse world internationally but the only other horse magazine that we subscribe to is the Chronicle of the Horse. Lay them side by side and it is obvious which I and I think most people would prefer to read.

Unfortunately, we live in a world where the stars of sport get the attention. I'm not totally sure Take the Reins can compete. / / One type of article that I think might be of some interest is a "Where are they now?" type of articles. Are there riders that did well in IEA that have gone on to ride well in IHSA or professionally or have solid accomplishments in other fields?

Human interest about riders and coaches / Historical about IEA

I would like to see more stories about riders and their experiences at shows. For example, there could be an article on how a middle or upper school team didn't think they were going to do well, and then they ended up doing extremely well. I would also like to see more articles on horses.

i would like to know more about the competitions and the backgrounds of the riders and how they practice for the comps.

Maybe more stories about some of the riders

Members and horse stories and lots of pictures

More personal stories from members, interviews with past IEA members, contests to win prizes, new strategies of riding

More personal stories with IEA riders.

new or young riders just starting / how to pick a horse

Talk about the "rookies" as well. Not only the best of the best. I realize there may not be enough room and not everyone is interested in the younger riders, but it makes some feel discouraged as they know they may never have a chance to be featured in the "Take The Reins" magazine.

I would like to see some stories written by riders about their experiences.

IEA tests/questions that are asked in different zones / Personal stories / Stories/statistics from Nationals

It is inconsistent in getting to membership. I for some reason don't receive it, but our other coach does. / Maybe 1 article per issue about a member or coach should be max. Quite honestly I don't really care about that. When you do make an article about a member/coach make it a special interest type. Someone that does excellent volunteer work or had to overcome a tough situation. / Most of the articles I see in magazine(not just THR) I know that those individuals are the focus of the article because they paid for advertising space. So all these articles toting various people I take with a grain of salt.

Show/Competition

Stories about individual zone shows
The results of shows. Shows going on .
The. rated shows / Clinics
Talk more about individual shows
Information or highlights from specific shows.

Zone

Zone high point riders
Zones nationals regionals info ect. /
Would like to see stories from each Zone, and to distinguish which zone, city, local the story is about. A lot of times I can't even tell where that barn, rider, horse, team, etc., is even located. I would be interested about teams, barns, horses, people in our zone, and right now, I can't tell any of this, so it doesn't interest me beyond the photos.
More things on IEA and about whats going on like at regional, zones, and national. Also, maybe something along the lives of like an IEA rider or the issue or horse of the issue, or maybe both!
More specific Zone information, IEA events, and especially equestrian and equine educational articles.
More of what's going on with in the zones
More of all the different zones
More about zone 1 finals and talking about more teams and things that they do to set them apart from others
More about zones, nationals
It would be interesting to see zone/team interviews on how they got started etc :)
I would like to see more information about zones and regions and how to sign up a team for the coming IEA season.
I would like to see more about the participation each zone does for IEA in stories, how the teams work as teams, but all around it is a great magazine.
I enjoy reading about the different zones and teams across all IEA. It is always nice to read an article from your own team or about your own team but it is always great to keep connected with all IEA members and zones.
Equal amount of hunt seat, western, and saddle seat. more stories of people in the smaller zones(like zone 5:) and regionals as well as the bigger zones and going to zones.
More information about all the zones in each magazine.
Leaderboards for the zones

More purposeful articles about issues in the IEA, news from the Zones, dissection of rules or taking apart different rules and how they apply within the zone. Less "fluff" stories, more stories on exercises for teaching or coaching, activities or clinics that might be useful to IEA kids (like Jim Arrigon's prep tournaments or the Equestrian Talent Search) and maybe a connection to IHSA.

Overall design

Better graphic design and layouts and more quality writing.

better photos

Design needs to be more interesting for the current audience. Including photos which at times are awkward. / I think someone needs to take a more active role in acquiring articles and "spotlight" pieces. I would like to see more action pictures (jumping, riding, etc) rather than all of the team member pictures.

More photographs of over fences.

More pics of high point riders at shows and list them . I have been high point rider 1 champion and 2 reserve and I work hard for that and it was my first year in it .

Frequency

doesn't come out very frequently, maybe more frequent during the IEA competition season should come out 1 or 2 more times a year / tips for increasing chances of qualifying for regionals/zones/nationals / input from judges - what are they looking for?, etc

More issues through out the year

More frequent - only got 1

More frequent publication with show result updates/highlights.

Content

Your editorial staff need to do a better job of editing for typographical errors. In the latest issue, page 12, the title of the article is "BEAST Cancer Fundraiser". Isn't that a bit much?

Verify the information is accurate! I just read an article about hunt seat clothing that NEVER mentioned boys (and yes, boys ride too, loved last quarter's article!) and included rules about tall boots and gloves that are NOT IEA rules. That's a big problem, I think most people would assume that any "rule" referred to in the magazine would be an IEA rule also. I would like to see more first person stories about teams and riders, particularly from upper level riders who have done well at Nationals. We are part of IEA and will be for years to come, and it's a wonderful organization. I think "Take The Reins" should reflect that. Some articles are a little boring. I would love to see articles I am truly interested in and pictures of riders everywhere not just because they won or anything big but because they are a part of IEA

Make the stories a little more interesting, maybe "IEA horse of the month" "IEA member of the month" etc

it's a bit....dull

Interesting

I would like to see a greater variety in the article topics, and more stories about IEA riders and helpful information on how to do well in shows.

I would like it to be a little longer. I also think it would be better if it had more of a variety of types of articles in each issue. The pictures are very good quality but some are not very appealing; for instance, a picture of someone holding a ribbon or something big that they just won should have them smiling and looking happy not otherwise.

VITA

Jamie L. Trissel

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: PERCEPTIONS OF INTERSCHOLASTIC EQUESTRIAN ASSOCIATION MEMBERS REGARDING THE *TAKE THE REINS* MAGAZINE: A READERSHIP STUDY

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Biographical:

Education:

Graduated from Woodward High School, Woodward, Oklahoma in May 2008.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Animal Science at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2012.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2014.

Experience:

Employed as an Oklahoma State University graduate teaching assistant for the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources from June 2012 to July 2014 in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Served as layout designer/editor for *Take the Reins* magazine from June 2012 to August 2013 in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Employed through various positions at Omni Communications during summers from May 2008 to July 2010 in Woodward, Oklahoma.

Professional Memberships:

Agricultural Education, Communication, and Leadership Graduate Student Government Association

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