TECHNOLOGY USE AND INFORMATION PREFERENCES OF DIGITALLY ENGAGED AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study was to assess AQHA members' preferences for obtaining equine industry information via digital media and give AQHA more knowledge about its digitally engaged membership, as it relates to members' needs and improvements for an expansion of the organization's mobile application. The American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) is the largest equine breed registry and member organization in the world.

Survey research was used in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from a 26-question instrument developed by the researcher. Approximately 100,000 instruments were distributed and 5,707 responses were complete and usable. The response rate was 5.7%; however, a follow-up instrument was distributed to allow for generalization.

Results revealed the typical respondent to be a white female, who is 42.5 years old and a general membership holder with AQHA. Most respondents earned a high school education, with many obtaining at least one college degree. The typical respondent resides in Texas, has a total household income of $100,000 or more per year, and does not rely on involvement within the equine industry for income. Results also revealed the typical respondent owns a smart phone and accesses the Internet several times a day, from home, via broadband technology. The typical respondent accesses mobile applications and would access a new AQHA-sponsored application. In regard to digital media use, the typical respondent accesses a variety of sources for information and believes digital media is an educational tool; however, the typical respondent is neutral in their opinion of social media and its uses. When considering a potential new AQHA-sponsored mobile application, the typical respondent expects to see AQHA news provided within it and expects to pay for pedigree and records research.

It is recommended that AQHA consider the findings from this study in developing a mobile application. The demographic information, as well as the digital media use and mobile application information will be useful in creating an application to be used by the organization's members. It is recommended that further research be conducted on equine enthusiasts' needs and preferences related to obtaining industry information via a variety of platforms.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Setting

The American Horse Council reported that the equine industry makes up a significant portion of the U.S. economy and continues to play a large and important role. The industry itself "is diverse, involving agriculture, business, sport, gaming, entertainment and recreation" (National economic impact, n.d., para. 1).

> An economic study done by Deloitte Consulting LLP for the American Horse Council Foundation in 2005 validates what the industry has known for some time, that the horse industry is a highly-diverse, national, serious and economically significant industry that deserves the attention of the general public, the media and federal, state and local officials. (National economic impact, n.d., para. 2)

Equine enthusiasts' involvement in the industry is also significant. The American Horse Council indicated that "4.6 million people are involved in the horse industry in some way, either as owners, employees, service providers or volunteers" (National economic impact, n.d., para. 7). This total includes 2 million people who own horses, which "means that 1 out of every 63 Americans is involved with horses" (National economic impact, n.d., para. 7).

When breaking down the population of horses in the United States, there are conflicting results. Because many horses are used for recreational purposes, rather than agricultural production, the USDA is unable to get an accurate total for the country (Kilby, 2007).

According to Kilby's findings, there are ponies, feral equine, as well as horses on reservations, mules and donkeys that could have been overlooked, as well.

> Projecting the American Horse Council Foundation horse population figure for 2003 two years into the future (1.3% growth in '04 and '05 = 9,464,200), and adding overlooked ponies and asses (200,000), the country's feral equidae (60,000) and the invisible populations (200,000) produce a figure of 9,924,000 for the 2006 U.S. equine population. (Kilby, 2007, p. 180)

Considering there are a variety of horses in the United States, there are more than 100 different breed registries that contain the purebred population (Kilby, 2007). Kilby noted the American Quarter Horse Association is the largest. According to Kilby, from 1991-2005, AQHA registered more than 2.8 million horses. After comparing to the entire United States, Kilby found that this total makes up almost 60 percent of all horses registered in the country.

The uses and gratifications theory, developed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch, will be used throughout this study to understand the preferences and use of digital media outlets and mobile applications by digitally engaged AQHA members (Carrier, 2004). Carrier discussed how this theory's foundation is based upon the way a consumer meets his or her needs by choosing different media outlets.

As equine members of society need to access industry information, the importance for industry organizations to understand these needs and assess the preferences of its members to receive information will remain constant. This understanding will allow associations to develop a better relationship with their prospective audience, as well as allow their audience to maximize use of resources. Within the equine industry, the American Quarter Horse Association connects with numerous individuals who are members within its association (AQHA, n.d.). To meet the informational needs of its members, it is necessary to evaluate the digital media use among them and look for avenues of improvement.

Although there is a lot of scientific research information circulating about horses, there is minimal information regarding the individuals who are involved in the equine industry. Research relating to the informational needs of those involved in the equine industry is lacking. The voice of horse owners and industry professionals throughout the equine world is absent regarding information received.

Statement of the Problem

In today's equine industry, the American Quarter Horse Association is challenged with meeting members' preferences for types of industry information received and assessing the importance of electronic communication entities to its digitally engaged membership. AQHA has expressed the need to better understand how digitally engaged members would like to receive information, especially as it relates to mobile applications; however, there is a dearth of information related to the information preferences and needs of those in the equine industry.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to assess AQHA members' preferences for obtaining equine industry information via digital media and give AQHA more knowledge about its digitally engaged membership, especially as it relates to identifying members' needs and suggested improvements for a potential expansion of the organization's mobile application.

Objectives

The following research objectives were developed to guide this study:

1. Describe the personal and professional demographics (age, gender, race, education, location, membership type, total household income, and primary means of household income) of AQHA members who are digitally engaged.
2. Describe digital media use of digitally engaged AQHA members by analyzing their ownership of a smart phone, preferred sources of information, current use of social media tools, and opinion of reliability of sources of information.

3. Assess the mobile application preferences of digitally engaged AQHA members as it relates to the development of a new AQHA-sponsored application.
4. Determine how the demographics of digitally engaged AQHA members relate to their mobile application preferences and digital media use.

Significance of the Study

Ho and Syu (2010) reported that "mobile communication follows the development trend of the Internet...which has provided human beings with more diversified information application forms" (p. 315). Just as the Internet and social media allow individuals to receive information instantly, mobile applications can do the same thing. By considering the use of digital media among equine enthusiasts belonging to AQHA and assessing their preferences for potential new mobile applications, this study will allow agricultural communicators, AQHA, as well as other agriculture-related organizations, such as advocacy, trade and industry groups, to better understand the preferences and need for mobile applications.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study includes members of AQHA who are digitally engaged.

Assumptions

This study was conducted under the following assumptions:

1. The members of AQHA that participated in the study had at least a working knowledge of the Internet, social media and smart phones.
2. Members accurately and honestly reported their demographic information, mobile application preferences and digital media use.

Limitations

The following limitations were recognized for this study:

1. Because the instrument and study-related communications were distributed electronically, this study only examined equine enthusiasts who are digitally engaged.

2. The results of this study cannot be generalized beyond the AQHA members who participated in the study.

3. Even though reliability and validity of the instrument were verified, the questions were researcher-designed; therefore, are subject to error.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined for use in this study:

American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) – "The American Quarter Horse Association is the world's largest equine breed registry and membership organization" (Treadway, n.d., para. 1).

Digital media – "Digitized content (text, graphics, audio, and video) that can be transmitted over internet or computer networks" (Digital media, 2012, para.. 1).

Mobile application – "A software application that runs in a handheld device such as a smart phone" (Mobl21 Online, 2012, para. 18).

Smart phone – **"**A cell phone that includes additional software functions (such as e-mail or an Internet browser)" (Smart phone, 2012, para. 1).

Social media – **"**Forms of electronic communication (such as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)" (Social media, 2012, para. 1).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature related to agricultural communications, specifically mobile applications, as it relates to the American Quarter Horse Association and its digitally engaged membership. The chapter provides background information on the equine industry, the American Quarter Horse Association, as well as the informational needs and source preferences of individuals within the agricultural industry.

Along with industry background, the topic of the digital divide and the knowledge gap are discussed within this chapter. Background information and possible reasons why the divide occurs is covered, as well as what it means for society. Additionally, the area of new communication technologies is discussed, as well as social media use. Socioeconomic factors relating to the use of mobile technology is provided, along with general use of mobile technology. Not only is the use of mobile technology presented, but also more specifically, smart phones and mobile applications are discussed.

To conclude the chapter, computer-mediated communication and the theoretical framework are discussed. The theory used, the uses and gratifications theory, is applicable to this study even though it was developed many years ago. The basis of the theory, that consumers satisfy needs and goals through choice of media, is relevant to this study's focus on technology use and information preferences of digitally engaged AQHA members.

Equine Industry

According to Eastwood, Jensen and Jordan (2006), the equine industry is large and encompasses many different aspects. “It combines aspects of leisure, entertainment and service sectors and draws its customers from all geographic areas and social backgrounds” (Eastwood et al., 2006, p. vii). Eastwood et al., makes the point that the center of the industry is made up of manufacturers. Because they are the foundation of the industry, Eastwood et al. says they are included in this sector.

Eastwood et al. (2006) describes the next component of the industry as one that contains the horse owners, riders and organizations to which the horses belong to. Members of this group are very diverse, in that their activities range from recreational riding to competitive riding (Eastwood et al.). According to Eastwood et al., the last division of the industry is made up of the service providers, which includes veterinarians, trainers, farriers, etc. Overall, Eastwood et al. describes the entire industry as having one common denominator: the horse.

According to an economic study conducted by Deloitte Consulting LLP for the American Horse Council Foundation, “approximately 34% of horse owners have a household income of less than $50,000 and 28% have an annual income of over $100,000” (National economic impact, n.d., para. 17). In terms of population, the study found that “there are 9.2 million horses in the United States and 4.6 million Americans who are involved in the industry as horse owners, service providers, employees and volunteers” (National economic impact, n.d., para. 3). With this study, the American Horse Council was able to provide statistics on 15 of the top states affecting the economy in the U.S. (National economic impact, n.d.). The states included were: “California, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wyoming” (National economic impact, n.d., para. 2).

American Quarter Horse Association

“The American Quarter Horse Association is located in Amarillo, Texas, and is considered the largest equine breed registry and member organization in the world” (Treadway,

n.d., para. 1). It is comprised of one of the world's most versatile breeds of horses (Hedgepeth, 1990). According to Hedgepeth, the Quarter Horse is a breed that is known for its ability to run short quarter-mile races. Not only is the breed well recognized for its speed over short distances, but Hedgepeth says that it is also known for attributes such as toughness, hardiness, excellent ability to work cattle, its bulldog appearance, as well as its intelligence. Many breeders and ranchers worked hard, during the early years of the breed's development, to preserve the breed and work to establish an organization honoring it, according to Hedgepeth.

In his book about the history of the American Quarter Horse Association, Hedgepeth (1990) discusses how "William Anson was the first man to make a serious attempt at tracing the Quarter Horse from its preeminence as a cow horse back through time to its origins in Colonial America" (p. 1). According to Hedgepeth, Anson believed that the Quarter Horse was an individualistic breed. Although Anson worked to make the Quarter Horse known as a breed of its own, it would take a dedicated individual to put a "broad based campaign for recognition" into place and Robert M. Denhardt was the man to do just that (Hedgepeth, p. 1). Denhardt is considered the "true founder of the American Quarter Horse Association" based on his work researching the breed, gathering information, writing articles, and promoting interest (Hedgepeth, p. 2).

In 1940, Denhardt called a meeting in Fort Worth to set up a registration organization for the breed (Hedgepeth, 1990). "On March 15, 1940, Denhardt met with other ranchers and offered a charter that was based off of the National Horse and Mule Association, where shareholders would have complete control of the organization" (Hedgepeth, p. 3). According to Hedgepeth, the bylaws included the following:

> The purpose of this association shall be to collect, record, and preserve the pedigrees of Quarter Horses in America, to publish a stud book and registry, and to stimulate any and all other matters such as may pertain to the history, breeding, exhibiting, publicity, sale or improvement of this breed in America. (p. 4)

Hedgepeth's description of Denhardt, along with the other ranchers that met that day in Fort Worth, described how they established the foundation of the American Quarter Horse Association and helped lead the way for preservation of America's most popular breed.

Since the development of the breed registry, "the American Quarter Horse Association has registered more than 5 million horses" (AQHA mission statement, n.d., para. 3). Considering its membership base, the breed registry "serves a membership total of over 350,000 members worldwide" (AQHA mission statement, n.d., para. 3). For 2011, AQHA's U.S. membership was approximately 287,000 (AQHA annual report, 2011). The AQHA Annual Report also indicates that the U.S. registered approximately 2.6 million horses in 2011 (AQHA annual report, 2011).

Informational Needs of Agriculturalists

According to Diekmann and Batte (2009), the importance of information within the agricultural industry has steadily been on the rise over the last several years. With this need for information, Diekmann and Batte indicate there are numerous options for receiving industry information. As the agricultural society continues to grow, Diekmann and Batte found that it will remain important for industry professionals to understand the informational needs of farmers. Although all equine enthusiasts are not farmers, many farmers are part of the equine industry.

As stated by Boehlje (1998), information is based on certain topics and centers around choice. Boehlje wrote that he believes the significance of information is defined by many factors.

> Information becomes more valuable as it results in improved decision making and better physical and financial performance. Information must be timely, technically accurate, and scientifically sound. It must be objective and unbiased, complete, understandable, and convenient. (p. 25)

Boehlje makes the point that agriculturalists within the U.S. are known for their excellent ability to receive information and embrace new technology. Additionally, Guenthner and Swan's (2011) research concluded that the use of electronic media by members of the agricultural community should not be minimized.

Diekmann, Loibl, and Batte (2009) stated that as the agricultural industry evolves, demands for information will increase. As stated by Diekmann et al., "with agricultural production systems continuing to become more complex and information intensive, demands on farm decision-makers in acquiring, evaluating, and processing information are ever increasing" (p. 853).

Source Preferences for Information

According to Diekmann and Batte (2009), the value of information is different for each person. Diekmann and Batte found that for information to be used, it must be newsworthy. In other words, it must be relevant and have meaning (Diekmann & Batte). Diekmann and Batte explained that part of the process of ensuring information is newsworthy and relevant, is to confirm that the information is gathered and disseminated in a way that is preferable by the respective audience. Gloy, Akridge, and Whipker (2000) discussed the same topic in their research with commercial farmers. Gloy et al. indicated:

> When selecting models to deliver information to commercial producers, agricultural marketers must consider the type of information to be delivered, the capability of the information source for delivering the information, and their target market's preferences for receiving information from various sources. (p. 259)

According to Boehlje (1998), the private sector's methods of dispersing information are growing in relation to the public area. As avenues for distributing information to members of the agricultural community continue to evolve, Boehlje states that the price of receiving information will decrease, and the ability to receive instantaneous knowledge will be available. For example, Ortmann's research (as cited in Boehlje,1998) indicated the following in relation to corn belt farmers:

> In some geographic regions, larger and more educated producers are becoming a larger proportion of U.S. producers, and rate traditional public sector information sources such

as county extension agents and even university specialists significantly lower than many other sources of information for production, marketing, or financial decisions. (p. 26)

Research conducted by Diekmann et al. (2009) provides categories pertaining to why agriculturalists have different informational searches. As stated by Diekmann et al., "explanations can be grouped into (a) situational characteristics relating to a farmer's type of enterprise, (b) psychological characteristics relating to attitudes of farmers, and (c) demographic and socioeconomic characteristics" (p. 855).

In a study conducted by Diekmann and Batte (2011) about the information needs of agricultural consultants in Ohio, source preferences for receiving information were evaluated. Of the respondents, Diekmann and Batte reported that most wanted to obtain "information via print and electronic media" (p. 6). Additionally, Diekmann and Batte found that "Extension publications, electronic newsletters, and Extension websites were highly ranked as information sources for the group" (p. 6). In contrast, the research conducted by Diekmann et al. (2009) about commercial farmers found that "print media were still the most important information sources for farmers, followed by interpersonal sources and broadcast media…electronic media ranked last" (p. 869).

Research conducted by the American Business Media's Agri Council described the "impact of media channels that serve the agricultural industry," (Kinsman, 2012, para. 1). According to Kinsman, "the study tracked 15 media channels, including magazines, newspapers, and ag-related mobile apps" (para. 1). When reporting the results, Kinsman stated that "print continues to be dominant, even among the 45 and under age bracket" (para. 2).

Kinsman (2012) reported that all areas of digital media are contributing to the agricultural community. When reviewing the study's findings, Kinsman reported that

82% of farmers and ranchers use magazines/newspapers on a weekly basis; 40% use websites on a weekly basis; 30% use e-newsletters on a weekly basis; 17% use ag-related text/SMS on a weekly basis; 16% use ag-related websites on a mobile device on a weekly

basis; 12% use ag-related apps on a mobile device; and 9% use ag-related social media on a weekly basis. (para. 3)

In relation to growth during next three to four years, Kinsman stated that "40% of farmers and ranchers expect ag websites to grow in importance, and only 12% expect ag newsletters (printed) to grow in importance" (para. 6). In continuation of reporting the results for what percentage of farmers expect growth in certain media channels, Kinsman stated that "25% of farmers and ranchers expect mobile apps to grow in importance over the next three to four years" (para. 6).

In relation to socioeconomic factors, a study conducted by Gloy et al. (2000) relating to the media's worth and individuals' outlets for receiving information among commercial farms, "education is an unimportant factor in evaluating preferences toward information sources" (p. 259). Gloy et al. also found that commercial farmers preferred magazines when seeking industry information.

According to Martinson, Hathaway, Wilson, Gilkerson, Peterson, and Vecchio (2006), "the majority of horse owners currently obtain information from equine magazines, other horse owners, veterinarians, trainers, and farriers" (p. 1). The research conducted by Martinson et al. showed that "horse owners preferred short publications, the Internet, and evening seminars" when receiving information on the topic of horses (p.1).

Digital Divide

"The digital divide is the gap between those people and communities who have access to information technology (personal computers, the Internet, skills, etc.) and those who do not" (Kuttan & Peters, 2003, p. 3). Kuttan and Peters consider it the difference between "technology haves and have-nots" (p.3). Kuttan and Peters also define digital divide "as the gaps in technology, access to technology (specifically the Internet), education, and technology training between and within specific populations" (p. 3).

According to Rogers (2001), "the term 'digital divide' was probably coined by Larry Irving, former assistant secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information during the

Clinton administration" (p. 96). Rogers indicates that the digital divide is very similar to the knowledge gap hypothesis. The knowledge gap hypothesis believes,

> as the infusion of mass media information into a social system increases, segments of the population with higher socioeconomic status tend to acquire the information at a faster rate than the lower status segments, so that the gap between these segments tends to increase rather than decrease. (p. 96)

Rogers discusses how even though the digital divide is considered an "access-divide," it could eventually turn into a "learning-divide" or a "content-divide" (p.100). This change in type could happen as a result of extensive adoption of the Internet or members of society's ability to use the Internet in specific ways, according to Rogers.

People have suggested many different reasons behind why the digital divide exists (Rogers, 2001). For Rogers, there are three main reasons. The first reason Rogers provides is the "lack of telephone and computer access to the Internet" (p. 101). Rogers wrote that many people may not have access to computer technology due to the inability to own a computer or lack of a telephone to receive Internet access. Also, this type of barrier is related to socioeconomic issues that are most prevalent in rural communities, as well as with minority members of society (Rogers). Secondly, Rogers said that demographic characteristics are a reason behind the digital divide. Lastly, Rogers indicated that there is an "education-divide, a socioeconomic-divide, and a learning-divide" (p. 103). All of these factors contribute to the growth of the digital divide and the increase in the knowledge gap among members of society (Rogers). Additionally, research conducted by Elbert and Alston (2005) indicated "the digital divide has become more pronounced across racial, ethnic, economic, and geographic lines over the past decade as technology continues to advance" (para. 21). In contrast, Nguyen and Western (2007) discuss how many scholars believe socioeconomic factors have decreased in their importance related to the digital divide.

In doing research about the digital divide after the 1990s, Kuttan and Peters (2003) discovered that some believe the digital divide is a catastrophe that will require a tremendous amount of effort to resolve. In contrast, Kuttan and Peters found that others believe society uses computers and the Internet for primarily entertainment and leisure purposes; therefore, it is not as catastrophic as some believe. Nguyen and Western's (2007) research proves that the digital divide is not easy to eliminate simply by making the source available to the audience.

In research done by Tsatsou in (2011), "skills and motivation have become more important indicators of divides in empirical research, even in countries where not much research and technological development exists" (p. 321). Tsatsou's research has shown that

> lack of motivation, non-users' unwillingness to gain new skills due to their psychologically complicated sense of use, where issues of language, learning, hardware cost and accidently harmful online behavior matter, as well as non-users' dismissal of lifelong learning can contribute to the digital division among social groups. (p. 321-322)

Nguyen and Western (2007) found that "more Internet accessibility, more traditional news and information usage and privileged socioeconomic profiles are strong predictors of online news and information adoption/use" (p. 168).

New Communication Technologies

Nellis (2004) defines new communication technology as including "new methods of storing, delivering, and receiving information" (p. 246). According to Nellis, examples of new communications technologies include, but are not limited to, "the Internet, World Wide Web, chat-rooms, satellite radio and television" (p. 246). Nellis stated that many individuals experience this new technology through e-mail, mobile phones, or even by downloading digital media online. Overall, Nellis indicated that most individuals will experience new communication technologies through computer-mediated communication (CMC) (p.246).

Mobile Technology

According to Lica (2010), mobile technology has been one of the most rapidly growing areas of society in the last several years. Lica reported that mobile technology has become a common, easily accessible tool that most consumers are interested in. According to Wei (2006), the more consumers choose to use mobile phones for various tasks, the more likely they are to utilize mobile phones for data services. With this, Wei concluded that mobile phones with advanced technology fill the gap between interpersonal and mass communication.

Wei (2006) proves that mobile technology is easily accessible. Mobile phone use provides an opportunity for consumers to get information at their fingertips, according to Wei. Leung and Weis (2000) concluded that "the new wireless telephone technology maximizes freedom through mobility; it also pushes immediate accessibility to the fullest extent" (p. 316). Essentially, Leung and Weis found that the cellular phone provides a balance between being mobile and accessing information.

Mobile technology has allowed consumers to drift away from desktop and laptop computers and engage in smart phones that are accessible to the Internet in a quick and usable manner (LaBelle, 2011). Additionally, Guenthner and Swan (2011) reported that the latest mobile technology provides opportunities for organizations to reach out to their clients. To go along with this, Diekmann et al. (2009) concluded that "a better understanding of farmer information strategies provides new opportunities for extension educators, agricultural professionals, information specialists, and marketers for designing the most effective strategies for disseminating farming information to their clientele" (p. 870).

Leung and Wei (2000) indicated that mobile technology allows consumers to access information essentially anytime, which in turn empowers them. As stated by Leung and Wei, "an audience perspective on new communication technology research in empirical settings should be crucial in understanding the future trends of the rapidly changing media landscape towards choice, diversity, and increased competition" (p. 318).

When considering socioeconomic factors, Guenthner and Swan's (2011) research relating to extension's role in electronic technology indicated that younger members of the agricultural community use technology more often than those that are older; however, they found no "statistically significant difference in the use of electronic media as it relates to gender" (p. 8). According to Guenthner and Swan, those who are younger tend to be more informed of the developments in technology.

Social media.

Smith (2009) discusses social media and how it has become a revolution that has taken over society. According to Smith, "technologies such as blogs, social networks, and video sharing platforms" have taken over the Internet. Smith stated that "collectively these social technologies have enabled a revolution in user-generated content, global community, and the publishing of consumer opinion, now uniformly tagged as social media. (p. 559).

Research conducted by Smith (2009) has shown that social media is reaching around the world. Smith describes those people who have Internet access, as being involved with social media in some way.

Additionally, Smith (2009) provides reasoning behind why the social media revolution is affecting the economy. Smith discusses the importance of companies listening to their audience and how this can allow for improvements.

> Now that every consumer online is a commentator, reviewer and publisher, all organizations have to stop talking and start listening to how they are perceived. This makes the act of listening an essential part of every business model, feeding product development, customer relations and marketing communications. Companies that don't listen in this environment will increasingly get left behind. (p. 560)

Smith also stated that listening is just part of the job. Organizations should "actively engage with customers directly" (Smith, 2009, p. 560). This type of regular interaction "will be a key way to build long-term advocates of the brand" (p. 560).

Smart phones.

With the development of the smart phone, CMC can occur more often. According to Ho and Syu (2010), the development of new media and mobile technology has affected consumers' living habits over time. Ho and Syu's research shows that the use of the smart phone has increased "in 2010 as high as 78.1%, showing that the smart phone has gradually become the mainstream in mobile phone market" (p. 315). As described by Ho and Syu, "the smart phone has the function of installing applications, provides users with more diversified mobile value-added services and will change the use habits in the future" (p. 315).

Wei (2006) indicated that "different motivations of mobile phone use predicted different use of the mobile phone for mass communications and entertainment" (p. 43). Ho and Syu (2010) have predicted that smart phones will be the mobile phone of choice when consumers are making purchases in 2010. With the increase in changes in technology, the mobile phone is predicted to continue to advance (Wei, 2006). The increase in smart phone purchases has led to a significant increase in mobile applications (Ho & Syu, 2010). Liva (2010) also concluded that the increase in mobile technology use is related to the increase in the amount of mobile applications available.

Mobile applications.

Jukov (2011) reported the history of mobile applications begins at the early part of the 21st century. Upon their initial development, Jukov stated mobile applications provided the mobile phone user with the capabilities of accessing games, ringtones, calculators, etc. With the development of new technology, Jukov described mobile devices as having obtained the ability to offer operating systems on mobile phones. Since then, Jukov indicated mobile phone development has increased and developers have strived to create mobile applications that are appealing to consumers.

"Mobile applications are developed for handheld devices such as personal digital assistants, enterprise digital assistants or mobile phones" (Ho & Syu, 2010, p. 316). Ho and Syu reported that applications may be installed on the phones prior to purchase of the mobile phone,

or they may be available for purchase by the consumer post-purchase. Findings from Ho and Syu indicate that most mobile applications are related to games and entertainment. As stated by Ho and Syu,

> Research findings discovered that the proportion of mobile application users is increasingly more, and categories of mobile applications are also increasingly diversified. (p. 317)

Computer-Mediated Communication

Research by Nellis (2004) shows that when encountering new communication technology, most people will experience it via computer-mediated communication (CMC). According to Nellis, CMC connects interpersonal and mass communication by initiating social interaction, such as email and social media. Although CMC is different from traditional mass communication, Nellis describes it as being similar in that it meets the same four required roles: "information, explanation, entertainment, and transmission of culture" (p. 246).

According to Nellis (2004), computer-mediated communication (CMC) is a combination of interpersonal and mass communication. Due to its make-up of both types of communication, it has become a great interest to those who conduct research on the topic.

When discussing computer-mediated communication (CMC), Nellis (2004) stated interpersonal communication, or face-to-face communication, occurs when "two or more people interact together in the same place and at the same time" (p. 246). Nellis defines this type of interaction as "synchronous communication" (p. 246). During this type of interaction, Nellis concluded that the individuals have the ability to receive instantaneous responses from others within the interaction; therefore, they are able to adjust their own responses based on these cues. With that in mind, Nellis indicated that CMC involves the same process.

Face-to-face communication and CMC are similar in that they both can be synchronous (Nellis, 2004). According to Nellis, feedback is immediate and messages can be altered more readily based on the response received. Nellis describes how the development of new

communication technologies such as CMC, transforms the expectations of consumers for receiving newsworthy information.

As CMC continues to be used, questions relating to the expectations of individuals use of media and their outcomes of CMC use are raised (Nellis, 2004). According to Nellis, research by Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire in 1984 brought up the question of "whether the speed and ease of CMC leads people to have unrealistic expectations for immediate responses despite the asynchronous nature of much of the communication" (p. 253).

Nellis discusses a newly developed theory called the "technology expectancy image gap theory" (p. 253). This theory suggests that some consumers may expect more information than can be given to them (Nellis, 2004). Nellis describes this type of expectation as one that leads to disappointment for the individual. Nellis stated that Kazoleas & Teigen's research in press, reported that "this is bad for word-of-mouth promotion of new technologies but can be financially devastating to companies whose technologically based image creates expectations far above the true performance ability of the developing technologies they employ" (p. 253).

Parks and Floyd (1996) have found that research based on the uses and gratifications theory shows "that those who engage in CMC report a variety of positive outcomes such as socialization, maintaining relationships, playing games, and receiving emotional support from online contact with others" (Nellis, 2004, p. 253). When considering the uses and gratifications theory and CMC, Nellis indicated that "different CMC uses are satisfied through clicking on different icons or bullets on a web site where users can choose streams of dialog about their chosen subject matter" (p. 253).

Theoretical Framework: Uses and Gratifications Theory

The theory used in this study is the uses and gratifications theory. This theory is relevant to this study because the preferences and use of media by digitally engaged AQHA members will be analyzed by the use of an instrument designed to evaluate such factors. "Interest in the gratifications that media provides their audience goes back to the beginning of empirical mass

communication research" (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973-1974, p. 509). The developers of this theory, Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch, focused on consumers and their reasons for choosing certain media sources (Carrier, 2004). Carrier discusses how the uses and gratifications theory analyzes how consumers satisfy needs through their choice in media. Since consumers view media messages with different motives, Carrier believes they may interpret information differently than others who view the same message. Unlike similar theories, Carrier explains how the uses and gratifications theory does not consider the audience targets for the media to hit. Instead, Carrier indicates the audience seeks out the media with a specific objective. In today's society, most consumers have the ability to access a variety of media sources to meet their goals and needs.

In research completed by Quan-Haase and Young (2010), the difference between the uses and gratifications theory and earlier communication theories is discussed. As stated by Quan-Haase and Young, "the audience is characterized as active, discerning, and motivated in their media use" (p. 351). Ho and Syu (2010) found that "in the uses and gratifications theory audiences are stressed to actively choose media, and users' motives are based on the influence of personal primary needs, social context at that time, and personal characters" (p. 316). Katz et al. (1973-1974) stated that "gratifications can be derived from at least three distinct sources: media content, exposure to the media, and the social context that typifies the situation of exposure to different media" (p. 514).

Perry (2004) makes the point that there are times when society wants to blame the media for the choices that people make. Contrary to this, Perry says that the uses and gratifications theory suggests that consumers have more of an influence on society around them than the media that they view. As stated previously, Perry discusses how the consumer chooses to view certain media sources to meet their needs. Perry indicates that research on this theory centers around the social and psychological needs of consumers, which lead researchers to analyze ways media sources can meet these needs.

Perry (2004) presented four conditions that must be met for the uses and gratifications theory to be pertinent in addressing how the media acts as a tool for consumers:

> (1) when media use is purposive and intentional; (2) when the purposive media choices are driven by the user's felt needs as the person weighs all possible options to meet those needs; (3) when individuals initiate the media selections they make as opposed to being sucked into an environment where media are forced upon them or when the user has little role in selecting content; and (4) when the individual understands and can articulate his or her reasons for choosing specific media content. (p. 218)

According to Perry (2004), Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch stated:

> when those conditions exist, uses and gratifications research is able to explain these three things: (1) how the media are used by consumers to satisfy their needs, (2) the motives for media choices and usage patterns, and (3) the media's functions for individuals based on their personal needs, motives, and communication behaviors. (p. 218)

According to Leung and Weis (2000), "the process of acquiring gratifications through using a particular technology may influence profoundly one's future media use behavior in the new media environment of abundance" (p. 318).

> In 1964, after Bauer, a social psychologist, put forward the point of view of "obstinate audience," the previous view that audience are passive is overthrown, it advocates that audience positively seek for information, and produce mutual benefit through two-way communication, which aims at discussing how audience process or use media information. (Ho & Syu, 2010, p. 317)

Lueng and Wei (2000) found that this theory "has stimulated numerous studies of media use in general and on telephone use in particular" (p. 309).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter's purpose is to provide a description of the methods and procedures used to conduct this study. The research design, population, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis are presented and discussed within this chapter. Additionally, the approval of the study by the Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University is included.

Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University's research policy requires that all studies involving human subjects are approved before actual research can be conducted (OSU IRB, 2011). The review of the study was conducted by the Oklahoma State University Office of University Research Services and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Welfare and rights of the human subjects being tested is the primary concern of the review board (OSU IRB, 2011a). To meet these requirements, this study was submitted for review and was approved on August 2, 2012. The IRB assigned number for this study is AG1237 (see Appendix A).

Research Design

This study used survey methodology to determine the technology use and information preferences of digitally engaged members of AQHA. Since the members are digitally engaged, it was assumed that they can access the Internet. The instrument design was distributed via the Internet and was only accessible through the Web.

Survey methodology has existed "for more than 75 years" (Dillman, 2009, p. 1). According to Dillman, surveys have become tools that are both practical and efficient in understanding individuals' actions and beliefs. Dillman also states that his type of research methodology also allows survey results to be received and analyzed in a confident manner.

Population

The study's population was divided into a target population and a survey population. Warde (1990) defined the target population as "the population about which we would like to be able to draw inference and the survey population as the population to which we can draw valid statistical inference" (p.25).

The target population included members of AQHA who lived within the United States, held either an amateur or general AQHA membership, were above the age of 18, and were digitally engaged. Members were considered digitally engaged if they had an active email address on file with AQHA. This population was selected because it is assumed by AQHA that digitally engaged members are more likely to make use of a potential smart phone application developed by the organization (AQHA, personal communication). The survey population included those digitally engaged members who opened the email correspondence from AQHA; however, the number of digitally engaged members who clicked on the instrument link was also taken into consideration.

All study correspondence was distributed through the American Quarter Horse Association's email database and was out of the researcher's control. Even though the intention was to reach out to the entire target population, the daily fluctuation of active email addresses updated through the AQHA email database caused the number of digitally engaged members who received email correspondence related to the study to differ each time correspondence was sent (AQHA, personal communication). The initial email was distributed to 100,000 digitally engaged AQHA members, the first reminder email was distributed to 93,946 digitally engaged AQHA

members, and the final email reminder was distributed to 94,056 digitally engaged AQHA members (AQHA, personal communication).

The survey population for this study consisted of three different groups. The first group included digitally engaged members from the initial email correspondence, the second group included digitally engaged members from the first reminder email, and the third group included digitally engaged members from the second reminder email. When broken down by group, 24,177 members opened the initial email correspondence with 4,771 of those members clicking on the instrument link; 19,841 members opened the first reminder email correspondence with 2,986 of those members clicking on the instrument link; and 14,463 members opened the second reminder email correspondence, with 1,850 of those members clicking on the instrument link.

Instrumentation

To address the objectives of this study, an instrument designed by the researcher was developed. A panel of experts was used to verify validity and a pilot study was run to ensure reliability.

Instrument Design

The design of the instrument was based on the Dillman Tailored Design Method (2009). According to Dillman, "the Tailored design involves using multiple motivational features in compatible and mutually supportive ways to encourage high quantity and quality of response to the surveyor's request" (p. 16). Dillman stated this method is developed from the idea that respondents' participation occurs because of the possibility they may receive one or more benefits from responding to the survey. Additionally, Dillman stated these respondents believe the reward for participation is greater than the risk of participation.

Dillman (2009) stated that the Tailored design method is supported by three considerations. First, Dillman indicated that the method centers around "reducing survey error" (p. 16). Second, Dillman reported the method focuses on creating survey procedures that

encourage people to participate in survey research. And lastly, Dillman stated that the Tailored Design Method

> builds positive social exchange and encourages response by taking into consideration elements such as survey sponsorship, the nature of the survey population and variations within it, and the content of the survey questions, among other things. (p. 16)

Qualtrics Survey Software was used to construct the instrument online. Qualtrics, a tool used to create online surveys, was provided by Oklahoma State University's College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources' Department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership.

The instrument included 26 questions divided into three categories: demographics, digital media use, and mobile application preferences (see Appendix B). Eight questions pertained to the demographics of AQHA's members, such as age, gender, race, level of education, state of residency, total household income, primary means of income, and membership type. Thirteen questions asked respondents about their digital media use, and five questions asked respondents about their mobile application preferences.

Questions relating to the amount of time using the Internet, location for accessing the Internet, technology most often used for Internet access, smart phone ownership, and amount of time spent using mobile applications were used. Additionally, questions related to what members would like to see in a mobile application, location for accessing mobile applications, use of social media, and preferences for receiving industry information were included. The instrument also included an introductory page informing the respondent of their rights and thanking them for their participation (see Appendix B). An existing instrument was used for guidance in the development of this study's instrument. The 2010 American Business Media's Agri Council Media Channel Study provided inspiration for development of the question asking respondents what action they had taken in response to receiving equine industry information (American Business Media, 2010).

Validity

According to Creswell (2012), "validity is the development of sound evidence to demonstrate that the test interpretation (of scores about the concept or construct that the test is assumed to measure) matches its proposed use" (p. 159). As stated by Creswell, validity should show whether or not the research measured what it should have. A panel of experts was used to determine the content and face validity of the instrument that was to be distributed to the population. The panel of experts included four university faculty members. Two were equine science professors and two were agricultural communications professors (see Appendix C). The panel was chosen because of their knowledge in the equine industry, agriculture, and communications. The panel of experts critiqued the instrument and provided suggestions for improvement.

Reliability

Creswell (2012) described reliability as having test scores that are consistent. In other words, Creswell believed that if the test was to be administered to the same audience multiple times, the results should be very similar. Once the validity of the instrument was verified, the reliability was determined by distributing the instrument for a pilot study. The pilot study took place on August 7, 2012, the first day the instrument was distributed, and consisted of the first 30 respondents to the instrument. Data derived from scaled questions in the instrument were used to calculate a Cronbach's alpha. This coefficient is used to measure the consistency of scaled items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the pilot study was .95.

Data Collection

Collection of data for this study was based on the Dillman Tailored Design Method (2009). According to Dillman (2009), new ways of distributing and completing surveys are growing and being used by many researchers. Dillman described the Internet and email as just a few examples of survey methods being used. Dillman indicated that designing a quality survey begins with two fundamental assumptions:

> (1) responding to a self-administered questionnaire involves not only cognition, but also motivation (Jenkins and Dillman, 1995, 1997), and (2) multiple attempts are essential to achieving satisfactory response rates to self-administered surveys regardless of whether administered by email, the web, or postal delivery (Scott, 1961; Heberlein and Baumgartner, 1978; Dillman, 1991). (p. 13)

According to Dillman, "people must understand clearly what is wanted of them if they are to respond…multiple attempts to contact potential respondents are essential" (p. 13).

All items of instrument correspondence, including the initial email and reminder emails were distributed electronically through the American Quarter Horse Association's email database.

The instrument was presented to the population through an email link to the Qualtrics Survey Software. The instrument took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Instrument questions were optional and respondents were able to exit the study at any time without being penalized. The initial email (see Appendix D) was distributed to digitally engaged members of AQHA on August 7, 2012. Reminder emails were distributed on August 14 and August 21 (see Appendices E and F). The data collection process closed on September 4, 2012.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was collected from this study and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. All qualitative data was analyzed using Microsoft Access. This program was used to determine the frequency of each qualitative response.

An exploratory factor analysis was run and descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to analyze the data once data collection was complete. According to Steinberg (2011), descriptive statistics describes the population that is being studied. As stated by Steinberg, descriptive statistics also simplifies results for the purpose of presenting them in an understandable manner. Descriptive statistics were chosen for this study to analyze the digital media use of digitally engaged members of the American Quarter Horse Association, as well as the mobile application preferences of these members.

The first objective was satisfied by describing the demographics of AQHA's members, who are digitally engaged. The second objective was met by looking at the digital media use of digitally engaged members of AQHA. The third objective was satisfied by analyzing mobile application preferences of AQHA's digitally engaged membership and the fourth and final objective was met by comparing the demographics of digitally engaged AQHA members to their digital media use and mobile application preferences.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the findings obtained in this study. The results will be discussed as they relate to each objective presented in Chapter I. Results will focus on the demographics, digital media use, and mobile application preferences of digitally engaged AQHA members.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to assess AQHA members' preferences for obtaining equine industry information via digital media and give AQHA more knowledge about its digitally engaged membership, especially as it relates to identifying members' needs and suggested improvements for a potential expansion of the organization's mobile application.

The following research objectives were developed to guide this study:

1. Describe the personal and professional demographics (age, gender, race, education, location, membership type, total household income, and primary means of household income) of AQHA members who are digitally engaged.
2. Describe digital media use of digitally engaged AQHA members by analyzing their ownership of a smart phone, preferred sources of information, current use of social media

tools, and opinion of reliability of sources of information.

3. Assess the mobile application preferences of digitally engaged AQHA members as it relates to the development of a new AQHA-sponsored application.
4. Determine how the demographics of digitally engaged AQHA members relate to their mobile application preferences and digital media use.

Response Rate

Despite applying the Dillman Tailored Design Method (2009), this study received a low response rate. The study results were inadvertently submitted in preview mode through the Qualtrics Survey Software, which may have contributed to the lack of response. Of the digitally engaged AQHA members who received the instrument (initial email: 100,000; first reminder email: 93,946; second reminder email: 94,056), 5,747 respondents completed the study. Incomplete results, along with 46 responses who reported their age as under 18, were eliminated. The final number of complete and usable responses for the study was n = 5,701.

When considering only the number of digitally engaged members who received the initial email correspondence (100,000), the response rate for the study is 5.7%. Although this percentage is considered sufficient by Krejcie & Morgan (1970), follow-up instrument correspondence was distributed to ensure results could be generalized to the study's population (See Appendix G).

The follow-up instrument correspondence was distributed on November 28, 2012, through AQHA, just as the initial instrument correspondence was distributed (See Appendix G). According to communication with AQHA, 116,395 emails were distributed over the AQHA email system and 16,214 digitally engaged members opened the email correspondence, with 1,239 digitally engaged AQHA members clicking on the instrument. The follow-up instrument then received 1,159 responses, which is a response rate of 1.0% when considering those who received the email correspondence (116,395). Responses from the original instrument and non-respondents were compared, and yielded no statistical difference. This finding provided assurance that responses from the instrument are generalizable to the entire population of the study.

The respondents' incentive for participating in the study was a chance to win a pair of Justin boots from the company's popular Lifestyle Collection, which is sponsored by AQHA. The boots were valued at $240. After the study closed, a participating respondent was randomly selected by the researcher and the winner was reported to AQHA. AQHA notified the winner.

Research Findings

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to find out if there was a relationship among items that allowed them to be grouped into individual factors.

Results of the exploratory factor analysis produced three factors:

1. Quality of AQHA's use of selected social media platforms.
2. Connection of members with AQHA and fellow AQHA members via selected digital media.
3. AQHA-sponsored mobile application content.

Factors one and two were highly correlated. Cronbach's alpha was run and the reliabilities of the factors were .91, .96, and .85, respectively. See Table 1 for a correlation among the factors.

Table 1
Correlation Matrix

	Factors		
Factors	1	2	3
1	1.0	6.0	.15
2	.60	1.0	.31
3	.15	.31	1.0

Findings Related to Objective 1

Objective one was designed to determine the personal and professional characteristics of digitally engaged AQHA members. Digitally engaged members were asked to indicate the year they were born; their gender; the race that best describes them; the highest level of education they

had earned; the state in which they currently reside; their total household income per year; whether their primary means of income is derived from their involvement in the equine industry; and what type of AQHA membership they currently hold.

Of the 5,701 respondents who completed the study, ages ranged from 18 to 88 years old, with an average of 42.5 years old. The majority of respondents were female, with 73.1% indicating they were female (n = 4,167) and 26% indicating they were male (n = 1,462). Of the respondents, the most common race indicated was white (n = 5,397, 96.1%). When respondents were asked their highest level of education, most respondents reported that they had completed at least some college. Of the 5,701 respondents, 66.7% reported that they had some college (n = 3,805) and 32.2% reported that they had not (n = 1,834). See Table 2 for data regarding age, gender, race, and education of digitally engaged AQHA members.

When considering state of residency, all 50 states were represented in the study's population. The U.S. Census Bureau defines the census regions as Northeast, Midwest, South, and Northeast. The following states are located within each: Northeast: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania; Midwest: Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota; South: Delaware, D.C., Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas; West: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington (United States Census Bureau, *Census Bureau Regions).* When considering regions, of the 5,648 responses, 37% of respondents reported they resided in a state located in the South region, 29.4% of respondents reported they resided in a state located in the Midwest region, 26.4% of respondents reported they resided in a state located in the West region, 7% of respondents reported they resided in a state located in the Northeast region, and less than 1% of respondents reported they did not reside in the United States. When considering individual states,

Table 2
Digitally engaged AQHA members' age, gender, race, and education

	f	%	Range	Mean	Median	Mode
Age			18-88	42.5	41	38
Gender						
Male	1,462	26				
Female	4,167	74				
Race						
White	5,397	96.1				
Black or African American	16	0.3				
American Indian or Alaska Native	90	1.6				
Asian	14	0.2				
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	7	0.1				
Hispanic/Latino	93	1.7				
Education						
Did not complete high school	42	0.7				
High school diploma	1,792	31.8				
Associate's degree	1,168	20.7				
Bachelor's degree	1,670	29.6				
Master's degree	694	12.3				
Doctoral degree	273	4.8				

most respondents reported that they resided in the state of Texas. Considering the top five states of residency reported, of the 5,648 responses, 13.2% resided in Texas (n = 748); 6.5% resided in California (n = 369); 4.8% resided in Oklahoma (n = 272); 4.3% resided in Ohio (n = 242); and 4.0% resided in Colorado (n = 229). See Appendix H for data related to respondents' state of residency.

When asked their total household income per year, most respondents reported that they earned $100,000 or more (n = 1,742, 31.3%). Respondents who earned between $50,000 and $74,999 (n = 1,327) followed closely behind, accounting for 23.9% of all respondents. Most respondents reported their primary income was not derived from the equine industry. Of the 5,701

respondents, 91.6% reported their primary income was not derived from the equine industry (n = 5,201), while 8.4% respondents reported their primary income was derived from the equine industry (n = 475). When asked about membership type, most respondents indicated they held a general membership with AQHA (n = 3,862, 68.1%). See Table 3 for data regarding household income per year, whether primary household income is derived from involvement with the equine industry, and membership type of digitally engaged AQHA members.

Table 3
Digitally engaged AQHA members' income and membership type

	f	%
Household Income Per Year		
Less than $25,000	319	5.7
$25,000-$49,999	1,042	18.7
$50,000-$74,999	1,327	23.9
$75,000-$99,999	1,131	20.3
$100,000 or more	1,742	31.3
Primary Income Derived from Equine Industry		
Yes	475	8.4
No	5,201	91.6
Type of AQHA Membership		
General	3,862	68.1
Amateur	1,810	31.9

When comparing age and type of membership held with AQHA, 5,026 respondents reported both their age and type of membership held with AQHA. Of those respondents, 67.69% held a general membership and 32.31% held an amateur membership. When broken down by age group, the majority of respondents who held a general membership were between the ages of 30 and 49 (n = 2,016, 59.26%) and the majority of respondents who held an amateur membership were also between the ages of 30 and 49 (n = 999, 61.51%).

Findings Related to Objective 2

Objective two was designed to evaluate the digital media use of digitally engaged AQHA members. Digitally engaged members were asked if they owned a smart phone; where they access the Internet; how often they use the Internet; what technology they use to access the Internet the most; how many minutes a day they use mobile application; and, if they do not use mobile applications, why? Respondents were also asked to list up to five sources they would access for equine industry information and up to five sources they would access for AQHA news, along with what source they consider to be the most trustworthy in each area. Additionally, respondents were asked what action they had taken in response to receiving equine industry information, and if digital media use had become a large component of their involvement with the equine industry. To conclude this objective, respondents were asked to indicate the percentage of time they spend on social media platforms for equine industry information versus all other types of information; their agreement with AQHA's social media use; and whether digital media made them feel more connected with AQHA and fellow AQHA members.

When asked about smart phone ownership, most respondents reported they owned a smart phone. Of the 5,701 respondents, 60.1% reported that they owned a smart phone, while 39.5% reported that they did not. See Table 4 for data regarding smart phone ownership of digitally engaged AQHA members.

Table 4
Digitally engaged AQHA members' smart phone ownership

Smart Phone Ownership	*f*	%
Yes	3,425	60.4
No	2,250	39.6

Respondents were then asked about their Internet usage. Respondents were first asked where they access the Internet. Of the 5,701 respondents, 95.7% reported that they accessed the Internet at home. Next, the respondents were asked how often they use the Internet. Of the 5,701

respondents, the majority use the Internet several times a day (n = 4,734, 83.4%). Respondents were then asked what technology they used to access the Internet the most. Of the 5,701 respondents, 61% reported that they used broadband (DSL, cable) the most and 22% reported that they used their mobile phone the most. See Table 5 for data regarding Internet usage of digitally engaged AQHA members.

Table 5
Digitally engaged AQHA members' Internet usage

	f	%
Internet Access Location		
Home	5,437	95.7
Office/place of employment	3,410	60
Equine-related shows or events	1,623	28.6
While on horseback	1,142	20.1
Local library or Wi-Fi hot spot	1,052	18.5
Internet Usage		
Several times a day	4,734	83.4
Once a day	590	10.4
A few times a week	294	5.2
A few times a month	50	0.9
Less than once a month	11	0.2
Technology Used to Access the Internet		
Dial-Up	154	2.7
Broadband (DSL, Cable)	3,458	61
Mobile phone	1,246	22
Satellite	810	14.3

Note: Percentages for Internet access location will not add to 100 because participants could select more than one answer.

After evaluating Internet usage, respondents were asked about their mobile application use. Most respondents reported that they used mobile applications from 1 to 15 minutes a day (n = 1,730, 30.5%); however, 25.8% reported that they did not use mobile applications at all. Of the respondents who indicated their reason for not using mobile applications (n = 1,451), 79.3%

reported it was because they did not own a smart phone; 14.5% reported that they preferred to use a web browser; and 6.3% chose another reason. Of the 78 respondents who wrote in another reason for not accessing mobile applications, 19.2% reported their lack of mobile application use was due to financial reasons (n = 15). Examples of written responses included: too costly for respondents; expensive; cannot afford; and not in budget. See Table 6 for data regarding mobile application use of digitally engaged AQHA members.

Table 6
Digitally engaged AQHA members' mobile application use

	f	%
Minutes Per Day Spent Accessing Mobile Applications		
0	1,464	25.8
1-15	1,730	30.5
16-30	950	16.7
31-45	570	10
46-60	403	7.1
More than 60	561	9.9
Reason for Not Using Mobile Applications		
I do not own a smart phone	1,150	79.3
I prefer to use a web browser	210	14.5
Other reason	91	6.3

Members were asked about their digital media use as it relates to the equine industry, specifically. Respondents were asked to list up to five sources they would access for equine industry information and AQHA news. Additionally, they were asked to provide the name of the source for each that they considered the most trustworthy. It is important to note that respondents were not given a list of sources to choose from. Instead, respondents were given five blank fields and asked to provide the specific names of the sources they accessed for equine industry information and AQHA news. Sources were divided up into the following 30 categories: AQHA; advertisements; other associations/organizations; books; computer; don't know; email; events; government; health; journals; magazines; mail; news; n/a; none; pedigrees and records; people;

phone; racing; radio; television; sales; same; shows; social media; state associations; universities; online media; and unable to determine. The possibility of sources overlapping categories was likely.

In regard to equine industry information and AQHA news, respondents accessed AQHA via Internet, publications and interpersonal communication, as well as a variety of different types of online media the most for information related to both subject areas. Of the 5,073 respondents who provided a first source for equine industry information, 46.8% reported they accessed AQHA in some form. Of the 4,665 respondents who provided a second source for equine industry information, 28.8% reported they accessed online media in some form. Of the 3,885 respondents who provided a third source for equine industry information, 28.6% reported they accessed online media in some form. Of the 2,752 respondents who provided a fourth source for equine industry information, 28.2% reported they accessed online media in some form. Of the 1,860 respondents who provided a fifth source for equine industry information, 25.3% reported they accessed online media in some form.

Of the 4,675 respondents who provided a first source for AQHA news, 70.7% reported they accessed AQHA in some form. Of the 3,338 respondents who provided a second source for AQHA news, 48.6% reported they accessed AQHA in some form. Of the 1,888 respondents who provided a third source for AQHA news, 38.2% reported they accessed AQHA in some form. Of the 908 respondents who provided a fourth source for AQHA news, 24.4% reported they accessed AQHA in some form. Of the 558 respondents who provided a fifth source for AQHA news, 21.1% reported they accessed online media in some form.

In terms of trustworthiness, the majority of respondents reported they considered AQHA the most trustworthy for equine industry information and AQHA news. Of the 4,472 respondents who reported a source they considered trustworthy for equine industry information, 56.1% reported that they considered some form of AQHA communication to be the most trustworthy. Of the 4,367 respondents who reported a source they considered trustworthy for AQHA news, 74.5%

reported that they considered at least one form of communication from AQHA to be the most trustworthy.

Digitally engaged AQHA members were asked to indicate their action taken in response to receiving equine industry information. Of the 5,701 respondents, the majority reported they learned something new about the industry and/or discovered a new product or service (76.1%). When asked about their digital media use and involvement in the equine industry, 54% of respondents reported that digital media use had become a large component of their involvement with the equine industry. See Table 7 for data regarding digitally engaged AQHA members' digital media use as it relates to the equine industry.

Table 7
Digitally engaged AQHA members' digital media use

	f	%
Action Taken in Response to Receiving Equine Industry Information		
I learned something new about the industry and/or discovered a new product or service.	4,230	76.1
I gathered more information.	3,834	69
I made note of the information for use as a reference.	3,087	55.6
I recommended or purchased a product or service presented.	2,505	45.1
I sought out a digital media source	1,292	23.3
I took no action	563	10.1
Digital Media Use Become Large Component of Involvement with the Equine Industry		
Yes	3,008	54
No	2,562	46

Note: Percentages for actions taken in response to receiving equine industry information will not add to 100 because participants could select more than one answer.

To conclude the findings for objective two, digitally engaged AQHA members' social media use was evaluated. Members were asked to estimate the percentage of time they spent on social media platforms accessing equine industry information versus all other types of information. Respondents were given the following platforms to consider: Facebook, Twitter,

Pinterest, and LinkedIn. An option was also provided for respondents to write in a platform that was not listed. Respondents reported that they spent most of their time on the provided social media platforms accessing information unrelated to the equine industry. Of the 846 respondents who reported that they accessed a platform not listed, 57.2% reported that they accessed some other type of website for equine industry information. However, specific sites names were not provided from each respondent. See Table 8 for data summarizing the mean percentage of time spent accessing each platform for equine industry information and all other types of information.

Table 8
Digitally engaged AQHA members' social media use

	Not Equine Industry Info	Equine Industry Info
Platform	M (%)	M (%)
Facebook	34.56	18.47
Twitter	2.78	0.87
Pinterest	5.08	1.24
LinkedIn	5.91	1.48
Other	4.13	6.85

Digitally engaged AQHA members' opinion regarding AQHA's social media use was also evaluated. Respondents were presented with a scaled question to determine their level of agreement with statements indicating AQHA does a good job using Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. The scale provided was labeled "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Most respondents indicated they were neutral in their position related to how well AQHA uses the listed platforms. See Table 9 for a summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' agreement that AQHA's social media use is good.

Members were then asked to indicate their level of agreement with how electronic media influences their feeling of connection with AQHA and fellow AQHA members. Respondents were presented with a scaled question asking them to indicate their level of agreement from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Most respondents reported they were neutral in their

position related to how much digital media influences their feeling of connection with AQHA and fellow AQHA members. See Table 10 for a summary of data obtained.

Table 9
Digitally engaged AQHA members' agreement that AQHA's social media use is good

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
Platform	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Facebook	80	1.6	223	4.3	2,967	57.5	1,497	29	393	7.6
Twitter	41	0.9	42	1	4,092	93.2	173	3.9	42	1
Pinterest	60	1.4	105	2.4	4,040	92..2	152	3.5	27	0.6
LinkedIn	61	1.4	88	2	4,035	91.8	170	3.9	40	0.9

Table 10
Digitally engaged AQHA members' level of agreement that digital media tools increase their connectedness with AQHA and fellow AQHA members.

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Social media tools make me feel more connected with AQHA (n = 5,701)	334	6.2	490	9.1	2,167	40.2	1,847	34.3	548	10.2
Social media tools make me feel more connected with fellow AQHA members (n = 5,701)	318	6	417	7.8	2,335	43.8	1,667	31.3	597	11.2
An AQHA mobile application would make me feel more connected to AQHA (n=5,701)	317	6	408	7.7	2,274	42.8	1,526	28.7	791	14.9
An AQHA mobile application would make me feel more connected to fellow AQHA members (n = 5,701)	321	6.1	433	8.2	2,554	48.3	1,296	24.5	681	12.9

Findings Related to Objective 3

Objective three sought to determine the mobile application preferences of digitally engaged AQHA members. Members were asked to indicate whether they would use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application. Additionally, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements regarding what should be included in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application; what they expect to pay for in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application; and where they preferred to access an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

When asked about their potential use of a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application, the majority of respondents reported that they would use it. Of the 5,701 respondents, 62.5% reported that they would use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application, while 37.5% of respondents reported that they would not use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application. See Table 11 for data regarding digitally engaged AQHA members' potential use of newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

Table 11
Summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' use of an AQHA-sponsored mobile application

Use AQHA-Sponsored Mobile Application	*f*	%
Yes	3,085	62.5
No	1,852	37.5

Respondents reported preferred content of a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application was then evaluated. Members were presented with a scaled question asking them to indicate their level of agreement with whether certain topics should be included in a potential newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application. Topics to be ranked included: AQHA news, the AQHA rulebook, the AQHA show schedule, the AQHA trail ride schedule, AQHA pedigree and records research, AQHA horse trivia, and other. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a scale ranked from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Of the 5,701 respondents, most respondents reported that they "agree" AQHA news should be included

in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application (n = 2,528, 46.7%). Of the topics that respondents agreed should be included in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application, horse trivia was the least desirable (n = 1,639, 30.9%). In regard to a topic that was not provided, 68.9% of respondents reported they took a neutral position in their agreement that a topic that was not provided, should be included. Of the 269 respondents who reported a specific topic for the "other" option, 30.9% reported more detailed information relating to horse shows should be provided (n = 83). Examples included: schedule; results; entry forms; show patterns; awards and points; and directions to shows. See Table 12 for data summarizing digitally engaged AQHA members' agreement with mobile application content.

Table 12
Digitally engaged AQHA members' agreement with mobile application content

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
AQHA news	109	2	115	2.1	1,677	31	2,528	46.7	979	18.1
AQHA rulebook	120	2.2	191	3.5	1,597	29.5	2,209	40.8	1,298	24
AQHA show schedules	98	1.8	68	1.3	1,446	26.8	2,436	45.1	1,351	25
AQHA trail ride schedules	97	1.8	104	1.9	2,102	38.9	2,197	40.7	898	16.6
AQHA pedigrees	124	2.3	249	4.6	1,598	29.6	2,046	37.9	1,386	25.7
Horse trivia	160	3	357	6.7	2,626	49.4	1,639	30.9	530	10
Other	26	1.9	22	1.6	950	68.9	173	12.6	207	15

Respondents were then provided a list of potential topics that could be included in an AQHA-sponsored application and asked to indicate which ones they would expect to pay for. Of the 5,701 respondents, 48.4% of respondents indicated that they would expect to pay for pedigree and records research; however, 46.1% reported they would expect to pay for none of the above. It is important to note that respondents could select more than one answer. Additionally, 2.6% of

respondents reported that they expected to pay for a topic not listed by selecting "other." Of those 138 respondents, 24.6% reported that the potential topics to be included in the mobile applications should be provided to AQHA members at no charge. The services of the mobile application should be included with membership fees (n = 31). See Table 13 for data regarding topics digitally engaged AQHA members expect to pay for and do not expect to pay for in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

Table 13
Summary of topics digitally engaged AQHA members expect to pay for in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application

	Expect to Pay For	
Topics Expected to Pay for in Mobile Application	*f*	%
AQHA news	421	7.8
Rulebook	680	12.6
Show schedule	393	7.3
Trail ride schedule	245	4.5
Pedigree and records research	2,606	48.4
Horse trivia	255	4.7
None of the above	2,480	46.1
Other	138	2.6

Note: Percentages will not add to 100 because participants could select more than one answer.

To conclude findings for objective three, respondents were presented with a scaled question asking them to rank locations where they would expect to access an AQHA-sponsored mobile application. Ranking ranged from "strongly unpreferred" to "strongly preferred." Respondents were asked to disregard the type of technology (smartphone, computer) used when answering the question. Of the 5,701 respondents, most reported they "strongly preferred" to access an AQHA-sponsored mobile application from home (n = 2,365, 43.8%). Respondents reported that they least preferred to access an AQHA-sponsored mobile application while on horseback (n = 988, 20.6%). Of the 72 respondents who provided a location for the "other" option, 16.7% reported sales (n = 12), and 16.7% reported none (n = 12). See Table 14 for a

summary of data related to digitally engaged AQHA members' location preferences for accessing an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

Table 14
Digitally engaged AQHA members' location preferences for accessing an AQHA-sponsored mobile application

	Strongly Unpreferred		Unpreferred		Neutral		Preferred		Strongly Preferred	
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Home	135	2.5	87	1.6	641	11.9	2,176	40.3	2,365	43.8
Office/place of employment	517	10.5	546	11.1	1,779	36.2	1,493	30.4	584	11.9
Equine-related shows or events	169	3.4	153	3	1,536	30.6	1,991	39.6	1,173	23.4
While on horseback	988	20.6	833	17.3	1,990	41.4	697	14.5	299	6.2
While traveling	224	4.4	185	3.7	1,462	28.9	2,139	42.3	1,050	20.8
Other	57	6.6	15	1.7	665	77.1	64	7.4	61	7.1

Findings Related to Objective 4

Objective four intended to analyze selected demographics of digitally engaged AQHA members related to digitally engaged AQHA members' digital media use and mobile application preferences.

Findings based on age. Earlier in this chapter, the age demographic was discussed. Respondents' age ranged from 18 to 88 years with an average of 42.5 years old. When comparing age and digital media use as it relates to smart phone usage, 5,026 respondents reported both their age and smart phone ownership. Of those respondents, 61% indicated they owned a smart phone (n = 3,067). Of those respondents, the majority were between the ages of 18 and 49 (n = 2,086, 68.02%). See Table 15 for data summarizing age as it relates to smart phone usage.

Table 15
Digitally engaged AQHA members' age as it relates to owning a smart phone

	Own a Smart Phone	
Age	*f*	%
18-19	15	0.49
20-29	284	9.26
30-39	871	28.40
40-49	916	29.87
50-59	508	16.56
60-69	387	12.62
70-79	85	2.77
80-89	1	0.03

When evaluating digital media use, respondents were asked if digital media use had become a large component of their involvement within the equine industry. As previously discussed in this chapter, the majority of respondents reported that digital media use had become a large component of their involvement with the equine industry. Of the 4,942 respondents who indicated both their age and whether digital media use had become a large component of their involvement with the equine industry, 54.7% of respondents reported that it had (n = 2,701). Of those respondents, the majority were between the ages of 18 and 49 (n = 1,848, 68.42%). See Table 16 for a summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' age as it relates to digital media use becoming a large component of their involvement in the equine industry.

When evaluating mobile application preferences, respondents were asked if they would expect to use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application. Of the 4,463 respondents who indicated their age and whether they would use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application, 63.1% respondents reported that they would use the application (n = 2,815). Of those respondents, the majority were between the ages of 18 and 49 (n = 1,839, 65.33%). See Table 17 for data summarizing age as it relates to use of an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

Table 16
Digitally engaged AQHA members' age as it relates to digital media use becoming a large component of involvement in the equine industry

	Digital Media Use Has Become Large Component of Involvement in the Equine Industry	
Age	*f*	%
18-19	15	0.56
20-29	265	9.81
30-39	778	28.80
40-49	790	29.25
50-59	436	16.14
60-69	337	12.48
70-79	79	2.92
80-89	1	0.04

Table 17
Digitally engaged AQHA members' age as it relates to use of a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application

	Use a Newly Developed AQHA-Sponsored Mobile Application	
Age	*f*	%
18-19	12	0.43
20-29	244	8.67
30-39	742	26.36
40-49	841	29.88
50-59	499	17.73
60-69	379	13.46
70-79	98	3.48
80-89	0	0

Respondents were asked to indicate what they expected to pay for in a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application based on a list of topics provided. Topics included: AQHA news, rulebook, show schedule, trail ride schedule, pedigree and records research, horse trivia, none of the above, or other. These results were compared with respondents' age. As stated earlier in this chapter, most respondents reported that they expected to pay for pedigree and records

research. Of the 4,765 respondents who indicated their age and whether they would expect to pay for pedigree and records research, 48.8% reported that they would expect to pay for pedigree and records research (n = 2,326). Of those respondents, the majority were between the ages of 30 and 59 (n = 1,705, 73.30%). See Table 18 for a summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' age as it relates to topics they expect to pay for in a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

Findings based on education. As previously discussed in this chapter, the majority of respondents reported their highest level of education earned was at least one college degree. Of the 5,630 respondents who indicated their highest level of education earned and whether they owned a smart phone, 60.1% of respondents reported they owned a smart phone (n = 3,383). Of those respondents, 71.4% had at least some college (n = 2,416), with the most common degree being a bachelor's (n = 1,085, 32.1%). See Table 19 for a summary of digitally engaged members' education level as it relates to whether they own a smart phone.

Of the 4,894 respondents who indicated their highest level of education and whether they would potentially use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application, 62.2% of respondents reported that they would use the new application (n = 3,043). Of those respondents, more than 70% had at least some college (n = 2,143), with the most common degree being a bachelor's (n = 929, 30.53%). See Table 20 for a summary of digitally engaged members' education level as it relates to whether they would use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

Respondents' highest level of education earned and whether digital media use had become a large component of their involvement with the equine industry was compared. Of the 5,523 respondents who indicated both their education earned and whether digital media use had become a large component of their involvement in the equine industry, 54% respondents reported that digital media use had become a large component of their involvement in the equine industry (n = 2,981). Of those respondents, more than 68% had at least some college (n = 2,046).

Table 18

Digitally engaged AQHA members' age as it relates to topics they expect to pay for in a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application

	AQHA news (n = 353)		Rulebook (n = 582)		Show schedule (n = 330)		Trail ride schedule (n = 206)		Pedigree and records research (n = 2,326)		Horse Trivia (n = 225)		None of the Above (n = 2,194)		Other (n = 117)	
Age	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
18-19	1	0.28	4	0.69	2	0.61	0	0	10	0.43	0	0	23	1.05	2	1.71
20-29	27	7.65	74	12.71	34	10.30	24	11.65	251	10.79	26	11.56	324	14.77	19	16.24
30-39	113	32.01	175	30.07	102	30.91	69	33.50	689	29.62	71	31.56	742	33.82	38	32.48
40-49	95	26.91	150	25.77	82	24.85	50	24.27	631	27.13	56	24.89	643	29.31	29	24.79
50-59	48	13.60	85	14.60	43	13.03	33	16.02	385	16.55	29	12.89	261	11.90	13	11.11
60-69	52	14.73	66	11.34	46	13.94	23	11.17	280	12.04	31	13.78	166	7.57	13	11.11
70-79	17	4.82	27	4.64	21	6.36	7	3.40	80	3.44	12	5.33	35	1.60	3	2.56
80-89	0	0	1	0.17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 19
Digitally engaged AQHA members' education level as it relates to smart phone ownership

	Owns a Smart Phone (n = 3,383)		Does Not Own a Smart Phone (n = 2,247)	
Education	*f*	%	*f*	%
Did not complete high school	24	0.7	18	0.8
High school diploma	943	27.9	846	37.7
Associate's degree	676	20	490	21.8
Bachelor's degree	1,085	32.1	583	25.9
Master's degree	459	13.6	233	10.4
Doctoral degree	196	5.8	77	3.4

Table 20
Digitally engaged AQHA members' education level as it relates to use of a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application

	Use a Newly Developed AQHA-Sponsored Mobile Application	
Education	*f*	%
Did not complete high school	21	0.69
High school diploma	888	29.18
Associate's degree	636	20.90
Bachelor's degree	929	30.53
Master's degree	404	13.28
Doctoral degree	165	5.42

However, when educational levels are broken down, there were more respondents who indicated that they had earned only a high school diploma (n = 912, 30.59%). See Table 21 for a summary of data regarding digitally engaged AQHA members education earned and whether or not digital media use has become a large component of their involvement in the equine industry.

Findings based on income. As previously discussed in this chapter, the majority of respondents reported a total household income of $100,000 or more per year. Of the 5,551 respondents who reported both their annual household income and whether they owned a smart phone, 60.5% reported they owned a smart phone (n = 3,360). Of those respondents, the majority

reported that they earned $75,000 or more per year (n = 2,013, 59.9%). See Table 22 for a summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' total household income per year as it relates to smart phone ownership.

Table 21
Digitally engaged AQHA members' education level as it relates to digital media use becoming a large component of involvement in equine industry

	Digital Media Use Has Become a Large Component of Involvement in the Equine Industry	
Education	*f*	%
Did not complete high school	23	0.77
High school diploma	912	30.59
Associate's degree	634	21.27
Bachelor's degree	892	29.92
Master's degree	368	12.34
Doctoral degree	152	5.10

Table 22
Summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' total household income per year as it relates to smart phone ownership

	Owns a Smart Phone (n = 3,360)		Does Not Own a Smart Phone (n = 2,191)	
Household Income Per Year	*f*	%	*f*	%
Less than $25,000	141	4.2	178	8.1
$25,000-$49,999	523	15.6	519	23.7
$50,000-$74,999	683	20.3	640	29.2
$75,000-$99,999	720	21.4	407	18.6
$100,000 or more	1,293	38.5	447	20.4

Respondents were then asked to indicate their total household income per year. As described earlier in this chapter, the majority of respondents had a total household income of $100,000 or more per year. Respondents' choices about what they expect to pay for in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application were compared to their total household income per year. Of the 5,273 respondents who indicated their annual income and what they expected to pay for in an

AQHA-sponsored mobile application, 48.6% respondents indicated they would expect to pay for pedigree and records research (n = 2,561). Of those respondents, more than 33% earned $100,000 or more per year (n = 855). Only 132 respondents reported they would pay for a topic that was not listed. More than 31% of these respondents earned $100,000 or more per year. See Tables 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30 for a summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' total household income per year as it relates to topics they expect to pay for in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

Table 23
Summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' total household income per year as it relates to paying for AQHA news (n = 417)

	Pay for AQHA News	
Household Income Per Year	*f*	%
Less than $25,000	28	6.71
$25,000-$49,999	84	20.14
$50,000-$74,999	95	22.78
$75,000-$99,999	81	19.42
$100,000 or more	129	30.94

Table 24
Summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' total household income per year as it relates to paying for the rulebook (n = 671)

	Pay for the Rulebook	
Household Income Per Year	*f*	%
Less than $25,000	37	5.51
$25,000-$49,999	134	19.97
$50,000-$74,999	179	26.68
$75,000-$99,999	133	19.82
$100,000 or more	188	28.02

Table 25
Summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' total household income per year as it relates to paying for the show schedule (n = 391)

	Pay for the Show Schedule	
Household Income Per Year	*f*	%
Less than $25,000	29	7.42
$25,000-$49,999	81	20.72
$50,000-$74,999	87	22.25
$75,000-$99,999	70	17.90
$100,000 or more	124	31.71

Table 26
Summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' total household income per year as it relates to paying for the trail ride schedule (n = 242)

	Pay for the Trail Ride Schedule	
Household Income Per Year	*f*	%
Less than $25,000	10	4.13
$25,000-$49,999	46	19
$50,000-$74,999	57	23.55
$75,000-$99,999	45	18.60
$100,000 or more	84	34.71

Table 27
Summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' total household income per year as it relates to paying for pedigree and records research (n = 2,561)

	Pay for Pedigree and Records Research	
Household Income Per Year	*f*	%
Less than $25,000	133	5.19
$25,000-$49,999	474	18.51
$50,000-$74,999	591	23.08
$75,000-$99,999	508	19.84
$100,000 or more	855	33.39

Table 28
Summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' total household income per year as it relates to paying for horse trivia (n = 251)

	Pay for Horse Trivia	
Household Income Per Year	*f*	%
Less than $25,000	18	7.17
$25,000-$49,999	61	24.30
$50,000-$74,999	55	21.91
$75,000-$99,999	52	20.72
$100,000 or more	65	25.90

Table 29
Summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' total household income per year as it relates to paying for none of the above (n = 2,420)

	Pay for None of the Above	
Household Income Per Year	*f*	%
Less than $25,000	149	6.16
$25,000-$49,999	452	18.68
$50,000-$74,999	597	24.67
$75,000-$99,999	497	20.54
$100,000 or more	725	29.96

Table 30
Summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' total household income per year as it relates to paying for a topic not listed (n = 132)

	Pay for Topic Not Listed	
Household Income Per Year	*f*	%
Less than $25,000	10	7.58
$25,000-$49,999	28	21.21
$50,000-$74,999	23	17.42
$75,000-$99,999	29	21.97
$100,000 or more	42	31.82

Findings based on membership type.

As previously discussed in this chapter, the majority of respondents reported they held a general membership with AQHA. Of the 5,370 respondents who reported both their AQHA

membership type and what topics they would expect to pay for in a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application, most reported they would expect to pay for pedigree and records research (n = 2,599, 48.4%). Of those respondents, 66.8% held a general membership type with AQHA. Of the 2,472 respondents who reported they expected to pay for none of the topics listed, 67.7% reported they held a general membership with AQHA. See Table 31 for a summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' AQHA membership type as it relates to topics they expect to pay for in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

Table 31

Digitally engaged AQHA members' AQHA membership type as it relates to topics they expect to pay for in a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application

	AQHA news (n = 421)		Rulebook (n = 677)		Show schedule (n = 393)		Trail ride schedule (n = 244)		Pedigree and records research (n = 2,599)		Horse Trivia (n = 255)		None of the Above (n = 2,472)		Other (n = 138)	
Membership Type	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
General	287	68.2	496	73.3	266	67.7	203	83.2	1,736	66.8	189	74.1	1,674	67.7	92	66.7
Amateur	134	31.8	181	26.7	127	32.3	41	16.8	863	33.2	66	25.9	798	32.3	46	33.3

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, & IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will interpret the findings listed in Chapter IV, based on the responses of the typical respondent. Additionally, it will provide conclusions and discussion, by objective. Furthermore, recommendations for AQHA as it develops a potential new mobile application, and future study recommendations are provided based on the findings related to the study's four objectives.

Statement of the Problem

In today's equine industry, the American Quarter Horse Association is challenged with meeting members' preferences for types of industry information received and assessing the importance of electronic communication entities to its digitally engaged membership. AQHA has expressed the need to better understand how digitally engaged members would like to receive information, especially as it relates to mobile applications; however, there is a dearth of information related to the information preferences and needs of those in the equine industry.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to assess AQHA members' preferences for obtaining equine industry information via digital media and give AQHA more knowledge about its digitally engaged membership, especially as it relates to identifying members' needs and suggested improvements for a potential expansion of the organization's mobile application.

Objectives

The following research objectives were developed to guide this study:

1. Describe the personal and professional demographics (age, gender, race, education, location, membership type, total household income, and primary means of household income) of AQHA members who are digitally engaged.
2. Describe digital media use of digitally engaged AQHA members by analyzing their ownership of a smart phone, preferred sources of information, current use of social media tools, and opinion of reliability of sources of information.
3. Assess the mobile application preferences of digitally engaged AQHA members as it relates to the development of a new AQHA sponsored application.
4. Determine how the demographics of digitally engaged AQHA members relate to their mobile application preferences and digital media use.

Conclusions & Discussion

Objective 1

Objective one was designed to describe the personal and professional demographics of digitally engaged AQHA members. As previously discussed, members were asked their age, gender, race, education, location, membership type, total household income, whether their primary means of household income was derived from the equine industry, and ownership of a smart phone.

The typical respondent of this population is 42.5 years old, female, white, and holds a general membership with AQHA. Most respondents earned at least a high school education, with many obtaining at least one college degree. Although respondents were widespread across the United States in regard to state of residency, the typical respondent resides in the Southern region of the United States, specifically, the state of Texas. This finding agrees with the research conducted by the American Horse Council relating to horse owners' state of residency. Texas,

along with the other top five states of residency from this study were included in the American Horse Council's top 15 states affecting the U.S. economy (National economic impact, n.d.).

The typical respondent for this study earns a total household income of $100,000 or more per year and does not rely on their involvement with the equine industry for their primary means of household income. When comparing this finding to research conducted by Deloitte Consulting LLP for the American Horse Council, the two are contradicting. The American Horse Council's research stated the majority "of horse owners have a household income of less than $50,000" (National economic impact, n.d., para. 17). It is important to note that the American Horse Council's study did not research quarter horse owners specifically.

According to Elbert and Alston (2005), "the digital divide has become more pronounced across racial, ethnic, economic, and geographic lines over the past decade as technology continues to advance" (para. 21). In contrast, research by Nguyen and Western (2007) indicated that socioeconomic factors have decreased in importance when considering the digital divide. These findings are kept in mind when discussing the next three objectives.

Objective 2

Objective two was developed to analyze the digital media use of digitally engaged AQHA members. Smart phone usage; location for accessing the Internet; technology used to access the Internet; time spent accessing mobile applications; preferred sources of information; reliability of source information; current use of social media tools; how digital media use has affected their involvement with the equine industry and AQHA were all identified and evaluated.

The typical respondent for this study owns a smart phone. This finding is supported by research conducted by Ho and Syu (2010) stating that smart phone usage has increased by more than "78% in 2010 and has gradually become the mainstream in the mobile phone market" (p. 315). Of the respondents, the typical respondent accesses the Internet several times a day from their home. When accessing the Internet, the most common technology used by the typical

respondent is broadband Internet (DSL, cable). In conclusion, the typical respondent accesses the Internet several times a day, from home, via broadband technology.

The typical respondent for this study accesses mobile applications anywhere from 1-15 minutes a day. According to Kinsman (2012), "12% of farmers and ranchers are using mobile applications" (para. 3). Additionally, Kinsman stated that "25% of farmers and ranchers expect mobile applications to grow in importance over the next three to four years" (para. 6). Even though the typical respondent for this study may not be a farmer or a rancher, there is the possibility that they could be since they are included in the agricultural industry. This finding leads to the conclusion that the typical respondent for this study, who owns a smart phone, is most likely accessing mobile applications. With that in mind, not only would the typical respondent for this study have the capability to access mobile applications, but the typical respondent for this study would also access mobile applications on a daily basis. For those respondents who do not access mobile applications, most do not because they do not own a smart phone. Research by Smith (2012) shows that most people, who do not own a smart phone choose not to do so because of financial reasons.

When accessing different sources for equine industry information and AQHA news, the typical respondent for this study reported they rely on information from AQHA and online media that is not connected with AQHA. Additionally, the typical respondent reported they consider AQHA to be the most trustworthy source of information for equine industry information and AQHA news. It is important to note that respondents were not provided with a predetermined list of sources. Rather, they were given blank fields and asked to provide the specific names of sources they accessed for equine industry information and AQHA news. A variety of different methods of interaction with AQHA and online media were reported; however, this finding leads to the conclusion that not only is the online media providing access to equine industry information, but it is also providing news related to AQHA. Additionally, this finding leads to the conclusion that not only is AQHA the preferred source for providing news related to the

organization, but it is also providing information relating to the equine industry as a whole and has gained the trust of the typical respondent of this study.

Findings related to source preferences for information contradict the research conducted by Martinson et al. (2006) stating that most horse owners receive information "from other horse owners, veterinarians, trainers, and farriers;" however, it supports the statement that horse owners receive information from "equine magazines" (p. 1). When considering the uses and gratifications theory, these findings are supported by the notion that individuals seek out different sources of media in order to meet their specific needs (Carrier, 2004).

Digital media use has become a large component of the typical respondent's involvement with the equine industry. In response to receiving equine industry information, the typical respondent for this study has learned or discovered something new about the equine industry. This finding leads to the conclusion that digital media use is affecting respondents' involvement with the equine industry and has allowed them to learn new things about the products and/or services within it. This finding also relates to the discussion by Carrier (2004) that states consumers view media messages for different reasons; therefore, they can interpret information differently than others who receive the same information.

Of the time spent accessing social media platforms, the typical respondent for this study accesses Facebook the most when compared to Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and others not listed. The use of social media by the typical respondent of this study is supported by research conducted by Smith (2009) indicating that global society is saturated with social media use. Smith also encourages organizations to reach out to their prospective audience to build better relationships and to let the audience know that they are being heard.

In regard to whether respondents access equine industry information versus all other types, the typical respondent for this study accesses social media platforms the most for information not related to the equine industry. In other words, the typical respondent spends a minimal amount of time accessing social media platforms for equine industry information.

Additionally, the typical respondent for this study tends to take a neutral position when ranking their level of agreement of whether AQHA does a good job using Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. The typical respondent also takes a neutral position when ranking their level of agreement in regard to digital media tools making them feel more connected to AQHA and fellow AQHA members.

These findings lead to the conclusion that social media platforms may not be the best use of AQHA resources as an avenue to pursue when attempting to reach and inform the typical respondent for this study about the equine industry. This study found that neither does the typical respondent use social media for equine industry informational purposes, nor does the typical respondent feel more connected to the group through its use of social media.

Objective 3

Objective three was directly related to a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application. Digitally engaged members were asked whether they would use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application, and to rank their level of agreement that certain topics should be included in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application. Respondents were also asked to indicate what they would potentially expect to pay for in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application and where they would potentially prefer to access an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

Research conducted by Ho and Syu (2010), indicated that "the proportion of mobile application users is increasing, and categories within mobile applications are becoming more diverse" (p. 317). If an AQHA-sponsored mobile application was developed, the typical respondent for this study reported that they would use it. Additionally, when asked to indicate their level of agreement with potential topics that could appear in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application, the typical respondent for this study most strongly ranked "AQHA news." The typical respondent for this study ranked horse trivia as the least desirable potential topic to be included in the mobile application.

The typical respondent for this study expects to pay for pedigree and records research in a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application. Even so, there are many respondents who reported that they believed the mobile application should be provided for free. Additionally, the typical respondent for this study reported that they "strongly prefer" to access an AQHA-sponsored mobile application from home. Accessing an AQHA-sponsored mobile application while on horseback is "strongly unpreferred" by the typical respondent of this study. Considering the conclusion that the typical respondent for this study accesses the Internet at home via broadband technology, the newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application may need to contain information that is not easily accessible via the Internet. For instance, if the mobile application is a copy of the original website, the typical respondent for this study may not pay for a mobile application that includes information provided online for free.

Objective 4

Objective four sought to define how the demographics of digitally engaged AQHA members relate to their digital media use and mobile application preferences. Select demographics were chosen and compared to various digital media use and mobile application preference questions.

Respondent age. Research conducted by Guenthner and Swan (2011) indicated that younger members of the agricultural community use electronic technology more often than those who are older. This research contradicts the findings of this study based on age.

When comparing age and smart phone usage, it was concluded that the typical respondent for this study who owns a smart phone is between the ages of 18 and 49, with most reporting their age as being between 40 and 49. Smith (2012) found that younger age groups tend to not own smart phones because of cost, and those who are older tend to not own a smart phone because of their "lack of need or interest, or challenges with using a more advanced device" (p. 13). Additionally, the typical respondent who reported they would use a newly developed AQHA-

sponsored mobile application is between the ages of 18 and 49, with most reporting their age as being between 40 and 49.

Furthermore, respondents' age and whether digital media use had become a large component of respondents' involvement in the equine industry were compared, as well as age and topics expected to pay for in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application. Findings conclude that the typical respondent for this study between the ages of 40 and 49, owns a smart phone, and would use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application. They also conclude that the typical respondent believes digital media use has become a large component of their involvement in the equine industry and expects to pay for pedigree and records research in a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

Respondent education. The typical respondent for this study who reported they would use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application has at least some college; however, when educational levels are broken down by: did not complete high school; high school diploma; associate's degree; bachelor's degree; master's degree; and doctoral degree, there were more respondents who indicated they had earned a bachelor's degree specifically.

When comparing highest level of education earned and smart phone ownership, the typical respondent who owns a smart phone, has at least some college. A bachelor's degree is the most common degree earned for the typical respondent who owns a smart phone.

In regard to digital media use, the typical respondent for this study who reported that digital media use had become a large component of their involvement in the equine industry, has completed some college; however, when educational levels are broken down by: did not complete high school; high school diploma; associate's degree; bachelor's degree; master's degree; and doctoral degree, there were more respondents who indicated that they had earned only a high school diploma.

These findings lead to the conclusion that level of education earned may be dependent upon smart phone ownership and the use of a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile

application; however, it is not dependent upon digital media use affecting involvement in the equine industry. According to research conducted by Gloy et al. (2000), when considering source preferences of information, education is unimportant. However, education earned could affect skill level and understanding of digital media and mobile applications. This conclusion somewhat contradicts the research conducted by Rogers (2001) relating to the digital divide and knowledge gap hypothesis, as respondents of all levels of education report that digital media use is a large component of their involvement with the equine industry.

Respondent income. When comparing total household income per year and smart phone ownership, the typical respondent earns $75,000 or more per year and owns a smart phone. Additionally, the typical respondent for this study has a total household income of $75,000 or more per year and expects to pay for pedigree and records research that could potentially be included in a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application. However, respondents could indicate topics they would expect to pay for, but also that they would prefer not to pay for anything. With that in mind, more than 40% of respondents indicated they would expect to pay for "none of the above." Additionally, respondents who marked a topic they would expect to pay for tended to earn more than $100,000 per year. These findings lead to the conclusion that even though the typical respondent could afford to pay for topics that may be included in a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application, there are also a large number of them who prefer to have access to the mobile application for free.

Respondent membership type. As previously discussed, findings based on membership conclude that the typical respondent holds a general membership with AQHA. Also, the typical respondent expects to pay for pedigree and records research in a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application. When the two are compared, findings confirm the conclusion that the typical respondent is a general membership holder with AQHA and expects to pay for pedigree and records research in a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

Recommendations for AQHA Practice

When considering recommendations for AQHA, the conclusions based on income of the typical respondent indicate that the typical respondent may not have the ability to support their household on funds derived from the equine industry alone. With that in mind, if AQHA were to develop a new mobile application, the typical respondent for this study would most likely use it for leisure purposes instead of work-related purposes.

Conclusions based on the typical respondent's digital media use indicate that the typical respondent will have the ability to access a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application. Additionally, the typical respondent for this study would also access mobile applications on a daily basis. These conclusions tell AQHA that the typical respondent for this study will have the technology and ability to use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application. This information brings greater awareness of the likelihood of a typical respondent using an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.

Since all education levels were present among the respondents of the study, AQHA should take into consideration education level when developing a new mobile application. The new AQHA-sponsored mobile application should be one that all education levels are likely to use.

Since the typical respondent for this study learns about the equine industry through their use of digital media, it is recommended that if AQHA develops a new mobile application, it consider integrating educational components into the mobile application. This will allow viewers to use the mobile application as an educational tool and expand their knowledge of the equine industry via mobile application.

This study found that the typical respondent is neutral in their opinion of AQHA's social media use. Additionally, neither does the typical respondent use social media for equine industry informational purposes, nor does the typical respondent feel more connected to the group through its use of social media. These findings lead to the conclusion that social media platforms may not

be the best use of AQHA resources as an avenue to pursue when attempting to reach and inform the typical respondent for this study about the equine industry. Therefore, a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application may be a better educational and informational tool through which to reach AQHA members.

The typical respondent for this study reported that they would use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application and they would expect to see AQHA news provided within it. When considering a new mobile application, AQHA should take into consideration that the typical respondent will use the new mobile application and AQHA should provide AQHA news within it.

In regard to topics to pay for in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application, the typical respondent expects to pay for pedigree and records research; however, many respondents expect to pay for nothing at all. Conclusions from these findings indicate that if AQHA develops a new mobile application and intends on providing it for a fee, it should strongly consider allowing its audience to access pedigree and records research as part of the cost. Additionally, considering the conclusion that the typical respondent for this study accesses the Internet at home via broadband technology, the newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application may need to contain information that is not easily accessible via the Internet.

Results from this study indicate that the typical respondent is middle-aged. With that said, AQHA should take into consideration the age of the typical respondent for this study when designing a new AQHA-sponsored mobile application and tailor it to appeal to a more mature audience.

To conclude recommendations for AQHA, the typical respondent's membership type should be taken into consideration. The typical respondent is a general membership holder within AQHA. If AQHA develops a new mobile application, it should consider developing one that will appeal to their general membership base.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides several recommendations for further research. In regard to working with organizations for industry-related research, it is recommended that studies be conducted by the primary researcher. By allowing items, such as the research instrument, to be distributed by the organization (s) involved in the research, there is more room for error. To alleviate some of the unnecessary errors that may occur, it would be best to allow all items to be distributed by the primary researcher.

Based on the findings and conclusions, more research should be conducted to better understand and describe the demographics of the individuals within the equine industry. A lot of research is available on the horse population in general, but minimal information is available related to the horse owners and horse enthusiasts that make up the quarter horse industry. Occupation, as well as why their primary means of household income is not derived from the equine industry are example topics that should be researched.

In relation to digital media use, more research should be conducted on the use of smart phones by horse owners and horse enthusiasts. For this study, mobile applications were discussed; however, a smart phone has many capabilities. It would be beneficial to find out what horse owners and horse enthusiasts use their smart phones for, and if they use them more for one task versus another. Additionally, more research should be conducted on the uses of mobile applications by horse owners and equine enthusiasts.

Research on social media use could be expanded to include those who are horse owners and equine enthusiasts. This would allow for a better understanding of a new rapidly growing communication technology. Additional research should be conducted on AQHA's social media use. Findings from the study concluded that the typical respondent does not have an opinion about AQHA's social media use. Research in this area could help discover why, and allow AQHA to make improvements where necessary.

Further research should be conducted on the informational needs of horse owners and equine enthusiasts. This research would allow for a better understanding of needs of individuals within the industry and equip industry professionals with the knowledge needed to meet those needs. Also, further research should be conducted on the specific source preferences of those involved within the equine industry. For this study, respondents were not provided with a predetermined list of sources they access for equine industry information and AQHA news. In the future, more research on the specific categories derived from this study could be beneficial. This would allow industry professionals to better understand how equine enthusiasts receive information.

Implications

As discussed previously, Ho and Syu (2010) have found that "mobile communication provides human beings with more diversified information application forms" (p. 315). Mobile applications are included in the mobile communications that allow individuals to receive information in a variety of ways. This study has confirmed that individuals rely on many different sources for information and expect a variety of information to be provided from them.

This study's focus on technology use and information preferences of digitally engaged AQHA members allows AQHA, as well as other agricultural communicators and industry organizations, to better understand the informational preferences and needs of horse owners and equine enthusiasts. Not only that, but it explores an area of communication technology, mobile applications, that has not been heavily researched and provides insight into future developments and improvements that may take place.

The uses and gratifications theory's relevance throughout this study remains strong, as understanding the technology use and information preferences of digitally engaged AQHA members has the potential to influence the behavior of individuals within the industry, as they are presented with other avenues of media interaction (Leung & Weis, 2000). As new forms of

communication technologies grow and develop, this study provides insight into changes and improvements of these technologies within the equine industry.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Approval of Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Thursday, August 02, 2012
IRB Application No	AG1237
Proposal Title:	Mobile Application Preferences of Digitally Engaged AQHA Members
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 8/1/2013

Principal Investigator(s):

Jessie Turk
448 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

Angel Riggs
446 Ag Hall
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.

[X] 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 of one calendar year. 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 this 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 Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Shelia H. Kennison

Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date	Tuesday, November 27, 2012	Protocol Expires:	8/1/2013
IRB Application	AG1237		
Proposal Title:	Mobile Application Preferences of Digitally Engaged AQHA Members		
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt **Modification**		

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) **Approved**

Principal Investigator(s) :

Jessie Turk
448 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

Angel Riggs
440 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

The requested modification to this IRB protocol has been approved. Please note that the original expiration date of the protocol has not changed. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. All approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB

☒ 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.

Signature :

Shelia M. Kennison

Shelia Kennison, Chair, OSU Institutional Review Board

Tuesday, November 27, 2012
Date

Appendix B

Instrument

Mobile application preferences of digitally engaged AQHA members

Directions: Please read the information below. This information is intended to provide you with a summary of this research study, what is expected of you as a participant and your rights as a participant. After you have read all of the instructions, you will be given the opportunity to verify your age and give your consent. If you have any questions, please email your questions to jessie.turk@okstate.edu. Thank you for your time!

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to assess American Quarter Horse Association members' preferences for obtaining industry information via digital media. It will also give AQHA more knowledge about its digitally engaged membership, as well as identify members' needs and suggested improvements for a potential expansion of the organization's mobile application. This information will allow AQHA to better meet the needs of its members.

Risks of Participation: This research study does not involve risks that are associated with stress, psychological, social or physical risk.

Benefits of Participation: By participating in this study, you have the opportunity to voice your preferences for receiving equine industry information. This will allow AQHA to become more knowledgeable about its digitally engaged membership, as well as identify members' needs and suggested improvements for a potential expansion of the organization's mobile application.

Confidentiality: Your responses are voluntary and will be treated confidentially. Responses to this survey will be stored online in a password-protected account until the survey is closed and then will be stored in a password-protected spreadsheet on the researcher's computer.

Compensation: If you decide to participate in this study, you will be entered to win a pair of Justin boots from the popular AQHA Lifestyle Collection. The cognac full-quill ostrich boots are hand-crafted in the United States and have a retail value of approximately $240.

Contacts: If you have any questions about this study, please email Jessie Turk at jessie.turk@okstate.edu or Dr. Angel Riggs at angel.riggs@okstate.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078; 405-744-3377; or irb@okstate.edu.

Participant Rights: If you choose not to participate in this study, there will be no penalty. **Your participation in this study is voluntary.**

By checking the box below, you are agreeing that you have read the above information, are above the age of 18 and giving your consent to participate in this study.

☐

What year were you born?

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What race best describes you?

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Hispanic/Latino

Choose the highest level of education you have earned:

- Did not complete high school
- High school diploma
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree

In which state do you currently reside?

What is your total household income per year?

- Less than $25,000
- $25,000-$49,999
- $50,000-$74,999
- $75,000-$99,999
- $100,000 or more

Is your primary means of household income derived from your involvement within the equine industry?

- Yes
- No

What type of AQHA membership do you currently hold?

- General
- Amateur

Please keep the following definitions in mind for the next set of questions:

Digital Media - sound, pictures, text and video available in digital format for downloading or streaming across the Internet or other network.

Smart Phone - a cell phone that includes additional software functions (such as e-mail or an Internet browser).

Mobile Application - a software application, or "app", that runs in a handheld device such as a smart phone (excludes e-mail and web browser).

Trustworthy - able to be relied on as honest or truthful.

Do you own a smart phone?

- Yes
- No

Where do you access the Internet? Please check all that apply.

- [ ] Home
- [ ] Office/place of employment
- [ ] Equine-related shows or events
- [ ] While on horseback
- [ ] Local library or wi-fi hot spot

How often do you use the Internet?

- ○ Several times a day
- ○ Once a day
- ○ A few times a week
- ○ A few times a month
- ○ Less than once a month

What technology do you use to access the Internet the most?

- ○ Dial-Up
- ○ Broadband (DSL, Cable)
- ○ Mobile phone
- ○ Satellite

How many minutes a day do you use mobile applications? (Remember, this does not include email or web browsing).

- 0
- 1-15
- 16-30
- 31-45
- 46-60
- More than 60

Answer if *How many minutes a day do you use mobile applications?* "0" minutes is selected.

If you do not use mobile applications, please tell us why.

- I do not own a smart phone
- I prefer to use a web browser
- Other Reason

List up to 5 sources you would access for equine industry information. Please provide the names of specific sources you use.

Source 1	
Source 2	
Source 3	
Source 4	
Source 5	

What source for equine industry information do you consider most trustworthy? Please provide the name of the specific source.

List up to 5 sources you would access for AQHA news. Please provide the names of specific sources you use.

Source 1	
Source 2	
Source 3	
Source 4	
Source 5	

What source for AQHA news do you consider most trustworthy? Please provide the name of the specific source.

What action have you taken in response to receiving equine industry information? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ I learned something new about the industry and/or discovered a new product or service.
- ☐ I gathered more information.
- ☐ I made note of the information for use as a reference.
- ☐ I recommended or purchased a product or service presented.
- ☐ I sought out a digital media source.
- ☐ I took no action.

Has digital media use become a large component of your involvement with the equine industry?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Of the time you spend on each platform listed below, please estimate the percentage of time you spend accessing equine industry information versus all other types of information. The total for each platform should equal 100%. If you do not use a platform, please type "0" in the related boxes.

	Not Equine Industry Info	Equine Industry Info	Total
Facebook	0 %	0 %	%
Twitter	0 %	0 %	%
Pinterest	0 %	0 %	%
LinkedIn	0 %	0 %	%
Other (Please list)	0 %	0 %	%

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
AQHA does a good job using Facebook.	○	○	○	○	○
AQHA does a good job using Twitter.	○	○	○	○	○
AQHA does a good job using Pinterest.	○	○	○	○	○
AQHA does a good job using LinkedIn.	○	○	○	○	○

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Social media tools make me feel more connected with AQHA.	○	○	○	○	○
Social media tools make me feel more connected with fellow AQHA members.	○		○	○	○
An AQHA mobile application would make me feel more connected to AQHA.	○	○	○	○	○
An AQHA mobile application would make me feel more connected to fellow AQHA members.	○	○	○	○	○

Would you use a newly developed AQHA-sponsored mobile application?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
AQHA news should be included in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.	○	○	○	○	○
The AQHA rulebook should be included in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.	○	○	○	○	○
The AQHA show schedules should be included in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.	○	○	○	○	○
The AQHA trail ride schedules should be included in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.	○	○	○	○	○
AQHA pedigree and records research should be included in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.	○	○	○	○	○
AQHA horse trivia should be included in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application.	○	○	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○	○	○

Of the following topics to be included in an AQHA-sponsored mobile application, which ones would you expect to pay for? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ AQHA news
- ☐ Rulebook
- ☐ Show schedule
- ☐ Trail ride schedule
- ☐ Pedigree and records research
- ☐ Horse trivia
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other

Regardless of the technology used to access an AQHA-sponsored mobile application, please rank the following places where you would access the application from strongly unpreferred to strongly preferred.

	Strongly Unpreferred	Unpreferred	Neutral	Preferred	Strongly Preferred
Home	○	○	○	○	○
Office/place of employment	○	○	○	○	○
Equine-related shows or events	○	○	○	○	○
While on horseback	○	○	○	○	○
While traveling	○	○	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○	○	○

Thank you for responding to this survey. Please click here to enter your contact information for a chance to win a pair of Justin boots from the popular AQHA Lifestyle Collection. The cognac full-quill ostrich boots are hand-crafted in the United States and have a retail value of approximately $240. The winner will be notified by October 12, 2012.

Please enter your contact information for a chance to win a pair of Justin boots.

Name	
Address	
Address 2	
City	
State	
Postal Code	
Phone	
Email	

Appendix C

Panel of Experts

Steven Cooper, Ph.D.
Professor and Horse Judging Team Coach
Department of Animal Science
Oklahoma State University

David Freeman, Ph.D.
Professor and Extension Equine Specialist
Department of Animal Science
Oklahoma State University

Emily Rhoades, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership
The Ohio State University

Tanner Robertson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Agricultural Sciences
West Texas A&M University

Appendix D

Initial Email

To: Digitally Engaged AQHA Members
Subject: Help AQHA and Be Entered for a Chance to Win a Pair of Justin Boots!

Dear AQHA Member,

As a digitally engaged member of the American Quarter Horse Association, you have the opportunity to voice your preferences for receiving equine industry information. This will allow AQHA to become more knowledgeable about its digitally engaged membership, as well as identify members' needs and suggested improvements for a potential expansion of the organization's mobile application.

You must be 18 or older to participate in this study. Participants who complete the questionnaire will be entered to win a pair of Justin boots from the popular AQHA Lifestyle Collection. The cognac full-quill ostrich boots are hand-crafted in the United States and have a retail value of approximately $240.

This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You will be able to access the survey one time from your computer. If you are not able to access the online survey, please email me at jessie.turk@okstate.edu.

To access the online survey, please use your Internet browser and go to:

[Survey Link]

Your immediate response is greatly appreciated. Your responses are voluntary and will be treated confidentially.

You may choose at any time to withdraw from the study without penalty. If you have any questions about this study, please email Jessie Turk at jessie.turk@okstate.edu or Dr. Angel Riggs at angel.riggs@okstate.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078; 405-744-3377; or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,

Jessie C. Turk
Graduate Student
Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership
Oklahoma State University

Appendix E

Reminder Email #1

To: Digitally Engaged AQHA Members
Subject: Help AQHA and Be Entered for a Chance to Win a Pair of Justin Boots!

Dear AQHA Member,

You are receiving this email as a reminder that it's not too late to complete this survey and be entered to win a pair of Justin boots! Last week I sent you the following message:

As a digitally engaged member of the American Quarter Horse Association, you have the opportunity to voice your preferences for receiving equine industry information. This will allow AQHA to become more knowledgeable about its digitally engaged membership, as well as identify members' needs and suggested improvements for a potential expansion of the organization's mobile application.

If you have already completed the survey, thank you! Your participation is greatly appreciated!

You must be 18 or older to participate in this study. Participants who complete the questionnaire will be entered to win a pair of Justin boots from the popular AQHA Lifestyle Collection. The cognac full-quill ostrich boots are hand-crafted in the United States and have a retail value of approximately $240.

This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You will be able to access the survey one time from your computer. If you are not able to access the online survey, please email me at jessie.turk@okstate.edu.

To access the online survey, please use your Internet browser and go to:

[Survey Link]

Sincerely,

Jessie C. Turk
Graduate Student
Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership
Oklahoma State University

Appendix F

Reminder Email #2

To: Digitally Engaged AQHA Members
Subject: Help AQHA and Be Entered for a Chance to Win a Pair of Justin Boots!

Dear AQHA Member,

This is the ***final*** reminder to complete this survey and be entered to win a pair of Justin boots! Two weeks ago I sent you the following message:

As a digitally engaged member of the American Quarter Horse Association, you have the opportunity to voice your preferences for receiving equine industry information. This will allow AQHA to become more knowledgeable about its digitally engaged membership, as well as identify members' needs and suggested improvements for a potential expansion of the organization's mobile application.

If you have already completed the survey, thank you! Your participation is greatly appreciated!

You must be 18 or older to participate in this study. Participants who complete the questionnaire will be entered to win a pair of Justin boots from the popular AQHA Lifestyle Collection. The cognac full-quill ostrich boots are hand-crafted in the United States and have a retail value of approximately $240.

This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You will be able to access the survey one time from your computer. If you are not able to access the online survey, please email me at jessie.turk@okstate.edu.

To access the online survey, please use your Internet browser and go to:

[Survey Link]

Sincerely,

Jessie C. Turk
Graduate Student
Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership
Oklahoma State University

Appendix G

Follow-Up Email

To: Digitally Engaged AQHA Members
Subject: AQHA still needs your help!

Dear AQHA Member,

As a digitally engaged member of the American Quarter Horse Association, you have the opportunity to voice your preferences for receiving equine industry information. Many of you may have filled out this survey in August or September. If you did, thank you for your response! If you did not have a chance to do so, please consider filling it out now.

This study will allow AQHA to become more knowledgeable about its digitally engaged membership, as well as identify members' needs and suggested improvements for a potential expansion of the organization's mobile application.

You must be 18 or older to participate in this study.

This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You will be able to access the survey one time from your computer. If you are not able to access the online survey, please email me at jessie.turk@okstate.edu.

To access the online survey, please use your Internet browser and go to:

[Survey Link]

Your immediate response is greatly appreciated. Your responses are voluntary and will be treated confidentially.

You may choose at any time to withdraw from the study without penalty. If you have any questions about this study, please email Jessie Turk at jessie.turk@okstate.edu or Dr. Angel Riggs at angel.riggs@okstate.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078; 405-744-3377; or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,

Jessie C. Turk
Graduate Student
Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership
Oklahoma State University

Appendix H

Summary of digitally engaged AQHA members' personal and professional demographics

State of Residency	*f*	%
Alabama	84	1.5
Alaska	10	0.2
Arizona	133	2.4
Arkansas	83	1.5
California	369	6.5
Colorado	229	4.0
Connecticut	35	0.6
Delaware	6	0.1
D.C.	1	0.0
Florida	164	2.9
Georgia	81	1.4
Hawaii	15	0.3
Idaho	88	1.5
Illinois	149	2.6
Indiana	148	2.6
Iowa	121	2.1
Kansas	136	2.4
Kentucky	94	1.7
Louisiana	75	1.3
Maine	20	0.4
Maryland	43	0.8
Massachusetts	23	0.4
Michigan	175	2.8
Minnesota	162	2.9

Mississippi	61	1.1
Missouri	180	3.2
Montana	89	1.6
Nebraska	119	2.1
Nevada	45	0.8
New Hampshire	14	0.2
New Jersey	32	0.6
New Mexico	84	1.5
New York	105	1.9
North Carolina	142	2.5
North Dakota	52	0.9
Ohio	242	4.3
Oklahoma	272	4.8
Oregon	120	2.1
Pennsylvania	148	2.6
Rhode Island	4	0.1
South Carolina	47	0.8
South Dakota	68	1.2
Tennessee	100	1.8
Texas	748	13.2
Utah	84	1.5
Vermont	16	0.3
Virginia	60	1.1
Washington	158	2.8
West Virginia	31	0.5
Wisconsin	129	2.3

Wyoming	67	1.2
I do not reside in the United States	5	0.1

VITA

Jessie C. Turk

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: TECHNOLOGY USE AND INFORMATION PREFERENCES OF DIGITALLY ENGAGED AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Biographical:

Education:

Graduated from East Hall High School, Gainesville, Georgia in May 2006.

Received Bachelor of Science in Agriculture at University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia in May, 2010.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree in Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2012.

Experience:

Worked as a public relations and sales associate at Stillwater Armory from April 2012 – present.

Employed as a graduate teaching assistant with the department of Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership at Oklahoma State University from August 2011 – December 2012.

Served as the student editor for the *Journal of Applied Communications* from January 2012 – December 2012.

Employed as a customer service representative with Igenity, owned by Merial Limited, from August 2010 – August 2011.

Completed a customer service representative internship with Igenity, owned by Merial Limited, from May 2009 – August 2009.

Worked as a student employee with the Whitehall Beef & Sheep Unit at University of Georgia from August 2008 – May 2010.