Building Collaboration within the Quarter Horse Community:

The obstacles and hurdles

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ABSTRACT

The following study investigates how to increase collaboration within the Quarter Horse community through Twitter. Twitter is increasingly one of the top social media tools for many organizations, including organizations within the Quarter Horse community. Twitter is an important tool in creating a dialogue between community members, and the organizations to which they are members. Research shows, “Users believe that using Twitter can improve their performance or their ability to achieve specific goals and, thus, they are more extrinsically motivated to continue to use it” (Agrifoglio, Black, Ferrara & Metallo, 2012, p. 38). That being said, it is important that research into Twitter usage be conducted, and that the most effective practices be understood.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the problem

This study focuses on the aspects of social media surrounding Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community, including social media preference, willingness to adopt, continued use and measurement of success. Over the past year, Twitter has become the place for sharing of opinions and ideas within many social groups, but this does not seem to be true of the Quarter Horse community. “Social media has provided us a world with no boundaries and has allowed small companies to dream of having a global reach. But, along with these challenges—chief among them is navigating the tricky terrain of communication and social differences in diverse geographies” (Grensing-Pophal, 2012, p. 21).

The surge of social media through various outlets has led many organizations to evaluate each outlet’s effectiveness within the organization. The Quarter Horse industry would benefit from increased Twitter use as a two-way collaborative relationship between its various publics.

Background of the Problem

The existing literature regarding Twitter usage in the Quarter Horse community is non-existent. Therefore, it is important to look at the broader context of the issue. The existing literature talks about the overall use of Twitter and the preferences surrounding the adoption of the platform. Preferences between Facebook and Twitter seem to be at the
heart of the issue. The use of Twitter allows users to interact without face-to-face communication, allowing for a faster, more convenient way of communicating.

Agrifoglio, et al. (2012) argued that, “face-to-face interaction is being increasingly replaced by e-mail, texting, blogging and the use of mobile devices, and phones, allowing people to communicate without spatial and time limits. Online social networks and microblogging are becoming widely used by individuals and organizations” (p. 33).

With the surge in online social networks, organizations within the Quarter Horse community have inevitably joined in the online interaction. However, the community has not seen the response that many other organizations have seen. In order for Quarter Horse organizations to reap the full benefits of a Twitter campaign, it is important to conduct research on the trends in Twitter usage within the community to better understand member preferences. This will be done by collecting expert opinions by leaders in the industries of online and interactive communications, online editing and equine journalism.

**Purpose of the Study**

Current trends in social media suggest that the influx of smart phones and other mobile devices are causing a massive increase in the use of social media platforms. Twitter allows an on-the-go approach to sharing information that enables its users to feel connected when they cannot be near a computer. This fact, no doubt, makes Twitter more enticing to users. But even with the mobile usage on their side, Quarter Horse industry leaders find members reluctant to make the switch from Facebook to Twitter.
Quarter Horse industry leaders promote collaboration between themselves and the public through the use of social media. Although attempts have been made to tap into the resource that Twitter provides, the Quarter Horse community seems reluctant. A look at the preferences of community members, along with their use of mobile social media, is important to understanding the trends in social media and measuring its success. By investigating the current trends in using social media to enhance collaboration within a community, it will benefit marketing, public relations, online and interactive communications, and equine journalism industry professionals who seek collaboration within the Quarter Horse community.

**Setting for the Study**

This study will be done as part of the data collection for a Senior Project at California Polytechnic State University located in San Luis Obispo, California. Interviews will be conducted with four experts in the following fields: equine journalism, online and interactive communications, and online editing. The experts will each be asked the same set of questions and probes. The questionnaire is specifically designed to answer the research questions and fill the gaps in previous literature on the topic of Twitter usage within the Quarter Horse community.

**Research Questions**

The study used the following research questions, which were designed to answer fundamental gaps in the existing literature on the topic of encouraging collaboration within the Quarter Horse community through Twitter. Each question was created after
investigating the existing information on the topic in order to acquire additional pertinent and necessary data from professionals in the fields of equine journalism, online and interactive communications, and online editing.

1. What are effective social media outlets for collaboration?
2. How does Twitter differ from Facebook in terms of social media collaboration?
3. How does the use of Twitter as a social media tool effect collaboration in the Quarter Horse community?
4. Who should be facilitating collaboration within the Quarter Horse community through Twitter?
5. Where can AQHA most effectively target their Twitter campaigns to boost collaboration within the Quarter Horse community?
6. How can success and widespread usage of Twitter within the Quarter Horse community be measured?

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined to clarify several of the terms on the topic, as well as to assist the reader and provide context to the remainder of the study.

**Agreeableness:** Agreeableness is seen as a measure of how friendly people are, with high ratings being associated with individuals who are kind, sympathetic and warm (Hughes, Rowe, Batey & Lee, 2012, p. 2).

**Conscientiousness:** Conscientiousness refers to a person’s work ethic, orderliness and thoroughness (p. 2).
**Diffusion Theory:** states that people adapt an idea only after going through five stages: awareness (the individual has been exposed to the idea), interest (the idea has to arouse the individual), evaluation (the individual must consider the idea's potentially useful), trial (the individual tries out the idea on others), and adoption (final acceptance of the idea after having successfully passing through the four earlier stages) (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman & Toth, 2012).

**Extraversion:** Extraverts are typically adventurous, sociable and talkative, whereas introverts are typically quiet and shy (Hughes, et al., 2012, p. 2).

**Neuroticism:** a measure of affect and emotional control, with low levels suggesting good control over emotions and stability, whereas individuals with high levels may be somewhat sensitive and nervous with a propensity to worry (p. 2).

**Openness:** Individuals who demonstrate high Openness-to-experience (Openness) have broad interests and seek novelty, with low ratings linked to preferring familiarity and convention (p. 2).

**SNS:** Social Networking Site. A site used for the sharing of ideas, information, or opinions (p. 1).

**Organization of Study**

Chapter 1 included the background of the problem, purpose of the study, and a definition of terms. Chapter 2 will identify the trends regarding encouraging Twitter usage within an organization by reviewing the current literature on the topic. Chapter 3 will present the methodology of the study. In Chapter 4, the findings will be presented and organized based on the original research questions. The data will then be analyzed
compared to the current literature on the topic. Lastly, Chapter 5 will include a summary of the study and recommendations for professionals in the equine journalism, online and interactive communications and online editing industries to develop a stronger Twitter campaign.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The review of literature focuses on the existing literature on the utilization of Twitter as a collaboration platform, including various trends, methods for assessment, and possible hurdles regarding gaining followers and increasing collaboration via Twitter.

Gaining Collaboration Through Various Social Media Outlets

According to Lin Grensing-Pophal (2012), “social media has provided us with a world with no boundaries and has allowed small companies to dream of having a global reach. But, along with opportunities come challenges—chief among them is navigating the tricky terrain of communication and social differences in diverse geographies” (p. 21). Social Media has the potential to be a great resource for many organizations and businesses to collaborate with a given community, but many organizations and businesses lack the experience necessary to successfully utilize the platform.

Grensing-Pophal also said that a survey of 105 Fortune 500 companies suggested that, “While 72% of respondents indicated that social media offers great opportunity to reach existing and potential customers around the world, they also indicated that they were lacking the tools and information necessary to leverage global social media effectively” (p. 21). This is an important idea in that social media cannot successfully encourage collaboration if the facilitator is unaware of how to use it.

Although the study focused on large businesses, the message is still the same. Organizations also need to learn exactly how to utilize social media in order to get the
most benefit. Grensing-Pophal said that, “According to the study, when using social media on an international basis to reach customers in local geographic markets, the biggest obstacles faced were tracking or measuring success (48%), managing and maintaining information (45%), engaging audiences (42%), identifying influencers who can carry the brand message (39%), and keeping regional and country-specific content fresh (32%). All of this information is hugely important to success in social media because an organization must track the success of the social media outlet in order to decide if changes need to be made, as well as whether they are getting the best reach. Especially with Twitter usage, engaging audiences and identifying influencers is essential to maintaining a target audience.

Twitter Versus Facebook As An Effective Media Outlet

According to Hughes, et al. (2012), “Facebook’s popularity has grown exponentially over recent years, from 5.5 million active users in 2005 to around 500 million active users in 2011. Facebook allows users to create a profile where they can post information about themselves ranging from their occupation, to their religious and political views to their favorite movies and musicians” (p. 1). They also say that the draw to Facebook has to do with the fact that users are able to send public or private messages, as well as engage in real time instant messaging.

Facebook is the largest social networking site available, but there are many others that people use to collaborate and share ideas. “The newest and perhaps most interesting SNS is Twitter, as its focus seems to be on the sharing of opinion and information rather than on reciprocal social interaction” (p. 1). Hughes, et al. said that Twitter allows
members to send short updates using 140 characters. They also said that Twitter has in
the region of two hundred million accounts.

There are several differences between Facebook and Twitter, which attract
different users. “Twitter, unlike Facebook offers the opportunity to reinstate some of the
anonymity previously sought in online communication. Users do not need to post
information about themselves to find ‘friends’ and thus the site focuses less on ‘who you
are’ and more on what you have to say” (p. 1). Hughes, et al. also said that “the reduction
of social pressure brought about by anonymity may mean that reasons for using Twitter
differ from Facebook” (p. 1).

There are various personality traits that go into which type of social networking
system a person will choose. “Researchers have tended to use the Five-Factor-Model or
Big-Five. The Big-Five consists of five broad personality traits, namely, Neuroticism,
Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness” (p. 2). A difference in
personality between any one of these traits could be part of the reason that users choose
either Facebook or Twitter as their primary social networking system.

Twitter’s Effect on Collaboration Within a Community

According to Agrifoglio, et al. (2012), “Twitter is an Internet social network and
microblogging platform with both mass and interpersonal communication that allows
users to send short messages, called tweets, to other people, called followers” (p. 33).
They said “people mainly use Twitter for updating their daily activities with families,
friends, and co-workers, sharing information, news, and opinions. Therefore, Twitter
allows users to share information about social and work life, facilitating and improving communication and relationship quality among Tweeters” (p. 32).

Agrifoglio, et al. argue that, “Twitter allows users to improve interaction and communication efficiency” (p. 33). They also said that, “Twitter is a useful tool for employees to gather information about their professions, to discover new collaboration opportunities, and even for knowing personal goals and what is on others’ minds at this moment” (p. 33).

There are several reasons that Twitter is seen as a useful collaboration tool within various communities. Agrifoglio, et al. said, “Twitter is perceived as a familiar and friendly tool that encourages users to be more spontaneous, inventive and imaginative, favoring playfulness” (p. 33). All of these characteristics make Twitter an effective social media tool for various groups, and play a role in whether or not a person continues to use Twitter. Through their study, Agrifoglio, et al. found that “users believe that using Twitter can improve their performance or their ability to achieve specific goals and, thus, they are more extrinsically motivated to continue to use it” (p. 38).

**Facilitating Collaboration Through Twitter**

According to Katherine Levy, “Twitter's interest-based targeting is also better by design than Facebook's because Twitter is basically one big interest well. It is arguably easier to build up a truer interest graph on Twitter, as it is all about what else you are interested in, other than yourself. Not only does it seem natural to see a brand Tweet in your feed, but it is probably much more likely that the brand in question is of interest to you” (2012, p. 1).
Levy also said that, as far as businesses and organizations go, Twitter is a more reliable way of getting advertisements and information out for community members to see. “Twitter, it could be argued, has greater commercial potential than Facebook. It all goes back to the beginning, with the problem being that Facebook is incredibly personal. Add a very personal space together with a very personal device (a mobile phone), and you have a very brand-resistant domain. In contrast, having a Tweet from a brand in your Twitter feed does not feel intrusive - it feels informative, it might even mean a money-off voucher; but, most importantly, it just feels right” (p. 1).

This information not only makes Twitter a good choice for businesses, but for organizations as well. The use of Twitter to get advertisements out to the public does not feel intrusive to the members of the target community. Not only that, but Twitter appears to have a significant impact on smartphone users, as well as users of other mobile devices. “While Facebook struggles with monetizing its platform through mobile (a huge headache when more than half its users access the platform on mobile), Twitter appears to be steadily riding the wave of smartphone opportunity” (p. 1). This aspect is important to the facilitation of collaboration via Twitter because it gives organizations a target audience for their information. Twitter is much more user friendly in a mobile device setting.

**Target Group for Twitter Campaign**

As far as identifying a target group, starting with the main idea of publicizing the organization is important. This is especially true because the basis of any organization is
the organization’s members and followers. According to Joseph Faina (2012), “What this means is that publicity as the dominant ideology of technoculture is self-serving. It is the currency by which we operate within an increasingly mediated culture, serving as its own end. Publicity constitutes our subjectivity, forming our identities and carving out spaces in the online abyss” (p. 64). As far as organizations and its members are concerned, forming of an identity would be crucial to the success of the social media platform.

The most important idea within target groups for a Twitter campaign is that Twitter enables the user to be in control of what they want to see. “Users ultimately have control over whom they follow, and by virtue of various privacy settings, can control who follows them, enabling them to participate in various publics. In addition to seeking and obtaining followers, the second discursive feature that illustrates this re-vamped notion of publicity is the process of ‘hashtagging’” (p. 67). Keeping this in mind, organizations could benefit from targeting members who already understand how to use Twitter, at least initially. The followers of an organization hold the power as far as collaboration goes.

Furthermore, desire to be a part of the group tends to drive users of social media. That being said, organizations could target users, as well as nonusers, who have a desire to join an organization that they might not otherwise be a part of. Foster, Francescucci and West (2011) said that their study results suggest “the existence of five key motivators that influence participation in SNS: community membership; friendship connections; information value; participation confidence; and participation concerns” (p. 4). Targeting a public that has a desire to collaborate with an organization because they are not actual members of that organization could be helpful in the growth of followers.
Finally, paying attention to the fact that Twitter is more widely received in the mobile device world is also important. As stated earlier, Katherine Levy (2012) has said that, “While Facebook struggles with monetizing its platform through mobile (a huge headache when more than half its users access the platform on mobile), Twitter appears be steadily riding the wave of smartphone opportunity” (p. 1). It makes no sense to target a public that does not have access to the social media platform. If owners of smartphones and other mobile devices are the public using Twitter, that should be a primary target group.

**Measuring Success**

Finding a way to measure the success of a social media platform is essential to the overall success of the platform. Users of Twitter have no way of knowing if their campaign is actually working without taking a close look at whether the campaign is reaching the target audience. Grensing-Pophal (2012) notes that Strabley said, “There is no need to try and devise a platform that works for all audiences; embrace the cultural nuances of each target, and create a social presence to serve each of them” (p. 25). Twitter may work for some publics, and not work for others. This fact is why it is important to evaluate whether an organization is reaching the appropriate public for Twitter. Strabley also said that, “you need to develop some kind of forum to communicate the feedback that different markets are getting, so you can leverage those best practices” (p. 25). There is no way of knowing whether a Twitter campaign is successful without feedback.
Kanter and Paine (2012) have stated that, “Many nonprofit groups aren't realizing their potential because they haven't figured out how to measure results on social media or with other efforts. They need to build strong networks and turn the findings into data that offer insights on whether they're moving people from simply tweeting about a social issue to making a financial donation to an organization working on that issue, or to emailing an elected official with the power to change things” (p. 49). This is an important idea for all organizations because an organization exists because of its members. Ideally, collaboration brings enough new ideas to make the organization even better. In order to have this happen, organizations need to evaluate how well the social media is reaching the intended audience.

Kanter and Paine also said that successful organizations use data intelligently to improve their decision-making and figure out what works. Organizations that successfully utilize social media don’t just count tweets, they measure the progress made toward achieving missions and goals. They also measure performance to make decisions and improve the organization, as well as understand how to set up and measure low-risk experiments to test their strategies (p. 49). Evaluating actual data from Twitter campaigns is essential to understanding and building upon an organization’s social media use.
Methodology

This chapter presents the methods used to collect data for this study of Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community. This chapter includes the data sources, collection and presentation of data, as well as the limitations and delimitations.

Data Sources

In this study, experts in the fields of online and interactive communications, online editing and equine journalism were interviewed using a single questionnaire. Each participant was given the same questionnaire, which was developed to answer the six original research questions concerning Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community.

Participants

The online and interactive communications expert selected for this questionnaire was Jody Reynolds, Director of Online/Interactive Communications at the American Quarter Horse Association in Amarillo, Texas. The online editing expert selected was Tara Christiansen, Online Editor for the American Quarter Horse Association, based in Amarillo, Texas. The two equine journalism experts selected were Christine Hamilton, an editor for The American Quarter Horse Journal, and Holly Clanahan, Editor of America’s Horse. All four experts have experience within the journalistic fields of the American Quarter Horse Association, as well as close ties to the Quarter Horse community itself.

Interview Design
The following questions and probes were given to each of the experts in order to obtain relevant data for this study:

1. In your field, which social media outlets do you find effective in creating collaboration between members of the Quarter Horse community?
   a. Is there any one outlet that seems particularly effective?
   b. Why do you think that is?

2. Do you see a difference in participation from followers in your use of Facebook versus Twitter? How so?

3. What effect does Twitter have on the Quarter Horse community, if any?
   a. Would you say that members of the community are receptive to Twitter?
      If not, why do you think that is?
   b. Would you say that Quarter Horse community members understand how to collaborate and exchange information via Twitter?

4. As experts in the field of Quarter Horse communication, who do you think are the ideal facilitators of collaboration through Twitter?
   a. Do you think that one particular organization should facilitate information?
   b. Do you think members of the Quarter Horse community (followers, trainers, members of AQHA) could facilitate exchanges of information?

5. As leaders in the Quarter Horse industry, whom do you think AQHA should target in its Twitter campaigns?
   a. Are there certain obstacles that AQHA might face in using Twitter that other organizations might not face?
6. In your opinion, how might success and widespread usage of Twitter in the Quarter Horse community be measured?

**Data Collection**

The four interviews took place between February and March 2013 and were conducted via email and phone. “With a properly thought-through research design, realistic identification of the research interview as a valid and reliable instrument for the task in hand, meticulous data analysis and inductive reasoning, and an understanding of the purpose and character of ethnographic research, the researcher should both gain and achieve a lot through using the method” (Hannabuss, 1996, p. 22). In the email and phone interviews, experts were asked questions from a single questionnaire with the purpose of providing answers to the afore-mentioned research questions. The emails and phone interview were transcribed and can be found in the appendix of this study. The experts were asked to give honest feedback for each question so as to obtain a truthful representation of current trends.

**Data Presentation**

The data collected through each questionnaire was transcribed and added to the appendix of this study. Transcriptions utilized the same layout for each of the expert’s responses, so as to maintain cohesiveness in the study. Exact documentation of the email and phone responses was used to ensure the most complete data possible.

**Limitations**
Limitations on time were the main issue in this study, as it had to be completed within a ten-week period. The study was also conducted from San Luis Obispo, while the experts interviewed were based out of Amarillo, Texas, and Colorado. The lack of time, as well as the lack of proximity to the respondents, were key limitations to the completeness of this study. Further research could have been conducted to complete the study if time had not been a factor.

**Delimitations**

Closer proximity to AQHA’s headquarters would have allowed for face-to-face interviews with experts in the field. This fact would have made probing and non-verbal aspects of answers apparent for use in the study. Although the respondents were asked to answer with as much detail and honesty as possible, face-to-face interaction would likely have been more beneficial in terms of data collection. That being said, the respondents were chosen based on their work within the Quarter Horse community. This idea allowed for accurate and precise information about the current trends.

**Chapter 4**
Data Analysis

This chapter will provide descriptions of the experts interviewed in the study and summarize the respondents’ answers to the questionnaire about Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community. Since the data was collected via email and telephone interviews, it will be presented in the form of direct quotations or paraphrased responses. The answers will be analyzed and compared to the original six research questions and the current literature on Twitter as a social media tool, as reviewed in Chapter 2.

Description of Participating Experts in Related Fields

Online and Interactive Communications

Jody Reynolds was the online and interactive communications expert for this study. Jody has worked for the American Quarter Horse Association for nearly 13 years, and she currently serves as the Director of Online/Interactive Communications. Her previous positions at AQHA include Field Editor and Senior Manager of Direct Response Marketing. The American Quarter Horse Association is located in Amarillo, Texas, and is the largest equine breed registry. The organization is involved in marketing, publications, and customer service, as well as many other operations. Jody received her bachelors degree in print journalism at Kansas State University. She also grew up on her family’s Quarter Horse ranch in Missouri, and has won awards for her stories about the American Quarter Horse.

Online Editing
The online editing expert for this study was Tara Christiansen. Tara has held the position of Internet Editor at the American Quarter Horse Association for the past 2 years. Prior to her current position with AQHA, she worked as one of AQHA’s publications interns. Tara earned her bachelors degree in agricultural communications and journalism at Texas A&M University. She is also an accomplished horsewoman, having won a World Champion title at the 2006 AQHA Youth World Championship in working cow horse. She also competed on Texas A&M University’s Women’s Equestrian Team during her time in college.

**Equine Journalism**

Christine Hamilton was one of the equine journalism experts for this study. She has worked as a feature writer and editor for *The American Quarter Horse Journal* for nearly 10 years. *The American Quarter Horse Journal* is the world’s largest single-breed monthly publication and has served the Quarter Horse industry for over 60 years. She also travels to various shows throughout the year to cover the competition aspect of the Quarter Horse industry. Christine graduated from the University of Alabama with a bachelors degree in English. Prior to her work at AQHA, Christine worked in marketing and equine reproduction for equine farms.

The other equine journalism expert for this study was Holly Clanahan. Holly is the Editor of AQHA’s *America’s Horse* magazine. The award-winning magazine is the largest equine member publication in the world. *America’s Horse* is one of the many benefits to AQHA membership. The magazine reaches more than 300,000 mailboxes, 10 times a year. Prior to her work for AQHA, Holly worked for Wichita Falls Times Record News. Holly received her bachelors degree in journalism-news communication from The
University of Oklahoma. Holly and Christine have both won awards for their stories about the American Quarter Horse.

**Twitter Use Within the Quarter Horse Industry Questionnaire**

Each expert was asked to respond to the following questions and probes regarding Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community:

1. In your field, which social media outlets do you find effective in creating collaboration between members of the Quarter Horse community? Is there any one outlet that seems particularly effective? Why do you think that is?

Question #1 was asked to gain insight into the use of social media, in general, within the Quarter Horse community. The question was designed to provide information about the trends in social media within the Quarter Horse community, as well as to solidify the fact that Twitter is not the primary outlet within the community.

- **Jody Reynolds:** “Horse people seem to be drawn to Facebook in general- to the community feel, to the ease of sharing photos and accomplishments…. With Facebook, we’re able to be more up-close and personal with our fans than any other network” (Appendix A).

- **Tara Christiansen:** “Facebook seems to be the most comfortable form of social media for American Quarter Horse fans to use. Facebook can be used to accomplish so many goals…. Facebook is also very user-friendly and visual. As a result, users have taken the time and effort to familiarize themselves with the ins and outs of Facebook and have learned how to customize Facebook to their taste” (Appendix B).
• Christine Hamilton: “Facebook is the most effective because it’s the largest community. But one of the other things, as an aside, is fostering a membership community, and I think Facebook definitely helps with that, too. It helps our website be a little more interactive” (Appendix C).

• Holly Clanahan: “Facebook seems to be more popular; we certainly can speak to more people there. Because there is no character limit, and a better ability to share photos, Facebook seems to allow easier sharing and commenting” (Appendix D).

2. Do you see a difference in participation from followers in your use of Facebook versus Twitter? How so?

Question #2 was asked in order to gain insight into the differences between Facebook and Twitter use. This question was important to include because it is important to understand why Facebook tends to be more successful in creating communication than Twitter. Understanding the personal preferences of Quarter Horse community members is important to creating increased use of Twitter.

• Jody Reynolds: “It’s slower growing, but Twitter has a following, and they seem to appreciate our event coverage and quick newsy tidbits. Our Facebook fans want to interact with us and share our photos and ask us questions. Our Twitter followers want the little bits of news that we disseminate” (Appendix A).

• Tara Christiansen: “While AQHA has more Facebook fans than it does Twitter followers, the relative engagement that we see with Facebook fans is much greater than with Twitter followers. AQHA Facebook fans are more apt
to “like,” comment on or share a post or photo than AQHA Twitter followers are to retweet, favorite or reply to a tweet” (Appendix B).

- Christine Hamilton: “I think our Facebook population is significantly larger than our Twitter population. But we’d have to add up all our different accounts because we have several different Twitter accounts … we’ve got a lot more different Twitter feeds, whereas AQHA has bundled it into one Facebook page” (Appendix C).

- Holly Clanahan: “For one thing, Facebook users seem to expect a personal response, whereas Twitter seems less personal … more putting a link or snippet of information out there, rather than a conversation” (Appendix D).

3. What effect does Twitter have on the Quarter Horse community, if any? Would you say that members of the community are receptive to Twitter? If not, why do you think that is? Would you say that Quarter Horse community members understand how to collaborate and exchange information via Twitter?

Question #3 served to gauge the current trends in Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community. This question was important to understand what the current usage is, so as to better understand what has to change to make Twitter more effective within the Quarter Horse community.

- Jody Reynolds: “Twitter is growing on our industry. It’s still not prolific, but in a few years it might just be the big thing. Our goal is to continue to be there NOW, and be ready for growth. A lot don’t understand Twitter, and I think that’s why they hold tight to their Facebook security blanket. But we occasionally ask our Facebook fans to head on over to Twitter for
contests, event coverage, etc. We’re warming them to the idea” (Appendix A).

- Tara Christiansen: “The vast majority of the Quarter Horse community is not receptive to Twitter. Twitter is not as visual, nor as user-friendly, as Facebook. Both of these factors are turn-offs for start-up social media users…. Most Quarter Horse enthusiasts do not know how to collaborate or exchange information on Twitter. Users might retweet or favorite, but seldom do they tag the proper entity or use a hashtag to trend” (Appendix B).

- Christine Hamilton: “It’s like with anything else, different things appeal to different people. So, I would not say that a majority of Quarter Horse members do anything with Twitter, … but there are different populations within AQHA that do have Twitter feeds. I think our All-Around group and our show membership is more likely to get involved in Twitter…. You really need a smart phone to do Twitter. So, that population out there that doesn’t have that, you know, they’re less likely to have a Twitter account. I think we have found just because we have a rural community, we have a largely ranching community, although a lot of them are Internet connected and very tech savvy, there’s a significant population that isn’t” (Appendix C).

- Holly Clanahan: “Because of the hashtag function, it’s a great way for people at an event to talk to one another or share information from AQHA about the event…. I suspect that the younger generations are the ones most
keyed in to the nuances of Twitter. But it would be great to see some actual demographics of these users. Looking at the numbers of followers/fans, though, you can see that the AQHA Twitter account has about 19,000 followers, while the Facebook page has topped 600,000. So you can see which one is better understood/preferred” (Appendix D).

4. As an expert in the field of Quarter Horse communication, who do you think are the ideal facilitators of collaboration through Twitter? Do you think that one particular organization should facilitate information? Do you think members of the Quarter Horse community (followers, trainers, members of AQHA) could facilitate exchanges of information?

Question #4 served to gain insight into how Twitter would most effectively work within the Quarter Horse community. The question helps to understand how Twitter really works, and how to best utilize it to get the most out of communication within the Quarter Horse industry. The more effective the communication, the more effective the Quarter Horse community can be in collaborating.

- Jody Reynolds: “We need to use the medium for which it was intended. Twitter is a free-for-all of great information that people can digest quickly and then share with their followers. The more facilitators, the merrier. At AQHA, we have numerous Twitter handles, all with specific duties…. Through alliances, corporate partners and other friends, we are retweeting each other regularly. The more our industry grows on Twitter, the bigger this will all get” (Appendix A).
• Tara Christiansen: “Information should be disseminated through multiple avenues. With this in mind, AQHA has created several Twitter handles, each targeted at a specific segment within the industry. As the world’s largest equine breed association, we maintain a steady stream of news generated through the multiple facets of our industry. When a news item is on hand, it is initially tweeted from the handle with the most suitable audience for the news…. Quarter Horse enthusiasts do facilitate exchanges of information, but there is a lot of room for improvement. Only a handful of trainers are Twitter users, although quite a few AQHA members are on Twitter. To encourage members to disseminate the information that we are tweeting, we try to engage with them by retweeting and favoriting their posts, with the hopes that they will one day do the same for us” (Appendix B).

• Christine Hamilton: “With Twitter, it’s so much more of a chatting back and forth, whereas a Facebook page is a presence…. The nice thing about Twitter feeds is that there are a lot of different accounts…. I do think that for an organization like us, it is important to have one person or a group of people monitoring our official Twitter feed. Our message is so important…. It’s nice with Twitter, by following trainers in our community, we can help foster that community and retweet from them. So it’s nice, but it can also get a little chaotic” (Appendix C).

• Holly Clanahan: “Because of the nature of social media in general and Twitter specifically, there is a cacophony of voices trying to be heard. It’s
rather noisy in here! So I think you’ll always have information being
thrown out by a variety of sources, some more reputable than others.
That’s where AQHA and other reputable organizations have a good
foothold. People will tend to trust (and thus share/retweet) the information
they receive from us and will put a higher value on any interaction with
us. A long answer to say that reputation matters…. But in order to
continue growing our social media presence, we need other people to
retweet us …so that their followers will see AQHA’s social media outlets
and then follow us. Same principle, obviously, on Facebook. It does take a
village” (Appendix D).

5. As leaders in the Quarter Horse industry, whom do you think AQHA should
target in its Twitter campaigns? Are there certain obstacles that AQHA might face
in using Twitter that other organizations might not face?

Question #5 was asked in order to better understand who within the Quarter Horse
community is most likely to use Twitter. Better understanding of who actually uses
Twitter can aid the facilitator in having the most effective tweets, as well as gain the most
eyes. The question also served to gain insight into obstacles that AQHA might face with
their target audience that other groups might not.

- Jody Reynolds: “Our targets are different for each Twitter account.

Potential members- we hope they follow any of our Twitters because we
strive to cross-promote enough that every follower gets exposed to a
membership message…. We want the showing audience to follow the
Journal. We want young people to follow @aqhya. We are fortunate to
have so many irons in the Twitter fire. It gives us a lot of potential for reaching new followers in some way…. Twitter is still a new frontier for many horse people. They are extremely comfortable with Facebook, and I don’t think they want to add another medium to their daily repertoire” (Appendix A).

- Tara Christiansen: “Because we have so many Twitter handles, it gives us many options, but it is essential that the right handle be chosen to tweet first. Additionally, AQHA is a membership-based organization. While much of our information is applicable to the general horse world, it is also important that our tweets be seen as good public relations for our association…. If too many promotional tweets are posted, a Twitter user will become disenfranchised with the handle’s tweets and will unfollow. That is something that we want to avoid” (Appendix B).

- Christine Hamilton: “I would target exhibitors, just as a rule. I would target the show exhibitors because they’re on the road a lot. I feel like it is a quick medium for getting fast information out. And if you’re on the road and you’re just using your phone, it’s easier to check Twitter…. I think (one obstacle) is the sheer unfamiliarity, you know, not being very tech savvy, and just not really wanting to engage with it at all” (Appendix C).

- Holly Clanahan: “As an organization, we do see the need to tailor our message to the users that are already out there. But we need to get a better idea of who those people are and what they want from us…. Most of our members are 40 plus, and I bet that’s not true for Twitter. A second
consideration – I’m not sure you could call it an obstacle – is that AQHA’s social media admins do have to be very careful in what they say. Again, we have to guard that reputation, and we have to be careful not to misspeak, lest that comment get retweeted around the world” (Appendix D).

6. In your opinion, how might success and widespread usage of Twitter in the Quarter Horse community be measured?

Question #6 was asked in order to gain insight into how experts might gauge success through Twitter. Measuring success is extremely important to understanding whether or not a Twitter campaign has achieved what an organization hopes it will achieve.

- Jody Reynolds: “Right now, we measure in simple terms: By our number of followers, retweets, hashtag use, etc. In the future, we’ll measure success by how many people came to a show because of a special discount code we tweeted; or by how many people bought a new membership specifically because of a tweet” (Appendix A).

- Tara Christiansen: “For us, Twitter success is measured by user engagement and increase in followers. With an increase in followers, we know that our messages are being shared with a greater audience. While retweets and favoriting are also desired, we relish in replies from our users. A reply, to us, means that our message spoke enough to the user that they were encouraged to communicate back. Even better is when a user tags us in a tweet” (Appendix B).
• Christine Hamilton: “It seems like when I go to conferences like AHP, that’s the magic number. People are trying to figure out how to measure success. And right now, it would just be followers, but we want to find a way to monetize it. And if there would be a way to link Twitter feeds to click-throughs and actual purchases, that’s where I would start…. I can say that it’s increasing a perception of AQHA serving their membership, and that is valuable. We can’t hang a dollar amount on that, but when I’m running around, and the show office is giving me messages and I’m tweeting them, the perception of me giving them a service is pretty valuable” (Appendix C).

• Holly Clanahan: “The dissemination of information is a member/industry service, so that counts for something – the fact that we are actively seeking outlets to spread education and news. That helps position AQHA as the place to turn to (or follow) for information. I suppose the ultimate marker of success is when we can begin to turn followers/fans into members” (Appendix D).

Twitter Use Within the Quarter Horse Community Research Questions

For this project, the following six research questions were used to gain insight into the current trends and strategies that are being used among online and interactive communication, internet editing and equine journalism professionals. The questions were used to gain expert opinions on Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community and how success might be measured in the future.
Research Question 1: What are effective social media outlets for collaboration?

- “Facebook allows users to create a profile where they can post information about themselves ranging from their occupation, to their religious and political views to their favorite movies and musicians” (Hughes, et al., 2012, p. 1).
- “The newest and perhaps most interesting SNS is Twitter, as its focus seems to be on the sharing of opinion and information rather than on reciprocal social interaction” (p. 1).

Research Question 2: How does Twitter differ from Facebook in terms of social media collaboration?

- “Twitter, unlike Facebook offers the opportunity to reinstate some of the anonymity previously sought in online communication. Users do not need to post information about themselves to find ‘friends’ and thus the site focuses less on ‘who you are’ and more on what you have to say” (p. 1).
- “The reduction of social pressure brought about by anonymity may mean that reasons for using Twitter differ from Facebook” (p. 2).

Research Question 3: How does the use of Twitter as a social media tool effect collaboration within the Quarter Horse community?

- “Twitter is an Internet social network and microblogging platform with both mass and interpersonal communication that allows users to send short messages, called tweets, to other people, called followers” (Agrifoglio, et al., 2012, p. 33).
- “People mainly use Twitter for updating their daily activities with families, friends, and co-workers, sharing information, news, and opinions. Therefore,
Twitter allows users to share information about social and work life, facilitating and improving communication and relationship quality among Tweeters” (p. 32).

- "Twitter is perceived as a familiar and friendly tool that encourages users to be more spontaneous, inventive and imaginative, favoring playfulness” (p. 33).
- “Users believe that using Twitter can improve their performance or their ability to achieve specific goals and, thus, they are more extrinsically motivated to continue to use it” (p. 38).

Research Question 4: Who should be facilitating collaboration within the Quarter Horse community through Twitter?

- “Twitter's interest-based targeting is also better by design than Facebook's because Twitter is basically one big interest well. It is arguably easier to build up a truer interest graph on Twitter, as it is all about what else you are interested in other than yourself. Not only does it seem natural to see a brand Tweet in your feed, but it is probably much more likely that the brand in question is of interest to you” (Levy, 2012, p. 1).
- “Twitter, it could be argued, has greater commercial potential than Facebook. It all goes back to the beginning, with the problem being that Facebook is incredibly personal. Add a very personal space together with a very personal device (a mobile phone), and you have a very brand-resistant domain. In contrast, having a Tweet from a brand in your Twitter feed does not feel intrusive - it feels informative, it might even mean a money-off voucher; but, most importantly, it just feels right” (p. 1).
• “Publicity as the dominant ideology of technoculture is self-serving. It is the currency by which we operate within an increasingly mediated culture, serving as its own end. Publicity constitutes our subjectivity, forming our identities and carving out spaces in the online abyss” (Faina, 2012, p. 64).

Research Question 5: Where can AQHA most effectively target their Twitter campaigns to boost collaboration within the Quarter Horse community?

• “While Facebook struggles with monetizing its platform through mobile (a huge headache when more than half its users access the platform on mobile), Twitter appears to be steadily riding the wave of smartphone opportunity” (p. 1).

• “Users ultimately have control over whom they follow, and by virtue of various privacy settings can control who follows them, enabling them to participate in various publics. In addition to seeking and obtaining followers, the second discursive feature that illustrates this re-vamped notion of publicity is the process of ‘hashtagging’” (p. 67).

• “(A study suggests) the existence of five key motivators that influence participation in SNS: community membership; friendship connections; information value; participation confidence; and participation concerns” (Foster, et al., 2012, p. 4).

• “There is no need to try and devise a platform that works for all audiences; embrace the cultural nuances of each target, and create a social presence to serve each of them” (Greensing-Pophal, 2012, p. 25).
Research Question 6: How can success and widespread usage of Twitter within the Quarter Horse community be measured?

- “You need to develop some kind of forum to communicate the feedback that different markets are getting, so you can leverage those best practices” (p. 25).
- “Many nonprofit groups aren't realizing their potential because they haven't figured out how to measure results on social media or with other efforts. They need to build strong networks and turn the findings into data that offer insights on whether they're moving people from simply tweeting about a social issue to making a financial donation to an organization working on that issue, or to emailing an elected official with the power to change things” (Kanter and Paine, 2012, p. 49).
- “Organizations that successfully utilize social media don’t just count tweets, they measure the progress made toward achieving missions and goals” (p. 49).
- They also measure performance to make decisions and improve the organization, as well as understand how to set up and measure low-risk experiments to test their strategies” (p. 49).

Twitter Usage Data

For this study, it was important to gain information from experts within the field due to the virtually non-existent information that currently exists on the topic of Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community. Jody Reynolds, an online and interactive communications expert, Tara Christiansen, an online editing expert, Christine Hamilton, an equine journalism expert, and Holly Clanahan, an equine journalism expert, were all interviewed in order to acquire this data for the study. They were each asked the same
questions, designed to answer the original six research questions, through a questionnaire. The following tables represent the experts’ answers in the form of their individual perspectives on the original research questions.

**Research Question #1: What are effective social media outlets for collaboration?**

This question was researched because of the fact that there are many social media outlets available for use in the world. The idea behind the question was to determine which of the many social media outlets are considered effective in creating collaboration in various groups. The majority of current literature views both Facebook and Twitter as effective means of developing collaboration. According to Hughes, et al. (2012), “Facebook allows users to create a profile where they can post information about themselves ranging from their occupation, to their religious and political views to their favorite movies and musicians” (p. 1). They also say that Twitter is effective due to its focus on sharing of information, rather than social interaction.

This question was further studied to see if the same ideas hold true within the Quarter Horse community. The literature seems to state that Facebook and Twitter are equally effective in creating collaboration, with the idea that Twitter is merely a newer medium. The experts were asked this question to see if the trends associated with the literature were equally true of the Quarter Horse community. This question set the stage for further discussion of Twitter use specifically.

Table 1 summarizes the answers to question #1. The experts were all consistent in their thoughts that Facebook was very effective in creating collaboration within the Quarter Horse community. They were also fairly consistent in their ideas on Twitter.
Each expert saw Facebook as the medium that members were most responsive to, based on the way Facebook works.

Table 1

**Effective Social Media Outlets for Collaboration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Social Media Outlet</th>
<th>Successful because…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jody Reynolds</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>Community feel, ease of sharing photos and accomplishments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara Christiansen</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>User-friendly and visual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Hamilton</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>Largest community, fostering a membership community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly Clanahan</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>Can speak to more people because there is no character limit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question #2: How does Twitter differ from Facebook in terms of social media collaboration?

This question was studied to determine the differences between Twitter and Facebook that might make one more successful over the other. Much of the literature speaks to various differences that make users choose one medium over another. “Twitter, unlike Facebook offers the opportunity to reinstate some of the anonymity previously sought in online communication. Users do not need to post information about themselves to find ‘friends’ and thus the site focuses less on ‘who you are’ and more on what you have to say” (Hughes, et al., 2012, p. 1).

This research question was further studied through discussion with industry experts to gauge whether the differences are also seen in the Quarter Horse community.
In order to fully understand why Twitter might not be perceived as useful within the Quarter Horse community, understanding of the differences of Facebook and Twitter use are necessary. Once the differences in usage rates are understood, a solution can be created.

Table 2

*Differences in Twitter and Facebook Engagement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Is there a difference?</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jody Reynolds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Twitter is slower growing, but appreciated for news tidbits. Facebook fans want interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara Christiansen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Facebook engagement is larger than Twitter because fans are more likely to participate in conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Hamilton</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Facebook population much larger than Twitter, but Twitter involves many different accounts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly Clanahan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Larger Facebook numbers due ease of sharing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 2, all of the respondents agreed that Facebook was generally more successful in creating collaboration between Quarter Horse community members. Jody Reynolds and Christine Hamilton touched on the fact that Twitter might just be slower growing than Facebook and that the ability to have multiple Twitter accounts for specific interests might be causing the lower numbers. Tara Christiansen and Holly Clanahan spoke to the fact that the success of Facebook over Twitter is, in large part, due to the fact that fans find it easier to participate on Facebook.
Research Question #3: How does the use of Twitter as a social media tool effect collaboration within the Quarter Horse community?

This question was studied to take a look at how Twitter affects the Quarter Horse community specifically. While data in the literature looks at the effect of Twitter generally, there doesn’t seem to be literature right now that deals specifically with the Quarter Horse industry. The literature is helpful, though, in discussing how Twitter affects other groups. “People mainly use Twitter for updating their daily activities with families, friends, and co-workers, sharing information, news, and opinions. Therefore, Twitter allows users to share information about social and work life, facilitating and improving communication and relationship quality among Tweeter” (Agrifoglio, et al., 2012, p. 33).

The information from the experts is especially important in studying this question because of the lack of data on the subject. In order to fully understand the affect Twitter has within the Quarter Horse community, feedback from professionals in the field is vital. Once this information is determined, a solution to the problem of little collaboration via Twitter can start to be understood.

Table 3 looks at the affect of Twitter within the Quarter Horse community. In Table 3, all of the respondents agreed that Twitter does not have a significant impact on the Quarter Horse community. Jody Reynolds and Tara Christiansen both touched on the fact that many members of the community do not seem to understand how to use Twitter. This stands in the way of Twitter being more successful. Christine Hamilton pointed out the fact that Twitter is more successful when members of the community have a smartphone. Since many of the Quarter Horse community’s members live in rural areas, many
of them do not have as much access to the Internet and smart phones, compared to other populations. Holly Clanahan allowed that Twitter is more successful at shows because community members can use hashtags to talk about what is happening on the show grounds and how a show is progressing.

Table 3

*Twitter’s Affect On the Quarter Horse Community*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Twitter’s Affect</th>
<th>Twitter has this affect because…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jody Reynolds</td>
<td>Smaller, but growing</td>
<td>Many don’t understand how to use Twitter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara Christiansen</td>
<td>Most not receptive</td>
<td>Not as visual and user-friendly. Many don’t understand how to exchange information on Twitter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Hamilton</td>
<td>Most don’t use Twitter, but certain populations do</td>
<td>Need for a smart phone and rural communities with less access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly Clanahan</td>
<td>Fewer users than Facebook, but showing population and younger generations seem more likely to use Twitter</td>
<td>Shear numbers show fewer users than Facebook. Hashtag function allows for communication at shows.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question #4: Who should be facilitating collaboration within the Quarter Horse community through Twitter?**

This question was studied to understand whether or not a facilitator is necessary when it comes to Twitter use. The literature seems to show that it is important both to have everyone communicating on topics, as well as larger organizations using Twitter to facilitate action. “Twitter is basically one big interest well. It is arguably easier to build up a truer interest graph on Twitter, as it is all about what else you are interested in other
than yourself. Not only does it seem natural to see a brand Tweet in your feed, but it is probably much more likely that the brand in question is of interest to you. Twitter, it could be argued, has greater commercial potential than Facebook” (Levy, 2012, p. 1).

Further study by interviewing professionals in the Quarter Horse industry was important to gain insight into the specificities of the Quarter Horse community. While much can be learned from looking at organizations in general, each population has its own challenges. The question served to judge whether any number of people could facilitate communication, or whether it is important to have a single entity in charge.

Table 4

*Facilitating Collaboration Via Twitter*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Types of Facilitators</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jody Reynolds</td>
<td>Many facilitators</td>
<td>Numerous Twitter handles through AQHA, alliances, corporate partners and other friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara Christiansen</td>
<td>Various avenues. Start with hand most appropriate for information</td>
<td>Community members, trainers, AQHA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Hamilton</td>
<td>Many members and an organization overseeing</td>
<td>Many community members and AQHA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly Clanahan</td>
<td>Various sources and a reputable organization</td>
<td>Members and AQHA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows the respondents views on who should facilitate collaboration within the Quarter Horse community on Twitter. All of the respondents agreed that the purpose of Twitter was to have many different individuals contributing to the information being released. Jody Reynolds and Tara Christiansen emphasized the idea of everyone
within the community sharing information and retweeting from each other. Going off of that, Christine Hamilton and Holly Clanahan shared that, ideally, everyone would be sharing information, and then a single entity would oversee the communication and retweet reputable information.

**Research Question #5: Where can AQHA most effectively target their Twitter campaigns to boost collaboration within the Quarter Horse community?**

Studying this question both served to thoroughly understand Twitter’s reach within the Quarter Horse community, as well as who would be better targets for the future. Being that there doesn’t seem to be literature focusing on the Quarter Horse community specifically, the literature spoke to the fact that, in general, Twitter is successful among smart phone users. “While Facebook struggles with monetizing its platform through mobile (a huge headache when more than half its users access the platform on mobile), Twitter appears to be steadily riding the wave of smartphone opportunity” (Faina, 2012, p. 1). The literature also stated that, “There is no need to try and devise a platform that works for all audiences; embrace the cultural nuances of each target, and create a social presence to serve each of them” (Grensing-Pophal, 2012, p. 25).

Focusing on the Quarter Horse community, the experts allowed for further study of this question. Understanding the various publics within the Quarter Horse community, as well as the factors in Twitter usage is hugely important to coming to a conclusion. Choosing a target for AQHA to focus on requires knowledge of who is using Twitter right now.
For the most part, the respondents had similar ideas about whom AQHA should target with their Twitter campaigns. This is shown in Table 5. All of the respondents mentioned the fact that the target would depend on the handle. Since AQHA has many different handles that are used for different purposes, there would be a separate target for each. Some respondents gave ideas for potential specific targets. Jody Reynolds said that each handle has an ideal target. Tara Christiansen mentioned the fact that Twitter is a PR tool, and therefore, AQHA might target members. Similarly, Christine Hamilton mentioned the fact that Twitter can be a great tool for exhibitors at shows. Holly Clanahan also allowed that younger members might be more inclined to use Twitter.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Target because…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jody Reynolds</td>
<td>Many different targets, each for a specific handle</td>
<td>With all of AQHA’s different Twitter accounts, campaigns can be targeted to different groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara Christiansen</td>
<td>Many options, but also members. Each handle has a target</td>
<td>AQHA has many different handles. Twitter can be used as a PR tool for membership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Hamilton</td>
<td>Depends on the handle, but also exhibitors</td>
<td>Twitter is a great way to get quick information about shows on the go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly Clanahan</td>
<td>Users that are already out there, and possibly the younger generations</td>
<td>Most members are 40+, which is probably not true of Twitter users.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question #6: How can success and widespread usage of Twitter within the Quarter Horse community be measured?

This question was used to study success in Twitter usage. Current literature mentions that measuring success in Twitter is essential for determining if a Twitter campaign needs to change for more beneficial use. “Many nonprofit groups aren't realizing their potential because they haven't figured out how to measure results on social media or with other efforts. They need to build strong networks and turn the findings into data that offer insights on whether they're moving people from simply tweeting about a social issue to making a financial donation to an organization working on that issue, or to emailing an elected official with the power to change things” (Kanter & Paine, 2012, p. 49). Kanter and Paine also allow that organizations that successfully utilize social media don’t just count tweets, they measure the progress made toward achieving missions and goals” (p. 49).

Responses from the experts were particularly important for studying this question because of the lack of data on the topic of Twitter use. Many seem to still be searching for an answer to measuring success with Twitter. For this reason, expert opinion was sought out to gain understanding of what might be done in the future.

Table 6 shows the largely similar opinions of the experts’ responses. All of the respondents allowed that measurement of success is something that is still being investigated among all fields. For now, the respondents agreed that success is measured with an increase in followers, as well as increased retweets and AQHA related hashtags. Many of the respondents also spoke to the idea that, in the future, the hope is to be able to track increases in membership purchases and attendance at AQHA events based on tweets.
Table 6

*Measurement of Success with Twitter*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Can Success be Measured?</th>
<th>How?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jody Reynolds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Now: number of followers, retweets, hashtag use, etc. Future: attendance and purchases from special discount code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara Christiansen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Increase in followers and engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine Hamilton</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Now: number of followers. Future: click-throughs and purchases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly Clanahan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Turning followers into members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

This study was performed in response to the growing trend of Twitter use amongst organizations. While Twitter is becoming commonplace throughout many populations, the trend seems to be meeting resistance within the Quarter Horse community. Based on the fact that Twitter is a fairly new medium for social media, current literature on the subject is somewhat lacking. Today’s literature focuses on organizations and Twitter use, in general. Literature is non-existent for current trends within the Quarter Horse community. That being said, it was essential to collect data from experts within the Quarter Horse industry to understand that population’s Twitter use.

In order to obtain more information about the current practices being used by professionals within the Quarter Horse community, four experts were interviewed. These experts encompassed the fields of online and interactive communications, online editing and equine journalism. Each expert was interviewed based on a single questionnaire, which was used to answer the following six research questions for the study:

1. What are effective social media outlets for collaboration?
2. How does Twitter differ from Facebook in terms of social media collaboration?
3. How does the use of Twitter as a social media tool effect collaboration in the Quarter Horse community?
4. Who should be facilitating collaboration within the Quarter Horse community through Twitter?
5. Where can AQHA most effectively target their Twitter campaigns to boost collaboration within the Quarter Horse community?

6. How can success and widespread usage of Twitter within the Quarter Horse community be measured?

Each research question was used as a springboard to create questions and probes, which were then used to interview each expert within the Quarter Horse industry. The questionnaire served to gain responses that were tied to the current literature, but also to gain insight on Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community, specifically.

Discussion

By analyzing the connections between the experts’ responses in Chapter 4, as well as the current literature in Chapter 2, it is possible to make conclusions regarding the following original research questions.

Research Question #1: What are effective social media outlets for collaboration?

When the experts were asked which social media outlets were most effective for creating collaboration, they all agreed that Facebook was the most effective within the Quarter Horse community. They all had similar ideas about why Facebook is the most effective. These ideas included the fact that the medium creates more of a community feel that other mediums. They also explained the fact that Facebook tends to be more user-friendly than many of the other social media outlets available.

The literature tends to be consistent with the expert’s viewpoints. Although the literature does say that Facebook and Twitter are both effective in creating collaboration, Hughes, et al. (2012) said, “Facebook allows users to create a profile where they can post
information about themselves ranging from their occupation, to their religious and political views to their favorite movies and musicians” (p. 1). These characteristics enable Facebook users to feel as though they are a part of a community, as well as personalize the medium to suit them best.

Overall, both the Quarter Horse industry experts and the current literature voice that Facebook is the most effective means of creating collaboration within a community. This idea is due to the fact that users can personalize Facebook to show their personalities. It also allows users to be a part of a community and collaborate with others who share their interests.

Research Question #2: How does Twitter differ from Facebook in terms of social media collaboration?

The experts where consistent in their responses to this question in that they all agreed that Twitter was slower growing and encompassed a much smaller population within the Quarter Horse community than Facebook. The experts vocalized the fact that Twitter requires multiple accounts for a single organization, which might create smaller numbers when you go to actually count followers. Some of the experts also mentioned the fact that Quarter Horse community members seem to find Facebook easier to use than Twitter, which could account for the lack of participation in Twitter.

The literature tended to mirror these ideas, but it also seemed to focus on the fact that some of the differences between the two mediums could make Twitter more successful. “Twitter, unlike Facebook offers the opportunity to reinstate some of the anonymity previously sought in online communication. Users do not need to post information about themselves to find ‘friends’ and thus the site focuses less on ‘who you
are’ and more on what you have to say” (Hughes, et al., 2012, p. 1). Hughes, et al. went on to say, “The reduction of social pressure brought about by anonymity may mean that reasons for using Twitter differ from Facebook” (p. 2). That being said, Twitter might be more successful in groups that are uncomfortable with the amount of information that tends to be disclosed when using Facebook.

Overall, the experts and the literature share similar ideas concerning the fact that there is a definite difference in the use of Twitter versus Facebook. The experts explain that Facebook tends to be more successful because members of the Quarter Horse community find it easier to participate through that medium. Something to be considered for the future, though, would be the idea that some users within the Quarter Horse community might actually be more comfortable with participating on Twitter due to the medium’s anonymity aspect.

Research Question #3: How does the use of Twitter, as a social media tool, effect collaboration within the Quarter Horse community?

The experts within the Quarter Horse community tend to agree that the majority of the community is not receptive to Twitter. They also believe, though, that the community is slowly catching on to the idea. The experts pointed out the fact that many don’t understand how to use Twitter as an issue standing in the way of the medium’s success. One expert also pointed out the fact that Twitter seems to be more successful among smart phone users, due to the ease of getting information on the go.

Although the literature does not reference the Quarter Horse community, in general it says, “Users believe that using Twitter can improve their performance or their ability to achieve specific goals and, thus, they are more extrinsically motivated to
continue to use it” (p. 38). This is an important idea because it points out a specific
difference from Facebook. The literature allows that people are looking less for a sense of
community in their use of Twitter, but more of a measurable benefit. Twitter is a source
of quick information, so users view it as a medium that directly benefits their daily lives.

Overall, it is important to understand that Twitter has a different affect on a
community than Facebook does. In general, users view Twitter as a place to find the
information they need quickly. The Quarter Horse community could market Twitter as
something that is worth learning to use because it will directly benefit them. Twitter is
less about developing an individual personality, and more about exchanging information.

Research Question #4: Who should be facilitating collaboration within the Quarter
Horse community through Twitter?

All of the experts agreed that part of the beauty of Twitter is the fact that it allows
for many different facilitators, depending on the focus for the specific handle. For the
Quarter Horse community specifically, these handles would include the various AQHA
related handles, community members, trainers, AQHA corporate partners and many
others. Several of the experts did mention that it would be beneficial to have one
reputable organization overseeing the information released on Twitter. This is not to say
that others couldn’t release information to the public, but the reputable organization could
maintain accuracy through their retweets.

The literature vocalizes similar ideas. “Twitter is basically one big interest well. It
is arguably easier to build up a truer interest graph on Twitter, as it is all about what else
you are interested in, other than yourself. Not only does it seem natural to see a brand
Tweet in your feed, but it is probably much more likely that the brand in question is of
interest to you. Twitter, it could be argued, has greater commercial potential than Facebook” (Levy, 2012, p. 1). This idea goes along with the idea that certain organizations would be able to use Twitter to their benefit. While the purpose of Twitter is to have as many facilitators and ideas as possible, the medium lends itself to individual facilitators, as well.

Overall, Twitter has several potential benefits for the Quarter Horse community. Not only does Twitter allow for many different facilitators, and many different ideas, it also lends itself to facilitation by a single organization. Followers of AQHA follow the organization because they are interested in what it has to say. AQHA could utilize Twitter feeds to get information out to the public because followers expect to see that information.

**Research Question #5: Where can AQHA most effectively target their Twitter campaigns to boost collaboration within the Quarter Horse community?**

The Quarter Horse industry experts all agreed that Twitter lends itself to targeting many different populations. AQHA has several Twitter handles, which would all have different target audiences. Several of the experts did allow that certain groups could be targeted initially, including members, younger generations and show exhibitors. It would make sense that different handles would each target one of these groups.

The literature shows a similar viewpoint to the experts. In general, the literature describes Twitter as a medium that does not require one target for the entirety of a community. “There is no need to try and devise a platform that works for all audiences; embrace the cultural nuances of each target, and create a social presence to serve each of them” (Grensing-Pophal, 2012, p. 25). This idea is important to successful use of Twitter.
Although a target is required for successful utilization of the medium, a separate handle can be created for each target audience. Twitter has the ability to cater to each individual population within a community.

Overall, Twitter enables organizations within the Quarter Horse community to target many different populations. That being said, each individual handle should lend itself to a specific audience. In the case of AQHA, the AQHA handle could target members, the Journal handle could target exhibitors, and so on. It is important to decide on a target for each handle, but the beauty of Twitter is that it allows for creation of as many handles as necessary.

Research Question #6: How can success and widespread usage of Twitter within the Quarter Horse community be measured?

The experts all agreed that success with Twitter could be measured. Unfortunately, the relatively new medium does not allow for sophisticated analysis at this time, but the experts agree that success is measured with and increase in followers and participation. In the future, though, several of the experts expressed ideas that success might be measured with increased attendance at events, as well as purchases, based off of specific tweets.

Although the current literature on Twitter use is similar in the ideas that success with Twitter is measureable, it also encourages organizations to work out a more concrete way of measuring that success. “Many nonprofit groups aren't realizing their potential because they haven't figured out how to measure results on social media or with other efforts. They need to build strong networks and turn the findings into data that offer insights on whether they're moving people from simply tweeting about a social issue to making a financial donation to an organization working on that issue, or to emailing an
elected official with the power to change things” (Kanter & Paine, 2012, p. 49). The literature seems to fit along with the ideas that the experts have expressed for the future.

Overall, the experts and the literature are similar in that they say that Twitter success is measureable. The main question today seems to be how success should be measured. Since Twitter is a fairly new medium, success has been measured with an increase in followers and participation. But organizations within the Quarter Horse community might want to start putting other forms of measurement into action. Ideally, followers would actually start taking action based on seeing a tweet from an organization.

**Recommendations for Practice**

After completion of this study, substantial data has been collected on the topic of Twitter as a collaboration tool within the Quarter Horse community. Given the information, it is important to pinpoint the most useful information and present it for future online and interactive communication, online editing and equine journalism professionals. Some recommendations for practice include understanding the differences in purpose of Twitter as a medium, developing a specific target for each individual Twitter handle, and finding innovative ways to measure success.

**Understand Twitter’s Purpose**

In order to use Twitter effectively, it is important to understand Twitter’s purpose. Once an organization fully understands how Twitter is meant to be used, the organization will find marketing it as a tool much more effective. As the experts and literature have explained, Twitter’s purpose is completely different than Facebook’s purpose. Hughes, et al. said that “Twitter, unlike Facebook, offers the opportunity to reinstate some of the anonymity previously sought in online communication. Users do not need to post
information about themselves to find ‘friends’ and thus the site focuses less on ‘who you are’ and more on what you have to say” (p. 1). That being said, Twitter is best used as a place to learn a lot of information in a short amount of time.

A good way to market Twitter to members of the Quarter Horse community who might be hesitant to join in the conversation would be to highlight the benefits that go along with using it. Since Twitter’s purpose is to be a wealth of information, members can stay up to date on the happenings in the industry, get play-by-plays of what’s happening at a show, and take advantage of deals when making purchases. Members might be more interested in giving Twitter a try if they see that there is a direct benefit to them as consumers.

**Develop Specific Targets**

Twitter is effective because it is one big interest well. This idea allows for organizations to have as many various targets as they find effective. That being said, an organization can optimize effectiveness by targeting a specific population with each handle. Experts within the industry agree that there are some potential targets that would be very beneficial to start off with, in terms of the Quarter Horse community. That being said, the literature does say, “There is no need to try and devise a platform that works for all audiences; embrace the cultural nuances of each target, and create a social presence to serve each of them” (Grensing-Pophal, 2012, p. 25).

When creating something that works best for the Quarter Horse industry specifically, Twitter is a great tool because of the fact that a handle can be created to meet the needs of various targets. In working with current handles, the AQHA handle might be useful in targeting AQHA members. This could mean getting followers to become
members, or getting members to take advantage of discounts or other deals. The Journal handle would be ideal for targeting exhibitors at shows because the Journal is already the place that people turn to for information about shows. An initial target could feasibly be chosen for each additional handle that AQHA uses.

**Find Ways to Measure Success**

The most important idea that came about through this study seems to be the fact that organizations need to find ways of measuring success, other than just simply counting followers. The experts within the Quarter Horse industry have voiced the fact that no one really knows how this will happen yet. The literature has similar opinions. Kanter and Paine said, “Organizations that successfully utilize social media don’t just count tweets, they measure the progress made toward achieving missions and goals” (p. 49).

While counting followers and tweets does give an idea of whether or not a specific audience is growing, AQHA might consider some further testing. As the experts said, success might be measured based on the number of followers that are becoming members, attendance at events and purchases. One way to get users involved, and thus measure the success of their Twitter campaigns, might be to publicize a certain discount or event only on the medium. Then, the organization could gauge exactly how many people took advantage of the discount, or attended an event, because of a tweet. This might also encourage new users to try Twitter.

**Study Conclusion**
In conclusion, it is clear that more research into how to measure success with Twitter would be hugely beneficial. Due to the fact that Twitter is a fairly new social media tool, as well as the time constraints created by conducting a study within a 10-week period, a definitive conclusion on measurement is premature. For these reasons, further research on Twitter’s effect on the Quarter Horse community should be done. Overall, the study presented the collective data from experts in related fields, as well as a review of current literature surrounding the topic. The study serves as an educational tool for organizations and professionals within the Quarter Horse industry. While more research must be done in the future, recommendations about using Twitter as a social media tool, facilitating collaboration between community members, and establishing targets can be taken away from the study. Not only that, but the study could be used by anyone interested in utilizing Twitter to create collaboration within a community. Based on the ever-increasing usage of Twitter, this study could also be used by others as a springboard for additional research on the subject.

References


Appendix A

Interview Transcripts: Jody Reynolds

The following interview was conducted via email to get expert opinions from an online and interactive communication perspective based on a questionnaire about Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community.

Interviewer: Allison Grayson
Respondent: Director of Online and Interactive Communication at the American Quarter Horse Association
(Jody Reynolds)
Date of Interview: 2/20/2013
Interview Transcription:
Allison Grayson: “In your field, which social media outlets do you find effective in creating collaboration between members of the Quarter Horse community?”

Jody Reynolds: “By far, Facebook is proving the social network of choice for our horse-loving audience. However, Pinterest and Twitter are growing.”

AG: “Is there any one outlet that seems particularly effective?”

JR: “For achieving responses, Facebook is hands-down our go-to social network. We have a huge fan base, so if we need them to take an action or read an important news bite, we are very likely to reach them via the Facebook platform.”

AG: “Why do you think that is?”

JR: “Horse people seem to be drawn to Facebook in general – to the community feel, to the ease of sharing photos and accomplishments. On AQHA’s Facebook, we answer every question and provide a fun environment that teaches people new ways to enjoy their horses. With Facebook, we’re able to be more up-close and personal with our fans than any other network.”

AG: “Do you see a difference in participation from followers in your use of Facebook versus Twitter? How so?”

JR: “I was told by a social media professional about a year ago to “give up on Twitter. It’s not where horse people are at.” I disagreed with him then, and I still do. It’s slower growing, but Twitter has a following, and they seem to appreciate our event coverage and quick newsy tidbits. Our Facebook fans want to interact with us and share our photos and ask us questions. Our Twitter followers want the little bits of news we disseminate. They’re using the mediums exactly as they were built for. We simply strive to be anywhere a fan or potential fan would want us to be, in whatever form makes sense for the medium.”

AG: “What effect does Twitter have on the Quarter Horse community, if any? Would you say that members of the community are receptive to Twitter? If not, why do you think that is?”

JR: “Twitter is growing on our industry. It’s still not prolific, but in a few years, it might just be the big thing. Our goal is to continue to be there NOW, and be ready for growth.”

AG: “Would you say that Quarter Horse community members understand how to collaborate and exchange information via Twitter?”

JR: “A lot don’t understand Twitter, and I think that’s why they hold tight to their Facebook security blanket. But we occasionally ask our Facebook fans to head on over to Twitter for contests, event coverage, etc. We’re warming them to the idea!”
AG: “As an expert in the field of Quarter Horse communication, who do you think are the ideal facilitators of collaboration through Twitter? Do you think that one particular organization should facilitate information?”

JR: “This is a tough question, but as I said before, we need to use the medium for which it was intended. Twitter is a free-for-all of great information that people can digest quickly and then share with their followers. The more facilitators, the merrier. At AQHA, we have numerous Twitter handles, all with specific duties. The Journal Twitter feeds info about our magazine and event coverage; the AQHA twitter gives news, membership discounts, and industry info; The America’s Horse Twitter discusses our member magazine as well as our companion blog site; etc.”

AG: “Do you think members of the Quarter Horse community (followers, trainers, members of AQHA) could facilitate exchanges of information?”

JR: “I think we already do. Through alliances, corporate partners and other friends, we are retweeting each other regularly. The more our industry grows on Twitter, the bigger this will all get.”

AG: “As leaders in the Quarter Horse industry, whom do you think AQHA should target in its Twitter campaigns?”

JR: “Our targets are different for each Twitter account. Potential members – we hope they follow any of our Twitters b/c we strive to cross-promote enough that every follower gets exposed to a membership message from time to time. We want the showing audience to follow the Journal. We want young people to follow @aqhya. Etc. We’re fortunate to have so many irons in the Twitter fire. It gives us a lot of potential for reaching new followers in some way.”

AG: “Are there certain obstacles that AQHA might face in using Twitter that other organizations might not face?”

JR: “Just that Twitter is still a new frontier for many horse people. They are extremely comfortable with Facebook, and I don’t think they want to add another medium to their daily repertoire.”

AG: “In your opinion, how might success and widespread usage of Twitter in the Quarter Horse community be measured?”

JR: “Right now, we measure in simple terms: By our number of followers, retweets, hashtag use, etc. In the future, we’ll measure success by how many people came to a show because of a special discount code we tweeted; or by how many people bought a new membership specifically because of a tweet.”
Appendix B

Interview Transcripts: Tara Christiansen

The following interview was conducted via email to get expert opinions from an online editing perspective based on a questionnaire about Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community.

Interviewer: Allison Grayson
Respondent: Online Editor for the American Quarter Horse Association
(Tara Christiansen)
Date of Interview: 2/26/2013

Interview Transcription:
Allison Grayson: “In your field, which social media outlets do you find effective in creating collaboration between members of the Quarter Horse community? Is there any one outlet that seems particularly effective?”

Tara Christiansen: “When it comes to collaborating between members, and creating a dialogue between our association and its members, Facebook is the most effective medium.”

AG: “Why do you think that is?”

TC: “Facebook seems to be the most comfortable form of social media for American Quarter Horse fans to use. Facebook can be used to accomplish so many goals – be it reconnecting with old acquaintances, networking with users that have similar interests and staying abreast of news. Facebook is also very user-friendly and visual. As a result, users have taken the time and effort to familiarize themselves with the ins and outs of Facebook and have learned how to customize Facebook to their taste. Since Facebook is so versatile and can be used to accomplish so many goals, American Quarter Horse fans turn to that social medium first. With it being the most-used form of social media, AQHA members are more apt to collaborate amongst themselves through Facebook because it is the proverbial water cooler.”

AG: “Do you see a difference in participation from followers in your use of Facebook versus Twitter? How so?”

TC: “While AQHA has many more Facebook fans than it does Twitter followers, the relative engagement that we see with Facebook fans is much greater than with Twitter followers. AQHA Facebook fans are more apt to “like,” comment on or share a post or photo than AQHA Twitter followers are to retweet, favorite or reply to a Tweet.”

AG: “What effect does Twitter have on the Quarter Horse community, if any? Would you say that members of the community are receptive to Twitter? If not, why do you think that is?”

TC: “The vast majority of the Quarter Horse community is not receptive to Twitter. Twitter is not as visual, nor as user-friendly, as Facebook. Both of these factors are turn-offs for start-up social media users. Since Quarter Horse enthusiasts enjoy an outdoor hobby, most do not have unlimited amounts of time to spend studying social media etiquette. Because Facebook is more user-intuitive than Twitter, there is more of an ease for Quarter Horse enthusiasts to “get down to business” on Facebook right from the start.”

AG: “Would you say that Quarter Horse community members understand how to collaborate and exchange information via Twitter?”

TC: “Most Quarter Horse enthusiasts do not know how to collaborate or exchange information on Twitter. Users might retweet or favorite, but seldom do they tag the proper entity or use a hash tag to trend. It is not uncommon for us to see tweets that
incorporate “AQHA,” but those are more prevalent than seeing @AQHA or #AQHA, a handle and hash tag that we try to incorporate in tweets not only from @AQHA, but also from our other AQHA Twitter entities, such as @AQHAJournal, @AQHAnews, @AQHAracing, @AmericasHorse and @AQHYA. When Quarter Horse enthusiasts do use a hash tag in a tweet, it is generally for phrases that are not trend-worthy.”

AG: “As experts in the field of Quarter Horse communication, who do you think are the ideal facilitators of collaboration through Twitter? Do you think that one particular organization should facilitate information?”

TC: “Information should be disseminated through multiple avenues. With this in mind, AQHA has created several Twitter handles, each targeted at a specific segment within the industry. As the world’s largest equine breed association, we maintain a steady stream of news generated through the multiple facets of our industry. When a news item is on hand, it is initially tweeted from the handle with the most suitable audience for the news. From there, it is retweeted by the other handles with similar focuses. When appropriate, we also designate certain staff members as our news leaders for an event and encourage our association’s followers to follow the staff’s personal Twitter handles. Not only does this put more of a “face” on our event coverage, but it works well when we have multiple events occurring at the same time.”

AG: “Do you think members of the Quarter Horse community (followers, trainers, members of AQHA) could facilitate exchanges of information?”

TC: “Quarter Horse enthusiasts do facilitate exchanges of information, but there is a lot of room for improvement. Only a handful of trainers are Twitter users, although quite a few AQHA members are on Twitter. To encourage members to disseminate the information that we are tweeting, we try to engage with them by retweeting and favoriting their posts, with hopes that they will one day do the same for us. Additionally, our tweets are not always news-oriented – we like to throw in insightful quotes from other AQHA members. We find that these quotes are very retweetable, and by encouraging retweeting of the quotes we are essentially training our users to retweet news items.”

AG: “As leaders in the Quarter Horse industry, whom do you think AQHA should target in its Twitter campaigns? Are there certain obstacles that AQHA might face in using Twitter that other organizations might not face?”

TC: “When tweeting, AQHA must identify the audience for the tweet first. Because we have so many Twitter handles, it gives us many options, but it is essential that the right handle be chosen to tweet first. Additionally, AQHA is a membership-based organization. While much of our information is applicable to the general horse world, it is also important that our tweets be seen as good public relations for our association. Many times we have tweets that are promoting membership or magazine subscriptions, but it is essential that the tweets be crafted so that the Twitter user sees the tweet as a benefit to them, not as promotional propaganda. If too many promotional tweets are posted, a
Twitter user will become disenfranchised with the handle’s tweets and will unfollow. That is something that we want to avoid.”

AG: “In your opinion, how might success and widespread usage of Twitter in the Quarter Horse community be measured?”

TC: “For us, Twitter success is measured by user engagement and increase in followers. With an increase in followers, we know that our messages are being shared with a greater audience. While retweets and favoriting are also desired, we relish in replies from our users. A reply, to us, means that our message spoke enough to the user that they were encouraged to communicate back. Even better is when a user tags us in a tweet. In instances of replies and tags, we try to reward our users by featuring their tweets in the Mailbox section of our magazine, The American Quarter Horse Journal. By featuring our reader write-ins, not only are we applauding their courage for tweeting, but we are encouraging other members of the Quarter Horse community to join us on Twitter.”

Appendix C

Interview Transcripts: Christine Hamilton

The following interview was conducted via telephone to get expert opinions from an equine journalism perspective based on a questionnaire about Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community.

Interviewer: Allison Grayson
Respondent: Editor for The American Quarter Horse Journal
(Christine Hamilton)
Date of Interview: 3/5/2013

Interview Transcription:
Allison Grayson: “In your field, which social media outlets do you find effective in creating collaboration between members of the Quarter Horse community?”

Christine Hamilton: “Twitter and Facebook are definitely the top two. And I think our website, too. It’s part of that population, you know?”

AG: “Is there any one outlet that seems particularly effective?”

CH: “I would guess that Facebook is, but Twitter is, too. Twitter is best for like news coverage and when we want to link to news stories and things like that. I would think that they both kind of work together. The purpose of Twitter and Facebook, for us, is to drive people to our website, so that we can try to monetize something. So, our goal is to get them to our website to either pass along news that’s important to our members, and/or to promote things like membership deals, or registration and transfers, or informative booklets at America’s Horse Daily.”

AG: “Why do you think that is?”

CH: “Facebook is the most effective because it’s the largest community. But one of the other things, as an aside, is fostering a membership community, and I think Facebook definitely helps with that, too. It helps our website be a little more interactive, you know? We post a story and then we can push it on Facebook, and then it becomes part of Facebook.”

AG: “Do you see a difference in participation from followers in your use of Facebook versus Twitter? How so?”

CH: “I think our Facebook population is significantly larger than our Twitter population. But we’d have to add up all our different accounts because we have several different Twitter accounts. So we have the Journal and AQHA, and then we have the Youth Twitter feed and the Foundation. So we’ve got a lot more different Twitter feeds, whereas AQHA has bundled it into one Facebook page. So, you’d have to add up the followers on all of our different Twitter accounts. We thought about the Racing Journal and the Journal having its own Facebook page, but it was really kind of counter productive. But Twitter has lent itself to that because the individual departments can retweet things. It’s less of a one place presence, so different departments can have a Twitter feed and then we can link it to our Facebook page. But it’s more effective to have one Facebook page, for one message for our entire AQHA community.”

AG: “What effect does Twitter have on the Quarter Horse community, if any? Would you say that members of the community are receptive to Twitter? If not, why do you think that is?”

CH: “You know, I think it’s like with anything else, different things appeal to different people. So, I would not say that a majority of Quarter Horse members do anything with Twitter. It’s not a majority by any means, but there are different populations within
AQHA that do have Twitter feeds. I think our All-Around group and our show membership is more likely to be involved in Twitter, which is good because we can get news to them that way. But there are people in all aspects of the Quarter Horse population that are on Twitter. So, I just think it’s another way of reaching people in a different way.”

AG: “Would you say that Quarter Horse community members understand how to collaborate and exchange information via Twitter?”

CH: “Yea, but you know you really need a smart phone to do Twitter. So, that population out there that doesn’t have that, you know, they’re less likely to have a Twitter account. I think we have found, just because we have a rural community, we have a largely ranching community… Although a lot of them are internet connected and very tech savvy, there’s a significant population that isn’t. And I think our horse population is steadily getting more and more social media savvy. I think if you were to look at trends, our Quarter Horse community, comparing it to trends in other communities like the NFL sports community, we lag a little behind just because of the nature of dealing with rural communities that wouldn’t have high speed internet and stuff like that. I think our Quarter Horse community is still on that trend, but just a little bit behind other populations.”

AG: “What are the ideal factors in getting people to start using Twitter?”

CH: “Word of mouth. At the Smartpak West Novice Championship last year, I was really active with my Twitter feed. I made it really interactive, so that it wasn’t just me. It wasn’t just out there, I was talking to people and saying, ‘Hey, are you following me on Twitter?’ So, I think it’s helpful when you’re in an active show situation, where the Twitter feed can potentially help them with the show. I was Tweeting, ‘Exhibitor meeting at 7pm,’ ‘The class is about to end in the coliseum.’ So if they can get the idea that the Twitter feed is current and it’s helping right there where they are, that’s where I picked up followers and people who were interested in doing it. And then we have other ways, like when I tweet, it posts directly to my Facebook page and I think I gather followers that way as well. They see a Facebook post and they immediately see that it was posted via Twitter. It’s nice when it does that, too, with the Journal. When we tweet from the Journal and it posts to the AQHA Facebook page, we pick people up that way. But it’s harder to get people when you have people that just aren’t going to do it. They’re a little intimidated by just playing around with new things digitally and that digital interface. You’re just not going to get those people.

AG: “As an expert in the field of Quarter Horse communication, who do you think are the ideal facilitators of collaboration through Twitter? Do you think that one particular organization should facilitate information?”

CH: “I don’t know how you would do that because I think with Twitter it’s so much more of a chatting back and forth, whereas a Facebook page is a presence. It is a personality, but it’s also a presence. And I think that the nice thing about our Twitter feeds is that there are different accounts. Like I have my Twitter feed, and it’s my personal one, so I
make it me; but I use it very much for work. So there are things that I’ll tweet and then the Journal will retweet. But then there are things that do come straight from the Journal. So I do think that, for an organization like us, it is important to have one person or a group of people monitoring our official Twitter feed. Our message is so important, and the information that we promote. So, I could say something on my Twitter feed and it won’t affect anything, but if it is an error, it’s good that the Journal doesn’t retweet it. There’s a protection there. I do think for us, specifically, even if you have a bunch of different Twitter feeds, it’s important to have one person making sure that we have a consistent message. So like our Journal Twitter feed, Tara and I both tweet on it. Tara takes the lead and I know what she likes tweeted, but a lot of times I’ll ask her. And it’s nice that Jody has the AQHA feed because then I can suggest something to her, and then she can retweet it if it’s consistent with our message.

AG: “Do you think members of the Quarter Horse community (followers, trainers, members of AQHA) could facilitate exchanges of information?”

CH: “It’s nice with Twitter, by following trainers in our community, we can help foster that community and retweet from them. So it’s nice, but it can also get a little chaotic. I think Twitter is a little more chaotic.”

AG: “As leaders in the Quarter Horse industry, whom do you think AQHA should target in its Twitter campaigns?”

CH: “That’s a good question. I haven’t been able to notice a trend in that sense on who is and who isn’t on Twitter. I would target exhibitors, just as a rule. I would target the show exhibitors because they’re on the road a lot. I feel like it is a quick medium for getting fast information out. And if you’re on the road and you’re just using your phone, it’s easier to check Twitter than it is a Facebook page, frankly. So I would go about it that route. Like at the Novice Championships, promoting it as a newsfeed for the show. You know, so like, ‘Chris is at the show and she’s tweeting from the Show Office,’ and that kind of thing.

AG: “Are there certain obstacles that AQHA might face in using Twitter that other organizations might not face?”

CH: “I think the other one (besides rural communities and lack of smart phones) is the sheer unfamiliarity, you know, not being very tech savvy, and just not really wanting to engage with it at all. You know, we have some people in the community that have a hard enough time with email.”

AG: “In your opinion, how might success and widespread usage of Twitter in the Quarter Horse community be measured?”

CH: “That’s another good question because it seems like, when I go to conferences like AHP, that’s the magic number. People are trying to figure out how you measure success. And right now, it would just be followers, but we want to find a way to monetize it. And
if there would be a way to link Twitter feeds to click-throughs and actual purchases, that’s where I would start. Just from the voices that I’ve heard in the industry, that’s kind of everyone’s magic question right now, ‘How do you monetize it?’ And is the fact that I’m creating a community and gaining followers at the Novice Championship, is that equating into dollars for AQHA? And I can’t say that it is, but I can say that it’s increasing a perception of AQHA serving their membership, and that is valuable. We can’t hang a dollar amount on that, but when I’m running around, and the show office is giving me messages and I’m tweeting them, the perception of me giving them a service is pretty valuable. Members feeling that they are a part of that community and fostering that community is valuable, we just can’t hang a dollar amount on it. You know, it’s brand loyalty, it creates brand loyalty, is what we hope.

Appendix D

Interview Transcripts: Holly Clanahan

The following interview was conducted via email to get expert opinions from an equine journalism perspective based on a questionnaire about Twitter use within the Quarter Horse community.

Interviewer: Allison Grayson
Respondent: Editor of America’s Horse Magazine
(Holly Clanahan)
Date of Interview: 3/7/2013

Interview Transcription:
Allison Grayson: “In your field, which social media outlets do you find effective in creating collaboration between members of the Quarter Horse community?”

Holly Clanahan: “Facebook and Twitter seem to be the most valuable, with the biggest target audience.”

AG: “Is there any one outlet that seems particularly effective?”

HC: “Facebook seems to be more popular; we certainly can speak to more people there.”

AG: “Why do you think that is?”

HC: “Because there is no character limit, and a better ability to share photos, Facebook seems to allow easier sharing and commenting.”

AG: “Do you see a difference in participation from followers in your use of Facebook versus Twitter? How so?”

HC: “For one thing, Facebook users seem to expect a personal response, whereas Twitter seems less personal … more putting a link or snippet of information out there, rather than a conversation.”

AG: “What effect does Twitter have on the Quarter Horse community, if any?”

HC: “Because of the hashtag function, it’s a great way for people at an event to talk to one another or share information from AQHA about the event.”

AG: “Would you say that members of the community are receptive to Twitter? If not, why do you think that is?”

HC: “I think its acceptance is limited. I’ve heard some horse people say they ‘don’t get it’ and are confused by the hieroglyphics @, #, etc.”

AG: “Would you say that Quarter Horse community members understand how to collaborate and exchange information via Twitter?”

HC: “I suspect that the younger generations are the ones most keyed in to the nuances of Twitter. But it would be great to see some actual demographics of these users. Looking at the numbers of followers/fans, though, you can see that the AQHA Twitter account has about 19,000 followers, while the Facebook page has topped 600,000. So you can see which one is better understood/preferred.”

AG: “As experts in the field of Quarter Horse communication, who do you think are the ideal facilitators of collaboration through Twitter?”

HC: “Because of the nature of social media in general and Twitter specifically, there is a cacophony of voices trying to be heard. It’s rather noisy in here! So I think you’ll always
have information being thrown out by a variety of sources, some more reputable than others. That’s where AQHA and other reputable organizations have a good foothold. People will tend to trust (and thus share/retweet) the information they receive from us and will put a higher value on any interaction with us. A long answer to say that reputation matters.”

AG: “Do you think that one particular organization should facilitate information? Do you think members of the Quarter Horse community (followers, trainers, members of AQHA) could facilitate exchanges of information?”

HC: “Let’s say a news release goes out on aqha.com. We’ll have a link to that release on our Twitter feed, and of course, anyone else could also tweet the link. Most generally, that’s a positive, no matter who is sending it out. But in order to continue growing our social media presence, we need other people to retweet us … So that their followers will see AQHA’s social media outlets and then follow us. Same principle, obviously, on Facebook. It does take a village.”

AG: “As leaders in the Quarter Horse industry, whom do you think AQHA should target in its Twitter campaigns?”

HC: “Again, I’d really love to see some studies done on AQHA’s (or the Quarter Horse industry’s) social media users. As an organization, we do see the need to tailor our message to the users that are already out there. But we need to get a better idea of who those people are and what they want from us.”

AG: “Are there certain obstacles that AQHA might face in using Twitter that other organizations might not face?”

HC: “No. One would be the suspected generational divide. Most of our members are 40+, and I bet that’s not true for Twitter. A second consideration – I’m not sure you could call it an obstacle – is that AQHA’s social media admins do have to be very careful in what they say. Again, we have to guard that reputation, and we have to be careful not to misspeak, lest that comment get retweeted around the world. Too many organizations have had PR nightmares after off-the-cuff remarks, and we don’t want that to happen here. Perhaps that does take away from the running commentary nature of Twitter, but it’s better to be safe, and possibly a bit late with a response, than sorry.”

AG: “In your opinion, how might success and widespread usage of Twitter in the Quarter Horse community be measured?”

HC: “I think you can measure success in several different ways. First, for the ‘hipsters’ who think the hieroglyphics are cool, it’s important that AQHA remains relevant to them. Yes, we speak your language. Secondly, the dissemination of information is a member/industry service, so that counts for something – the fact that we are actively seeking outlets to spread education and news. That helps position AQHA as the place to turn to (or follow) for information. I suppose the ultimate marker of success is when we
can begin to turn followers/fans into members. I’m not sure how that can be tracked, but that is the idea: To make Quarter Horse lovers feel like part of the AQHA family, so that they will want to take the next step and join the Association, or perhaps purchase one of our America’s Horse Daily reports, from Quarter Horse Outfitters, etc.”