

Media Preferences and Uses of Texas Tech University Quail Tech Supporters

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Introduction/Need for Research

Media preferences of farmers (Millennium Research, 2016), landowners (Spraberry, 2011), and general agriculturists (Meyers, Gracey, Irlbeck, & Akers, 2015) have been heavily studied lately. Yet, very little current academic research focuses on communication preferences of a specific group of stakeholders that are heavily involved in, or passionate about, wildlife and outdoors – Quail hunters and enthusiasts. For Quail Tech, a research organization at [University], knowing the media preferences of supporters is crucial to the success of the organization as well as the conservation of the declining Northern Bobwhite and Scaled Quail populations in [state].

The Quail Tech research program is an organization that educates biologists, landowners, and the general public about quail conservation. Ultimately, Quail Tech aims to recruit corporate partnerships for funding and support while also supplying educational information and conservation recommendations to the organization's audiences (Quail Tech, 2022).

Quail conservation research organizations rely on area ranches to serve as locations to conduct various forms of research, such as bird populations, feeding strategies, and habitats. As the [state] quail population continues to decline, there is a need to establish relationships with landowners and stakeholders through various media methods. The purpose of this mixed method study was to analyze and determine communication preferences of the landowners, stakeholders, and supporters of the Quail Tech organization. The research was guided by the objective to explore which social media sites, traditional media usage, and behavioral patterns were most common among supporters.

Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted through the lens of Uses and Gratifications Theory. This theory seeks to explain the why people use and engage with certain media. It also explores media use behaviors (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). The theory states that media use is intentional, media choices are driven by a person's felt needs, an individual initiates the media selection, and a person can state the reasons he or she chose to consume specific media (Katz et al., 1974).

Methodology

Using a 16-question survey questionnaire with multiple choice, rank order, and text entry responses, Qualtrics survey software was utilized. Questions were categorized by asking about media preferences, media consuming behavior, and demographics. The preference questions asked survey respondents how they prefer to receive information about quail and hunting. Behavioral questions asked how often social media sites are used, when respondents were most active on social media, and how social media is used to gain information. Demographic questions included classification of hunters, land managers, and age.

A link to the questionnaire was emailed to more than 500 individuals on the Quail Tech research supporter listserv. Since there was no budget to incentive responses, only 45 completed questionnaires were received, a response rate of 9%. After the data were collected, the researchers used Microsoft Excel to analyze data and report the frequency data.

Results

The survey respondents' preference for receiving information about quail and hunting was as follows: 60.3% email, 16.2% social media, 10.3% print media, 8.8% mail, and 4.4% text

messages. In terms of social media, 30.56% of respondents regularly used Facebook and 25% used Instagram. On the other end of the spectrum, zero respondents used Snapchat, 2.17% used Pinterest, and 4.17% used TikTok. Respondents were active on social media either in the morning or at night, with 14.71% active from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 17.65% active from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. In a text entry box, respondents stated their preferred outdoor/hunting magazines consisted of *Covey Rise*, *Texas Parks & Wildlife*, *Lone Star Outdoor News*, *Pond Boss*, *Point Dog Journal*, *Shooting Sportsman*, *Gray's Sporting Journal*, *Bowhunter*, and *Gun Dog*.

The quail research team may host a workshop for the program's supporters but wanted to gauge interest. One hundred percent of the respondents said they would attend a workshop with three hours the preferred length (58.5%). From a demographic standpoint, 42.86% of the respondents were aged 60 or over. Additionally, 64.29% were both land managers and hunters.

Conclusion

The data gathered from this survey provided relevant and important information about the communication preferences of Quail Tech supporters. With a majority of the respondents categorized as hunters and land managers aged 60 and over, the researchers were not surprised at the low preference of social media and the high preference toward email. Email is commonly used by all generations and most enjoy the convenience of the communication (Yuan et al., 2016). With this in mind, an email marketing campaign would be a useful communication method for all ages that support Quail Tech. In addition, valuable insight was received relating to social media behaviors such as active times and site usage. By creating content and posting on Facebook or Instagram in the morning or evening, social media insights would increase due to the accommodation of Quail Tech supporters' behavioral active times for social media. Additionally, the text entry responses for YouTube and magazine preferences gave names of channels and magazines that could be useful for article publications and advertisements. Overall, the survey data provided information about the audience of Quail Tech, and therefore, provided direction for the organization to create a campaign based off the behaviors and preferences of the organization's supporters.

Implications/Recommendations/Impact on Profession

Based on the information gathered for the survey, it is recommended that Quail Tech create a communication campaign based on the behavior and preference findings to successfully reach the current demographic of the organization's supporters while also being inclusive of similar audiences that may want to support the organization at a later time. Once the campaign is in progress, it is recommended that accurate insights are analyzed on all social media platforms to correlate those findings with the survey responses to determine if any communication methods should stay the same, be taken away, or be altered. This study analyzed data from the supporters of the Quail Tech organization, a study of communication use of other wildlife conservation organization would be beneficial to determine the overall demographic, behaviors, and preferences of other wildlife research organizations.

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