

An Assessment of the Thoroughbred Racing Industry Constituents in the United States.

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INTRODUCTION

The equine industry in the U.S. involves \$102 billion and employs over 460,000 people with 9.2 million horses nationwide (Equine Business Association 2020). It has changed significantly since the racing industry started in the 1950s in terms of popularity and cultural trends. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the contemporary constituents of the thoroughbred racing industry; to summarize their general feelings, perceptions, and opinions about the industry; and to examine whether the thoroughbred racing industry is increasing or decreasing in popularity. These include how likely constituents are to recommend the sport, the extent to which they follow horse races in the media, how often and why they attend or bet on a race, their opinion about trends in the horse racing industry, popularity in their state, and the profile of the typical constituent.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Is horse racing popularity increasing, decreasing, or about the same in each state? If so, how likely are constituents to recommend others to attend horse races?
- What are possible causes of constituents' inclinations towards the horse racing industry?
- Are there any trends in the responses?

METHODS OF INQUIRY

The Qualtrics XM Platform™ was used to conduct the survey. The survey was posted in five Facebook groups centered around thoroughbred racing from multiple regions of the country. The survey goal was to receive 75+ responses in a 6-week period. The survey went to approximately 205,700 members:

- Thoroughbred horse racing discussion, thoroughbred horse racing, Free horse racing tips, Free horse racing tips- no1 community, and Friendly horse questions.

The survey was shared on June 23, July 2, July 30, 2020.

DATA

There was very limited participation from the selected Facebook groups and received 14 completed surveys after the 6-week period.

Responses were analyzed to describe the extent to which the survey participants express trends about the industry in terms of their involvement and its popularity.

- For example, how likely survey participants are to recommend the sport, the extent to which they follow horse races in the media and its limitations, how often they attend or bet on a horse race last year and why they attend, their opinion about trends in the horse racing industry popularity in their state, and the profile of the typical constituent.

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Is horse racing popularity increasing, decreasing, or about the same in each state? If so, how likely are constituents to recommend others to attend horse races?

- Just under half of the respondents are thoroughbred owners and only 27% believe that horse racing popularity is decreasing in their state.
- The industries are declining. In terms of how likely constituents are to recommend others to attend horse races, 76.92% of participants in this study said that they are extremely likely.
- 85% of respondents noted that horse racing is their favorite sport while 15% noted that they were not extremely likely to recommend horse racing.
- 80% believe that the news presents contradictory stories and information about the industry.
- The challenges that the respondents mentioned fell into a few main topics: radical animal rights activists/PETA, lack of leadership/governing body, doping horses, public perception informed by media.

What are possible causes of constituents' inclinations towards the horse racing industry?

- Main contributing factors for inclinations towards the industry are demographics and media portrayal.
- 100% of the respondents follow horse racing in the media, and only 61.53% of them have an above average background in horses.
- About 77% of respondents or a member of their family have owned a horse which means that there are owners without strong backgrounds or education.
- 76.92% attend because they find racing interesting, 61.53% have an invested interest, and 46.15% because they can bet and win.
- 80% of the participants finding the media to be contradictory, they must rely on their background for guidance.

Are there any trends among the responses?

- 100% of the participants follow the media.
- 92% are Caucasian.
- 100% are watching or attending the Triple Crown races every year.
- 92% attend more than 5 times a year.
- 92% have owned or worked with horses in the past.
- The media plays a very large role in constituent relation to the industry and is definitely a challenge that the industry needs a plan.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Several chi-square tests of independence were intended to be conducted among variables such as state, horse racing popularity, invested interest, horse background, owner or fan, and household income. Unfortunately, due to very limited survey participation, the chi-square tests cannot be conducted.

- Are states and horse racing popularity independent or dependent?
- Is an invested interest independent or dependent of racing popularity?
- Is horse background independent or dependent of racing popularity?
- Is being an owner dependent or independent of household income?
- Is being an owner independent or dependent on racing popularity?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study consolidated and evaluated information about the equine industry.

The survey design may assist other studies in identifying trends in the industry that are relevant to stakeholders and constituents.

The survey design may be helpful in identifying trends to the general horseman or people involved in the industry as a whole.

Most studies are regionally based and specific; they do not evaluate the industry nationwide, or are generally focused on owners and exclude fans.

CONCLUSIONS

The literature reviewed in this study as well as the survey suggest that the thoroughbred racing industry in the United States is declining.

Since the percentage of the population that is Caucasian is decreasing in America, it becomes increasingly important to find avenues to make the industry more appealing to diverse populations.

Thoroughbred racing was made and is run by the white male.

Participants in this study noted the large impact that the media has in the industry.

The industry needs to concentrate on addressing media issues.

Without a centralized governing structure for the industry, state and regional boards face challenges addressing media stories or representing the industry.

Education is vital for the industry to become diverse, attractive, and strong, but it must be media unbiased.