

Title: Preferred Ways of Information Procurement of German Equine Feed Buyers During the Pre-Purchase Phase

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Preface and Acknowledgement

I created this report in the course of my bachelor thesis for the module AAFWi (Thesis Project), which is a fundamental component of the study program International Food Business. It is needed to fulfill the graduation requirements from Aeres University of Applied Sciences in Dronten (Netherlands) and Dalhousie University in Truro (Canada).

I developed the thesis topic in collaboration with the company EQUOVIS GmbH, an equine and hobby farming feed business, where I completed my graduation placement. I thank the EQUOVIS GmbH for providing a generous prize with which I was able to promote my survey and, thus, generate a great number of respondents.

In addition to that, my company supervisor Lara Furmaniak supported my initial idea and helped me transform it into a conceptual framework for my bachelor thesis. Throughout this process, I was assisted by my company supervisor Lara Furmaniak and my thesis coach Corry Uenk. I want to thank them for their effort and time put into the mentoring of my thesis project. Furthermore, I want to thank all people who participated in my survey, especially those willing to share it with their friends and acquaintances.

I hope you enjoy reading my report.

Sarah Stiens

Ostbevern, June 7th, 2022

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Executive Summary

This report shall provide an insight into the preferences for equine feed-related information procurement of German equine feed buyers during the pre-purchase phase. The findings are supposed to be of use for B2C equine feed businesses that sell on the German market. They contribute to creating a better understanding of their target group and enable the development of more effective marketing measures that facilitate information intake based on consumers' preferences.

The researcher collected the data through the aid of an online survey distributed via various offline and online channels and evaluated the results of 366 participants through frequency analyses and statistical analyses.

The findings clearly show that German equine feed buyers rely on a diverse set of sources to acquire data and obtain advice, which points out the complexity of preferences for information procurement during the pre-purchase phase. The importance and use of each type of information source need to be investigated further for the brands' individual target group in order to tailor the given implementations to a particular B2C equine feed business. However, it was evident that most German equine feed buyers value face-to-face advisory service in feed shops the most. More convenient options for information procurement, such as the visit of websites of equine feed brands or the exchange with other equestrians, are very popular too. Besides the opinions of other equestrians, German equine feed buyers, first and foremost, trust veterinarians' or equine nutritionists' advice. Feed consultants from equine feed brands are third favorite opinion leaders.

Besides this, the findings revealed that most German equine feed buyers seek equine feed-related information actively and prefer such requested learning experiences over passive ones. Further, the results showed that information procurement needs to become quicker, more convenient, and relevant to the consumers' individual concerns. In line with this finding, German equine feed buyers indicated the wish for a greater offer of quick and easy advice that forgoes effortful personal interaction with advisors. Nonetheless, German equine feed buyers prioritized the quality of information, understandability, and accessibility. Based on the conclusions given above, B2C equine feed businesses should set up a variety of possible contact points through which advisory services can be sought. Collaborations with third-party brand representatives, such as veterinarians or equine nutritionists, may be established to boost credibility and reliability. Besides this, B2C equine feed businesses should support the word-of-mouth spreading of their brand and consider providing advisory tools that simplify consumers' decision-making.

German Executive Summary

Diese Arbeit soll einen Einblick in die Präferenzen deutscher Pferdefutterkäufer bei der pferdefutterbezogenen Informationsbeschaffung in der Vorkaufsphase geben. Die Erkenntnisse sollen für B2C-Pferdefutterunternehmen, die auf dem deutschen Markt verkaufen, von Nutzen sein, da sie dazu beitragen, ihre Zielgruppe besser zu verstehen und effektivere Marketingmaßnahmen zu entwickeln, die die Informationsaufnahme der Verbraucher auf der Basis ihrer eigenen Vorlieben erleichtern sollen.

Die Forscherin sammelte die Daten durch eine Online-Umfrage, die über verschiedene Offline- und Online-Kanäle verbreitet wurde, und wertete die Ergebnisse von 366 Teilnehmern durch Häufigkeitsanalysen und statistische Analysen aus. Die Ergebnisse zeigen deutlich, dass sich deutsche Pferdefutterkäufer auf eine Vielzahl von Quellen verlassen, um Daten zu sammeln und sich beraten zu lassen, was auf die Komplexität der Präferenzen für die Informationsbeschaffung während der Vorkaufsphase hinweist. Um die gegebenen Implementierungen auf ein bestimmtes B2C-Pferdefuttergeschäft zuzuschneiden, müssen die Bedeutung und Nutzung jeder Art von Informationsquelle für die individuelle Zielgruppe der Marken weiter untersucht werden.

Es zeigte sich jedoch, dass die meisten deutschen Pferdefutterkäufer die persönliche Beratung im Futtermittelhandel am meisten schätzen. Auch komfortablere Möglichkeiten der Informationsbeschaffung, wie der Besuch von Websites von Pferdefuttermarken oder der Austausch mit anderen Reitern, erfreuen sich großer Beliebtheit. Neben der Meinung anderer Reiter vertrauen deutsche Pferdefutterkäufer vor allem auf den Rat von Tierärzten oder Pferdeernährungsberatern. Futterberater von Pferdefuttermarken sind die drittliebsten Meinungsbildner. Außerdem zeigten die Ergebnisse, dass die meisten deutschen Käufer von Pferdefutter aktiv nach pferdefutterbezogenen Informationen suchen und solche angeforderten Lernerfahrungen passiven vorziehen. Darüber hinaus zeigten die Ergebnisse, dass die Informationsbeschaffung schneller, bequemer und relevanter für die individuellen Anliegen der Verbraucher werden muss. Passend zu diesem Ergebnis äußerten deutsche Pferdefutterkäufer den Wunsch nach einem größeren Angebot an schneller und einfacher Beratung, das auf den aufwändigen persönlichen Kontakt mit Beratern verzichtet. Dennoch legten die Käufer von Pferdefutter in Deutschland Wert auf Informationsqualität, Verständlichkeit und Zugänglichkeit.

Basierend auf den oben genannten Schlussfolgerungen sollten B2C-Pferdefuttermittelunternehmen eine Vielzahl möglicher Anlaufstellen einrichten, über die Beratungsdienste in Anspruch genommen werden können. Kooperationen mit Markenvertretern von Drittanbietern wie Tierärzten oder Pferdeernährungswissenschaftlern können eingerichtet werden, um die Glaubwürdigkeit und Zuverlässigkeit zu erhöhen. Darüber hinaus sollten B2C-Pferdefutterunternehmen die Mundpropaganda ihrer Marke unterstützen und erwägen, Beratungsinstrumente bereitzustellen, die die Entscheidungsfindung der Verbraucher vereinfachen.

1. Introduction

1.1 Theoretical Framework

1.1.1 The Equine Industry

According to a survey on equestrian sports in Germany in 2019 conducted by the research institute Ipsos, around 11.2 million respondents indicated having an interest in horses and equestrian sports (Ipsos, 2019). Of this, approximately 600,000 German individuals own horses (Ipsos, 2019). Generally, countries with a significant number of equestrians are very likely also to exhibit a strong equine industry sector that makes substantial contributions to the national economic output (Conners & Feldman, 2009). Supporting businesses in the equine industry are facility operators, feed producers or manufacturers of equipment, horse trailers, and riding clothes, as well as many others (Conners & Feldman, 2009). The German Equestrian Federation identified more than 10,000 horse-related (service) companies or craft businesses, contributing to a German equine industry turnover of roughly 6.7 billion euros in 2020 (Deutsche Reiterliche Vereinigung e.V, 2020). Of this number, around 39% refer to horse husbandry and 61% to retail and services (Deutsche Reiterliche Vereinigung e.V, 2020).

1.1.2 The Relation between Animal Welfare and Equine Nutrition

Most German equestrians realize a shift towards a greater focus on animal welfare in equestrian sports and industry (Ipsos, 2019). At the same time, the research in the field of animal welfare in equestrian sports has increased considerably (Ikinger & Spiller, 2016). Survey results confirm the suggestions of a greater focus on animal welfare in equestrian sports since 67% of the survey participants indicated being willing to spend more money to promote their horse's welfare (Ipsos, 2019). According to the Welfare Monitoring System for Horses, developed by the Wageningen UR Livestock Research department (2012), husbandry makes a significant contribution to animal welfare. In this, feeding and health management are a central part (Ikinger & Spiller, 2016). Therefore, it can be concluded that feed is an influential factor in the welfare of the horses, varying considerably according to the feed's quality, frequency, and amount (Ikinger & Spiller, 2016). In addition to that, active as well as occasional equestrian athletes rank feeding among the three most decisive aspects of an equestrian facility (Ipsos, 2019). In order to ensure an animal-friendly feeding routine, experts recommend conducting regular roughage analyses, weight checks, and blood tests to determine deficiencies, as well as relying on advice from experts (Ikinger & Spiller, 2016).

Furthermore, feeding practices are directly related to nutrition, which plays a significant role in equine health (Roberts & Murray, 2014). Even though most horse owners classify themselves as being “somewhat knowledgeable” in equine nutrition (Martinson et al., 2006), a study conducted by Honoré and Uhlinger (1994) revealed that most of the respondents' horses were given inappropriate feed rations in four or more nutrient categories. Some cases even showed severe miscalculations of feeding rations (Honoré & Uhlinger, 1994). This is partly due to the owner's tendency to overestimate the horse's workload (Honoré & Uhlinger, 1994). However, according to Honoré and Uhlinger (1994), most horse owners are very interested in equine nutrition and gather related information from various sources. The available sources for equine nutrition education are diverse and tend to emerge with the increased technology use in all areas of life (Roberts & Murray, 2014).

1.1.3 Marketing in the Age of Multi-Channel Usage

The usage of multi-channels accompanies the development of new technological advancements in order to get in touch with product or service providers (Chheda et al., 2020). As many companies have noticed, the enormously increased importance of technologies in every aspect of life has greatly impacted how they can and must communicate with their customers (Manser et al., 2017). As a result, customers seek information and make purchases using many different devices and platforms (Maity et al., 2018) and even expect the sellers' availability to be multi-channel based (Wolny & Charoensuksai, 2014). This often makes the customer experience more social and, at the same time, more complex for sellers to predict and shape (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Due to the multitude of possibilities in today's omnichannel shopping environment, customers tend to have specific preferences for channel usage during the pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase phases (Venkatesan et al., 2007). This is called a dynamic channel preference, which evolves over the course of the customer's buying decision process (Wolny & Charoensuksai, 2014). For the sake of grasping the complexity of the multi-channel customer journey, a mapping can ease the identification of customers' navigations through these channels (Wolny & Charoensuksai, 2014) and allow the seller to identify and meet customers' needs and preferences (Bianchi et al., 2020).

1.1.4 Specifics to Information Procurement in the Equine Industry

Nowadays, German riders exchange ideas or inform themselves about horse-related topics through many different media (Ipsos, 2019). In fact, Whatsapp, Youtube, and other social media, as well as TV, are the most frequent channels (Ipsos, 2019). Nonetheless, the veterinarian remains the primary source of information about equine nutrition and ration formulation for most people (Roberts & Murray, 2014). However, the role and quality of nutrition in veterinary studies are rather unresearched (Roberts & Murray, 2014).

Moreover, in a study on horse owners' preferences for education on equine topics in 2006, most respondents tended to acquire information from equine magazines and other horse owners (Martinson et al., 2006). In addition to that, the respondents indicated that they would prefer to educate themselves through short publications, the internet, or evening seminars (Martinson et al., 2006). Another study by Hoffman et al. (2009) suggests that most horse owners remain to seek information on equine nutrition from the veterinarian, followed by their trainer and the feed store. Even though 81% of the respondents indicated making their own feed buying decisions, the results made clear that the veterinarian has great power over the respondents' feed and supplement purchase decisions (Hoffman et al., 2009). Besides this, the study noticed the growing importance of nutritionists' and consultants' advice as well (Hoffman et al., 2009).

1.2 Rationale for Research

The information above exemplifies that horse owners tend to have insufficient knowledge about appropriate feeding routines for their horses while showing a serious interest in acquiring such and, thus, contributing to the better health of their horses (Honoré & Uhlinger, 1994; Martinson et al., 2006). At the same time, sellers face the challenge of effectively reaching, informing, and educating existing and potential customers in a multi-channel market environment (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). This issue may diminish sales if the brand's marketing

measures are not in line with the actual buyers' behavior during the pre-purchase phase of their customer journey.

The knowledge gap is the non-existing data about German buyers' preferences for equine feed-related learning and perceptions of current offers in a B2C business environment. At the same time, the researcher was not able to find any recent research giving valuable advice for B2C equine feed businesses on the provision of equine nutrition information based on consumer preferences. Therefore, this investigation aims to provide an insight into the behavior of equine feed buyers during the pre-purchase phase. The scope is specifically on their preferences to inform themselves about the topic of equine feed, which also involves general equine nutrition and feeding routines. The results could provide the basis for mapping a customer journey rather than creating a map itself. The outcomes of this research are of interest to B2C feed businesses of the whole equine feed industry. It has significant benefits in terms of the provision of ideas for the improvement of marketing measures to ease and influence the buyers' processes of information-gathering and can be applied to all B2C equine feed brands in the market.

The guiding question in this research is quantitative and expressed as follows: “How do German equine feed buyers prefer to inform themselves about equine feed or feeding?” Certain sub-questions, which will help the researcher to evaluate the data obtained further or to lead to a new scope of the investigation, are:

1. Which channels are mainly used by German buyers of equine feed to gather information?
2. Is information rather and preferably received passively or sought actively?
3. Which factors influence the opinion-forming processes of German buyers of equine feed?
4. What do German buyers of equine feed wish for to ease information procurement?

These questions will prompt the questions that will be asked to the consumer within the survey (see appendix A – Survey Outline English).

2. Materials and Methods

The research methodology first describes the theoretical background, providing cause for a closer investigation of the topic. Moreover, the following section discusses the methodological approach used in order to answer the guiding sub-questions. It focuses on the way data is collected, analyzed, and evaluated in a conclusive way. Therefore, the following chapter outlines methods of research and analysis as well as sourcing materials required to conduct such.

2.1 Materials

The researcher collected the data for this research project through a survey, which was answered in Germany from the perspective of German buyers of equine feed. A specific country, in this case, Germany, was chosen for the reason that it narrows the scope of the research and eases respondent collection because the researcher is resident in Germany. Thereby, the results provide the highest relevance for this study.

The objective was to have at least 200 participants within the time frame of one month. The desired sample size is based on the Roscoe guidelines for determining sample size. He recommends a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 500 survey participants to acquire valuable data. This guideline is a common technique and is usually appropriate for any behavioral research. (Roscoe, 1975)

The data had been collected in various ways, as the researcher distributed the survey through offline and online channels. This is because a focus on one kind only would have distorted the results. Besides this, the researcher aimed at a survey respondent group that is somewhat balanced with regard to the demographic characteristics of age and gender. Online, equine feed buyers were approached via the Instagram account of the equine feed brand Derby (Derby [@Derby_Pferdefutter], n.d.) of the company EQUOVIS GmbH, to which the researcher had access. It was expected that the invocations through offline channels would generate fewer answers, as it requires a greater effort to approach buyers. Thus, the researcher chose a more significant number of channels. These include word-of-mouth spreading through friends, family, and acquaintances or flyers at public places, such as equine feed shops, equestrian centers, and riding clubs.

Moreover, in order to support the provision of substantiated advice, the researcher reserves her right to introduce new research conducted by Karlíček et al. (2010), Villanueva et al. (2008), Vallejo et al. (2015), and Sotiriadis & Van Zyl (2013) in the report's recommendations section. In line with this claim, the researcher likes to mention that such sources are needed to underpin her argumentation about word-of-mouth marketing measures.

2.2 Methods

The choice for a survey as a method for investigation is due to the fact that it is specific and eases the spreading of it in order to achieve a more significant number of respondents. As a result, this research is descriptive rather than explorative and involves nominal as well as ordinal values. The survey outline is provided in English as well as in German in appendix A and appendix B (Survey Outline German). All questionnaire questions are mainly closed because they require less effort to answer (Hair, 2010). Additionally, closed questions provide

a particular context, support respondents in their answering, and ease evaluation (Frazer & Lawley, 2000).

With the first three questions, the participants were required to disclose their age range, gender, and how they became aware of this survey (see appendix A). Through this, it could have been assessed whether the overall survey results are representative of the diversity of equine feed buyers as a target group. In case the data shows an apparent surplus of, for instance, female or underage respondents, the results cannot allow a conclusion to be made about the whole group of equine feed buyers.

The fourth question of the survey gathered information about preferred channel usage to inform oneself about equine feed (see appendix A). The response options were vast and covered online and offline channels. Further, respondents were asked to share their individual importance of each item on a 6-points Likert scale, where 1 is least important and 6 is most important. Due to the reason that the question sought to find out the most common way of information procurement, a Likert scale with 6 points was chosen. For the measuring of personal attributes, such as attitudes, opinions, motivations, or satisfaction levels, rating scales are a common method to provide confident and constant results (Wright & Masters, 1982). One of the most frequently used ones is the Likert rating scale, which implies certain benefits such as easy usability, certainty, and a high level of reliability (Abdul, 2010). Likewise, a scale-based rating reduces the number of choices and provides a clear framework for measurement (Abdul, 2010). Based on this, studies suggest a 6-points Likert scale for research involving several variables (Abdul, 2010). In addition to that, in the questionnaire, survey participants needed to indicate at least a slight tendency since they could not choose a moderate value (Abdul, 2010). This cuts down the possibility of errors based on improvidence or dullness processes throughout the questionnaire answering (Abdul, 2010).

With the fifth and sixth questions, respondents were required to assess whether information reception usually happens passively and unintentionally, for example, in the form of advertisements or if the individuals usually seek equine feed-related information actively, for instance, through their own investigations. Thereupon, the preference for such information reception was inquired, as stated in the survey (see appendix A).

With the seventh question, participants were asked to grade potentially influential figures during the process of information procurement on a 6-points Likert scale to understand the importance of each one. Choosing the same method as in question five is owed to the fact that the respondent is familiar with it, and evaluation is eased. The potentially influential figures range from commercial to professional and public figures, or even those in the personal environment and can be found in appendix A.

Subsequently, the eighth question gathered opinions about the preferred preparation of information on equine feed. Some buyers may prefer short and condensed information, whereas others enjoy a detailed and effortful presentation of such. Again, the researcher chose the 6-points Likert scale for the indication of preference for each item (see appendix A).

The last question of the survey (see appendix A) focused on buyers' unmet needs when informing themselves. It is possible that the current options for information procurement and education on equine feed and nutrition do not entirely correspond with the actual buyer preferences. Therefore, they were asked whether they miss aspects to facilitate extending their knowledge and forming opinions. Several given answers could be selected, and personal wishes

could be specified. This question's answers were supposed to provide important data for the equine industry to improve the provision of information and support.

2.3 Analysis

For questions one, two, and three, the researcher prepared an analysis of frequencies supported by pie charts in order to illustrate the distribution of the respondents' composition. Through this, the researcher could identify whether there is a balance concerning the respondents' age, gender, and form of approach. The statistical test chosen for the evaluation of the Likert scales (questions four, seven, and eight) was the MANOVA with a post hoc test to eliminate error sources. Thereby, the researcher analyzed whether the variables' mean values were significantly different from each other. Results of questions five and six were evaluated in absolute numbers individually to capture overall tendencies. With the aid of the McNemar test, the researcher aimed to identify the percentual numbers of buyers who currently experience information receipt as desired and the other way around. The last question's data was examined based on each item's selection frequency and presented in a simple graph. All analyses' results are covered in the following sections of the report and can be found in more detail in appendix C (SPSS Results).

3. Results

In this section, the survey results are reported in each of their relation to the research's corresponding sub-question. First, outcomes about preferred channel usage and form of information intake are described. Subsequently, results about influential factors for equine feed buyers' opinion-forming processes as well as their additional wishes for facilitated information intake are outlined. This presentation involves statistical and frequency analysis, supported by various graphs and figures.

3.1 Demographic Data about The Respondent Group

In the initial analysis, the researcher categorized the survey respondents based on their demographic characteristics. The survey tool registered 366 complete response records used for evaluation. The demographic data of this sample is limited to the age and gender of the respondents, whereby the age has been indicated according to prescribed age groups. Moreover, the following results are stated in percentages, as it shall facilitate understanding the different proportions.

Figure 1 portrays the respondents' age in percentages, gathered through the survey's question one (see appendix A). Survey participants below the age of 18 and above 50 account for 2.46% and 8.47%, respectively. This implies that these two age groups form a minority and are less represented in this study. In contrast, individuals from 18 to 29 years account for 50.55% and, thereby, form a thin majority in this research. Lastly, 38.5% of the respondents were between 30 and 49 years old.

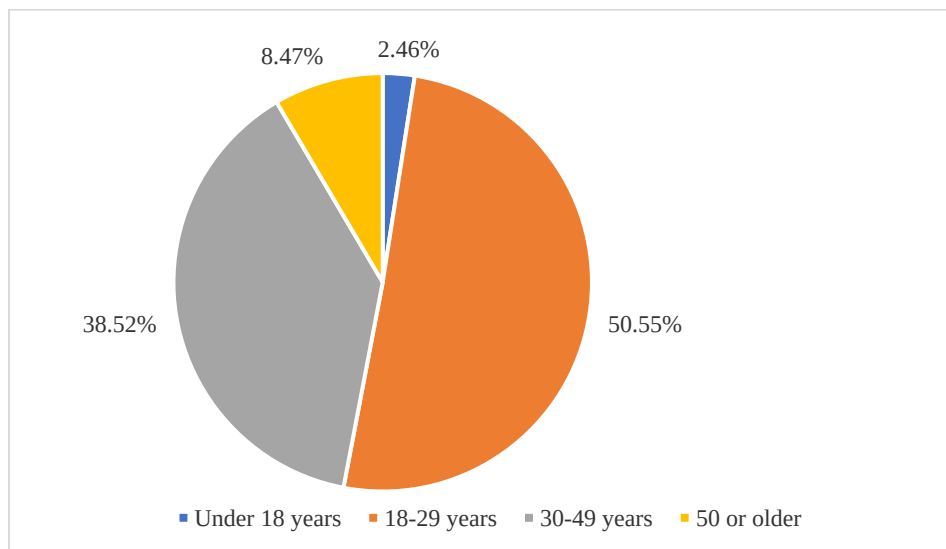


Figure 1

Age of Survey Respondents in Percentage

Note. This figure shows the age of the survey respondents in years within the framework of given age groups.

The other demographic factor this research considers is gender. This information was collected through survey question two, which can be found in appendix A. Besides *female* and *male*, the option *diverse* was given, which implies any other gender, such as transgender, gender-neutral, non-binary, genderqueer, or third gender. However, none of the 366

respondents chose this option. Instead, according to the data in figure 2, 95.39% of the participants were female, whereas 4.61% of them identified themselves as male.

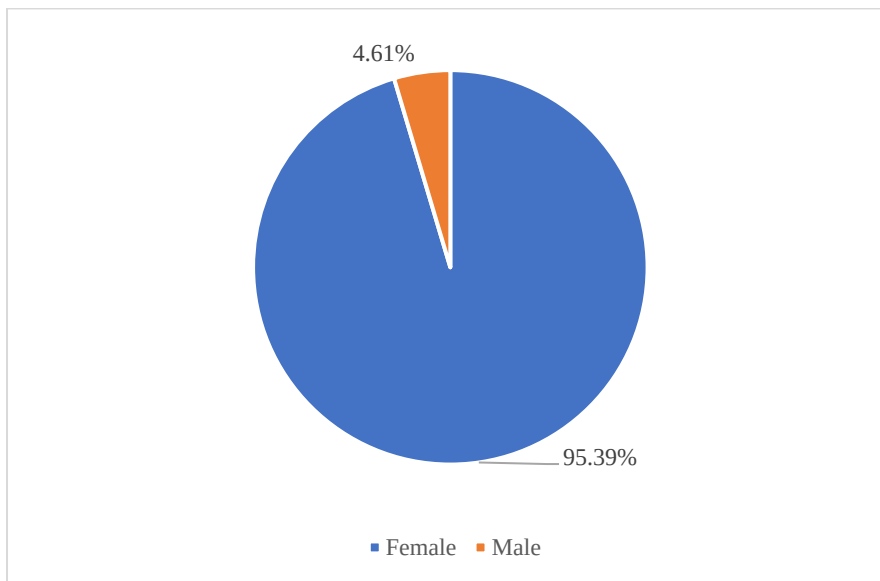


Figure 2

Gender of Survey Respondents in Percentage

Note. This figure shows the gender of the survey respondents and is limited to female and male.

Moreover, survey question three collected data about the way respondents had been approached to answer this survey (see appendix A). Based on the diverse set of methods applied to collect survey responses, the researcher created four parent categories offered for selection. The results, summarized in figure 3, demonstrate a clear majority in the spreading through social media channels such as Instagram and Facebook (78.42%). The second-best effective way of approaching survey participation was the direct approach via e-mail or Whatsapp, as it accounted for 14.21%. Only 6.83% of the respondents selected to have been approached personally, and 0.55% accessed the survey tool through a flyer.

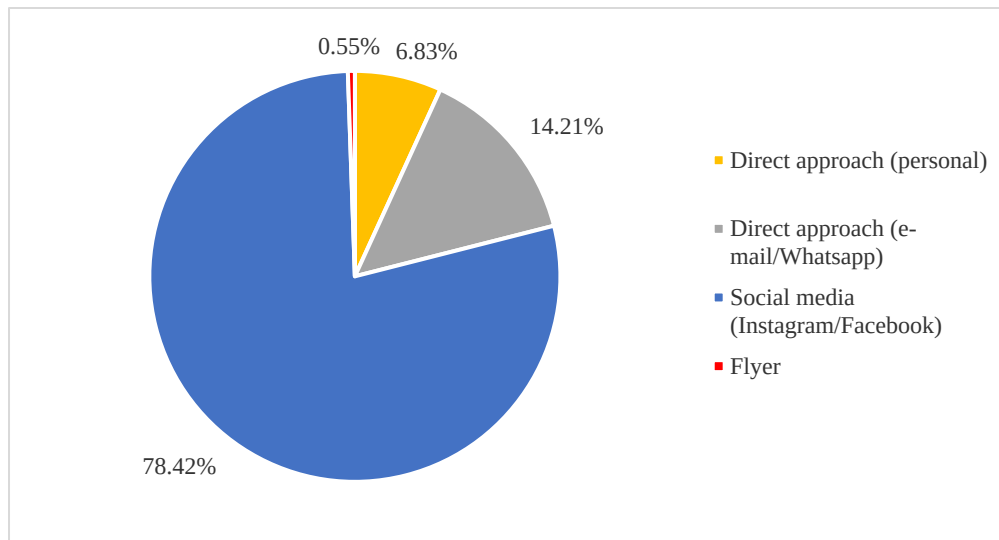


Figure 3

Approach of Survey Respondents in Percentage

Note. This figure demonstrates how the survey respondents have been approached. All endeavours were grouped into four main categories.

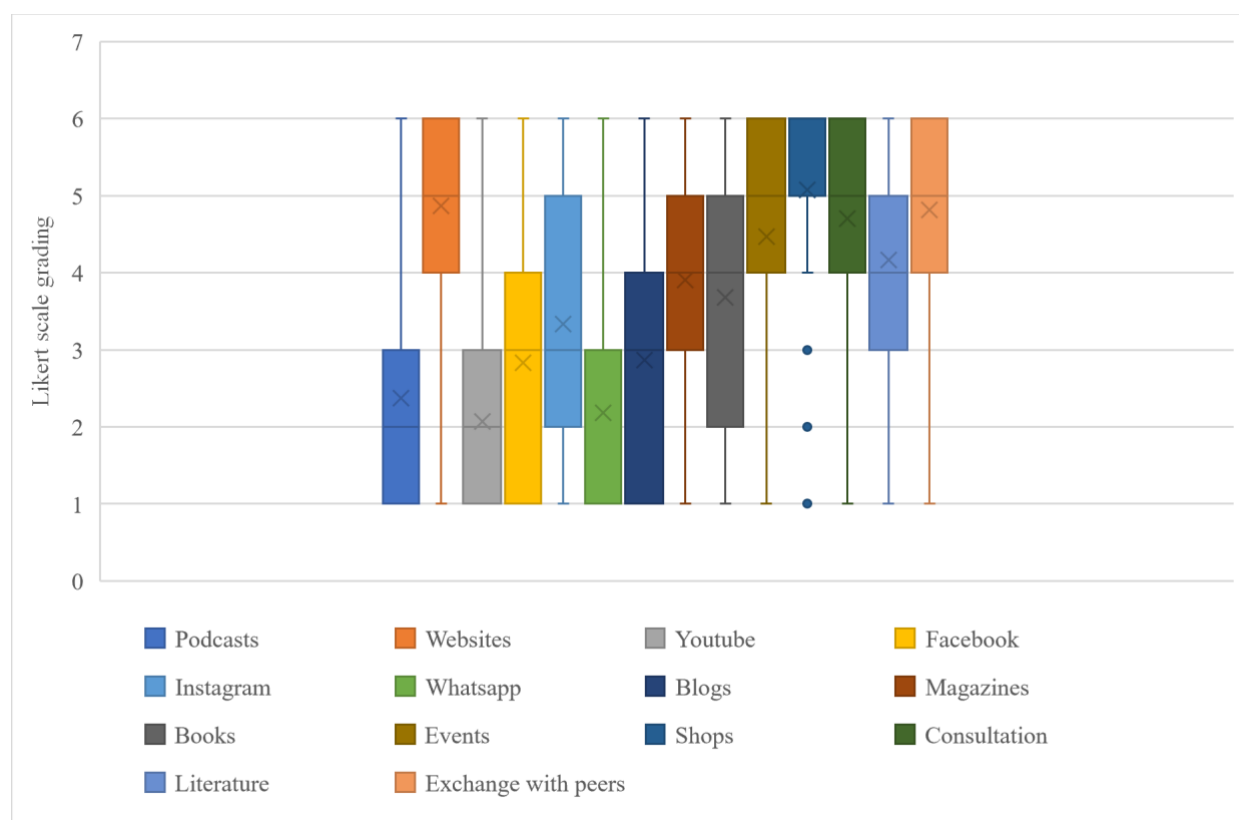
3.2 Preferred Channel Usage for Information Procurement

With the fourth question of the survey, the researcher aimed to identify preferred sources used for informing oneself about equine feed or feeding (see appendix A). Respondents were asked to indicate preferences for 14 groups based on a 6-points Likert scale. Over and above, the data's descriptives (see table 1) were used to illustrate the outcomes with the aid of a boxplot (see figure 4). Besides this, the researcher selected the statistical test one-way MANOVA with the Bonferroni post hoc to investigate if a significant difference between the mean values of the groups can be found. A statistical significance begins at $p = <0.5$ with gradations to $p = >0.01$ and $p = <0.001$, which is divided into significant, very significant and highly significant (Ludwig-Mayerhofer, 2014). Due to the fact that the statistical test assigned a significance of $<.0005$ to these results, the groups' means can be considered highly significant in their difference. A more detailed depiction of the statistical analysis results can be found in table 6, table 7, and table 8 (see appendix C).

Table 1*Descriptives for Groups of Information Sources*

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
Physical shops	5.08	1.119
Websites of equine feed brands	4.87	1.266
Exchange with peers	4.82	1.185
Feed consultation	4.70	1.449
Public events	4.47	1.336
Scientific literature	4.17	1.508
Magazines	3.91	1.382
Books	3.68	1.616
Instagram	3.34	1.702
Blogs	2.87	1.542
Facebook	2.83	1.498
Podcasts	2.37	1.744

Note. This table demonstrates each group's mean value generated from the respondents' gradings. The groups are organized starting with the highest mean value above.

**Figure 4***Boxplot for Groups of Information Sources*

Note. The figure depicts the grading of the respondents for various source groups that can be used to obtain information about equine feed and feeding. The grading was given through a 6-points Likert scale, where 6 is the highest and 1 is the lowest value.

Figure 4 displays the boxplot for each of the 14 source groups that can be used to obtain access to information. The boxes also called the interquartile range, represent the group's middle 50% of gradings. Within these boxes, the median is marked by an "X", and the dots outside of the boxes represent any outliers. Further, the error bars, also called upper and lower whiskers, indicate values outside the middle 50%. For most groups, it can be observed that the boxes and the whiskers stretch relatively widely across the possible range of 1 to 6. This indicates that the respondents hold quite different opinions about the importance of the groups.

Generally, it is striking that the medians of the groups *podcasts*, *Youtube*, *Whatsapp*, *blogs*, and *Facebook* are within the range of 2 to 3, wherefore they settle at the lower section of figure 4. Nonetheless, the size of the boxes for *blogs* and *Facebook* implies that the views are more spread upward, and the level of agreement among respondents is lower than for *Youtube*, *Whatsapp*, and *podcasts*. Furthermore, the median for *literature* is 4.17, whereas *Instagram*, *magazines*, and *books* scored 3.91, 3.68, and 3.34. These results are visualized in the centric arrangement of the boxes in figure 4. Additionally, *magazines* and *literature* exhibit a smaller interquartile range, which again suggests that the respondents had a higher level of agreement for these groups.

Moreover, *websites*, *exchange with peers*, *consultation*, and *public events* scored 4.87, 4.82, 4.7, and 4.47. Hence, these group's boxes can be found in the upper range of the graph. Lastly, *physical shops* is clearly the most favored group since a median above 5 and a standard deviation around 1 imply that the buyers were mostly in agreement with their high grading (see table 1).

3.3 Current and Desired Forms of Information Procurement

Another study objective was to find out how German equine feed buyers currently learn about equine feed and feeding and how they would prefer it, divided into the survey questions five and six (see appendix A). These are here referred to as groups *Current* and *Desired* and were answered given two response options: *active* information-seeking (for example, through own research) or *passive* information-receiving (for example, via advertisements). Due to the reason that both groups relate to the same defining variables, the results are interrelated and were analyzed as such. The statistical test used to evaluate the data is McNemar, which is most suitable for paired nominal data (McNemar, 1947). Similar to the Chi-Squared Test, it is applied through the aid of a 2x2 contingency table (see table 9, appendix C) (McNemar, 1947). It enables the evaluation of whether the two groups demonstrate considerable differences regarding the dichotomous dependent variable, a categorical variable with two categories (McNemar, 1947).

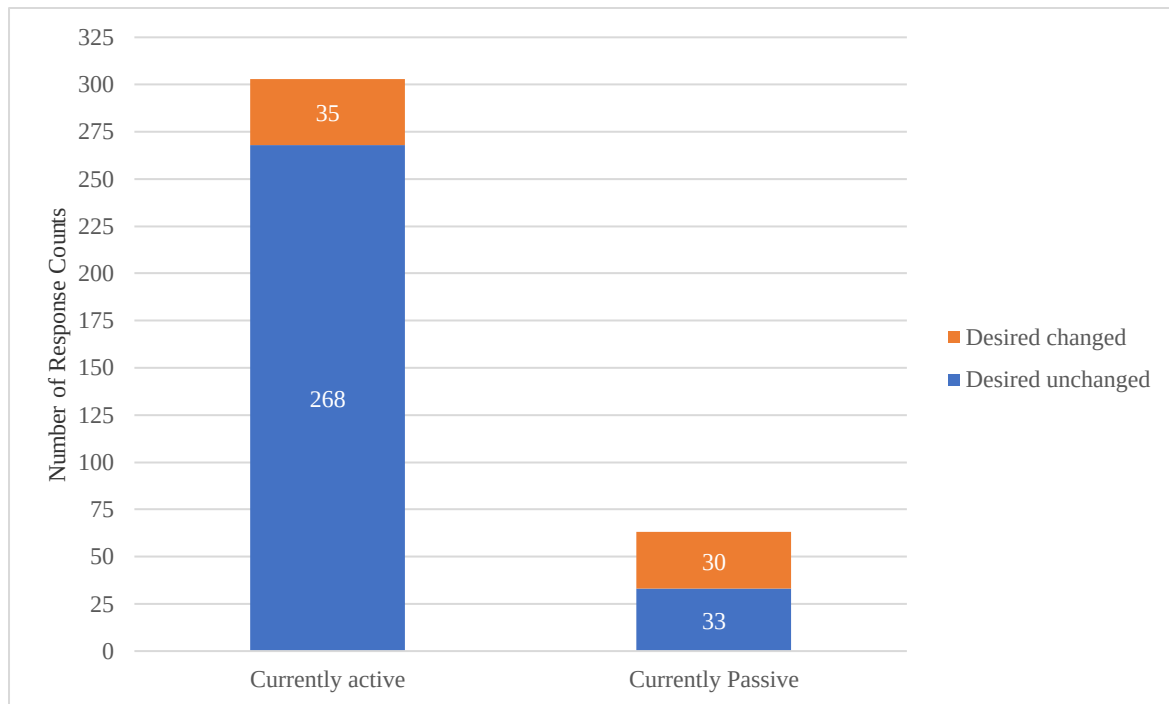


Figure 5

Stacked Column Bar for Current and Desired Information Procurement

Note. This figure demonstrates the distribution of respondents that currently seek information actively or receive it passively. The orange share represents those with a different desired state than their current one. The blue proportions represent the respondents who would like to maintain their current style (either passive or active). For the group Current, 303 chose active and 63 passive, while for the group Desired, 298 selected active and 68 passive.

While figure 5 provides a visual overview of the most important findings, the exact statistical analysis' results can be retrieved from table 9 and table 10 (appendix C). As illustrated in figure 5, 303 of the 366 survey participants currently tend rather seek feed-related information actively than receive it passively, whilst a minority of 63 respondents chose *passive* as their current state of learning. Further, table 9 (appendix C) demonstrates that the desired state is *active* for 298 and *passive* for 68 German equine feed buyers. Thus, the response counts for *active* in the current and desired state make up 82.79% and 81.42% of all German equine feed buyers, respectively (see table 9, appendix C). In comparison, the shares of German equine feed buyers choosing, for instance, the variable *active* with both groups - *Current* and *Desired* - are almost identical.

The results of the McNemar test, depicted in table 9 (appendix C) and visualized in figure 5, reveal that, out of the 303 individuals, who currently seek information actively, 268 still prefer to receive it actively, and 35 (11.6%) would instead switch to a passive form of information intake. Similarly, 30 people (47.6%) of the individuals who currently receive information passively would like to switch to an active way of learning. Interestingly, the share of respondents preferring active while experiencing passive information procurement is relatively high, as the rate of conversion is almost 50%. In addition to that, the statistical significance level chosen for this test was 0.05, with a corresponding 95% confidence interval. Based on the data retrieved from table 10 (appendix C), it becomes clear that the significance assigned to this case, which is 0.620, is higher than the chosen threshold of $p = 0.05$. This outcome suggests that the null hypothesis can be adopted, which implies that no (significant) change has occurred, as the mean of the two groups' samples is (almost) equal.

3.4 Influential Factors During the Opinion-Forming Process

The seventh survey question was supposed to collect information about potentially influential figures for the opinion forming-processes of German equine feed buyers concerning equine feed-related topics (see appendix A). Here, people were asked to rate ten figures' importance with the aid of a 6-points Likert scale. According to the one-way MANOVA with the Bonferroni post hoc results, the difference between the groups is very highly significant ($p = <0.001$), resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. In table 2, again, the descriptives for the ratings of groups of influential figures are given. In addition to that, figure 6 states the most important data in a boxplot, and table 11, table 12, and table 13 (appendix C) provide all data of the statistical analysis in a more detailed manner.

Table 2

Descriptives for Groups of Influential Figures

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
Independent equine nutrition experts	4.57	1.380
Contacts from the equestrian scene	4.42	1.134
Feed consultant of an equine feed brand	4.31	1.306
Trainer	4.19	1.323
Professional Riders	4.12	1.332
Friends	4.09	1.423
Salesperson of an equine feed brand	3.54	1.255
Family	3.44	1.664
Brand ambassadors	2.69	1.250
Social Media Influencers	2.56	1.363

Note. This table demonstrates each group's mean value generated from the respondents' gradings. The groups are organized starting with the highest mean value above.

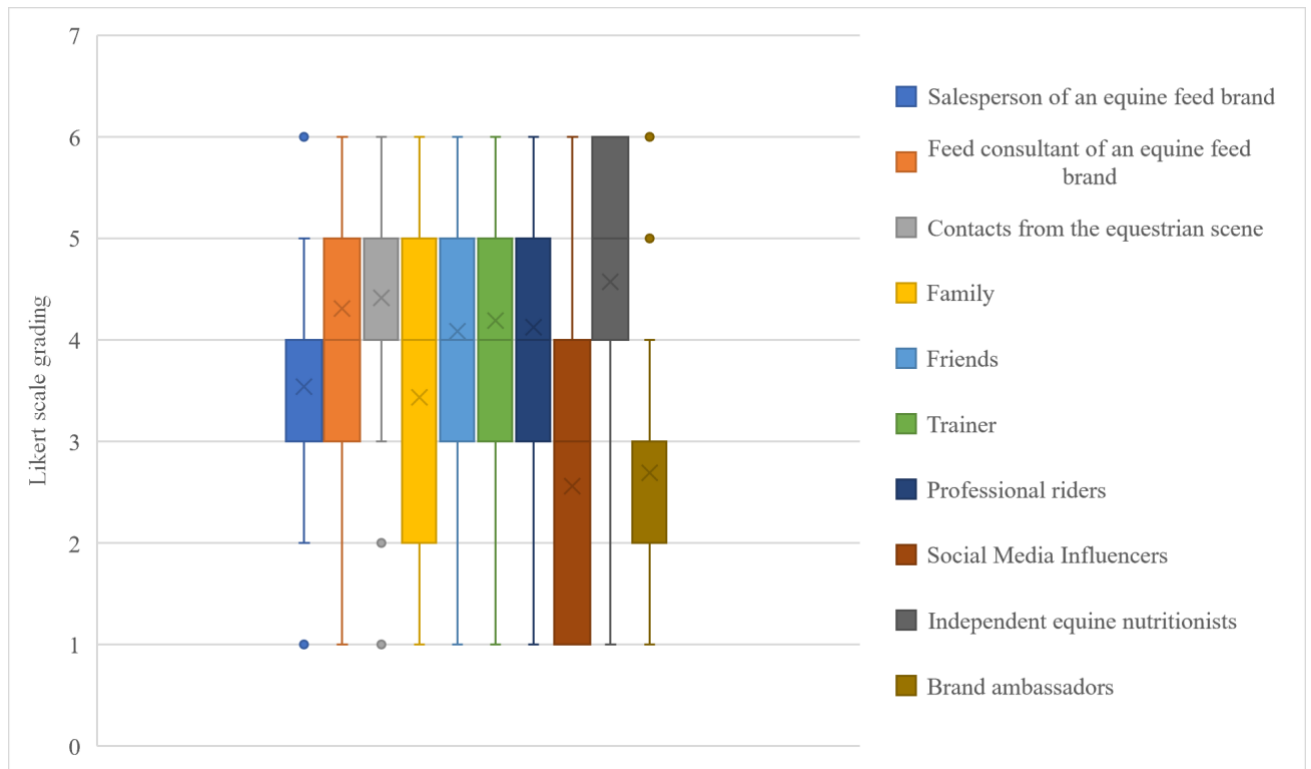


Figure 6

Boxplot for Groups of Influential Figures

Note. The figure depicts the grading of the respondents for various figure groups that can influence how individuals form opinions about equine feed-related topics. The grading was given through a 6-points Likert scale, where 6 is the highest and 1 is the lowest value.

Firstly, the most striking observation of figure 6 is that the group *social media influencers* with the lowest mean of all (2.56) exhibits the highest interquartile range. Interestingly, this demonstrates that the respondents all hold quite different opinions about the importance of this group. Secondly, individuals seem to agree that *brand ambassadors* play a minor role in advice on equine feed or feeding, as it scores a median grade below 3 too. Moreover, *salesperson of an equine feed brand* and *family* both have a similar mean of around 3.5. On the contrary, the opinions about *family* are much more spread across the range of 1 to 6 than those about *salesperson* (see table 2 and figure 6).

According to table 2, the groups *friends*, *professional riders*, *trainer*, and *feed consultant of an equine feed brand* are all in a mean range from 4.09 to 4.31. Lastly, even though the means of the groups *contacts from the equestrian scene* and *independent equine nutrition experts* have quite similar values of 4.42 and 4.52, the gradings for *independent equine nutrition experts* are much more diverse, as it exhibits a standard deviation of 1.380. This allows the interquartile range for *independent equine nutrition experts* to be spread across the range of grading 4 to 6, figure 6, by contrast, demonstrates a more centered arrangement for *contacts from the equestrian scene* within 4 to 5.

3.5 Wishes for Facilitated Information Procurement

The survey's ninth question was supposed to dispel the likelihood of unmet wishes of equine feed buyers that have not been addressed in previous evaluations of this study (see appendix A). Due to this, it aimed to identify aspects or offers that facilitate a convenient information acquisition for equine feed buyers. Besides seven given answer options, the

researcher provided the opportunity to express individual wishes through a text box under the option *other*.

With regard to the findings stated in figure 7, it is striking that the options *product finder* and *more helpful information on the product* by far are most desired since 252 and 242 individuals selected this response. These are followed by the wish for a better online consulting service about equine feed and feeding, as it scored 154 response counts. On the contrary, only 55 survey participants indicated an interest in offline consulting services. At the same time, the response counts for the options *other online educational offers* and *other offline educational offers* reveal a slight preference for offline instead of online education offers. The numbers for these answers were 100 and 67 selections. Lastly, figure 7 shows that 20 respondents did not miss anything about the possible ways to inform themselves about equine feed/feeding. Nine people left additional answers through a text box under the option *other*, captured in table 17 (appendix D – Additional Answers). The results section does not mention these answers because they were either unrelated to the question, covered by the given response options, or not relevant enough to be mentioned.

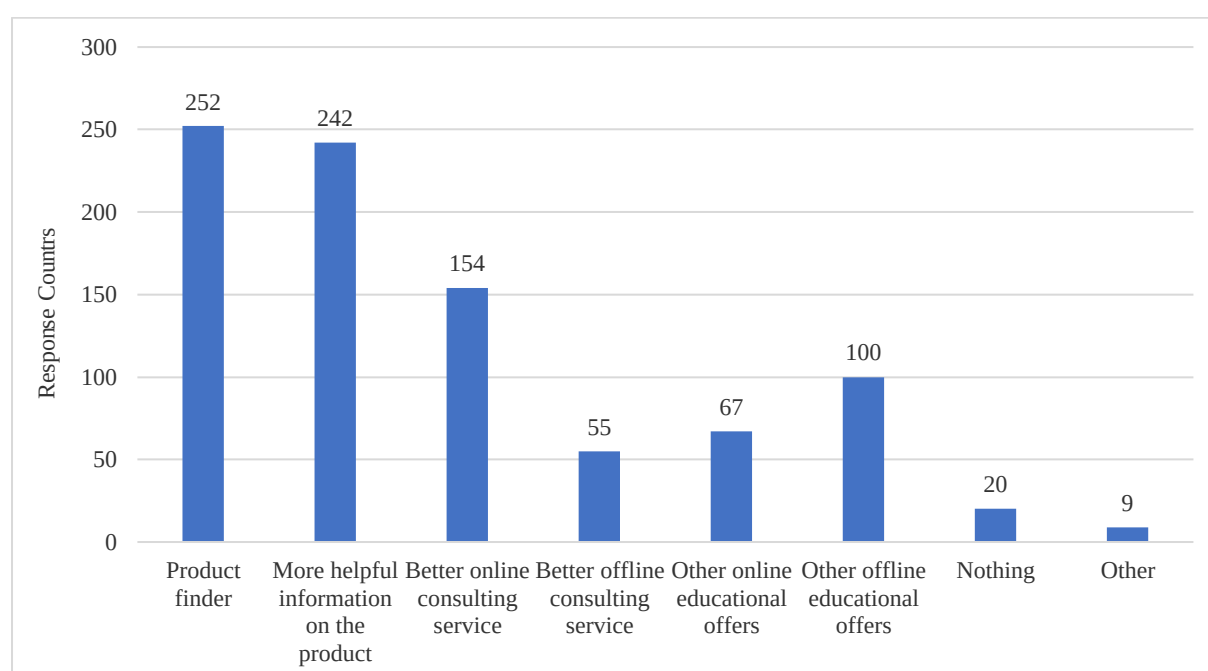


Figure 7

Wishes for Facilitated Information Procurement

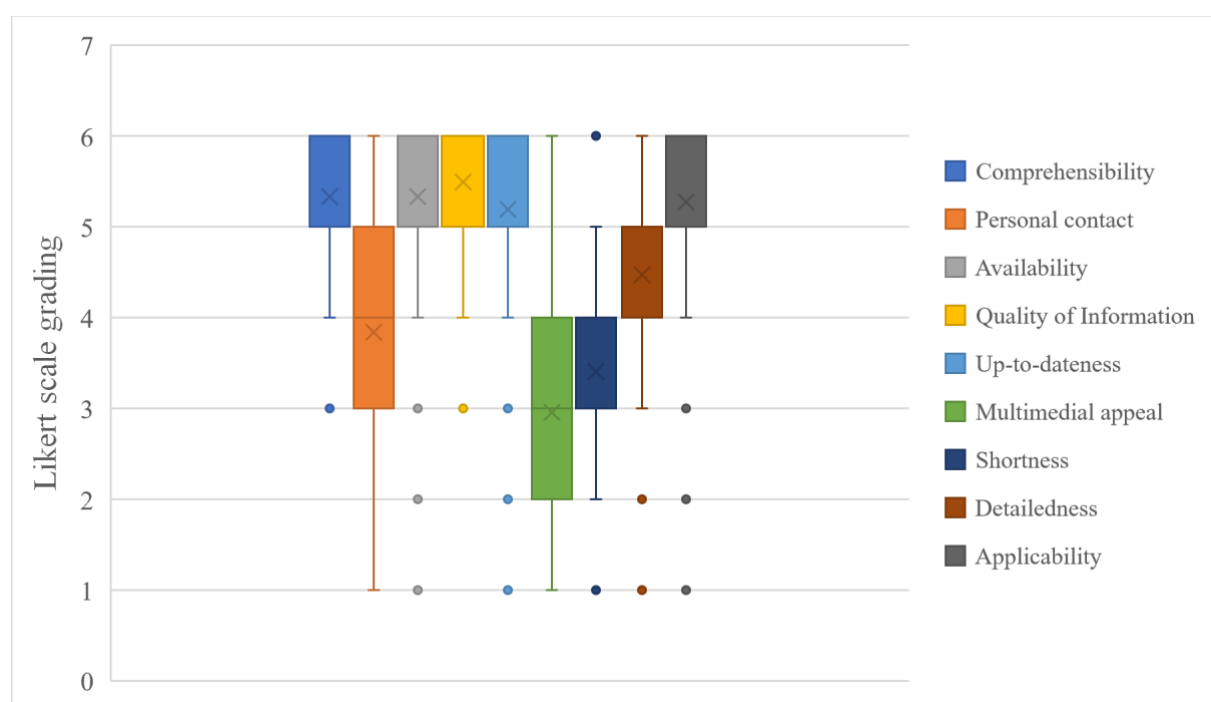
Note. The figure shows the survey participants' response counts for offers that could facilitate information procurement about topics like equine feed and feeding. Besides given options, respondents were able to indicate not to have any wishes or to write individual suggestions in a text box.

Another essential point when it comes to facilitating information procurement is its preparation. Due to this, in question eight, the respondents were asked to rate nine criteria based on their importance on a 6-points Likert scale (see appendix A). Data such as the groups' means and standard deviation are given in table 3, and a corresponding boxplot graph is provided in figure 8. Next to these results, the executed MANOVA with the Bonferroni post hoc statistical test revealed that a highly significant difference could have been found due to a p value of <0.0005 . The exact results of the statistical analysis can be found in table 14, table 15, and table 16 (appendix C).

Table 3*Descriptives for Groups of Information Criteria*

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
Quality of information	5.49	0.705
Comprehensibility	5.34	0.888
Availability	5.33	0.881
Applicability	5.28	0.914
Up-to-dateness	5.19	0.995
Detailedness	4.47	1.139
Personal Contact	3.84	1.356
Shortness	3.40	1.228
Multimedial appeal	2.96	1.328

Note. This table demonstrates each group's mean value generated from the respondents' gradings. The groups are organized starting with the highest mean value above.

**Figure 8***Boxplot for Groups of Information Criteria*

Note. The figure depicts the grading of the respondents for various criterion groups that define how information about equine feed-related topics can be prepared. The grading was given through a 6-points Likert scale, where 6 is the highest and 1 is the lowest value.

The most noteworthy result emerging from the data illustrated in figure 8 is that, for most groups, the survey participants were mainly in agreement about their opinions. The dots represent the outliers and form exceptions that confirm the overall agreement within a group. Unlike the other Likert scale results, the total answers did not always range from 1 to 6 and are generally higher (see figure 8). Due to a scoring below 4, *multimedia appeal*, *shortness*, and *personal contact* seem to be the least important criteria for preparing information. However, with a standard deviation of 1.328 and 1.356 (see table 3), *multimedia appeal* and *personal contact* exhibit the highest interquartile range of all groups, showing disunity in preferences. Table 3 demonstrates a mean of 4.47 for the group *detailedness*, wherefore it seems to be

somewhat important for German equine feed buyers and can be found in the upper half of figure 8. Further, according to the data in table 3, the groups *quality of information*, *comprehensibility*, *availability*, *applicability*, and *up-to-dateness* have ratings of 5.49, 5.34, 5.33, 5.28, and 5.19, as well as a general standard deviation below 1. Even though these five groups have very similar ratings, *quality of information* is clearly the most favored criterion compared to the other ones.

4. Discussion of Results

The primary objective of this research was to identify how German equine feed buyers like and wish to inform themselves about equine feed or feeding-related topics. The consumers' endeavors for information gathering are mostly done at the pre-purchase phase, wherefore the information gathered by the consumers usually affects the subsequent development of the purchase behavior significantly. Therefore, insights into consumer preferences in the pre-purchase phase could help B2C equine feed businesses develop a tailored marketing strategy that facilitates information transmission and, thus, influences buyers to make more favorable purchase decisions. Based on the declared objective of this study, the outcomes shall provide an answer to the following main question: "How do German equine feed buyers prefer to inform themselves about equine feed?"

In the subsequent sections, the previously mentioned results will be discussed based on their relation to the research's sub-question because they are supposed to provide the basis for answering the main question. Therefore, the sub-questions were used as a guideline for the structure of the discussion of results.

4.1 Preferred Channel Usage for Information Procurement

Most respondents agreed that the most preferred channel for acquiring information is physical *equine feed shops*, followed by *websites of equine feed brands* (see figure 4 and table 1). The results confirm statements from previous research, which pointed out the importance of feed stores when informing oneself about equine feed and feeding (Hoffmann et al., 2009). Thus, it can be argued that, even though the effort to seek information online is most likely much lower, people still value one-to-one exchange over visiting equine feed brands' websites. Further, figure 4 demonstrates a high level of agreement among respondents about the preferability for the exchange with peers. This underpins the results about the influential figures during the opinion-forming processes (see figure 6) since *contacts from the equestrian scene* were among the most favored ones, even in previous studies (Martinson et al., 2006). Even though the opinions varied about the importance of consultation from equine feed brands, many people still liked to gather information through the exchange with consultants through e-mail or phone (see figure 4). These results involve seeking personal contact with experts or peers and, at the same time, for example, through quick and easy internet research. Even though this is yet to be proven, the diversity of information one may aim to seek about equine feed could influence the preference for channel usage. Thus, whereas common and unsophisticated issues can be approached through online research or exchange with peers, more complex matters may require more extensive consultation through contact with experts. It is also possible, that one inquiry demands the usage of more than one source. Further, due to the fact the most preferred channels exhibit a high level of agreement, it is rather unlikely that the divergence in channel usage may result from a pattern of a particular demographic group (e.g., age or gender) but rather from a type of concern.

4.2 Current and Desired Forms of Information Procurement

The questionnaire identified a clear preference for the active form of information procurement since more than 80% of the respondents indicated actively seeking information, and chose it as their preferred style too (see table 9, appendix C). Furthermore, it is striking that, in absolute numbers, the spillover of one variable to another is minor and almost identical for both groups, *Current* and *Desired*. Based on the equality of outcomes, it can be concluded that most German equine feed buyers, first of all, want to seek information actively and, second

of all, already do that if they want to. Other than that, the results show that individuals like requested learning experiences instead of incidental ones. Based on this finding, it is assumed that an active form of information acquisition provides the opportunity to learn more targeted and purposeful. In other words, German equine feed buyers seem to prefer an underlying personal motivation to be the basis for the information procurement about equine feed and feeding.

4.3 Influential Factors During the Opinion-Forming Process

Besides own appraisal, external opinions of highly viewed persons may influence one's own opinion-forming processes towards a solution or a product. Figure 6 and table 2 demonstrate that the most influential person for German equine feed buyers is an independent equine nutrition expert. These include vets as well as equine nutritionists. As already mentioned by Hoffman et al. (2009), horse owners value veterinarians' advice on equine nutrition very highly. Based on these results, the researcher can argue that equine feed buyers expect the best advice to be given by someone with expert knowledge who is to the largest unbiased towards equine feed brands. It needs to be considered that veterinarians or equine nutritionists may not be fully unbiased because they choose their offer of products for recommendation and gain the corresponding margin of their sales. Nevertheless, they do not actually work for a particular brand and, thus, are usually perceived as rather independent advisors.

Moreover, the results show that almost all buyers rely on exchanging views on feed issues with contacts from the equestrian scene. Another study from Martinson et al. (2006) recorded very similar results, namely that horse owners tend to seek information from other equestrians. In this case, the value of judgment originates in the wealth of experience rather than in professional knowledge.

Besides this, the feed consultants of equine feed brands are the third favored source for advice. Even though their service is free, and their store of knowledge is usually just as good as that of independent equine nutrition experts, buyers probably shy away from the partiality that their jobs entail. In the ranking, this figure is followed by trainers and professional riders, which are considered somewhat knowledgeable. Surprisingly, investigations by Hoffman et al. (2009) suggest that most horse owners' second-most important source of information is the trainer. Even though this statement could not be confirmed by this study's outcomes, the trainer still seems to play an important role for some equestrians. Compared to the results from Hoffman et al. (2009), riding trainers today might play a slightly less prominent role due to the increased importance of information or advice sought online. Nonetheless, it is possible that the trainer and professional riders are seen as role models who draw knowledge from their own wealth of experience. German equine feed buyers could possibly expect a highly-qualitative feeding routine to support the trainer's or the professional rider's success, which would justify their opinion to be influential. Lastly, even though friends seem to influence the opinion-forming processes of German equine feed buyers greatly, the opinions diverged on this group. A reasonable presumption would be that those who have equestrian friends value their advice greatly, and those who do not have equestrian friends graded this group rather low.

4.4 Wishes for Facilitated Information Procurement

As illustrated in figure 7, most equine feed buyers hold certain unfulfilled wishes that would support their preferred way of learning about equine feed and feeding. As identified in figure 7, most respondents would appreciate using a product finder as well as more helpful information on the product. This insinuates that most German equine feed buyers value quick

and easy advice without personal interaction. Even though this argumentation contradicts with the findings in 4.1 - Preferred Channel Usage for Information Procurement, where consumers actively seek personal exchange, this hypothesis is confirmed by other market research. As an example, Spenner & Freeman (2014) argue that when it comes to finding, understanding, and evaluating information, customers want simplicity. They do not expect marketers to offer simply more information but helpful tools or other measures that assist in identifying product information that is most relevant to them (Spenne & Freeman, 2014).

Besides this, the results in figure 7 suggest that German equine feed buyers clearly demand an improved offer for consulting services offered online rather than offline. At the same time, there is a greater demand for educational offers to be improved offline than online. Previous research indicated a preference for education through the internet or evening seminars, drawing a more balanced picture of the demand for either online or offline educational offers (Martinson et al., 2006). These tendencies could indicate that knowledge acquisition is generally liked to be done quickly, easily, and conveniently. In contrast, there is a greater willingness to invest time and attentiveness into the education about general feed-related topics. And yet, it is also possible that there is not such a clear preference, but the respondents only saw these offers be lacking behind.

In the same way, the findings depicted in figure 7 confirm that German equine feed buyers have concrete ideas about what they value in the preparation of information about equine feed and feeding. The unanimous opinion is that information needs to be of high quality, understandable, and available for the general public. Then again, while the data shall be in line with the newest scientific findings, advice derived from such information shall be easy to apply with regard to one's individual concerns. Even though the level of agreement is quite as high for the importance of the information's detailedness, many equine feed buyers still graded this criterion to be highly relevant for them. All in all, these results show that equine feed buyers want the data to be scientifically credible but, at the same time, broken down so that it is easy to find, understand, and use.

4.5 Limitations

Since the study aimed to determine the preferred ways of information procurement about equine feed or feeding of German equine feed buyers, meaningful results need to depict the opinions of the whole buyers' group. When picturing German equine feed buyers as one buyer's group, it can be characterized by critical demographic factors such as age or gender. Their exploration is effortless and may allow the segmentation of one buyer's group into different smaller groups. According to Ipsos (2019), active riders in Germany are on average 38 years old. Nevertheless, table 4 shows that the age group with the highest percentage of riders is 40-70 years (37%), followed by 14-19 years (26%) and 20-29 years (20%). The smallest number of riders can be assigned to the age group of 30-39 (17%); however, this number is very similar to the remaining distribution.

Table 4*Age of Active German Riders in Percentage*

Age	Percentage
14-19 years	26%
20-29 years	20%
30-39 years	17%
40-70 years	37%

Note. Reprinted from *Pferdesport in Deutschland* (p.10) by Ipsos, 2019. Copyright 2019 by Ipsos.

Due to the reason that the age groups used in this survey slightly differ from those used by Ipsos, the results cannot be directly compared. Nevertheless, when taking a closer look at both studies' results in table 4 and figure 1, one can see that they do overlap at some point. Based on the fact that the average age of active German riders is 38 years (Ipsos, 2019), this study result's share of 38.52% of people between 30 and 49 years (see figure 1) can be considered reasonable. Nevertheless, the researcher cannot deny that this survey exhibits a surplus of respondents between 18 and 30 years, as this age group accounts for 50.55% of the total number. Simultaneously, figure 1 demonstrates a lack of respondents below the age of 18 (2.46%) and above the age of 50 (8.47%).

Moreover, Ipsos' results, demonstrated in table 5, suggest that most active riders in Germany are female. The respondents' data confirms this trend but shows an even more considerable surplus of female individuals (see figure 2). As a result, this study's findings draw a picture of female equine feed buyers' opinions rather than of all equine feed buyers.

Table 5*Gender of Active German Riders in Percentage*

Gender	Percentage
Female	78%
Male	22%

Note. Reprinted from *Pferdesport in Deutschland* (p.10) by Ipsos, 2019. Copyright 2019 by Ipsos.

Additionally, the respondents were asked to indicate how they learned about this survey. The corresponding results can be found in figure 3. The channels chosen for the respondent collection were both offline and online, considering the differences in channel usage according to buyers' demographic characteristics. The researcher expected the direct personal approach and the flyer to be methods that provide a good opportunity to reach a diverse group of equine feed buyers. They have been approached in feed stores, riding clubs, or equestrian centers, where one can usually encounter people of any age or gender. The researcher supposed the same to apply to the mediums of e-mail or Whatsapp.

In 2021, around 80% of the German population used e-mail as an integral part of its communication (Statista Research Department, 2022). In addition to that, the usage of e-mail started to become a common practice at the beginning of the 1990s (Siegert, 2008). This suggests that even people above the age of 50 are familiar with this medium and probably use it regularly. Even though the number of German Whatsapp users between the age of 30 and 49 years is slightly higher (92.7%), still 4 out of 5 people from the older generation (50-69 years) are active Whatsapp users (Innofact, 2019). Based on this data, e-mail and Whatsapp can be

considered commonly used communication channels across almost all age groups. In the context of this investigation, figure 3 shows that the direct personal and the direct digital approach (e-mail, Whatsapp) made up around 7% and 14%, respectively. According to the survey's data (see figure 3), flyers do not appear to have been a valuable method to capture potential respondents' attention, as they only make up 0.55% of the absolute numbers. On the contrary, social media such as Instagram or Facebook are dominated by younger users. In fact, approximately 80% of German Instagram users are between 14 and 29 years old (ARD/ZDF Research Commission, 2021). Therefore, it is here considered a relatively young medium with which a more specific target group can be reached. As shown in figure 3, roughly 78% of the respondents were approached through social media, which justifies the majority of the respondents to be between 18 and 29 years old.

From experience gained over the course of this research, it became evident that the spreading of the survey is much easier among young female adults than in any other demographic category. The researcher assumes that this tendency is partly owed to the phenomenon of the self-sufficient spreading of information across social media platforms like Instagram. Besides this, previous research, for instance, conducted by Sax et al. (2003), identified gender bias in the response rate of online surveys, as the results showed a much greater willingness to participate among women than men. Some other researchers hypothesize inherent gender differences to be the underlying cause for this tendency.

According to this theory, the females' empathetic and social nature results in online activities that are mainly based on the exchange of information. In contrast, males rather use online media in order to seek information. Even though this presumption cannot be verified to have affected the response rate for this study, the researcher had noticed a significant engagement of female respondents in sharing the survey altruistically with friends and family, which confirms the underlying thought to some extent. (Jackson et al., 2001)

All in all, even though the researcher made considerable efforts to obtain meaningful results representing the overall opinions of German equine feed buyers, the respondent group turned out to be quite unbalanced. There is reason to expect that a change in the methodology, for instance to personal interviews, would have resulted in greater participation rates among teenagers, individuals above 50 years and males. Other than that, the number of participants turned out to be according to plan, and most of the measures for the survey's distribution facilitated the approach of participants greatly. The offline measures were by far not as promising as the online ones, but this was already expected beforehand. Thus, the researcher could have made greater efforts to approach German equine feed buyers in person.

Limitations may have originated in the lack of experience in the targeted spreading of online surveys from the investigator or in several biases in survey participation related to age and gender. Notwithstanding these limitations, it is expected that valuable conclusions can be drawn from the outcomes regardless of the underrepresentation of equine feed buyers younger than 18 years, older than 50 years, and of the male gender because a very considerable share of the target group had been addressed.

4.6 Recommendations for Further Research

As mentioned above, further research could obtain more valuable results through personal interviews or the direct approach of men and individuals above 50 and younger than 18 years, as they are harder to reach through mass media and have a lower willingness to participate on their own initiative (Sax et al., 2003). Additionally, the indicated desires for more

helpful information on equine feed products as well as for improved offline educational offers and online consultation services could be explored more thoroughly. It would be interesting for B2C equine feed businesses to learn what exactly German equine feed buyers appreciate in, for instance, education or consultation offers. Also, the results of this survey pointed out several topics the respondents had quite varying opinions about. One example is the group *social media influencers* exhibiting the lowest mean but the highest interquartile range (see chapter 3.4 - Influential Factors During the Opinion-Forming Process). Due to the reason that this study did not segment the respondents' answers, further research is needed to identify response patterns based on, for example, the respondents' age, equestrian discipline, or level of knowledge about equine feed or feeding. Likewise, this research included the procedure of information procurement that can derive from various motives. Equine feed buyers could either simply want to compare different products with each other, obtain professional advice on horse's health issues, or seek general education. As the researcher expects that the motive greatly influences the way German equine feed buyers look for information, it is advised to examine such differences more closely.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This study aimed to identify how German equine feed buyers prefer to inform themselves about equine feed and related topics like equine nutrition or feeding routines. Based on the research through a quantitative analysis of consumer behavior during the pre-purchase phase, it can be concluded that German equine feed buyers generally like to exploit the full potentialities that a multi-channel market environment nowadays provides. The preference for informing themselves about equine feed is not limited to a particular channel or influential figure but is rather composed of the various information sources they can use, most likely according to their respective central concern.

The results stated in *4.1 Preferred Channel Usage for Information Procurement* indicate that, when it comes to information procurement about equine feed, German equine feed buyers, first and foremost, value face-to-face advisory service in feed shops. However, at the same time, quick and convenient online searches via websites of equine feed brands are very popular too. In addition to that, respondents repeatedly indicated the importance of the exchange with other equestrians. Due to the diversity of the preferences, it is assumed that the underlying motive, as well as the type of information sought, may influence the channel usage greatly.

Moreover, most equine feed buyers currently seek the required information in an active manner. Another finding is that such requested learning experiences are generally preferred over incidental information gathering, which occurs passively. As the findings from Roberts & Murray (2014) already suggested, equine feed buyers mainly trust unbiased experts' advice on equine nutrition. These experts include equine nutritionists and veterinarians. Other than that, as mentioned above, most equine feed buyers like to draw from other equestrians' pool of experience, as reflected in the high level of agreement for this grading. Even though feed consultants of equine feed brands usually provide more qualified advice on feed and feeding than veterinarians and equestrians, it ranks third in this evaluation. One reason for this may be the occupational partiality towards particular feed brands.

The survey respondents wish for more opportunities to obtain quick and easy advice without much personal interaction. More specifically, equine feed buyers expect sellers to provide helpful tools that make information procurement quicker, more convenient, and relevant for their specific reason of the request, for example, through a product finder or more helpful information on the product.

Concerning its preparation, information most importantly needs to be of high quality, including accuracy and reliability. Besides this, it seems to be crucial that it is understandable and easy to access as well. As a result, it can be concluded that the majority wants scientific findings on equine feeding and nutrition to be simplified and made accessible to the general public. This statement is underpinned by this investigation's results about the respondents' little willingness to gather information through scientific literature themselves.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, B2C equine feed businesses should aim at understanding the customer contact as multi-channel-based and adapt their marketing strategy accordingly. This does not only involve offering a diverse set of contact options but also the definition of their importance and use for the brands' individual target group. It needs to be understood that multi-channel usage requires a holistic strategic approach that allows the full exhaustion of each channel. Nonetheless, the outcomes of this study suggest certain factors to be highly relevant when reaching and educating German equine feed buyers in today's multi-channel environment. All in all, due to the wish for autonomous learning experiences, B2C equine feed businesses should provide various opportunities for consumers to get in touch with the company and its representatives rather than invest in educational advertisements.

Other than that, encouragement of the brands' representation in physical shops would be favorable and shall be supported by extensive training of the shop's staff. In addition, it could be of strategic value to cooperate with the shops, for example, through brand-themed sales promotions or campaign days on which consultants of the brand provide advice on-site. Moreover, B2C equine feed businesses are advised to enrich their website with valuable data about topics such as equine feed, feeding practices, nutrition, and their relation to equine health. In addition to that, this information needs to be search engine optimized so that it can be found through search engine search more easily. Exemplary ideas for the implementation of such are ingredient fact sheets or themed blogposts. In order to prepare the pieces of information as appealing as possible to the target group, they should be broken down to the most relevant information and easily accessible through the website's navigation. The usage of scientific sources or knowledgeable authors, such as equine nutritionists or veterinarians, could create credibility and trust in the quality of information.

Additionally, the brand's website should be equipped with a product finder or a chatbot that provides feeding advice based on the consumer's own indications regarding the horse's husbandry system, age, health issues, etc. The additional provision of further (personal) consultation should be an integral part of this offer. Beyond that, equine feed businesses need to develop a consistent, clear, and helpful structure of product information so that consumers can grasp the most relevant data more easily. A simplified illustration of product information in the form of symbolic language could facilitate the comprehension of a product's key features at a glance.

For the reason that most equine feed buyers rely heavily on other equestrians' advice, the researcher recommends implementing a recommendation-based marketing strategy that aims to encourage customer loyalty. A critical measure is the initiation of word-of-mouth marketing, which, according to Karlíček et al. (2010), involves “informal conversations and recommendations” made by existing or potential customers. As investigated by Villanueva et al. (2008), the long-term value of customers acquired through word-of-mouth is much higher for businesses than through, for instance, direct marketing. Other than that, word-of-mouth transforms „regular“ customers into brand advocates, who self-sufficiently initiate recruiting new customers (Villanueva et al., 2008). Equine feed businesses can make use of this powerful marketing measure through active promotion and control of positive word-of-mouth related to one's business. One example is to provide opportunities for online reviews and virtual customer exchange on the brand website (Vallejo et al., 2015). Thereby, businesses stay informed about customer opinions and have the chance to react to them (Vallejo et al., 2015). Further, the credibility of the referring person is heavily influenced by their previous experience with the

product (Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013). Thus, equine feed brands shall promote sharing customers' experiences with the brand or a particular product online.

Finally, because of the strong trust laid into veterinarians' competence, equine feed businesses should seek collaborations with this occupational group, for instance, through educational events. The researcher also suggests utilizing product claims, such as “recommended by vets”, in consultation with various recognized veterinarians or equine nutritionists.

While particular gender and age biases influenced the composition of respondents and, thus, limit the generalizability of the results, this research does provide new insights into the preferred way of information procurement for female equine feed buyers that are young adults or middle-aged. However, it needs to be considered that individuals below 18 or above 50 years and of the male gender are less represented in this study. Therefore, the researcher recommends focusing further research on obtaining more valuable results from the above-mentioned underrepresented demographic groups, for example, through personal interviews. Additionally, it could be further investigated whether certain disunities in responses can be attributed to specific characteristics, such as age, gender, or existing equine feed and feeding knowledge.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Survey Outline English

How old are you?

- Under 18 ☐
 18-29 ☐
 30-49 ☐
 50 or older ☐

What is your gender?

- Male ☐
 Female ☐
 Diverse ☐

How did you get to know about this survey?

- Direct approach (personal contact) ☐
 Direct approach (e-mail/Whatsapp) ☐
 Flyer ☐
 Social Media (Instagram/Facebook) ☐

How do you mainly inform yourself about equine feed?

*Please grade the following topics by how frequently you use them on a scale of 1 to 6 and place your grading in the boxes next to them.
 (1 being the least important and 6 being the most important)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Websites of equine feed brands						
Youtube						
Facebook						
Instagram						
Whatsapp						
Blogs						
Magazines						
Books						
Public events (fairs/equine sports events)						
Physical shops						
Feed consultation (e.g. service hotline)						
Scientific literature						
Exchange with peers						
Podcasts						

Do you rather receive equine feed-related information passively or seek it actively?

- Actively (intentional, e.g., feed consultant) ☐
 Passively (unintentional, e.g., Ads) ☐

Do you rather enjoy receiving equine feed-related information passively or seeking it actively?

- Actively (intentional, e.g., feed consultant) ☐
 Passively (unintentional, e.g., Ads) ☐

Whose opinion do you value most during that process?

*Please grade the following topics by how frequently you use them on a scale of 1 to 6 and place your grading in the boxes next to them.

(1 being the least important and 6 being the most important)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Salesperson of an equine feed brand						
Feed consultant of an equine feed brand						
Contacts from the equine sports scene						
Family						
Friends						
Riding instructor						
Professional riders						
Social media influencers						
Independent equine nutrition experts						

Which criteria are most important for you during that process?

*Please grade the following topics by how frequently you use them on a scale of 1 to 6 and place your grading in the boxes next to them.

(1 being the least important and 6 being the most important)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Comprehensibility						
Personal contact						
Availability						
Quality of information						
Up-to-dateness						
Multimedia appeal						
Shortness						
Detailedness						
Applicability						

What do you miss when informing yourself about equine feed?

*You may tick several boxes. Please choose the response option "none" if you do not miss anything.

- Product finder ☐
- More helpful on-product information ☐
- Better online consultation service ☐
- Better offline consultation service ☐
- Other educational offers online (e.g., youtube videos, blogs, seminars, expert talks, etc.) ☐
- Other educational offers offline (e.g., magazine articles, seminars, expert talks, etc.) ☐
- Other, please specify: ☐
- None ☐

Appendix B - Survey Outline German

Wie alt bist du?

- Unter 18 ☐
 18-29 ☐
 30-49 ☐
 50 oder älter ☐

Was ist dein Geschlecht?

- Männlich ☐
 Weiblich ☐
 Divers ☐

Wie hast du von dieser Umfrage erfahren?

- Direkte Ansprache (persönlich) ☐
 Direkte Ansprache (E-Mail/Whatsapp) ☐
 Flyer ☐
 Social Media (Instagram/Facebook) ☐

Wie informierst du dich hauptsächlich über Pferdefutter/-fütterung?

* Bitte bewerte die folgenden Themen nach ihrer Wichtigkeit auf einer Skala von 1 bis 6 und trage deine Bewertung in die Kästchen daneben ein.
 (1 ist am unwichtigsten und 6 am wichtigsten)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Websites von Pferdefuttermarken						
Youtube						
Facebook						
Instagram						
Whatsapp						
Blogs						
Magazine						
Bücher						
Öffentliche Veranstaltungen (Messen/Turniere)						
Ladengeschäfte						
Futterberatung (z.B. Service Hotline)						
Wissenschaftliche Literatur						
Austausch mit Gleichgesinnten						
Podcasts						

Erhältst du Informationen über Pferdefutter eher passiv oder suchst du aktiv danach?

- Aktiv (vorsätzlich, z.B. Futtermittelberater) ☐
 Passiv (unbeabsichtigt, z.B. Werbung) ☐

Erhältst du Informationen über Pferdefutter lieber passiv oder suchst du lieber aktiv danach?

- Aktiv (vorsätzlich, z.B. Futtermittelberater) ☐
 Passiv (unbeabsichtigt, z.B. Werbung) ☐

Welche Meinung schätzt du dabei am meisten?

* Bitte bewerte die folgenden Themen nach ihrer Wichtigkeit auf einer Skala von 1 bis 6 und trage deine Bewertung in die Kästchen daneben ein.
(1 ist am unwichtigsten und 6 am wichtigsten)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Vertriebsmitarbeiter:in einer Pferdefuttermarke						
Futtermittelberater:in einer Pferdefuttermarke						
Kontakte aus der Reitsportszene						
Familie						
Freunde						
Reitlehrer:in						
Professionelle Reiter:innen						
Social Media Influencer						
Unabhängige Personen mit Expertise über Pferde-Ernährung						
Brand Ambassadors						

Welche Kriterien sind dir bei Informationen über Pferdefutter/-fütterung am wichtigsten?

* Bitte bewerte die folgenden Themen nach ihrer Wichtigkeit auf einer Skala von 1 bis 6 und trage deine Bewertung in die Kästchen daneben ein.
(1 ist am unwichtigsten und 6 am wichtigsten)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Verständlichkeit						
Persönlicher Kontakt						
Verfügbarkeit						
Qualität der Information						
Aktualität						
Multi-medialer Reiz						
Kürze						
Ausführlichkeit						
Anwendbarkeit						

Was vermisst du, wenn du dich über Pferdefutter/-fütterung informieren möchtest?

*Du kannst mehrere Kästchen ankreuzen. Bitte wähle die Antwortoption „keine“, wenn du nichts vermisst.

- Produktfinder ☐
- Hilfreichere Informationen auf dem Produkt ☐
- Besserer online Beratungsservice ☐
- Besserer offline Beratungsservice ☐
- Andere online Bildungsangebote (z. B. YouTube-Videos, Blogs, Seminare, Expertengespräche etc.) ☐
- Andere offline Bildungsangebote (z. B. Zeitschriftenartikel, Seminare, Expertengespräche etc.) ☐
- Sonstiges, bitte angeben: ☐
- Nichts ☐

Appendix C – SPSS Results

Table 6

Information Sources: Descriptives

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Podcasts	366	2.37	1.744	.091	2.20	2.55	1	6
Websites of equine feed brands	366	4.87	1.266	.066	4.74	5.00	1	6
Youtube	366	2.07	1.250	.065	1.94	2.20	1	6
Facebook	366	2.83	1.498	.078	2.68	2.99	1	6
Instagram	366	3.34	1.702	.089	3.16	3.51	1	6
Whatsapp	366	2.18	1.483	.078	2.03	2.34	1	6
Blogs	366	2.87	1.542	.081	2.71	3.03	1	6
Magazines	366	3.91	1.382	.072	3.77	4.05	1	6
Books	366	3.68	1.616	.084	3.52	3.85	1	6
Public events	366	4.47	1.336	.070	4.33	4.60	1	6
Physical shops	366	5.08	1.119	.058	4.96	5.19	1	6
Feed consultation	366	4.70	1.449	.076	4.56	4.85	1	6
Scientific literature	366	4.17	1.508	.079	4.01	4.32	1	6
Exchange with peers	366	4.82	1.185	.062	4.70	4.94	1	6
Total	5124	3.67	1.770	.025	3.62	3.72	1	6

Table 7

Information Sources: ANOVA Effect Sizes

ANOVA					
Grading					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5364.617	13	412.663	197.481	.000
Within Groups	10678.022	5110	2.090		
Total	16042.639	5123			

Table 8

Information Sources: Post Hoc Test Multiple Comparisons

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Grading

Bonferroni

(I) Fragencode	(J) Fragencode	Mean Differenc e (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Podcasts	Websites of equine feed brands	-2.497*	.107	<.001	-2.87	-2.13
	Youtube	.303	.107	.415	-.07	.67
	Facebook	-.459*	.107	.002	-.83	-.09
	Instagram	-.962*	.107	<.001	-1.33	-.59
	Whatsapp	.191	.107	1.000	-.18	.56
	Blogs	-.495*	.107	<.001	-.86	-.13
	Magazines	-1.533*	.107	<.001	-1.90	-1.16
	Books	-1.309*	.107	<.001	-1.68	-.94
	Public events	-2.093*	.107	<.001	-2.46	-1.72
	Physical shops	-2.705*	.107	<.001	-3.07	-2.34
	Feed consultation	-2.331*	.107	<.001	-2.70	-1.96
	Scientific literature	-1.795*	.107	<.001	-2.16	-1.43
	Exchange with peers	-2.443*	.107	<.001	-2.81	-2.07
Websites of equine feed brands	Podcasts	2.497*	.107	<.001	2.13	2.87
	Youtube	2.801*	.107	<.001	2.43	3.17
	Facebook	2.038*	.107	<.001	1.67	2.41
	Instagram	1.536*	.107	<.001	1.17	1.90
	Whatsapp	2.689*	.107	<.001	2.32	3.06
	Blogs	2.003*	.107	<.001	1.63	2.37
	Magazines	.964*	.107	<.001	.60	1.33
	Books	1.189*	.107	<.001	.82	1.56
	Public events	.404*	.107	.014	.03	.77
	Physical shops	-.208	.107	1.000	-.58	.16
	Feed consultation	.167	.107	1.000	-.20	.54
	Scientific literature	.702*	.107	<.001	.33	1.07
	Exchange with peers	.055	.107	1.000	-.31	.42
Youtube	Podcasts	-.303	.107	.415	-.67	.07
	Websites of equine feed brands	-2.801*	.107	<.001	-3.17	-2.43
	Facebook	-.762*	.107	<.001	-1.13	-.39
	Instagram	-1.265*	.107	<.001	-1.63	-.90
	Whatsapp	-.112	.107	1.000	-.48	.26
	Blogs	-.798*	.107	<.001	-1.17	-.43
	Magazines	-1.836*	.107	<.001	-2.21	-1.47
	Books	-1.612*	.107	<.001	-1.98	-1.24
	Public events	-2.396*	.107	<.001	-2.77	-2.03
	Physical shops	-3.008*	.107	<.001	-3.38	-2.64
	Feed consultation	-2.634*	.107	<.001	-3.00	-2.26
	Scientific literature	-2.098*	.107	<.001	-2.47	-1.73
	Exchange with peers	-2.746*	.107	<.001	-3.12	-2.38
Facebook	Podcasts	.459*	.107	.002	.09	.83
	Websites of equine feed brands	-2.038*	.107	<.001	-2.41	-1.67
	Youtube	.762*	.107	<.001	.39	1.13
	Instagram	-.503*	.107	<.001	-.87	-.13
	Whatsapp	.650*	.107	<.001	.28	1.02
	Blogs	-.036	.107	1.000	-.40	.33
	Magazines	-1.074*	.107	<.001	-1.44	-.70
	Books	-.850*	.107	<.001	-1.22	-.48

	Public events	-1.634*	.107	<.001	-2.00	-1.26
	Physical shops	-2.246*	.107	<.001	-2.62	-1.88
	Feed consultation	-1.872*	.107	<.001	-2.24	-1.50
	Scientific literature	-1.336*	.107	<.001	-1.71	-.97
	Exchange with peers	-1.984*	.107	<.001	-2.35	-1.61
Instagram	Podcasts	.962*	.107	<.001	.59	1.33
	Websites of equine feed brands	-1.536*	.107	<.001	-1.90	-1.17
	Youtube	1.265*	.107	<.001	.90	1.63
	Facebook	.503*	.107	<.001	.13	.87
	Whatsapp	1.153*	.107	<.001	.78	1.52
	Blogs	.467*	.107	.001	.10	.84
	Magazines	-.571*	.107	<.001	-.94	-.20
	Books	-.347	.107	.107	-.72	.02
	Public events	-1.131*	.107	<.001	-1.50	-.76
	Physical shops	-1.743*	.107	<.001	-2.11	-1.37
	Feed consultation	-1.369*	.107	<.001	-1.74	-1.00
	Scientific literature	-.833*	.107	<.001	-1.20	-.46
	Exchange with peers	-1.481*	.107	<.001	-1.85	-1.11
Whatsapp	Podcasts	-.191	.107	1.000	-.56	.18
	Websites of equine feed brands	-2.689*	.107	<.001	-3.06	-2.32
	Youtube	.112	.107	1.000	-.26	.48
	Facebook	-.650*	.107	<.001	-1.02	-.28
	Instagram	-1.153*	.107	<.001	-1.52	-.78
	Blogs	-.686*	.107	<.001	-1.06	-.32
	Magazines	-1.724*	.107	<.001	-2.09	-1.35
	Books	-1.500*	.107	<.001	-1.87	-1.13
	Public events	-2.284*	.107	<.001	-2.65	-1.91
	Physical shops	-2.896*	.107	<.001	-3.27	-2.53
	Feed consultation	-2.522*	.107	<.001	-2.89	-2.15
	Scientific literature	-1.986*	.107	<.001	-2.36	-1.62
	Exchange with peers	-2.634*	.107	<.001	-3.00	-2.26
Blogs	Podcasts	.495*	.107	<.001	.13	.86
	Websites of equine feed brands	-2.003*	.107	<.001	-2.37	-1.63
	Youtube	.798*	.107	<.001	.43	1.17
	Facebook	.036	.107	1.000	-.33	.40
	Instagram	-.467*	.107	.001	-.84	-.10
	Whatsapp	.686*	.107	<.001	.32	1.06
	Magazines	-1.038*	.107	<.001	-1.41	-.67
	Books	-.814*	.107	<.001	-1.18	-.44
	Public events	-1.598*	.107	<.001	-1.97	-1.23
	Physical shops	-2.210*	.107	<.001	-2.58	-1.84
	Feed consultation	-1.836*	.107	<.001	-2.21	-1.47
	Scientific literature	-1.301*	.107	<.001	-1.67	-.93
	Exchange with peers	-1.948*	.107	<.001	-2.32	-1.58
Magazines	Podcasts	1.533*	.107	<.001	1.16	1.90
	Websites of equine feed brands	-.964*	.107	<.001	-1.33	-.60
	Youtube	1.836*	.107	<.001	1.47	2.21
	Facebook	1.074*	.107	<.001	.70	1.44
	Instagram	.571*	.107	<.001	.20	.94
	Whatsapp	1.724*	.107	<.001	1.35	2.09
	Blogs	1.038*	.107	<.001	.67	1.41
	Books	.224	.107	1.000	-.15	.59
	Public events	-.560*	.107	<.001	-.93	-.19

	Physical shops	-1.172*	.107	<.001	-1.54	-.80
	Feed consultation	-.798*	.107	<.001	-1.17	-.43
	Scientific literature	-.262	.107	1.000	-.63	.11
	Exchange with peers	-.910*	.107	<.001	-1.28	-.54
Books	Podcasts	1.309*	.107	<.001	.94	1.68
	Websites of equine feed brands	-1.189*	.107	<.001	-1.56	-.82
	Youtube	1.612*	.107	<.001	1.24	1.98
	Facebook	.850*	.107	<.001	.48	1.22
	Instagram	.347	.107	.107	-.02	.72
	Whatsapp	1.500*	.107	<.001	1.13	1.87
	Blogs	.814*	.107	<.001	.44	1.18
	Magazines	-.224	.107	1.000	-.59	.15
	Public events	-.784*	.107	<.001	-1.15	-.41
	Physical shops	-1.396*	.107	<.001	-1.77	-1.03
	Feed consultation	-1.022*	.107	<.001	-1.39	-.65
	Scientific literature	-.486*	.107	<.001	-.86	-.12
	Exchange with peers	-1.134*	.107	<.001	-1.50	-.76
Public events	Podcasts	2.093*	.107	<.001	1.72	2.46
	Websites of equine feed brands	-.404*	.107	.014	-.77	-.03
	Youtube	2.396*	.107	<.001	2.03	2.77
	Facebook	1.634*	.107	<.001	1.26	2.00
	Instagram	1.131*	.107	<.001	.76	1.50
	Whatsapp	2.284*	.107	<.001	1.91	2.65
	Blogs	1.598*	.107	<.001	1.23	1.97
	Magazines	.560*	.107	<.001	.19	.93
	Books	.784*	.107	<.001	.41	1.15
	Physical shops	-.612*	.107	<.001	-.98	-.24
	Feed consultation	-.238	.107	1.000	-.61	.13
	Scientific literature	.298	.107	.486	-.07	.67
	Exchange with peers	-.350	.107	.098	-.72	.02
Physical shops	Podcasts	2.705*	.107	<.001	2.34	3.07
	Websites of equine feed brands	.208	.107	1.000	-.16	.58
	Youtube	3.008*	.107	<.001	2.64	3.38
	Facebook	2.246*	.107	<.001	1.88	2.62
	Instagram	1.743*	.107	<.001	1.37	2.11
	Whatsapp	2.896*	.107	<.001	2.53	3.27
	Blogs	2.210*	.107	<.001	1.84	2.58
	Magazines	1.172*	.107	<.001	.80	1.54
	Books	1.396*	.107	<.001	1.03	1.77
	Public events	.612*	.107	<.001	.24	.98
	Feed consultation	.374*	.107	.042	.00	.74
	Scientific literature	.910*	.107	<.001	.54	1.28
	Exchange with peers	.262	.107	1.000	-.11	.63
Feed consultation	Podcasts	2.331*	.107	<.001	1.96	2.70
	Websites of equine feed brands	-.167	.107	1.000	-.54	.20
	Youtube	2.634*	.107	<.001	2.26	3.00
	Facebook	1.872*	.107	<.001	1.50	2.24
	Instagram	1.369*	.107	<.001	1.00	1.74
	Whatsapp	2.522*	.107	<.001	2.15	2.89
	Blogs	1.836*	.107	<.001	1.47	2.21
	Magazines	.798*	.107	<.001	.43	1.17
	Books	1.022*	.107	<.001	.65	1.39
	Public events	.238	.107	1.000	-.13	.61

Scientific literature	Physical shops	-.374*	.107	.042	-.74	.00
	Scientific literature	.536*	.107	<.001	.17	.90
	Exchange with peers	-.112	.107	1.000	-.48	.26
	Podcasts	1.795*	.107	<.001	1.43	2.16
	Websites of equine feed brands	-.702*	.107	<.001	-1.07	-.33
	Youtube	2.098*	.107	<.001	1.73	2.47
	Facebook	1.336*	.107	<.001	.97	1.71
	Instagram	.833*	.107	<.001	.46	1.20
	Whatsapp	1.986*	.107	<.001	1.62	2.36
	Blogs	1.301*	.107	<.001	.93	1.67
	Magazines	.262	.107	1.000	-.11	.63
	Books	.486*	.107	<.001	.12	.86
	Public events	-.298	.107	.486	-.67	.07
	Physical shops	-.910*	.107	<.001	-1.28	-.54
	Feed consultation	-.536*	.107	<.001	-.90	-.17
Exchange with peers	Exchange with peers	-.648*	.107	<.001	-1.02	-.28
	Podcasts	2.443*	.107	<.001	2.07	2.81
	Websites of equine feed brands	-.055	.107	1.000	-.42	.31
	Youtube	2.746*	.107	<.001	2.38	3.12
	Facebook	1.984*	.107	<.001	1.61	2.35
	Instagram	1.481*	.107	<.001	1.11	1.85
	Whatsapp	2.634*	.107	<.001	2.26	3.00
	Blogs	1.948*	.107	<.001	1.58	2.32
	Magazines	.910*	.107	<.001	.54	1.28
	Books	1.134*	.107	<.001	.76	1.50
	Public events	.350	.107	.098	-.02	.72
	Physical shops	-.262	.107	1.000	-.63	.11
	Feed consultation	.112	.107	1.000	-.26	.48
	Scientific literature	.648*	.107	<.001	.28	1.02

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 9

Current and Desired Forms of Information Procurement (Crosstabulation)

			Desired		Total
			Active	Passive	
Current	Active	Count	268	35	303
		% within Current	88.4%	11.6%	100.0%
	Passive	Count	30	33	63
		% within Current	47.6%	52.4%	100.0%
Total	Count		298	68	366
	% within Current		81.4%	18.6%	100.0%

Table 10*Current and Desired Forms of Information Procurement (Chi-Square Tests)*

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
McNemar Test		.620 ^a
N of Valid Cases	366	

a. Binomial distribution used.

Table 11*Influential Figures: Descriptives*

Grading	Descriptives							
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Salesperson of an equine feed brand	366	3.54	1.255	.066	3.41	3.67	1	6
Feed consultant of an equine feed brand	366	4.31	1.306	.068	4.18	4.45	1	6
Contacts from the equestrian scene	366	4.42	1.134	.059	4.30	4.53	1	6
Family	366	3.44	1.664	.087	3.27	3.61	1	6
Friends	366	4.09	1.423	.074	3.94	4.23	1	6
Trainer	366	4.19	1.323	.069	4.06	4.33	1	6
Professional Riders	366	4.12	1.332	.070	3.99	4.26	1	6
Social Media Influencers	366	2.56	1.363	.071	2.42	2.70	1	6
Independent equine nutrition experts	366	4.57	1.380	.072	4.43	4.72	1	6
Brand ambassadors	366	2.69	1.250	.065	2.56	2.82	1	6
Total	3660	3.79	1.507	.025	3.75	3.84	1	6

Table 12*Influential Figures: ANOVA Effect Sizes*

Grading	ANOVA				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1662.120	9	184.680	101.427	<.001
Within Groups	6645.959	3650	1.821		
Total	8308.080	3659			

Table 13*Influential Figures: Post Hoc Test Multiple Comparisons*

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Grading
Bonferroni

(I) Fragencode	(J) Fragencode	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Salesperson of an equine feed brand	Feed consultant of an equine feed brand	-.768*	.100	<.001	-1.09	-.44
	Contacts from the equestrian scene	-.874*	.100	<.001	-1.20	-.55
	Family	.107	.100	1.000	-.22	.43
	Friends	-.544*	.100	<.001	-.87	-.22
	Trainer	-.650*	.100	<.001	-.98	-.32
	Professional Riders	-.579*	.100	<.001	-.90	-.25
	Social Media Influencers	.981*	.100	<.001	.66	1.31
	Independent equine nutritionists	-1.030*	.100	<.001	-1.36	-.70
	Brand ambassadors	.852*	.100	<.001	.53	1.18
Feed consultant of an equine feed brand	Salesperson of an equine feed brand	.768*	.100	<.001	.44	1.09
	Contacts from the equestrian scene	-.107	.100	1.000	-.43	.22
	Family	.874*	.100	<.001	.55	1.20
	Friends	.224	.100	1.000	-.10	.55
	Trainer	.117	.100	1.000	-.21	.44
	Professional Riders	.189	.100	1.000	-.14	.51
	Social Media Influencers	1.749*	.100	<.001	1.42	2.07
	Independent equine nutritionists	-.262	.100	.386	-.59	.06
	Brand ambassadors	1.620*	.100	<.001	1.29	1.95
Contacts from the equestrian scene	Salesperson of an equine feed brand	.874*	.100	<.001	.55	1.20
	Feed consultant of an equine feed brand	.107	.100	1.000	-.22	.43
	Family	.981*	.100	<.001	.66	1.31
	Friends	.331*	.100	.042	.01	.66
	Trainer	.224	.100	1.000	-.10	.55
	Professional Riders	.295	.100	.140	-.03	.62
	Social Media Influencers	1.855*	.100	<.001	1.53	2.18
	Independent equine nutritionists	-.156	.100	1.000	-.48	.17
	Brand ambassadors	1.727*	.100	<.001	1.40	2.05
Family	Salesperson of an equine feed brand	-.107	.100	1.000	-.43	.22
	Feed consultant of an equine feed brand	-.874*	.100	<.001	-1.20	-.55
	Contacts from the equestrian scene	-.981*	.100	<.001	-1.31	-.66
	Friends	-.650*	.100	<.001	-.98	-.32
	Trainer	-.757*	.100	<.001	-1.08	-.43
	Professional Riders	-.686*	.100	<.001	-1.01	-.36
	Social Media Influencers	.874*	.100	<.001	.55	1.20
	Independent equine nutritionists	-1.137*	.100	<.001	-1.46	-.81
	Brand ambassadors	.746*	.100	<.001	.42	1.07
Friends	Salesperson of an equine feed brand	.544*	.100	<.001	.22	.87
	Feed consultant of an equine feed brand	-.224	.100	1.000	-.55	.10
	Contacts from the equestrian scene	-.331*	.100	.042	-.66	-.01
	Family	.650*	.100	<.001	.32	.98
	Trainer	-.107	.100	1.000	-.43	.22
	Professional Riders	-.036	.100	1.000	-.36	.29
	Social Media Influencers	1.525*	.100	<.001	1.20	1.85
	Independent equine nutritionists	-.486*	.100	<.001	-.81	-.16
	Brand ambassadors	1.396*	.100	<.001	1.07	1.72

Trainer	Salesperson of an equine feed brand	.650*	.100	<.001	.32	.98
	Feed consultant of an equine feed brand	-.117	.100	1.000	-.44	.21
	Contacts from the equestrian scene	-.224	.100	1.000	-.55	.10
	Family	.757*	.100	<.001	.43	1.08
	Friends	.107	.100	1.000	-.22	.43
	Professional Riders	.071	.100	1.000	-.25	.40
	Social Media Influencers	1.631*	.100	<.001	1.31	1.96
	Independent equine nutritionists	-.380*	.100	.006	-.71	-.05
	Brand ambassadors	1.503*	.100	<.001	1.18	1.83
Professional Riders	Salesperson of an equine feed brand	.579*	.100	<.001	.25	.90
	Feed consultant of an equine feed brand	-.189	.100	1.000	-.51	.14
	Contacts from the equestrian scene	-.295	.100	.140	-.62	.03
	Family	.686*	.100	<.001	.36	1.01
	Friends	.036	.100	1.000	-.29	.36
	Trainer	-.071	.100	1.000	-.40	.25
	Social Media Influencers	1.560*	.100	<.001	1.23	1.89
	Independent equine nutritionists	-.451*	.100	<.001	-.78	-.13
	Brand ambassadors	1.432*	.100	<.001	1.11	1.76
Social Media Influencers	Salesperson of an equine feed brand	-.981*	.100	<.001	-1.31	-.66
	Feed consultant of an equine feed brand	-1.749*	.100	<.001	-2.07	-1.42
	Contacts from the equestrian scene	-1.855*	.100	<.001	-2.18	-1.53
	Family	-.874*	.100	<.001	-1.20	-.55
	Friends	-1.525*	.100	<.001	-1.85	-1.20
	Trainer	-1.631*	.100	<.001	-1.96	-1.31
	Professional Riders	-1.560*	.100	<.001	-1.89	-1.23
	Independent equine nutritionists	-2.011*	.100	<.001	-2.34	-1.69
	Brand ambassadors	-.128	.100	1.000	-.45	.20
Independent equine nutritionists	Salesperson of an equine feed brand	1.030*	.100	<.001	.70	1.36
	Feed consultant of an equine feed brand	.262	.100	.386	-.06	.59
	Contacts from the equestrian scene	.156	.100	1.000	-.17	.48
	Family	1.137*	.100	<.001	.81	1.46
	Friends	.486*	.100	<.001	.16	.81
	Trainer	.380*	.100	.006	.05	.71
	Professional Riders	.451*	.100	<.001	.13	.78
	Social Media Influencers	2.011*	.100	<.001	1.69	2.34
	Brand ambassadors	1.883*	.100	<.001	1.56	2.21
Brand ambassadors	Salesperson of an equine feed brand	-.852*	.100	<.001	-1.18	-.53
	Feed consultant of an equine feed brand	-1.620*	.100	<.001	-1.95	-1.29
	Contacts from the equestrian scene	-1.727*	.100	<.001	-2.05	-1.40
	Family	-.746*	.100	<.001	-1.07	-.42
	Friends	-1.396*	.100	<.001	-1.72	-1.07
	Trainer	-1.503*	.100	<.001	-1.83	-1.18
	Professional Riders	-1.432*	.100	<.001	-1.76	-1.11
	Social Media Influencers	.128	.100	1.000	-.20	.45
	Independent equine nutritionists	-1.883*	.100	<.001	-2.21	-1.56

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 14

Information Criteria: Descriptives

Grading	Descriptives							
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		

Comprehensibility	366	5.34	.888	.046	5.24	5.43	3	6
Personal Contact	366	3.84	1.356	.071	3.70	3.98	1	6
Availability	366	5.33	.881	.046	5.24	5.42	1	6
Quality of information	366	5.49	.705	.037	5.42	5.57	3	6
Up-to-dateness	366	5.19	.995	.052	5.09	5.30	1	6
Multimedial appeal	366	2.96	1.328	.069	2.82	3.09	1	6
Shortness	366	3.40	1.228	.064	3.28	3.53	1	6
Detailedness	366	4.47	1.139	.060	4.36	4.59	1	6
Applicability	366	5.28	.914	.048	5.18	5.37	1	6
Total	3294	4.59	1.402	.024	4.54	4.64	1	6

Table 15

Information Criteria: ANOVA Effect Sizes

ANOVA					
Grading	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2712.585	8	339.073	296.500	.000
Within Groups	3756.675	3285	1.144		
Total	6469.260	3293			

Table 16

Information Criteria: Post Hoc Test Multiple Comparisons

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: Grading						
Bonferroni						
(I) Frangecode	(J) Frangecode	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comprehensibility	Personal Contact	1.497*	.079	<.001	1.24	1.75
	Availability	.005	.079	1.000	-.25	.26
	Quality of information	-.158	.079	1.000	-.41	.09
	Up-to-dateness	.142	.079	1.000	-.11	.40
	Multimedial appeal	2.380*	.079	<.001	2.13	2.63
	Shortness	1.932*	.079	<.001	1.68	2.18
	Detailedness	.863*	.079	<.001	.61	1.12
	Applicability	.060	.079	1.000	-.19	.31
Personal Contact	Comprehensibility	-1.497*	.079	<.001	-1.75	-1.24
	Availability	-1.492*	.079	<.001	-1.74	-1.24
	Quality of information	-1.656*	.079	<.001	-1.91	-1.40
	Up-to-dateness	-1.355*	.079	<.001	-1.61	-1.10
	Multimedial appeal	.883*	.079	<.001	.63	1.14
	Shortness	.434*	.079	<.001	.18	.69
	Detailedness	-.634*	.079	<.001	-.89	-.38
	Applicability	-1.437*	.079	<.001	-1.69	-1.18
Availability	Comprehensibility	-.005	.079	1.000	-.26	.25
	Personal Contact	1.492*	.079	<.001	1.24	1.74
	Quality of information	-.164	.079	1.000	-.42	.09
	Up-to-dateness	.137	.079	1.000	-.12	.39
	Multimedial appeal	2.374*	.079	<.001	2.12	2.63
	Shortness	1.926*	.079	<.001	1.67	2.18
	Detailedness	.858*	.079	<.001	.60	1.11
	Applicability	.055	.079	1.000	-.20	.31

Quality of information	Comprehensibility	.158	.079	1.000	-.09	.41
	Personal Contact	1.656*	.079	<.001	1.40	1.91
	Availability	.164	.079	1.000	-.09	.42
	Up-to-dateness	.301*	.079	.005	.05	.55
	Multimedial appeal	2.538*	.079	<.001	2.29	2.79
	Shortness	2.090*	.079	<.001	1.84	2.34
	Detailedness	1.022*	.079	<.001	.77	1.27
	Applicability	.219	.079	.206	-.03	.47
Up-to-dateness	Comprehensibility	-.142	.079	1.000	-.40	.11
	Personal Contact	1.355*	.079	<.001	1.10	1.61
	Availability	-.137	.079	1.000	-.39	.12
	Quality of information	-.301*	.079	.005	-.55	-.05
	Multimedial appeal	2.238*	.079	<.001	1.98	2.49
	Shortness	1.790*	.079	<.001	1.54	2.04
	Detailedness	.721*	.079	<.001	.47	.97
	Applicability	-.082	.079	1.000	-.33	.17
Multimedial appeal	Comprehensibility	-2.380*	.079	<.001	-2.63	-2.13
	Personal Contact	-.883*	.079	<.001	-1.14	-.63
	Availability	-2.374*	.079	<.001	-2.63	-2.12
	Quality of information	-2.538*	.079	<.001	-2.79	-2.29
	Up-to-dateness	-2.238*	.079	<.001	-2.49	-1.98
	Shortness	-.448*	.079	<.001	-.70	-.20
	Detailedness	-1.516*	.079	<.001	-1.77	-1.26
	Applicability	-2.320*	.079	<.001	-2.57	-2.07
Shortness	Comprehensibility	-1.932*	.079	<.001	-2.18	-1.68
	Personal Contact	-.434*	.079	<.001	-.69	-.18
	Availability	-1.926*	.079	<.001	-2.18	-1.67
	Quality of information	-2.090*	.079	<.001	-2.34	-1.84
	Up-to-dateness	-1.790*	.079	<.001	-2.04	-1.54
	Multimedial appeal	.448*	.079	<.001	.20	.70
	Detailedness	-1.068*	.079	<.001	-1.32	-.82
	Applicability	-1.872*	.079	<.001	-2.12	-1.62
Detailedness	Comprehensibility	-.863*	.079	<.001	-1.12	-.61
	Personal Contact	.634*	.079	<.001	.38	.89
	Availability	-.858*	.079	<.001	-1.11	-.60
	Quality of information	-1.022*	.079	<.001	-1.27	-.77
	Up-to-dateness	-.721*	.079	<.001	-.97	-.47
	Multimedial appeal	1.516*	.079	<.001	1.26	1.77
	Shortness	1.068*	.079	<.001	.82	1.32
	Applicability	-.803*	.079	<.001	-1.06	-.55
Applicability	Comprehensibility	-.060	.079	1.000	-.31	.19
	Personal Contact	1.437*	.079	<.001	1.18	1.69
	Availability	-.055	.079	1.000	-.31	.20
	Quality of information	-.219	.079	.206	-.47	.03
	Up-to-dateness	.082	.079	1.000	-.17	.33
	Multimedial appeal	2.320*	.079	<.001	2.07	2.57
	Shortness	1.872*	.079	<.001	1.62	2.12
	Detailedness	.803*	.079	<.001	.55	1.06

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Appendix D – Additional Answers

Table 17

Other Answers for Wishes for Eased Information Procurement about Equine Feed/Feeding from the Text Box Option

Other answers
More understandable information
Option for telephone consultation
I look at the equestrian store and feed store
We are Lexa customers and are very satisfied with the products and receive good advice there
Feed consultant or veterinarian
Independent feed consultants who deal with EVERY brand.
Clearly regulated information that is the same for everyone to improve comparability
Tips from the vet, in case of problems