



Evaluating perceptions of UGA Extension horse resource credibility and accessibility using diffusion of innovation theory.

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Situation

A variety of needs assessments have been conducted investigating horse owner preferences for teaching and learning methods by Extension institutions. Despite success in equine programming in Georgia, there has not been any significant investigation given to the diffusion of innovation to Georgia horse owners and equine industry stakeholders. This study was a preliminary assessment of perceptions of UGA Extension horse resource credibility and accessibility.

Study Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

- 1) Describe the demographics of UGA Extension horse resources users.
- 2) Explore the diffusion of innovation to horse owners by describing perceptions of UGA Extension horse resources.

Hypothesis: There is a statistically significant difference in UGA Extension Horse Resource perceived credibility and accessibility between individuals who currently use them and those who do not.

Materials and Methods

Survey Instrument:

- 20-question anonymous online survey developed using Qualtrics XM software
- Instrument was peer-reviewed for validity, then distributed via email listservs and social media for 14 day period in July, 2023
- Sections of questionnaire included demographics and three constructs: accessibility, credibility, and behaviors*.
- Each construct consisted of five Likert scale questions.
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was not required for this survey as it is not considered Human Subject Research by the University of Georgia.

*Behavior data not reported in this poster

Data Analysis:

- Data analysis was conducted in SPSS to determine differences in construct scores between respondents who currently use UGA Extension horse resources and those who do not.
- Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics and analysis for statistical significance including independent sample t-tests, ANOVA, and correlation analysis.
- Statistical significance was set at $P < 0.05$.

Survey Response

1,129

followers reached with social media

221

Surveys completed

104

Surveys included in data analysis

136

emails sent containing anonymous link

117

Discarded due to lack of completion (<75%)

Respondent Demographics

Respondents represented Georgia (70.2%), other states (26%), and an international audience (3.8%). The majority of UGA Extension horse resources users were Georgia residents, own 1-2 horses, are primarily involved in the equine industry as horse owners, have been interested in horses for over 21 years, and currently use UGA Extension horse resources (70.2%). Detailed demographic information is available in figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Type of Involvement in Equine Industry

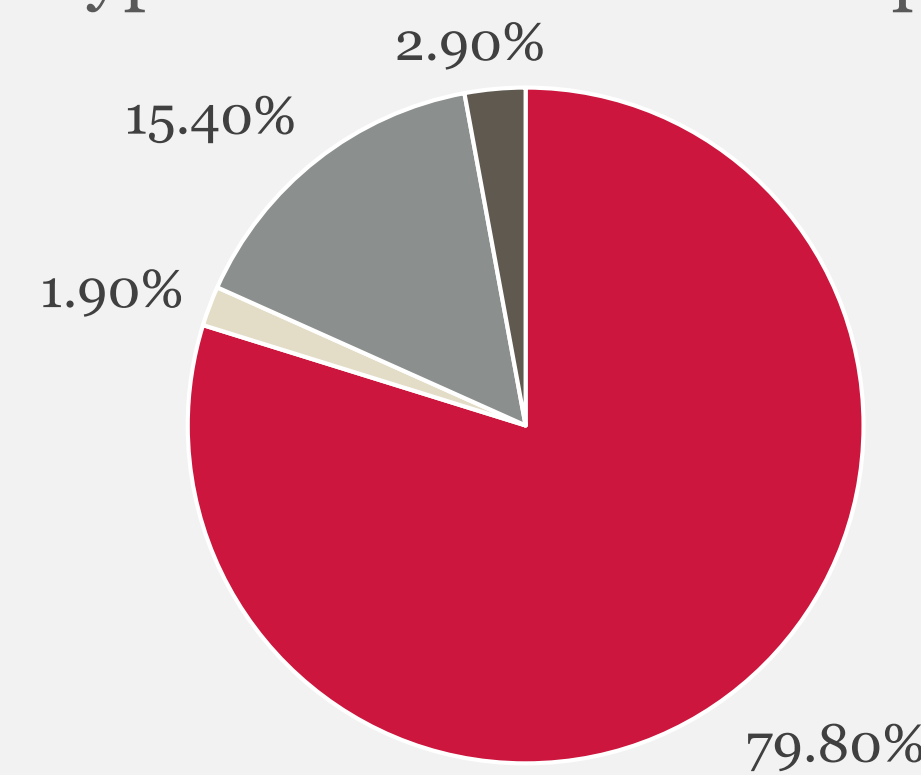
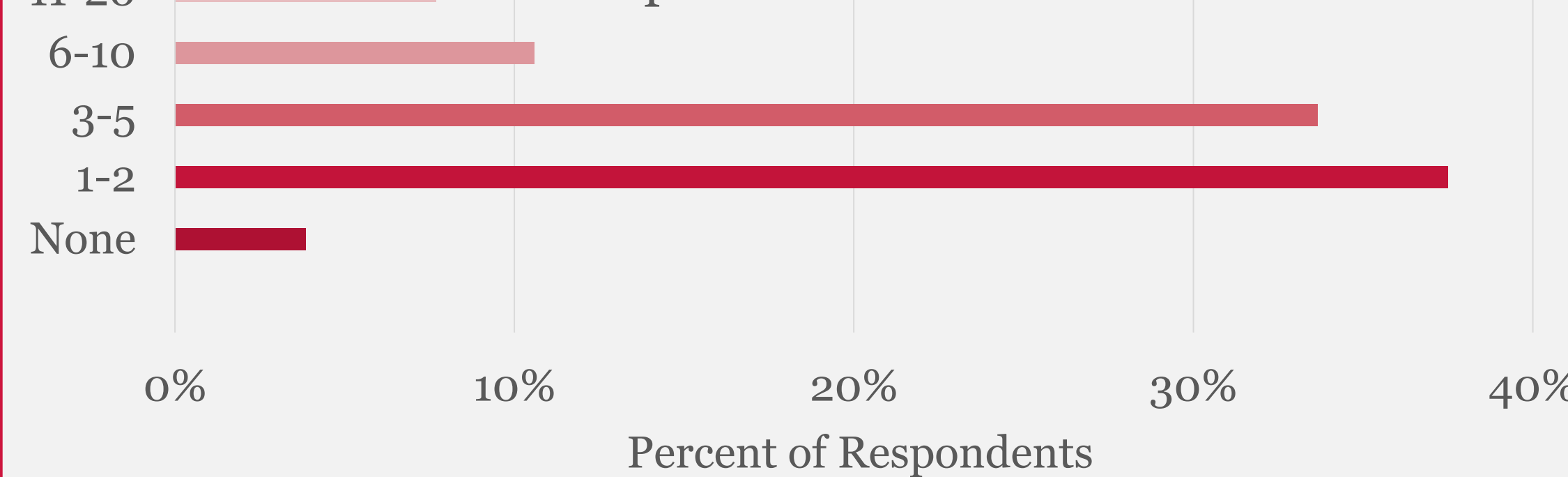


Figure 2: # of Horses Owned or Cared for by Respondents



Results

Independent samples t-tests indicated significant differences in perceived credibility ($t=4.144$; $p=0.001$, Cohen's $d=0.971$) and accessibility ($t=4.469$; $p<0.001$, Cohen's $d=0.969$) among those currently using UGA Extension horse resources compared to non-users. Statistically significant correlations were noted between use of Extension resources and perception of UGA Extension horse resource credibility ($r = 0.407$, $p=0.001$) and accessibility ($r = 0.406$, $p=0.001$). Results are presented in figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3: Perceived Credibility of UGA Extension Horse Resources Based On Use

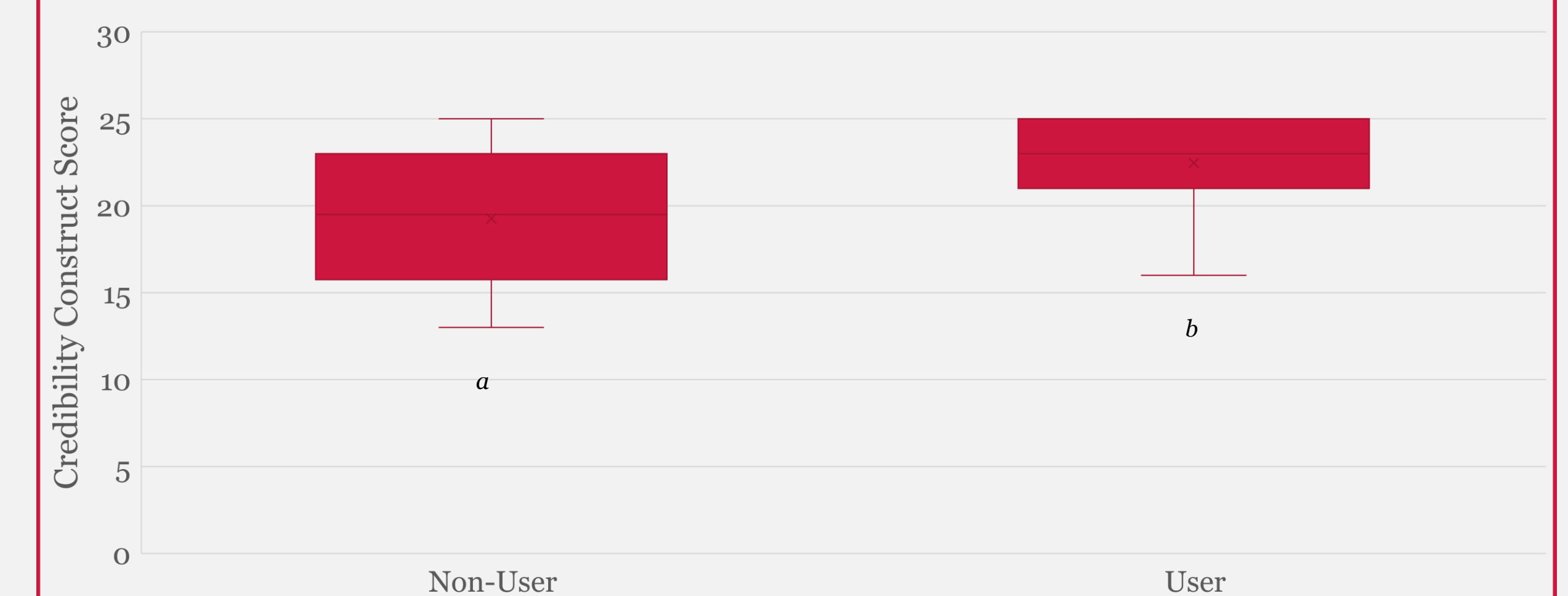
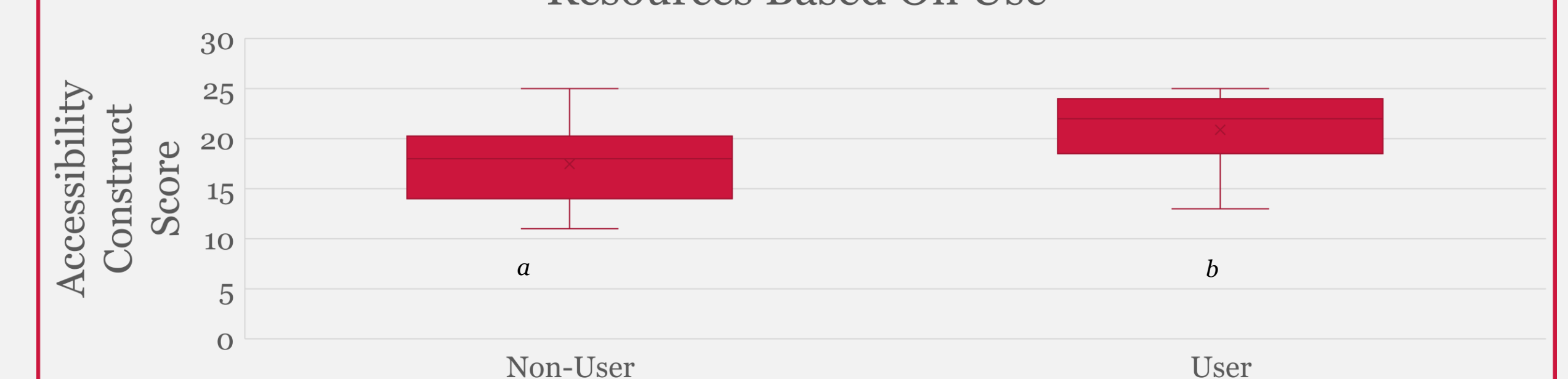


Figure 4: Perceived Accessibility of UGA Extension Horse Resources Based On Use



Discussion & Conclusions

The present study aimed to investigate the diffusion of innovation of UGA Extension horse resources to horse owners. Perception of UGA Extension horse resource credibility and accessibility is correlated to whether the respondent currently uses said resources or not. Current users had more positive perceptions of credibility and accessibility of UGA Extension horse resources than non-users, with correlations based on their involvement in the horse industry

With the equine industry thriving and horse owners relying more on veterinarians and the internet than Extension resources, this results of this study:

- highlights that **long-term engagement** and **targeted education efforts** are **critical to building positive perceptions of UGA Extension horse resources**
- underscores the **importance of improving the credibility and accessibility of UGA Extension horse resources** to better **serve diverse demographic groups** in the industry.

Future Research such as qualitative focus groups may provide further insights into the specific resource type and accessibility needs of Georgia horse owners and industry stakeholders.