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The Digital Age: Reminder and Confirmation Preference in Blood Donation



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Introduction

It is widely accepted that individuals are more likely to comply and follow through with responsibilities when reminded and asked to confirm their commitments. With the American Red Cross' access to fast and affordable communication and this notion in mind, there is potential to develop new recruitment strategies and better methods of ensuring blood donation commitments.

In particular, understanding modes of communication with the donor population can have significant implications: avoiding loss of follow up, improving donor experience, and ensuring appropriate use of resources and staff; therefore, the American Red Cross is interested in understanding demographic differences among those who prefer different modes of communication for blood donor appointment reminders and confirmations.

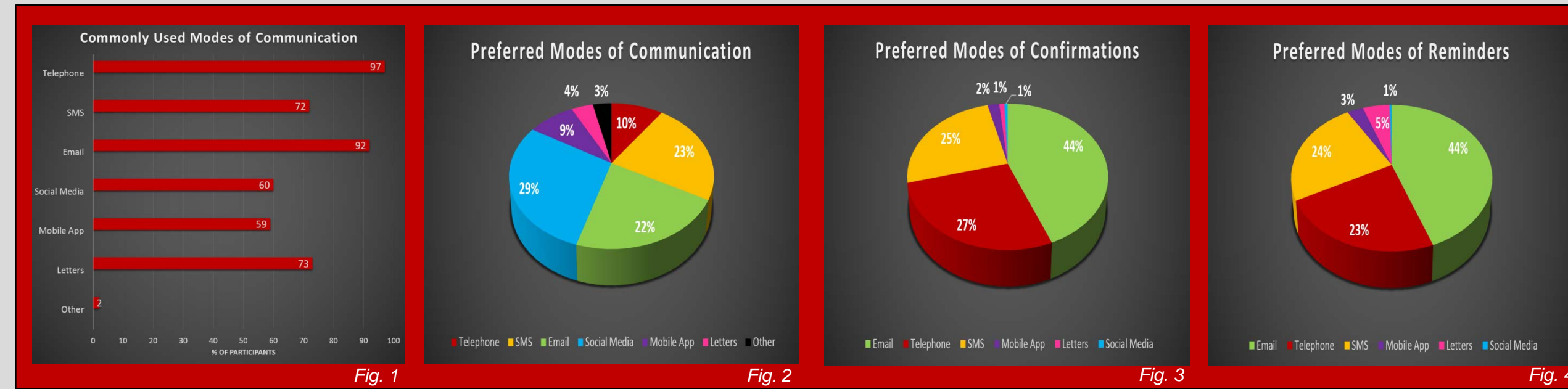
Purpose

The purpose of this project is to gauge the level of interest amongst blood donors in utilizing appointment reminders and confirmations as well as to determine the best mode of communication by which to reach blood donors.

Methods

Paper surveys were distributed to donors at the American Red Cross donor center in Burlington, Vermont and at mobile donation sites in VT from Oct 29th to Nov 17th 2015. The survey was anonymous and consisted of twenty questions that assessed communications technology access and usage habits of donors, preferences for scheduling appointments, appointment reminders, and appointment confirmations. Additional demographic information was gathered about age, gender, educational attainment, county of residence, and frequency of blood donation. Questions regarding likelihood to attend scheduled appointments and preferences for reminders and confirmations were posed as 5 point Likert scales ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." All other questions were multiple choice. The study was exempt from the IRB at the University of Vermont and approved by the American Red Cross.

Participants 17 years old and younger were excluded. Remaining surveys were segregated into "frequent donors," defined as donating 3 or more times per year (n = 398), and "infrequent donors," defined as donating fewer than 3 times per year (n = 193). All data (n = 591) were analyzed using Microsoft Excel.



	Frequent Donors	Infrequent Donors
Most common age range (percent)	56-65 (30)	18-25 (24)
Gender (percent male/percent female)	56/44	69/31
Education (percent with bachelor's degree or higher)	60	57
Internet access (percent readily available)	91	96
Most common method of donation scheduling (percent)	Phone (36)	Walk-In (41)

Table 1. Demographics of Blood Donors. Frequent donors were defined as those who give blood 3 or more times per year, while infrequent donors give blood fewer than 3 times per year. Total of 398 frequent donors and 193 infrequent donors.

	Frequent Donors	Infrequent Donors
Willing to confirm appointment (percent)	68	68
Preferred mode of confirmation (percent)	Email (43)	Email (46)
Want an appointment reminder (percent)	65	56
Preferred mode of reminder (percent)	Email (45)	Email (44)
Most prevalent mode of communication (percent)	Telephone (97)	Telephone (97)
Most frequently used mode of communication (percent)	Social Media (30)	Social Media (30)

Table 2. Reminder and Confirmation Preferences of Blood Donors. Frequent donors were defined as those who give blood 3 or more times per year, while infrequent donors give blood fewer than 3 times per year. Total of 398 frequent donors and 193 infrequent donors. "Most prevalent" mode of communication was most widely used in blood donor population, while "most frequently" used mode was based on self-reported individual use.



Additional Results

Communication technology among donors

- Most widespread mode of communication: telephone (97%)
- Most frequently used mode of communication: social media (30%)

Reminders and confirmations for appointments

- Although social media was reported as the most frequently used mode of communication, less than 3% of donors want reminders or confirmation through social media
- Most common modes of scheduling were phone (33%) and walk-in (30%)
- Frequent donors were most likely to schedule their appointment by phone; Infrequent donors were most likely to walk-in for their appointment
- Many donors (20%) scheduled their appointment online

Other findings:

- Most donors (83%) felt obligated to attend a scheduled appointment
- Donors claimed that they were equally likely to attend their appointments given telephone reminders from people in their town vs. remote call centers
- Frequent donors were more likely to answer questions posed on a Likert scale with strongly agree or strongly disagree while infrequent donors evinced more neutral feelings

Conclusions

Blood donors have interest in using appointment confirmations (64%) and reminders (60%), and the most commonly preferred mode for these communications is email (40%). These data will allow the American Red Cross and other blood centers to better tailor their modes of communications for the various aspects of donor recruitment, scheduling, confirmation, and donation.

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