

Delegate interactions with congress posters: current preferences and future opportunities

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Abstract

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Introduction

- In 2011, we launched Shire Congress Posters, a mobile-optimized platform designed to offer digital copies of scientific posters as an environmentally friendly alternative to paper handouts.^{1,2}
 - Our platform, which uses quick response (QR) codes, has evolved to provide delegates with additional content – for example, translations of posters for non-native English speakers and author presentations (audio and video).³
- Supported by the increased availability of smart devices and Wi-Fi, congresses have embraced mobile technology, providing various digital services such as apps, social media and online poster libraries (increasingly accessible via QR codes). However, few data are publicly available on delegate preferences for consumption of scientific content from poster sessions.
- We conducted a survey to understand delegate interactions with congress poster presentations, and to assess their preferences for traditional and digital media offerings.

Methods

- A short questionnaire was administered at the 4th Annual International Conference of the College of Mental Health Pharmacy (CMHP) (Leicester, UK; October 2013) and the 9th Congress of the European Crohn's and Colitis Organisation (ECCO) (Copenhagen, Denmark; February 2014). The questionnaire can be downloaded via the QR code.

Results

- In total, 204 delegates completed the survey: 69 at the CMHP conference (of about 150 attendees) and 135 at the ECCO congress (of approximately 4500 attendees). Not all delegates answered every question: unless otherwise indicated, all percentages are proportions of the total number of respondents.
 - Over 85% of respondents were resident in Europe, with the highest numbers coming from the UK (42%), Italy (5%), Spain (5%) and Sweden (5%). Delegates from Africa (1%), Australia (2%), the Middle East (2%), North America (2%) and South America (1%) were also represented.
 - The survey captured responses from delegates in a variety of roles (Figure 1). The majority of delegates (75%) were aged 25–44 years.
- When asked about the poster that they had visited most recently, 27% of respondents attended during the designated poster session, whereas 40% had visited the poster outside those times (Figure 2).
 - About a third of respondents (35%) had read the poster in great detail, while 45% had only scanned it for the key points.
- When asked about their use of paper handouts of posters, 85% of respondents said that they at least sometimes collect paper copies if they are available.
 - About two-thirds of respondents (66%) suggested that they take handouts home for further reference, while 23% suggested that they make copies for their colleagues. However, 14% of respondents suggested that they may discard a handout before leaving the congress.
- A large proportion of respondents (86%) said that they used smart devices (smartphones/tablets), but only 16% of all respondents had used a QR code to obtain a digital poster (10% at CMHP vs 19% at ECCO). A small majority of respondents (52%) suggested that they would use a QR code at least sometimes (>25% of the time, Figure 3).

Figure 1. Delegate demographics: respondents came from a range of backgrounds

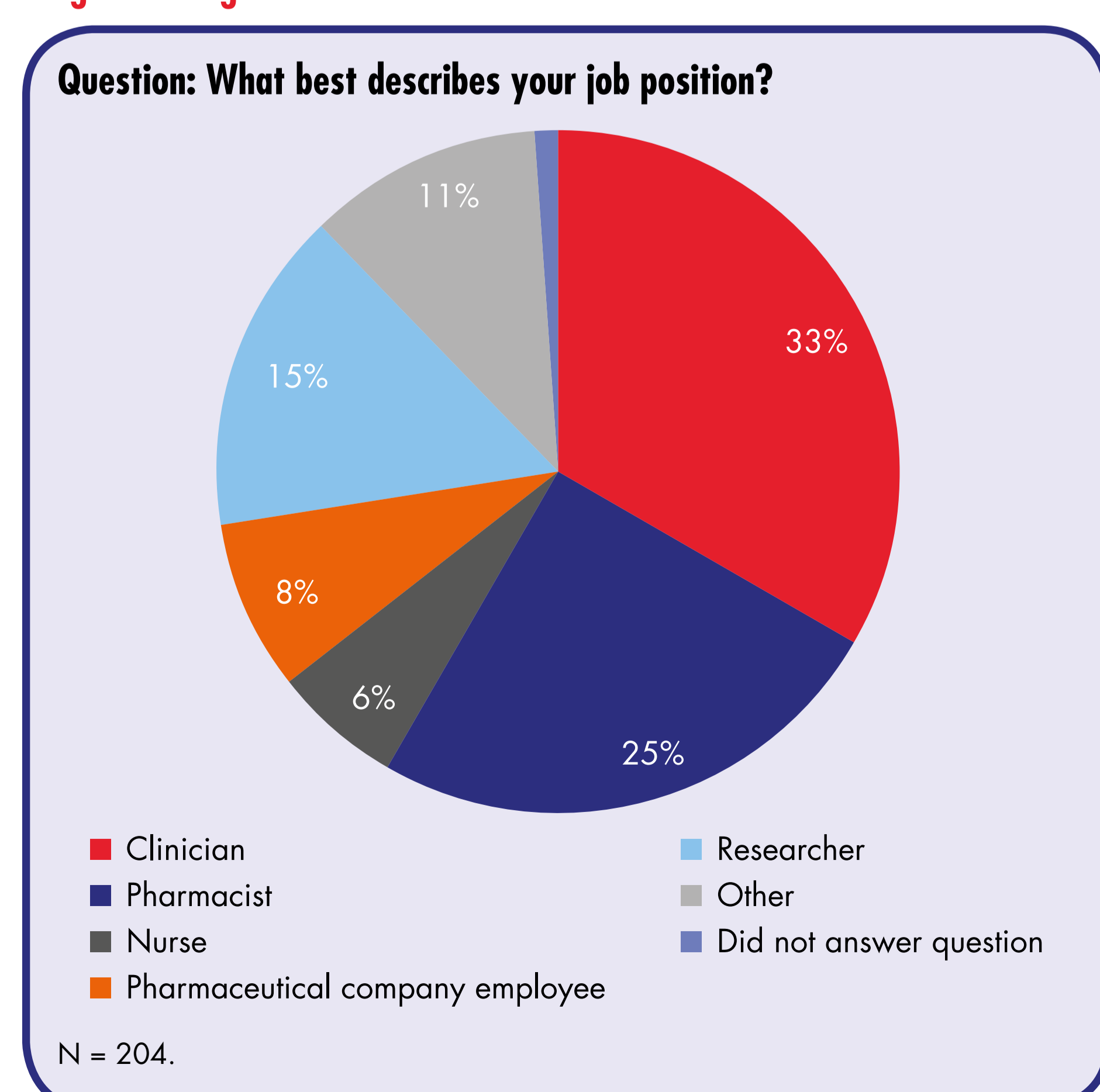


Figure 2. Current preferences: delegates engage with the scientific content of posters away from the short, busy presentation sessions

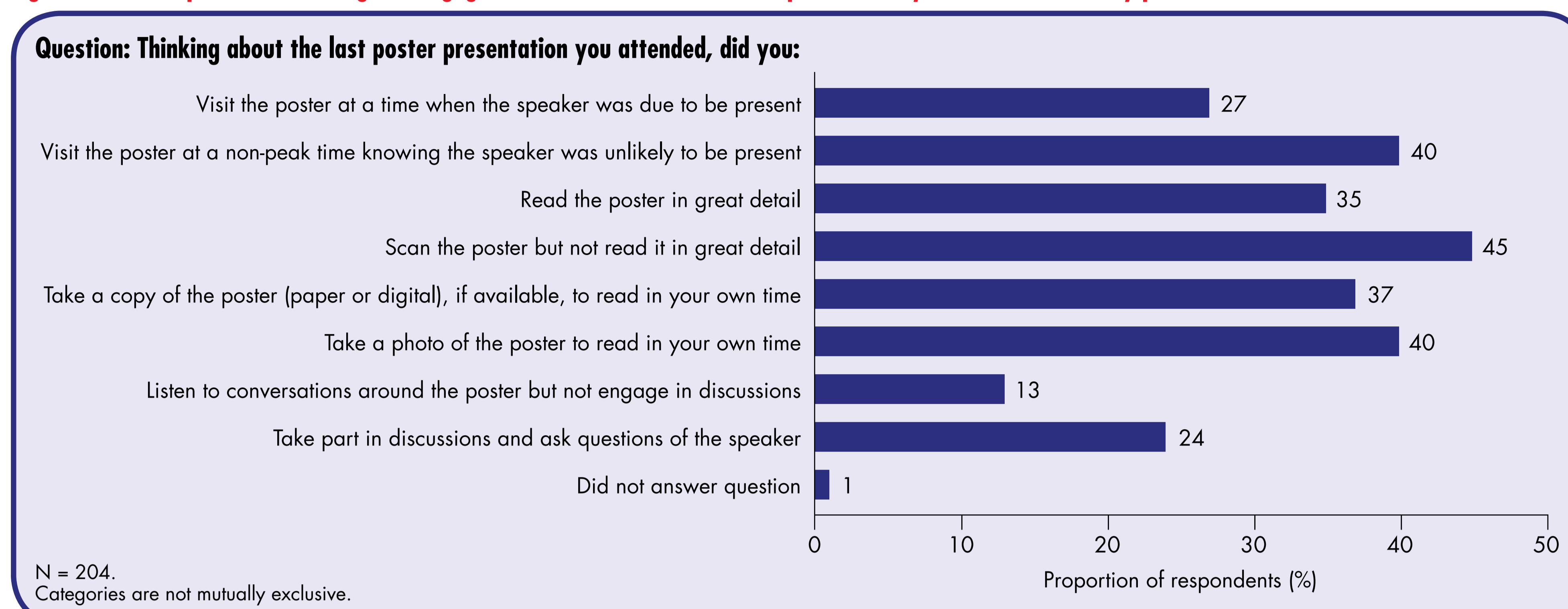


Figure 3. Current perspectives: for some delegates, knowledge of QR codes and lack of technology are barriers to uptake of digital services

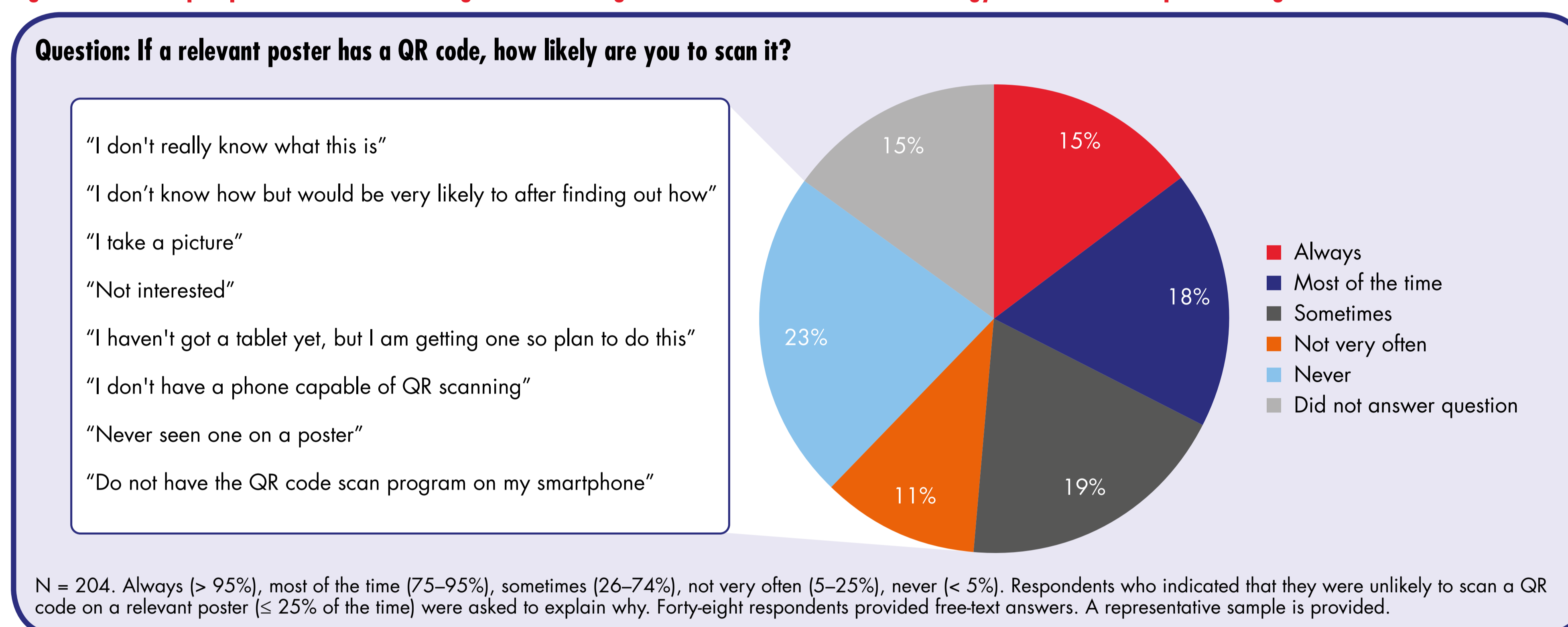
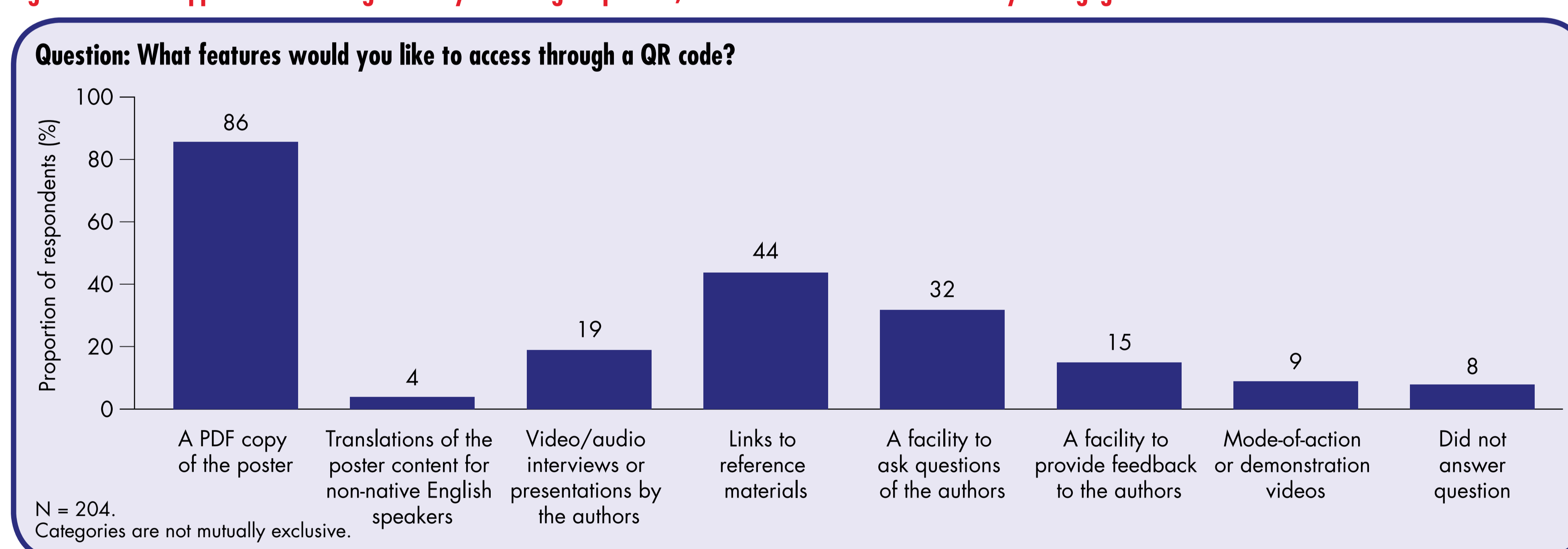


Figure 4. Future opportunities: delegates may value digital posters, reference materials and a facility to engage with authors



- Of those making little or no use/limited use of QR codes and provided a free-text explanation, over three-quarters (77%, 37/48) referred to limited knowledge of QR codes or having inadequate technology as barriers to accessing digital posters.
- Only 12% of respondents had used text messaging (SMS) to access posters. However, 66% of respondents suggested that they would use such a service if it were available.
- The most popular features that may be available via QR codes (Figure 4) were the ability to obtain a poster PDF (86%), links to reference materials (44%) and a facility to engage with authors (32%).
- Increasing adoption of QR code technology by congresses, combined with provision of additional educational materials to raise awareness, may increase the number of delegates accessing digital scientific content.
- Respondents to this survey indicated that, in addition to PDF copies of posters, they would value links to reference materials and a facility to engage with the authors. Translations of posters for non-native English speakers and video-based content were perceived to be of lower value by delegates at both congresses.
 - A potential limitation of this survey is that the large majority of respondents were resident in the UK. This sample may not be representative of other geographical regions.
- Our results will inform the development of awareness campaigns and additional functionality to support the use of digital posters.

References

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Disclosures

Paul Farrow, Annabelle Ballsdon and Michael Molloy-Bland are employees of Oxford PharmaGenesis™ Ltd. Fran Young and Chris Rains are employees of Shire Pharmaceuticals. Oxford PharmaGenesis™ Ltd provided editorial and creative design support.

Conclusions

- The results of this survey suggest that congress delegates engage with scientific posters when convenient, rather than prioritizing interactions during the short, busy presentation sessions.
 - Collection of paper handouts is a popular way to access content, but is not environmentally friendly. The increasing quality of smartphone cameras allows delegates to produce acceptable quality copies of posters for future reference. However, neither of these solutions allows access to potentially useful additional digital content.
- The majority of delegates now possess the technology to access digital content, but many are not aware of QR codes or how to use them, despite attempts to educate them.



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