

Safety standards in the Chinese Equestrian Industry

The Gap between the industries safety standards of the West vs. China

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Abstract:

This research has been carried out by means of desk and field research in China to analyze where the Chinese equestrian industry currently stands on safety issues, what the gap is between China and the West on equestrian safety standards, and what could be done to improve the safety standards in China. The research question for this research is *How to improve safety in the Chinese equestrian industry?*

This research report is a report that explains the current situation and provides ideas based on desk and field research in China on how to address and improve the current safety situation in the Chinese equestrian industry. The outcomes found that the most important aspect would be for the Chinese Equestrian Association (CEA) to step forward and initialize an official Chinese safety and training program preferably accompanied by a certification program for all equestrian interested and involved in the industry. Furthermore, this research provides an initial guide list of how to start the creation of a safety program for the Chinese equestrian industry, for any official body in China. Besides the CEA all professionals in this industry could educate other equestrians by the hand of their experience and scientific literature to ensure further safety within the industry.

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Key words: Safety, Equestrian Industry, China, Quality, Horseback Riding

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8th IBA Bachelor Thesis Conference, November 10th, 2016, Enschede, The Netherlands.

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1. Introduction

In recent years the equestrian industry, also known as equine industry, in China has developed rapidly and an interest in the equestrian sport has risen among the growing middle class. Horse riding and the lifestyle that comes with it is seen as a luxury past time and many Chinese are now participating in this attractive industry (Sant, Voice of America, 2015).

About 30 years ago the Chinese equestrian industry was near to non-existent, whereas now, according to the China Horse Industry Association the country has more than 300 equestrian clubs and over 25 race tracks (Thomas N. , 2014). There are three main equestrian associations in Beijing, of which one is called the Beijing Turf and Equestrian Association (BTEA). During a personal meeting with Mr. Yiu Kak, the president of the BTEA, it was explained that the BTEA has 110 members who are actively riding and 500 members who have an interest in the equestrian sport and support the growth in the equestrian industry. Still, the equestrian industry remains small in comparison to one of the most dominating equestrian countries of the world, the Netherlands, which consists of more than 1.700 registered riding clubs and 1.2 million individuals interested in the equestrian industry, including 500.000 active riding members (KNHS, Nederland Paardenland Feiten & Cijfers, 2015). While the Chinese equestrian industry is relatively small, multiple articles on the internet describe a possibility for potential future growth of the equine industry. One of the articles indicated that the growth average of USD spend on horses being imported to China between 2007 and 2012 was 34,33% yearly. For example in 2012 the Netherlands exported over \$13.4 million worth of horses to China. According to this research the trend will most likely continue, which is a notable indication for future growth in the equestrian industry of China (Hurley, 2013). The growth of the Chinese industry was also described by Maiken Jaeschke, CEO of China Equestrian Globe, who said that officials of KLM Airlines had told her that KLM had already flown over 20 times to Beijing in the middle of the year 2015 with an aircraft of 20 horses on average. She added that most quarantine stables in Beijing are permanently occupied, which in the past was not the case (M. Jaeschke, Personal communication, October 9, 2015).

Whilst the Chinese equestrian industry is growing rapidly in size, other aspects in this new industry have not developed to international standards. One of these aspects is the quality and standard of safety regulations in and around riding schools and equestrian clubs. This was verified during a meeting with C.v.d. Broeke, a Dutch equestrian business woman with affiliations in China, she noticed the lack of quality safety regulations, in riding schools and equestrian clubs (C. v.d. Broeke. Personal communications, September 24, 2015). Moreover, it has also been noted by the author of this research that safety issues have been a returning topic of concern among foreign equine professionals who visit or work in China.

Past riding tragedies which may or may not have been prevented if regulations were in place, has raised concern for safety among some people within the Chinese equestrian industry said Mr. Yiu Kak president of the BTEA (Y. Kak, Personal communication, August 27, 2015).

Although it seems that the concerns for safety have risen, no Chinese organization has stepped up to truly attempt to create a change in the Chinese equestrian industry. This is peculiar while Sun (2007) revealed that horse riding accidents resulting in injuries are as likely to occur as potential injuries caused by rugby, skiing, soccer, sport cycling and car racing. It was also found that horse riding had

the highest mortality rate among all sports that were observed.

Hence the research objective is to analyze the current safety standards in the Chinese equestrian industry in comparison to those of the western equestrian industries. By analyzing the possible gap, a potential starting point could be created for the increase of the safety standards in the Chinese equestrian industry.

To fulfill the research objective the following research question needs to be answered; *How to improve safety in the Chinese equestrian industry?*

The sub questions to be answered in order to answer the main question are; *How is safety generated by equestrian associations of other countries? What is the current safety situation in the Chinese equestrian industry? And, Can safety programs of other equestrian organizations be used solely to improve the safety in the Chinese equestrian industry?*

This research is based on existing research articles, official safety regulation documents and interviews from within the field.

2. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to analyze the current safety situation in the Chinese equestrian industry and compare this to the international standards in order to describe the existing gap. The methodology of this research is in threefold and consists of; (1) a short literature review explaining how safety in equestrian clubs and riding schools can be generated, (2) a summary of safety strategies of official equestrian associations like the *Fédération Equestre Internationale* (FEI), *Koninklijke Nederlandse Hippische Sportfederatie* (KNHS), the *British Horse Society* (BHS), the *Beijing Turf and Equestrian Association* (BTEA) and the *Chinese Equestrian Association* (CEA) (3) in-depth interviews with different people actively involved in the Chinese equestrian industry.

A threefold methodology was chosen in order to create the most accurate report that can actually be used to start improving the standard of the Chinese equestrian industry. Not only from a literary perspective but also by field information in order to fit the current needs of the Chinese equestrian industry. The summary of already existing safety programs gives a clear indication on what seems to be of importance internationally. How the threefold methodology is carried out can be read in the following sections.

2.1 Industry terminology used in this research

In this research the terminology 'equestrian industry' 'equestrian clubs' and 'riding schools' are used. To individuals involved in the equestrian industry these words are most likely familiar, however to others they might not be, therefore definitions were sought that define these terms in a clear and understandable way. The 'equestrian industry' is a combination of 'equestrian', meaning anything related with human on horseback (Merriam-Webster, 2015) and 'industry' which in this context is defined as; a branch or commercial enterprise with the output of a specific product or service (Dictionary.com, 2015). Combining these words gives *all commercial enterprises that lay focus on horseback riding*. The terminology 'equestrian clubs' is again a combination of 'equestrian' and 'club', where club is defined as an organization (Farlex, 2015). In this research *all commercial or sport organizations that own horses with the aim of*

horseback riding are appointed to the terminology 'equestrian club'. The last field specific terminology used is 'riding schools'. The definition described for this term is; a place where horseback riding is taught (Cambridge-Dictionaries-Online, 2015).

In this research this definition labels *all commercial stables with the main aim of teaching children or adults how to ride horses*.

2.2 Methodology desk research

The advantage of using existing literature is that this information gives insights on the most important aspects of safety in the equestrian industry regarding research. All scientific literature used to write the literature review is secondary data. The literature is sought via well-known databases like ScienceDirect and SCOPUS. Keywords like 'safety' 'horse riding' 'equestrian industry', 'safely' 'teach' 'children' 'beginners' 'riding schools' 'equestrian' 'clubs' 'western' 'international' 'standards' 'quality' are used to collect the right research documents.

The snowball effect is used to gather additional research that is focused on safety in the equestrian industry. Safety in the equine industry is a distinctive subject, as a consequence, it is challenging to find articles about this topic and therefore the snowball effect seemed an appropriate method to collect meaningful research articles.

All research articles are scanned through on relevance to the research topic. When passing this selection procedure, they are downloaded and saved in a separate file for one year. After all seemingly interesting research papers have been collected they are to be carefully read and highlighted. After which the procedure of writing the literature review starts.

The literature review will focus on explaining the various views that have been taken by researchers towards safety generation in and around equine clubs and riding schools.

2.3 Methodology summary existing safety programs

The second part of the methodology consists of a summary of already existing safety programs. It was chosen to firstly look at the already existing policies and programs of the main international equestrian sports bureau, the principal official equine organization, Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI). It seemed most advantageous to analyze the FEI's regulations and programs since all international sportsmen and women ride and are to adhere by them.

Likewise the existing policies and programs of the official Dutch equestrian association KNHS and of the British association (BHS) are to be analyzed and summarized as a comparison and addition to the international standards of the FEI. To be able to analyze a possible gap between the west and China, the two main equestrian associations of China are also analyzed on their possible safety programs. The two Chinese associations to be analyzed are the official national association, Chinese Equestrian Association (CEA) and the official Beijing association, Beijing Turf and Equestrian Association (BTEA). The exploration of the safety programs will focus on:

- Who created the programs
- When were the programs initiated
- What was the main reason for creating these programs
- What are the main aspects that are addressed in these programs, and
- Who is the controlling body in the field

There are other European equestrian associations that most likely also have extensive safety programs. However, this research mainly focusses on how to improve safety standards in the Chinese equestrian industry. Therefore an overview of the international standard and that of Europe's, high class, equestrian countries seemed to be sufficient for this research.

2.4 Methodology field research

The last part of the research consists of *open-ended questions in an in-direct interview form* with people actively involved in the Chinese equestrian industry. An informal conversational interview occurs in the course of field work and the respondent might not know an interview is taking place. An interview like this has the advantage of creating insights that the interviewee might not have anticipated, on the other hand it is a time consuming process (Sewell, 2015). Relevant people to interview are;

- A professional Chinese trainer
- A professional Chinese rider
- A Chinese stable manager
- A Chinese stable owner
- Parents of a young rider or beginning rider in China
- A Chinese young rider or beginning rider, and
- A few foreign equestrian professionals including judges.

Due to the known culture difference it is not suitable to prepare a list of interview questions, call possible interviewee's for an appointment, and interview interviewee's bluntly. If doing so, the outcomes will most probable be biased to what the interviewee's believe is a social describable answer.

Therefore the approach that was chosen to interview people of interest for this research was that of informal conversational interviews, also known as in-direct interviewing (Sewell, 2015).

The questions of the interview were developed by the hand of literature readings on the importance of interview questions and subjects in equestrian safety articles. These stated that current satisfaction, certainty and importance are dimensions to include when retrieving someone's judgment or attitude towards a subject (Thayer-Hart & Dykema, 2015). By this information and the dimensions of the main research questions the following interview questions were created;

- How do you perceive the current safety standard in equestrian clubs and riding schools and
- How is safety, in Chinese equestrian clubs and riding schools provided at the moment?
- What do you think needs to change to improve the standard of equestrian safety in China?
- Who is in your opinion responsible for safety guarantees at equestrian clubs and riding schools in China?

Conversely, these questions will not be asked in this way, the approach for gaining answers to these questions is to start a casual conversation while gradually moving the subject of conversation towards safety in the Chinese equestrian industry. After each conversation the main points will be documented either on paper or phone so that the main important aspects are surely reminisced.

Interviews with foreign officials of the FEI and foreign equestrian workers in China might be easier to take; still a casual approach will be taken to reinsure an ingenuous outcome. After each casual conversation, only if the situation feels pleasant, it will be attempted to ask if their opinion can be quoted for research. It has taken several years to develop close relationships with certain people within the Chinese equestrian industry, under no circumstance will actions been

taken that might possibly compromise the relationships. The field data are then to be analyzed via, collection, reducing and conclusion drawing. The method of collecting data is also partly that of ethnography, the process of studying a culture within a culture by using observations over a longer period of time. This process is only possible when an ethnographer understands the subtitles of expressions used and the multiple meaning that can be given to statements or acts (Schutt, 2014).

3. Findings, Analysis and Results

All findings found by conducting a literature review, analyzing existing safety programs and conducting field research are explained in the following sections.

3.1 Desk Research

The main aim for the literature review is to give an insight on various views that have been taken on by researchers studying topics related to safety in the equestrian industry.

Some studies focused on the cause of accidents and how to prevent them (Buckley, 2013; Ladewig, 2011), others focus more on the prevention of rider lesion (Thompson, 2015; Condie, 1993; Hawson, 2010). One of the studies focusing on the cause of accidents was conducted by P. Buckley and revealed that horse misbehavior is an important source of rider injuries. The risk of misbehavior according to this study increased when; horses where to fat, horses had access to great amounts of green grass in pastures, horses who were fed supplements daily, horses who received too little exercise and risks of misbehavior increased during competitions (Buckley, 2013). While this research explains into detail what causes the risks, it is not completely clear on how to prevent these risks.

Another study did describe some measures on how to prevent horse related accidents; the advice was to improve the predictability of horses to and by humans, and improving the physical competences of riders to be more resilient to injuries and falls (Thompson, 2015).

Other possible measures to decrease the likelihood of accidents described by another study are; incorporate learning theories into horse and rider training to reduce flight and defense responses, imply verified safety protocols at equestrian clubs for riding and handling horses, inquire mandatory wearing of safety helmets and footwear, usage of less anxious and nervous breeds to teach novice riders, and acknowledge the important role of equine ethology which provides valuable theories in enhancing riders safety (Hawson, 2010).

A study conducted by J. Ladewig showed three other important areas of attention for the prevention of horse related accidents. The first noted was the importance of obedience training, which according to this study is a neglected form of training, nonetheless it is said to be more important in the prevention of accidents than dressage or jumping training. Also a neglected area of attention is the habilitation of horses by their riders on known freighting aspects in their living environment. The last advice is to ensure a harmonious lifestyle to ones horses, only horses that have a pleasant life are safe to handle (Ladewig, 2011).

Another research focused mainly on the use of safety helmets, they found that although riders seem to recognize the needs for caps, they still do not seem to wear them that often. Possible strategies addressed to increase the usage of caps where; Encourage riding clubs to mandate policies on caps, distributing additional educational literature among the equestrian community, and designing and producing caps that are enjoyed more by the equestrians (Condie, 1993).

Whilst all the above was equestrian related, additional literature on cultural difference seemed to be of importance to this research. The articles utilized for this research focused on the impact culture has on once expression of their true thoughts. One of the articles was by Tsang. His research is about the influence of cultural differences on evaluation expression. It revealed that Chinese people were more likely to answer with socially desirable responses than those with a more individualistic cultural background (Tsang, 2009). Furthermore, research of Professor, Geert Hofstede showed that Chinese people are found comfortable with ambiguity, meaning that their language is full of ambiguous connotations, which can be difficult for western society to understand (Hofstede, 2010).

Table 1: Most important points of 3.1 Literature

Description	Summary	Solutions
1. Cause of accidents and the prevention possibilities of these accidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause: Accidents are usually cause by horse misbehavior • Prevention, reduction horse misbehavior: Create a better understanding of horses and horse behavior among people active in the equestrian industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate oneself on the basic needs horses have. • Educate children who spend time around horses. • Understand your horse's flight and fight responses. • Educate yourself whilst using equine ethology, which might help to understand the predictability in the behavior of horses. • Train ones horses on the aspects of obedience and habilitation. • Ensuring one's own fitness could help prevent horse misbehavior resulting in the reduction of the likelihood to fall, if one should fall, it is possible for a rider to break its fall when he or she is in a good shape. • The last solution towards reduction of horse misbehavior was to ensure safety protocols in equestrian clubs and riding schools, the rules of safety protocols are there to guide people towards proper behavior around horses.
2. The prevention of lesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The outcomes of most of these studies revealed only two solutions when it comes to lesion prevention certification and education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage equestrians to wear proper certified protective riding gear, like helmets, body protectors and appropriate shoes. • As well as educate people on the high impacts horse riding accidents can have on peoples life's as well as the scientifically proved importance of the usage of protective riding gear.

Resource table 1: Aspects 3.1 'Literature review' of this research.

3.2 Summary existing international safety programs and those of China

The FEI, has two programs that aim for higher safety standards in the equestrian industry worldwide. The first program was created in 2012 and aimed for a global understanding of quality coaches, via support of a framework (FEI, The Fédération Equestre Internationale, 2012). The framework aims for clear reference points for the development of coaching systems, education and quality in the equestrian industry. The initial framework was developed in August 2012 and called; sports international coaching framework. Since then it has been modified and updated several times. The framework defines the FEI's opinion of the most important aspect of proper coaching; maintaining the welfare of athletes (Kinetics, 2012). The FEI framework aims for the following points;

- Roles and responsibilities assumed by coaches
- Coaching certification
- Developments in coaching
- Information to guide decisions on policy and legislation regarding coaching

To assure their framework worldwide, coach training is given multiple times a year in different countries and regions (FEI, International Coaching Framework, 2015). The level of coaches is divided into three titles; Syllabus level 1, level 2, and level 3, where three is the highest level possible. To ensure a worldwide use, financial support is offered to national equestrian federations of a rising equestrian sports country (FEI, Main Coach Education, 2015).

The second program created by the FEI to ensure safety is called the Global Safety Helmet Campaign. The aim for the new helmet rule was adopted by the general assembly in 2011 and the new rule came into effect on the 1st of January 2013. The new rule would under no circumstance allow any rider at an FEI event to ride without protective headgear. If a rider does not comply with the rule, the rider will receive a Yellow Card Warning from a present FEI official, from the Yellow Card Warning System which was already in place before the new headgear rule came into effect. Besides the creation and implementation of the new rule, the FEI also launched a campaign, it involved a story of an Olympic dressage rider who after a traumatic fall without any protective headgear still suffers physical effects and is now forced to compete in the para-Olympics (FEI, FEI launches global safety helmet campaign, 2012).

To give further insight in already existing safety programs the national equestrian association of the Netherlands was also observed. Found was that the main equestrian association of the Netherlands, the Koninklijke Nederlandse Hippische Sportfederatie, from now on KNHS, mainly advise equestrians on the importance of safety, while also being the main safe keeper of rules during official national competitions. The actual safety program that has been implemented by the KNHS since 2008, was created by another association, an independent body that safeguards equestrian sports called, 'stichting veilige paardensport'. Since 2008 the KNHS has set out a rule to ensure safety; any riding school or equestrian club with an indoor facility that wants to enjoy a KNHS membership has to apply for a safety certificate issued by the 'stichting veilige paardensport'. To acquire such a certificate, the school or club has to apply for an official inspection by an official of the stichting veilige paardensport, and will need to apply for a yearly inspection in order to keep its certificate (KNHS, Veiligheid, 2015). The first and yearly inspections are based on an extensive up to

date manual explaining all the rules, into great detail, that an organization must comply with. The main topics are;

- The requirements of the facilities of equestrian clubs or riding schools
- Requirements of tack, clothing, vehicles and instructors used
- The requirements in the usage of the equestrian facility
- The requirements concerning calamities
- Requirements in management of the equestrian club or riding school
- Explanations of official procedures (SVP, 2015).

The 'stichting veilige paardensport' also launched an additional program to ensure higher safety standards in the equestrian industry. The attendance of this program is not required by the KNHS, but it is encouraged to attend. The program is available since 2014 and is called Fit & Veilig. It was launched with the aim of teaching coaches and instructors on how to keep their students fit, and how they should educate students on breaking their fall in case of an accident (Veiligheid.NL, 2015).

Besides the FEI and KNHS the program vision of the British Horse Society (BHS), is also specified in this research as it can elaborate on already existing safety programs. The standards of the professional industry and is a respected examination system carried out in over 84 different centers around the world. The main mission of the BHS examination system is to secure equine welfare, and rider and equine safety. They offer their examination to every level of equestrians, from novice owners to beginners and international experts. The BHS has multiple qualification levels for different aspects in the equine industry like grooms, riders, instructors, stable managers, coaches. Besides the classes and examinations on these aspects they also offer general classes on horse knowledge to all interested (BHS, 2015).

In China there are two Chinese equine associations who have seemed to create a system for the Chinese equine industry. The Chinese Equestrian Association (CEA) is the national federation of equine sports and has issued a competition system in 2016. The main aspects of the system are on competition rules, and a small part is dedicated to the restriction of riders to ride certain competitions. The restrictions are mainly focused on the age of the horse and rider. In addition the system also explains restrictions for higher level riders who have been placed during high level shows. For adult dressage shows children below the age of 16 are not allowed to compete neither are horses below six. For adult jumping competitions the restrictions are divided in national shows and 3-star or above international shows. For the national shows, riders have to be above the age of 12, whereas for international shows from and beyond 3-star, the riders have to be above 18 years old (CEA, 2016)

One of the other equestrian associations in China, the BTEA, Beijing Turf and Equestrian association started with offering test competitions which have to be passed by a rider before being able to enter into a BTEA jumping competition. The test focuses on control that the rider has over his or her horse. It does not seem to explain or strive for advanced safety rules or issues. However it tries to create a safer environment for the rider who wishes to compete at competitions (BTEA, 2016)

Table 2: Most important points of 3.2 Existing safety programs.

Association	Summary	Programs
1. FEI	The FEI ensures two programs to increase safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first focusses mainly on the important role that teachers and coaches have in safety aspects. This program is available to developing equestrian countries, which means the FEI is trying to create a low barrier to ensure international safety standards. The second focusses on the importance of protective head gear and regulates all FEI competitions to the mandatory wear of headgear.
2. KNHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The KNHS is ought to be partly an informative body when it comes to safety aspects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nevertheless, at approved KNHS competitions, it is the KNHS official who guarantees safety aspects and implement safety rules that come with the safety program. The official safety program used by the KNHS was developed by a third party, called Stichting Veilige Paardensport and the rules of that safety program are still adjusted and controlled by this association. The KNHS is not the controlling body of KNHS member riding schools and equestrian clubs; this is also completed by the third party The main aspects that are addressed by this safety program are; <i>the facilities of the school or clubs, the use of protective gear, the people who teach and coach or are active employees of the club or school, the way that the facilities are used, the way calamities are dealt with, and the requirement of management.</i>
3. BHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main mission of the BHS examination system is to secure equine welfare, and rider and equine safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They offer their examination to every level of equestrians, from novice owners to beginners and international experts. The BHS has multiple qualification levels for different aspects in the equine industry like grooms, riders, instructors, stable managers, coaches besides the classes and examinations on these aspects they also offer general classes on horse knowledge to all interested
4. CEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The system educates riders on the rules before and during the show, and a small part is to ensure a slightly safer competitor field by having age restrictions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The larger part of the CEA system is educating jumping and dressage riders on the competition rules. Starting from the aspects riders have to arrange before a show, regulation during a show and the welfare of the horse during transport. There is a part that restricts riders and their horses by their age on the possibility to enter a competition. For adult dressage shows: riders below 16 cannot compete in adult shows, and the horse has to be above 6 and has to be higher than 1.48m. For adult jumping shows: the rider has to be above 12 years old for normal national shows, from 3 star shows onwards the rider has to be above 18. Another part of the CEA system restricts riders from competing in low level competitions if they were placed in higher level competitions.
3. BTEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main mission is to have a start-up level to test the riders ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They offer riding start-up tests that test the basic riding skills of a rider. Once this test is passed the rider can compete in the official BTEA competitions. The test focusses mainly on control of the animal.

Resource table 2: Aspects 3.2 'Existing safety' programs of this research.

3.3 Field study Results

The results of the field study method in-direct interviewing can be read in the table below. The full text of the interviews can be found in the Annex 9.1 *Full text of in-direct interviews*.

Table 3: Outcomes of in-direct interviews

Name & occupation	Summary
1. Mr. Z. Zhao, a professional Chinese rider and trainer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall the industry lacks safety Some clubs do see the necessity of following safety programs and implemented existing international once like GALOP, BHS etc., but the majority of clubs do not seem to show interest at all. Create implement a safety program for China, including certifying riders and trainers. Suggested for the CEA to be the responsible body.
2. Ms. A. Qi, trainer and coach of polo and riding clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The safety conditions are not of a high standard In children's riding clubs caps are mandatory she said. Trainers and coaches should study what safety is about
3. Mr. Y. Kak, President of the BTEA and owner of a stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Touched on the riding accidents of which one resulted into a death. And believed these accidents could have been prevented National safety programs would be created preferably issued by the national federation CEA. If the CEA would not take up the role of creator and implementer of safety programs other equestrian associations should.
4. Ms. M. Zhao, assistant manager of riding school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sees room for improvement when it comes to safety. Whether there are strict rules in place or not anyone involved in the industry should be concerned with safety Nevertheless owners and managers of clubs should be responsible for the creation and implementation of safety rules.
5. Mrs. X. Alix, mother of three, of who two children are riding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety does not seem to be of main concern to neither the riders nor clubs yet. The club she chose is high class and implements the BHS system
6. Mr. J. Ding, young rider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Felt quite safe in the industry However said safety is not guaranteed Trainers and Riders should be responsible Someone else should take the responsibility for safety rules in the future
7. Mr. R. Jansen FEI official course builder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He said a wrong approach was taken in the field. Riders riding classes that they cannot ride is creating unsafe circumstances. Trainers and coaches should emphasis 'basics first' to their riders Chinese course builders have an opportunity to help by building courses in the best way to fit the levels description.
8. Mr. M. Deckers, Stable manager and coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He felt that while the industry has grown rapidly over the past 5 years he felt very concerned with the safety issues mainly for the safety of novice riders. Riders should always wear helmets, proper shoes and upper body protection. Arena's for riding should not be too large and surrounded by a fence. Horses should be hand walked for first time riders. Create a certificate program, certifying riding schools with a proper implementation of safety rules. CEA is in his eyes responsible to step forward and take action on the matter of safety regulations and implementations.

9. Ms. I. Mantilla, rider and groom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helmets mostly provided in riding schools for children, however coaches fail to explain the basics of riding she said. • She felt that the international riding rules should be explained before someone starts to ride alone and adhered to those rules. • Use knowledge of European professionals to educate Chinese. • A program for coaching should be created so that the certification of a coach can be publicly available and visible to riders and their parents
10. G. Arkema	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge is the base of most safety issues. • These safety problems are easily changeable if equestrians are more educated on the usage of tack and facilities and the behavior of horses. • Chinese equine associations should be the major organizations for the creation and familiarization of the importance of equestrian education.

Resource table 3: Details of the interviewees can be found in Annex. 9.2 'Interviewees'

4. Data Analysis

4.1

The data gathered during this research has been subject to analyzation. The analysis of the literature research went via a specific pre-planned method of collection and reducing data. For the desk research, all important information documents gathered were subject to highlighting and the important aspects were written down in section 3.1 *Desk research*, after which the most important and frequently repeated points were summarized in clear tables. Those tables are easy to interpret and pin point the most important aspects. These tables can be found in section 3. *Findings, analyses and results*. In the tables it can be read that in literature it was found that mostly *causation and prevention of accidents* are described in-depth as well as the possible *preventions of lesion of the rider*. The main terms used in various solutions to these two problems were described by: *education, training, fitness and protocols* as well as *positive encouragement*.

A similar method of analyzation was used for the information of the currently existing safety programs. The most important aspects were highlighted and written down in paragraphs and bullet points, which were then summarized for clarity in table 2. The most significant points of the research outcomes of the currently existing safety programs are that of *increasing and securing safety*, while others are *merely educative and non-responsive*.

The data gathered during the field research has been analyzed in a slightly different way as can be read in section 2.4 *Methodology field research*.

Outcomes were written down on a note page on the researchers iPhone directly after the in-direct interview. Those results were also written down in a word document, mostly within 1 day after the initial talk/interview to maintain the accuracy of the written information. The data from the interviews was then analyzed and re-written, as well as documented in table 3. In order to give a clearer view of the data collected Table 3. was analyzed and the data was subject to reduction: The most frequent outcomes and most important aspects stated by interviewees were:

- The overall feeling that the interviewees had about safety in the Chinese equestrian industry is that it is not safe enough and that there is definitely room for improvement.
- Only one young boy revealed to feel safe in the Chinese equestrian industry.
- While the general feeling was that of an unsafe industry, it was noted by several interviewees that some riding schools have adopted acknowledged foreign safety programs.
- The main reasons stated for the lack of safety were: Absence of interest in safety by Chinese equestrians and shortage on safety education.
- Further almost every interviewee revealed that there was no one at the moment who takes the official responsibility towards safety aspects.

- The person or organization distinguished by the interviewee's to take on this task was noted to be the CEA, followed by riders, coached and stable managers them self's.
- One interviewee explained that responsibility for safety aspects should be dealt with in a different way. She said that one should be cautious of oneself and study about safety so that they are better prepared to apply it in the field instead of relying on others to ensure safety for them.

The example solutions stated by the interviewees were:

- Example solutions: The introduction of a national safety program, controlled by the official Chinese equestrian federation, the CEA,
- The introduction of coach training, focusing on the basic riding skills and safety aspects first.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

After the analysis was written the gap between the Chinese equine industries safety standards and those of the West where identified. The main gap is the in-existence of real national equestrian safety programs which are accompanied by a certification program. There seems to have been a start in equestrian competition regulation, nevertheless a program focused mainly on safety is yet launched.

The answer to the research questions of this research clarifies how to ensure the growth of safety in the equine industry in China, closing the gap between China and the West. The research question to be answered was; *How to improve safety in the Chinese equestrian industry?* The analysis of existing research revealed that there are many different ways to improve safety in equestrian industry but that the most important ones are to educate equestrians on all aspects of maintaining, handling and riding horses. Further it showed that horses have to be trained in a proper way to ensure safety. Additionally, a lot of studies discovered the importance of protective riding gear to increase safety and prevent lesion.

The analysis of the existing safety programs discovered that the most important solutions of the FEI and KNHS towards improvement and securement of safety is to develop and maintain riders and coach training programs, create an acknowledged a safety program which issues certificates to approved riding schools and equestrian clubs and to set out safety rules at competitions which persist on the usage of safety gear.

The interviews exposed that in China there is indeed a need for safety improvement in the equestrian industry. The main body that people believe to be responsible for safety in the Chinese equestrian industry is the official national equestrian association, the CEA. The opinions on solutions given by interviewee's were similar to the outcomes of the literature review and the analysis of the already existing safety programs. Namely that, a safety

program with safety certificates should be created as well as coach training.

All in all it can be said that the best way to improve and guarantee safety in the Chinese equestrian is for the CEA to step forward and announce to start the creation of national programs focusing on safety certificates for equestrian clubs and riding schools as well as a national program to train coaches.

Steps that could be taken by an official equine association in China to initialize the improvement of safety in the equestrian industry are:

1. Create the possibility for official assistance from the FEI on the start of creating safety programs.
2. Creation of a safety unit who are able to understand the existing safety and training programs of the FEI, KNHS, BHS, and other western associations.
3. Read this research article and preferably interview more professional equestrians within the Chinese equestrian industry to understand the needs and current situation.
4. Start simple by introducing a training program on the basics of equestrianism to all equestrians interested in the industry.
5. Continue creating certification programs for trainers to follow, create a rider level system and surely start by appointing personal to control all equestrian riding clubs on safety, preferable by a safety hand book.
6. Market the created safety programs and explain those programs during any occasions to all equestrians, maintain affordable training programs to ensure the greatest widespread possible.
7. Not stop once these programs are initialized but keep on monitoring the industry and improving programs where necessary preferably by the hand of new scientific research.

Whilst it would be of great importance for an official equestrian association to step up, it is not only the official Chinese equine associations who can be of major influence in the improvement of safety. All equestrians in the Chinese equestrian industry, whether novice or professional, foreign or Chinese can try to educate each other and remind each other on the importance of safety. They could possible even take the opportunity of consulting existing literature and consult existing international safety programs on safety in the equine industry.

If the CEA would not seem to move forward on this subject it would be a possibility and duty of the professional equestrians within the Chinese equestrian industry to create their own safety and training programs so that other equestrians obtain guidance on this matter.

The last sub question of this research was *Can safety programs of other equestrian organizations be used solely to improve the safety in the Chinese equestrian industry?* As previously read, the Chinese equestrian industry including the equestrian safety situation in China is different than that in the West. For this reason it is not suggested for any association to copy and paste the international programs on to China. As read one of the main issues is that Chinese equestrians are not fully educated and aware of current issues and how to solve them. When one is not aware of an issue he or she will also not be open or look for solutions. The international programs can be consulted however a National equestrian safety program focusing on the current issues in the local industry would most likely be more effective.

6. Limitations & further research

Whilst the research question is answered giving detailed and different views on safety improvements, the Chinese equestrian industry still needs an official body to step forward and take on the responsibility of creating these improvements. This research does not provide ready programs to be used to ensure safety in the Chinese equestrian industry; however it does give a fair amount of information to any official body within the Chinese equestrian industry ready to create safety improvements.

Limitations of this research are to be sought in the amount of field study and interviews held in China. It could be stated that the amount of interviewees might not be representable; however, due to cultural differences it is unlikely to generate a large amount of quality information from interviewee's in the period of time that was used to execute this research as well as the limitation of geographically spread data results due to the grandness of the country and limited financial back up of this research. Nevertheless, in order to increase the confidence of the outcome of this research, further and more extensive field study could be conducted.

To ensure the improvement of safety in the Chinese equestrian industry it is recommend that further research is carried out, possibly creating a full or start of a safety program that fits the Chinese national equestrian industry.

As for future reference it can also be stated that whilst qualitative research using the method of in-direct interviews is ought to be the most liable method of research in the Chinese equestrian industry, the data analyzes method could be upgraded in its quality. A recommendation would be to use a pre-defined official documentation and coding models. Whilst this research did document field outcomes and the researcher has an extended knowledge of the industries language, not all outcomes were documented in an official documentation template, neither was a coding matrix used to identify specific industrial terms. Furthermore the usage of mix-method models of data analyzes would have improved the confidence in the conclusion as well.

Another limitation is that of authentication of the conclusion. Whilst the research method was clear, up front and the method chosen was explained appropriately the conclusions are not able to be compared to other researchers work since no research has been published before on the extend of safety in the equestrian industry of China, this limits the possibility of authenticating the conclusion of this research. A further limitation is the fact that the method of reflexivity was not described up front. Whilst the researcher was reflexive during the in-direct interviews the difficulties that were tackled were not documented. This failed to create an increase in confidence in the conclusions.

7. Acknowledgement

As the author of this bachelor thesis research I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors Dr. L. Brouwers-Ren, Mr. M. Stienstra MSc, Study advisor S. Salomé-Spuls MSc, and IBA Programme coordinator Drs. C. Huijs for giving me the opportunity to conduct a bachelor research thesis in my field of interest. Conducting this research has given me the opportunity to investigate the equestrian industry of China to a further extend and has made it possible for me to keep working on my professional relationships within this industry. This research has created a start for me to conduct further research and start the process of education in the Chinese equestrian industry. During this research I have been

able to start my own companies, focusing on the education of Chinese equestrians on several aspects.

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9. Annex

9.1 Full text of in-direct interviews

The results of the interviews;

Mr. Zhao Zhiwen, double winner of the FEI world cup China league 2014 and 2015, a professional Chinese rider and trainer, described that the Chinese equestrian industry was still lacking safety. He felt that while some clubs are trying their best to guarantee it by using examples of international programs, like the BHS program of Great Britain or GALOP from France, others clubs seem to lack interest in this aspect, or, are merely uneducated on this subject. In his opinion the national equestrian federation, called Chinese Equestrian Association, CEA, should be the main organ to address safety issues. He suggested the CEA to create and implement a safety program beginning with certifying, trainers, coaches and riding schools on safety guarantees. As well as expanding the procedure of safety control to all other equestrian clubs in China in the future. (Z. Zhiwen, Personal communication, 2015)

Ms. Ambrosia, a trainer and coach of polo and riding clubs said that she found that the safety conditions in the Chinese industry where not of any high standard and that there was still room for improvement. Her suggestion was that trainers and coaches needed to study what safety is about and needed to be trained in this aspect by professionals with a high safety standard (A. Ambrosia, Personal communication, 2015).

Mr. Yiu Kak, President of the BTEA and owner of Clearwood stud, believed that safety was a very important aspect of horse riding and handling. He touched on subject of the accidents that where described in the introduction of this report, and said that he felt these accidents should be prevented whenever possible. His solution to higher safety standards would be a national safety program preferably issued by the national federation, the CEA. He did say that if the CEA would not seem to advance their role in safety issues, other official equestrian associations should look into it. Another solution he

pronounced was for all equestrian associations in Beijing to sit together and create a special safety program for riding schools and equestrian clubs in Beijing (K. Yiu, Personal communication, 2015).

Ms. Zhao Hong Margot, an assistant manager of a riding school indicated that there is always room for improvement when it comes to safety. She expressed that due to the boom of the Chinese equestrian industry, many young riders have emerged, and safety should now be the main topic of improvement. She also said that while safety is a big concern in any industry it is definitely of concern in sports industries let alone the equestrian industry. In her opinion, anyone involved in the equestrian industry should be concerned and feel responsible for safety, whether there are strict rules in place or not, people should, in her opinion, try to function as safely as possible around horses. While she said that the owners and managers of clubs are responsible for setting out and controlling safety rules, she believed that it is a matter of self-consciousness and precaution's by oneself to remain as safe as possible. She added that educational programs could be of great help in increasing the awareness of safety in the equestrian industry (H.M, Zhao, Personal Communication, 2015).

Mrs. Alix X, a French national, with three children, of who two are riding, says that safety did not seem the main priority of many Chinese riders and clubs yet. She has seen numerous riders at weekly shows including children, and stated she mostly felt quite scared watching these youngsters ride. Therefore she chose a high class, evolved riding school with affiliations with foreign professionals for herself and her children. This riding school is working with the BHS system from Britain which made her feel safer about the riding lessons. She did say that the riding lessons for kids where a little too focused on sport equestrianism instead of fun for the kids. She

would have liked to see more games with horses, which in her opinion was very important to safety aspects. Children would learn in a faster and less forced way about horses when having fun and playing games(X, Alix, Personal communication, 2015).

Mr. Jonathan Ding, a Chinese young rider, said that he feels quite safe in the Chinese equestrian industry, while he did also say that in his opinion safety is not being guaranteed, it was not a problem for him at the moment. He thought that trainers and coaches should be responsible for the safety of riders, and that someone should take the responsibility in the future to guarantee more safety (J, Ding, Personal communication, 2015).

Mr. Rob Jansen, FEI international course builder, visited China a few times now. He explained that from his field of expertise, the jumping course, a lot could still be learned. For him it is all about the basics. He believes that if one is able to properly jump small classes, the higher classes will be more easy to attend and more safe for the rider. Riders, who cannot jump a low class in a correct way, will also not be able to jump higher classes in a safe way. In his opinion it is better for riders to take their time and learn the proper basics, then too hurry into jumping high classes. He felt that this type of training, 'basics first', should be encouraged by trainers and coaches, and in his opinion also explained to the Chinese equestrian community. He added that Chinese course builders also have an opportunity to help increase safety in the Chinese equestrian sport. In his opinion, the jumping courses should be of proper a height and technicality for the level that it is built for. Help and guidance from internationally known course builders could be a solution (R, Jansen, Personal communication, 2015).

Mr. Michka Dekkers, a stable manager and coach, based in China for over the past 5 years expressed his thoughts on safety as well. Firstly he wanted to mention that the industry has grown rapidly and improved a lot during these past years. Nevertheless, he feels very concerned about safety aspects, especially when it comes to novice and young riders. In his opinion there is only one riding school at the moment that really takes safety at heart. He explained that in order to teach new riders and young riders a couple of very important steps had to be fulfilled. Firstly riders should at all times wear approved safety helmets, have proper shoes and preferably wear a device for upper body protection. He added that the arena where these novice riders are taught should be surrounded by a safe fence, which should be closed at all times during the lesson. Further, horses should be held and walked by someone on the ground, creating one to one guidance. When the coach feels it is safe enough, the lessons can advance to lounging lessons, meaning, the coach standing in the middle with a long line controlling the horse partly while the rider learns how to sit properly and control the horse. The last aspect but probably the most important he said, was that novice riders should be taught on very nice and calm school master horses who have been properly trained for beginning riders. Under no circumstance should novice riders ride young horses or uncontrollable crazy horses, a phenomenon that he has seen one to many times in China he said. He believed that the CEA, the Chinese equestrian

association should step forward and construct a safety program. Preferably one that educates the equine community on safety, inspect safety at riding schools and provide riding schools with possible safety certificates so that parents can make a clear decision in where their children should go for riding lessons(M, Deckers, Personal communication, 2015).

Ms. Iris Matilla, a German rider and groom, based in China for 3 months now was also willing to give her opinion on safety aspects so far. She did say that she has not seen all of the Chinese equestrian industry but could give her initial thoughts on it. The good things she noted at the few riding schools she visited where that helmets were mostly provided and that most horses seemed to be calm so far. She does feel that the way of teaching is not correct and actually makes it dangerous for both the rider who is taking the lesson and other riders that are riding in the same arena. She said that coaches fail to explain the basic rules of riding with more people in an arena. In an arena there are internationally known riding rules, similar to rules that apply in traffic, and these should be taught to ensure no accidents between two or more riders occur. She said that before someone is allowed to ride alone, so without lounge line, these rules should be taught. She added that she has seen many riders coaching people, while she felt that their own riding was up to no standard to be teaching others. In her opinion it would be a step in the right direction if coaches would get special coaching certificates ensuring novice riders that their coach was fit for the job. Her advice would be to use the knowledge of European professionals to teach Chinese people in China all about these aspects (I, Matilla, Personal communication, 2015).

Mr. G. Arkema, an official Dutch dressage judge, with 5 years of affiliations with China, has given clinics in China and also flew over Chinese riders to train in Europe. During his stays he noticed that construction in and around the stable where constructed in a dangerous way and that a lot of tack was not utilized in the right way either. For example, arena fences were placed towards the inside of the ring instead of outside, trapping the legs of riders while riding their horses, longing lines, whips and other objects were left on the riding grounds, causing horses to trip. Martingales were not put on in the right way, blocking the horse from their movement and the same for other tack used during handling of horses. He felt that these problems are actually easily fixed and were not necessarily done on purpose. He thought that these problems mostly exist due to the inability of the equestrians to see the danger. He suggested that if all equestrians would be educated on the real function of tack and facilities that this would already eliminate a great amount of the safety issues. He also thought that it seemed that some equestrians in China like it when horses act out, but he also sees this mostly as a lack of the knowledge problem. Not knowing the dangers and impact horses can have on a human life. His suggestion for the improvement of safety in the Chinese equine industry is that an educational plan is to be created. This education plan should be marketed and carried out throughout the industry by the official equine associations of China (G, Arkema, Personal communication, 2015)

9.1 Interviewees

Name Interviewee	Contact year	Occupation	Contact details
Mr. Z. Zhao	2015	National team rider and coach, Chinese resident.	chuidanovan@yahoo.fr
Ms. Qi	2015	Trainer & Coach of polo and English riding clubs Chinese resident.	WeChat contact: ambrosiaqi
Mr. Kak	2015-2016	Owner of a stable and president Beijing Turf and Equestrian Association (BTEA), Chinese Resident.	Contact via assistant Shuang Li's WeChat: shuangguangshuang
Ms. M. Zhao	2015	Assistant manager riding school, Chinese Resident.	0086-13901237279
Mrs. X Alix	2015	Mother of three children of who two are riding in a Beijing riding club, permanent resident of China.	WeChat contact: Souris7
Mr. Ding	2015	Young Rider in China, lived and rode for over 10 years in China.	0086-18510001427
Mr. Jansen	2015	FEI Official course builders, has occasional visits to support Chinese competitions by his course building service.	Find contact details via Equuleus Club Beijing: equuleus@equuriding.com
Mr. Deckers	2015-2016	Stable manager and Trainer, has been living in China for over 10 years.	michkadeckers@hotmail.com
Ms. Matilla	2015	Groom and coach worked over 3 months at a Chinese Riding club.	Irislovescora_04@hotmail.com
Mr. Arkema	2016	Official dressage judge and dressage rider, over 5 years of affiliations with China.	dehaarhof@cs.com