

AUSTRALASIA EVALUATION SOCIETY CONFERENCE 2008

RE-EVALUATION OF A PACIFIC COMMUNITY INITIATIVE FOR A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Re-evaluation of a Pacific community initiative called 'CREEKFEST' brings new knowledge and ideas that may reveal contributing factors of specific problems encountered by the Pacific community in Porirua City, Wellington. One of these problems is 'health'. According to the Porirua City profile 2008, the population of Porirua comprises 10.8 percent of the Wellington Regional population and 1.2 percent of the New Zealand population. The first evaluation of the Creekfest in 2006 revealed the majority of Pacific peoples do not take their health seriously which should be of major concern to the New Zealand health professionals. However, it was interesting to note in the 2008 evaluation that there is a 20% increase in the number of people who have expected there to be healthy food promotion at the Creekfest. There were 500 questionnaires distributed this year, which was the same as 2006. The response rate this year was slightly lower than in 2006.

Introduction

Creekfest '08 is the celebration of weaving together PEOPLE, HEALTH and CULTURE. 'Creekfest' is a Pacific community festival that was first held in Porirua city, Wellington, New Zealand in 2004. The original intention was to bring the Pacific community together to share their values and beliefs. Due to its popularity, it eventually became an annual event that has attracted more than twenty thousand people in the last couple of years.

Whilst the festival grew bigger and bigger, the Porirua Health Links agency which leads the co-ordination for this event agreed that I evaluate the festival for the first time in 2006 to ensure that the festival's goals and objectives were met. One of the goals of Creekfest is to provide health information to the community.

Although health was one of the key themes at the festival, it was rather fascinating to find out that a third of those who attended the festival in 2006 were not interested in getting any information on health at all. I undertook the re-evaluation of the Creekefest independently in 2008 as a postgraduate student. Because this particular festival is unique in the Wellington region, it is important that its success is monitored. This is particularly so because the Creekefest event attracted a large number of people from all walks of life; therefore it should be considered a medium for informing the community about its development.

Reason for re-evaluation

The findings of the previous evaluation indicated that Pacific peoples do not appear to take their health seriously. As a Pacific researcher, I was quite concerned about such attitudes, which led to my decision to re-evaluate the festival in order to confirm this information. At the same time the festival is an opportunity for Pacific service providers to promote their services amongst the Pacific community to ensure the community is aware of health services available. My area of interest is to strategically promote healthy eating within the Pacific communities, and the Creekefest festival has given me an opportunity to look at Pacific people's health in general. The comparison of the two sets of data (2006 & 2008) should inform me about underlying issues that may contribute to the declining health of Pacific peoples. This will in turn enhance my ability to formulate appropriate strategies to at least raise awareness amongst the Pacific community in relation to healthy eating and healthy living. Equally important, my evaluation of this community festival will enhance my close relationship with my own community. I also understand that working for Pacific by a Pacific person will intensify the sharing of information relevant to the issues of concern.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this Creekefest evaluation are to :

- Support Pacific peoples wellbeing and welfare physically, socially, culturally, and spiritually
- Acknowledge Pacific people's achievements in sports, education and business.
- Ensure the interests of Pacific peoples are considered by providers, funders and policy makers

Method adopted

The extent of this work was considered a small evaluation but it yields a large response from the participants. The utilization of the simple survey questionnaire was considered adequate for this study as this method was trialed at the previous evaluation and proved successful. Robson (2000) characterizes small evaluation as being restricted in place to one locality rather than being regional or national; restricted in time to less than six months and restricted in personnel to one evaluator or at most a small team. Whilst Pacific peoples prefer oral discussions when sharing information, the simplicity and shortness of the questionnaire structure enabled them to answer it without any problems. There were three volunteers who assisted me on the festival day. Because of the small number of volunteers, I chose to work with one volunteer in the morning and two in the afternoon. I also placed at least 20 questionnaires at selected stalls from where they were distributed and I collected the completed ones every hour throughout the day. Because I have built a good relationship with the Pacific community I have found people co-operative. People were willing to complete the questionnaire and placed it in the box at my booth whilst I dealt with others who preferred to respond verbally. There were 500 questionnaires given out on the festival day and 325 responded which I consider to be a good response rate.

Focus of the evaluation

Whilst this work is to re-evaluate the Creekefest to compare the information from the two festivals, its main focus is to understand the dynamics amongst the Pacific community in relation to health. Another focus of this work is to ensure that all social organisations such as Pacific service providers, schools and churches are aware of factors that may contribute to Pacific people's health problems. The questionnaire for this year's evaluation was a duplicate of last year's one with a minor alteration. This questionnaire focuses the reality of the Pacific community's attitude towards health is represented at the evaluation. Given the festival's popularity throughout the whole community and its neighborhoods, I consider it an ideal opportunity to collect information to identify issues related to their declining health. In which case, the data collected and analysed will inform policy makers and funders of Pacific people's social characteristics. The evaluation of the festival should also inform the community that their wellbeing and welfare is paramount to the researchers, educators and health services providers. This in turn should enhance the community and health professionals to work collaboratively for the benefit of all.

Findings

The results of the first evaluation were presented at the AES conference at Darwin in 2006 and have been published in the AES journal (vol 7. 2, 2007). Because of this, I will not repeat the previous results in detail but I will refer to it where appropriate.

The comparison of the two sets of findings (2006 & 2008) illustrated that 'health' is still not a priority for Pacific peoples. Fig. 1, shows a similar trend to the previous one in relation to people's expectations of the festival. The majority preferred to have a safe and relaxed environment while they enjoyed the festival and the second highest number of people expected to see healthy food promotion at the festival. Likewise, Fig. 2 shows 80 per cent of those who participated in the survey are more interested in food than health promotion

activities. Most people who attended the festival this year came from Porirua city and the majority of the participants found out about the festival through friends. The ratings of this year and the 2006 festival activities as well as the safety of the festival environment are similar. Both years showed high number of participants rated the festival activities as excellent and people always feel safe at the festival.

Fig. 1. People's expectations of the Creekfest 2006/2008.

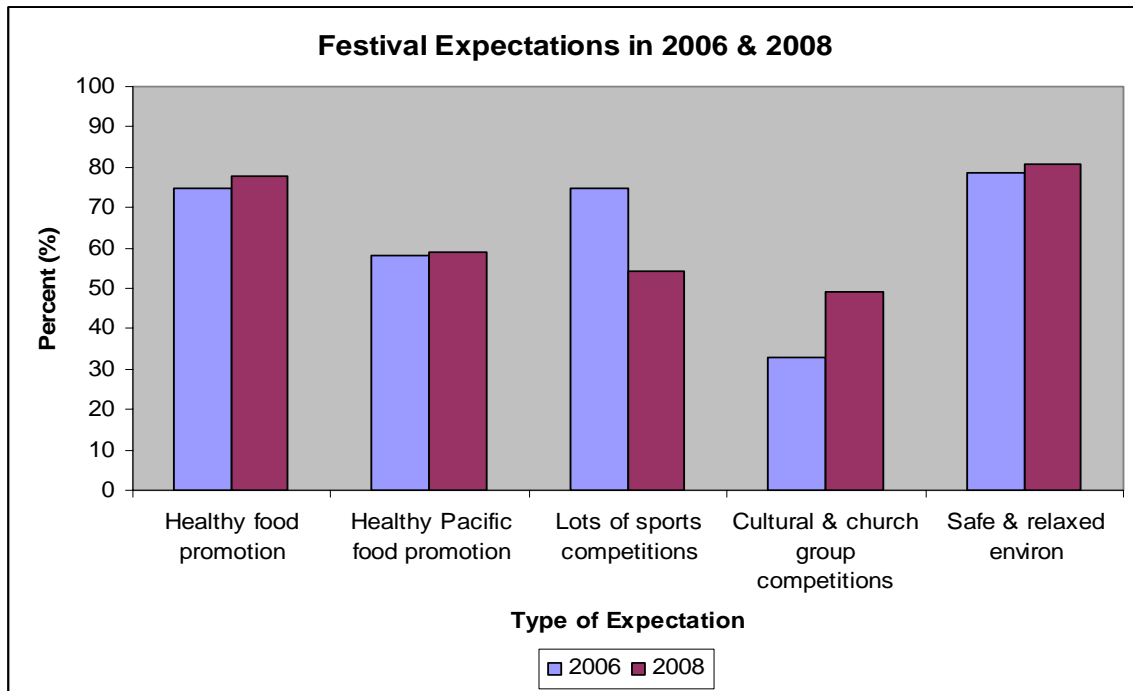
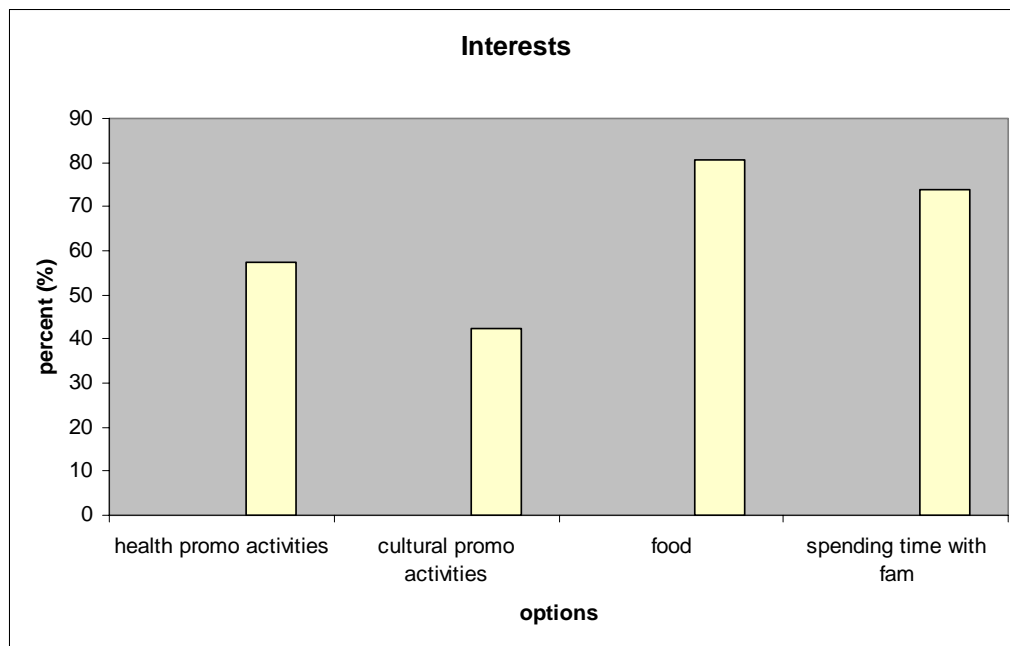
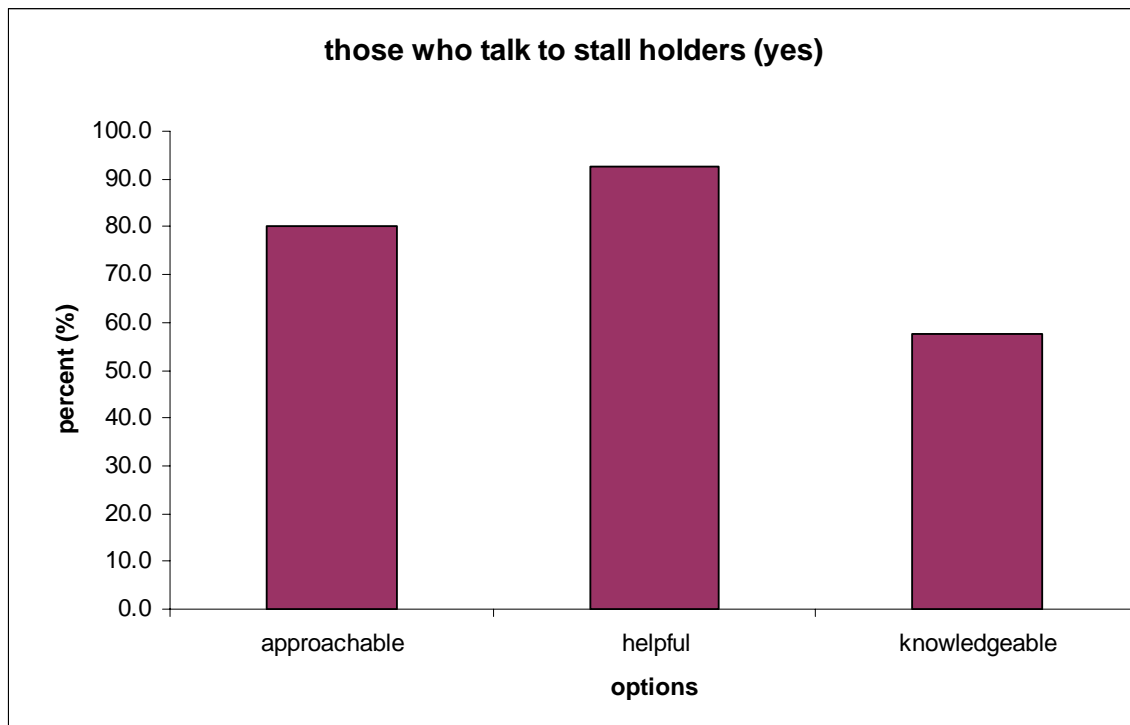


Fig. 2. People's interests at the Creekfest '08



Another interesting finding of this year's evaluation was the number of participants who talked to the stall holders. These stall holders are mainly Pacific service providers and other organisations that work towards Pacific people's well being and welfare. Fig. 3 showed that out of those who said 'yes we communicate with the stall holders', the highest number of participants reported that the stall holders are helpful, the second highest revealed that stall holders are approachable and the least number of participants believed the stall holders were knowledgeable. On the other hand, a large proportion of participants did not talk to stall holders and all of them indicated that this was because they did not need to.

Fig. 3. Participants that talked to stall holders



Conclusion

The analysis of this year's Creekfest evaluation and its comparison with the previous evaluation confirmed the findings of the first evaluation in 2006. Pacific peoples are not seriously aware that their health is at risk. Furthermore, the combination of the two sets of data also confirmed New Zealand Ministry of Health report that Pacific people's health is declining. The findings of my second evaluation informed me that there are underlying issues that need to be addressed amongst the Pacific community in Porirua city in relation to their health. I consider it relevant that findings of this research should be disseminated at a public forum at Porirua city in order for the community to be aware of the problem. In addition, the data should be presented to the organizers' and funders of the Creekfest event, and the Pacific service providers

so strategies can be put in place to shift this trend. I believe that the re-evaluation of the Creekefest festival has provided sufficient data to identify that Pacific peoples do not appear to be aware of health problems within their communities and moreover, that solutions are needed for these problems to be addressed.