

NZAC

Membership Survey

November 2007

Compiled by Ollie Clifton, NZAC Executive Officer

Executive Summary

The key findings of this survey are that:

- (a) The response rate of the 2007 survey, at approximately 30%, was much lower than in 2005 (approximately 60%). Hence it is recommended that future member surveys are distributed by post only.
- (b) There has been no significant change in the demographic profile of Club members. The relatively small percentage of Club members under 30 years old remains an issue. Hence it is recommended that a Youth Strategy be developed which aims to double the percentage of Club members under the age of 30, in the next five years. Club members also remain a relatively affluent section of society – it is therefore recommended that fundraising initiatives aimed specifically at Club members should continue.
- (c) Tramping and Outdoor Rockclimbing ranked as the most popular alpine-related activities, with General Mountaineering having decreased in popularity in relative terms.
- (d) Members undertake their alpine-related activities with family, or with friends, or a combination of both. Responses to all other options were negligible. The following recommendation is therefore made: That NZAC section trips need to be improved to somehow allow a greater level of member participation.
- (e) Awareness and usage of Base Lodges was very similar to 2005.
- (f) “Time constraints” was the most common reason for not using Base Lodges. Comments were also made regarding lack of awareness, and “never having been” to certain areas. Hence it is recommended that our Base Lodges, and the climbing opportunities available in the adjacent areas, should be better promoted, especially to new members.
- (g) There was a downturn in member participation in almost all Club activities and services. This trend needs to be monitored closely, and hence it is recommended that consideration be given to doing a member survey on an annual basis.
- (h) “Family commitments” was the most common reason given for not participating in Club activities. This report therefore recommends that more family-friendly Club activities be developed.
- (i) The comparison of “Importance vs Performance” of Club activities/services showed that Publications and Huts continue to perform very well. On the flip-side, Section Trips, Advanced Courses, Beginners Instruction and Recreation Advocacy have all under-performed. The following two recommendations are therefore made:
That both Beginner Instruction and Advanced level courses need to be improved to meet member expectations.
That better communication of the efforts made and outcomes achieved in the Club’s Recreation Advocacy be made with the wider Club membership.
- (j) Several key Club services/functions would be well utilised if available on-line, and hence that redevelopment of the Club website should be progressed ASAP.
- (k) None of the options given for raising future Club revenue were popular, with raising annual subs being the least popular. It is therefore recommended that any planning relating to future additional revenue for the Club should give regard to the opposition to any hut fee or annual subscription increases expressed in this survey.

Methodology

The last membership survey was completed in 2005, hence where possible the data collected in 2007 has been done in such a way that it is comparable with the 2005 data. 300 surveys were distributed to a representative sample of members throughout the country, by both post and email, with 98 surveys being returned. This is a much lower response rate than 2005, where all surveys were posted and approx 175 surveys returned. This demonstrates quite clearly that although emails are very convenient and efficient for distributing information, they are also easily ignored! Hence it is recommended that future member surveys are distributed by post only.

All the raw data was entered into spreadsheets via the heroic voluntary efforts of Club member David Ramm. This data was then analysed, and this report produced by Ollie Clifton, NZAC Executive Officer.

Demographics

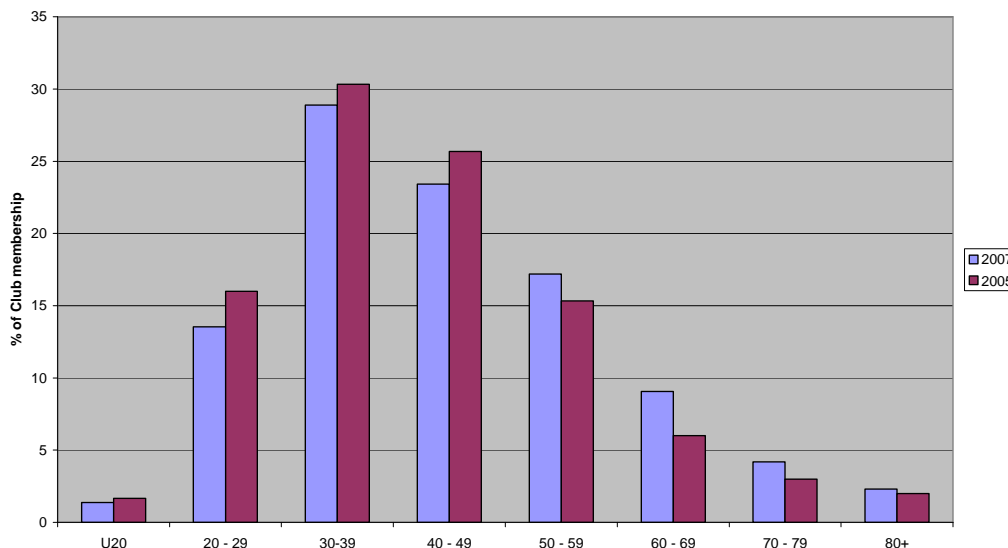
As in 2005, this survey asked three questions relating to age, gender, and income. Comparative results for these three areas are detailed below.

Age

The age profile of NZAC membership remains very much the same as it was in 2005 (see CHART 1 below). Hence the same conclusions drawn from the 2005 data apply in 2007, these being that:

1. Over 50% of the Club membership is aged 30 – 50 years old.
2. This is in contrast to the age profile of the wider climbing community; the 2005 member survey noted that a major survey of 14,400 people by NFL research in 2001, found that approximately 55% of those who climbed regularly were under the age of 30. Younger climbers are apparently not attracted to the Club. Increased numbers of younger members would both strengthen the club in the immediate future, and improve its long-term viability.

CHART 1 - Age groupings



Hence it is a recommendation of this report that a Youth Strategy be developed which aims to double the percentage of Club members under the age of 30 in the next five years.

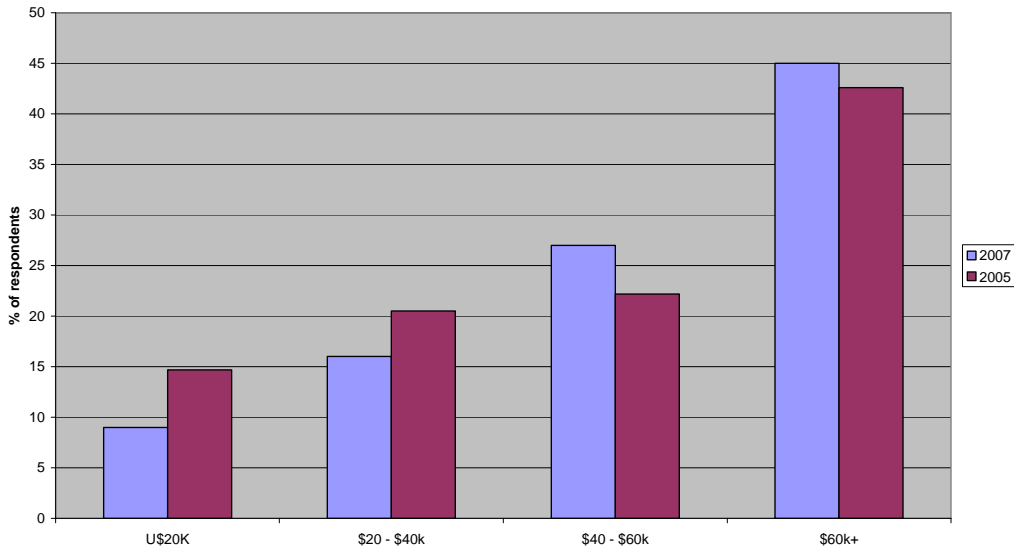
Gender

The Club remains very male biased, with the ratio of men to women remaining at approximately 80:20.

Income

Once again there has been very little change in the Club membership in this respect, with the \$60,000+ category having the most responses as in 2005 (see CHART 2 below). This indicates that overall the Club membership remains reasonably affluent, and furthermore that fundraising initiatives aimed specifically at Club members are still a very worthwhile activity.

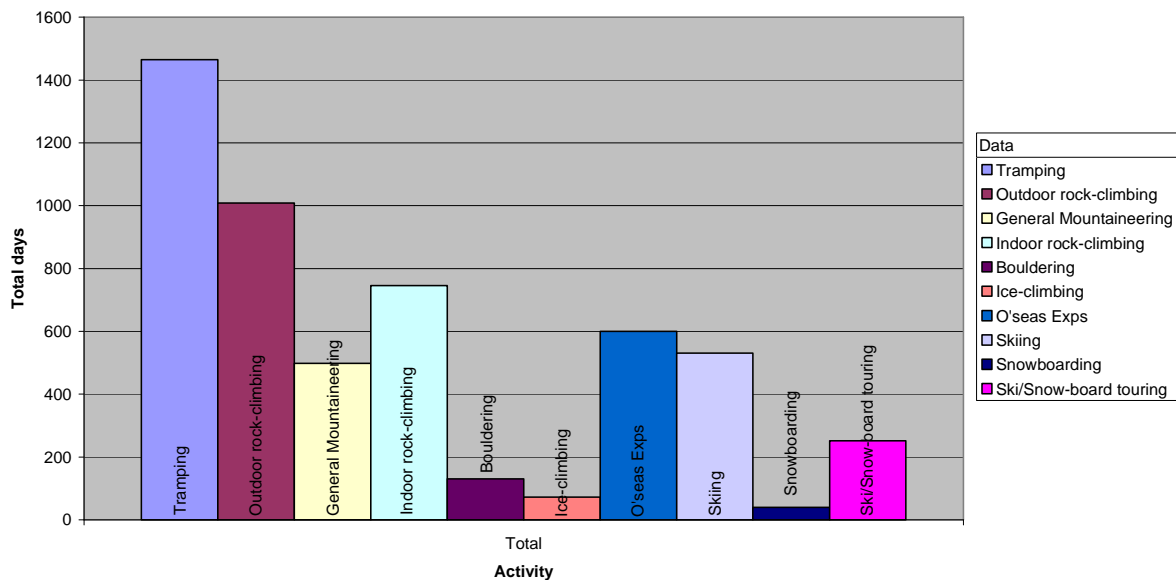
CHART 2 - Income brackets



Alpine-related Activities

The 2007 survey asked Club members their main interests, and the approximate number of days they had undertaken each activity (see CHART 3 below).

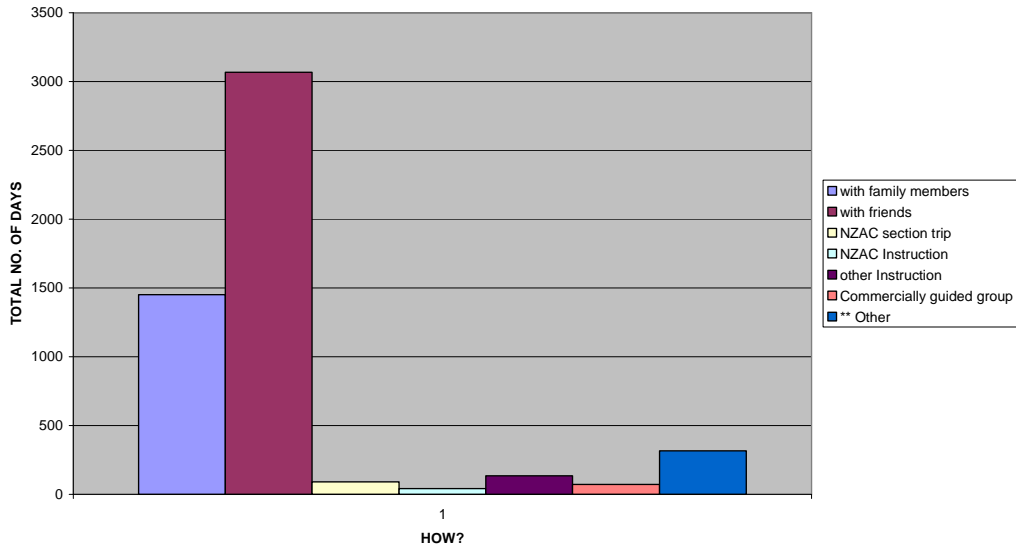
CHART 3 - Activity Days



The data on activity highlights the relative accessibility of Tramping, Outdoor Rockclimbing, and Indoor Climbing, compared to General Mountaineering. The activity categories themselves are of course not mutually exclusive – hence the data also illustrates the range of “alpine activity” that members are involved in. The data collected in 2005 is not directly comparable, however it does show that General Mountaineering has slipped in popularity, and Outdoor Rockclimbing increased.

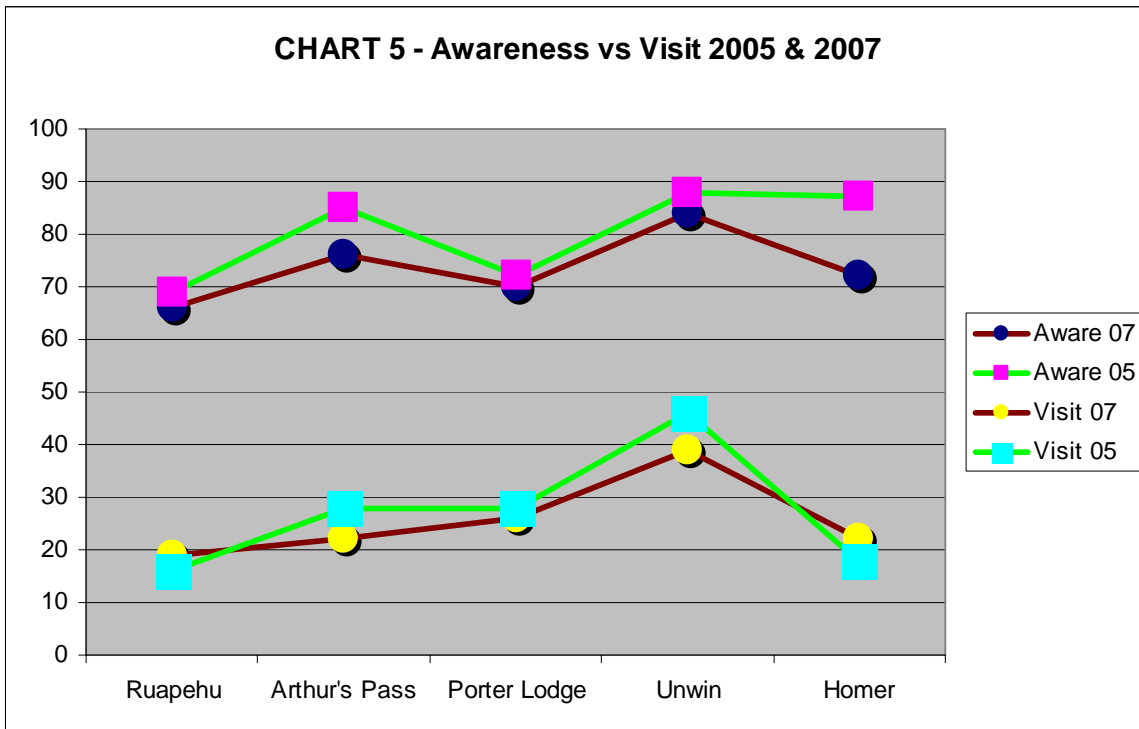
The second part of this question asked members how they did their activities – not surprisingly the “with family” and “with friends” categories rated the highest (see CHART 4 below). The number of days attributed to “NZAC section trips” was by comparison very low, and may be an area that needs improvement.

CHART 4 - How did you undertake activities?



Base Lodge Awareness

As in 2005, members were asked two specific questions relating to their awareness, and usage of our five Base Lodges (Homer, Unwin, Porter, Arthur's Pass, and Ruapehu). The data collected in 2007 was very similar to 2005, with the same direct relationship between awareness and usage being evident, as per CHART 5 below:



In addition to this data, it was also asked that if people had not used NZAC Base Lodges, did they have any specific reasons. Comments are summarised below:

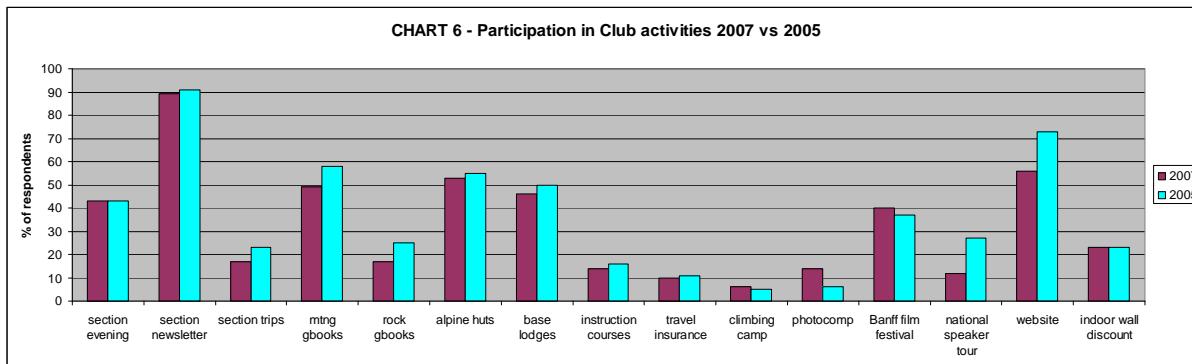
- Lodges are useful – I use them if in the area x 5
- New member, not aware x 6
- No longer climbing/activity restricted x 6
- Live overseas x 6
- Never been to those areas x 5
- Too far away/distance x 6
- Cheaper to camp x 3
- Time constraints x 9

Prefer to use huts x 4
Family commitments x 3

Not surprisingly “time constraints” was the most common reason for not using our Base Lodges. This suggests that we need to ensure that both booking and payment systems are comparatively easy for members to use. Better promotion of our Base Lodges, and the climbing opportunities available in the adjacent areas could also be useful in addressing the comments around “New member, not aware” and “Never been to those areas”.

Club Activities

This section of the survey asked respondents to indicate which Club activities/services they had participated in over the past year, and if they had wanted to be more active, what were the barriers. The results and comparison to 2005 data are shown below in CHART 6:



Of note here is the downward trend in most categories between 2005 and 2007, with the exception of the Photographic Competition, and Banff Film Festival. Section Evening attendance, and Section Newsletters have held their own. This trend is of real concern and needs to be closely monitored. It could be that larger macro-scale forces are at work here, with the downward trend in all Club activities possibly attributable to society in general doing shorter, more front-country focussed recreation activity. Given the importance of this trend, consideration should be given to doing a member survey on an annual basis.

In response to the question regarding barriers to participation, lack of time was by far and away the most common category selected. Encouragingly, “perceived quality” received the lowest number of responses. The “additional comments” received as part of this question are summarised below:

distance to travel x 7
activities not of interest/developed other interests x 8
live in Australia/overseas x 6
other commitments/family/work restrictions x 12
low activity but strong armchair interest remains x 3

The main theme to come out of these responses was that of family commitments. There were also several comments relating to activities typically being available in main centres only. Hence there may be scope for developing Club activities which are more family-friendly, and to ensure that where possible Club activities/services are available in the smaller centres.

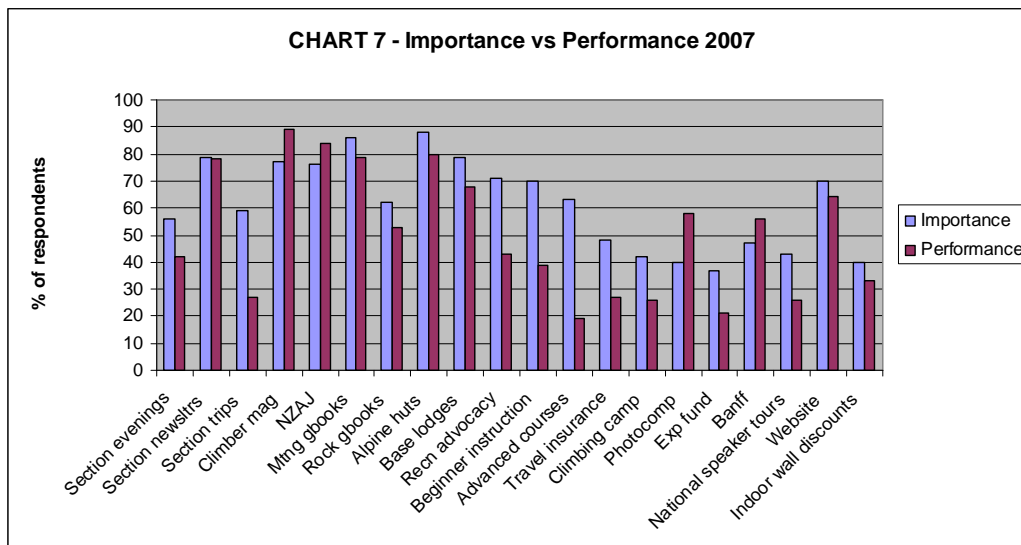
Membership Satisfaction

As in the 2005 survey, members were asked to rank a list of 21 Club activities/services, in both their importance, and performance ie “how important is this activity/service” and “how has the Club performed in this activity/service”. From the 2005 survey, the following conclusions were made in relation to this question:

- The publications are without exception excellent
- Huts are generally O.K. but base huts require some improvement
- The website and travel insurance should be improved where possible

- Section trips and newsletters must be the focus of efforts to strengthen the club

The results from 2007 are illustrated in CHART 7 below:



The data from 2007 highlights that Publications continue to perform exceptionally, with both the Climber and NZAJ ranking higher in performance than importance.. The Photographic Competition and Banff Film festival also rank exceptionally, as they did in 2005. Mountaineering and Rockclimbing guidebooks have also performed well.

Both Alpine Huts and Base Lodges have performed well, with similar rankings to 2005.

Section Newsletters have shown by far and away the biggest improvement, with performance now matching importance. Section Evenings have gained in importance, but have slipped in relative terms on performance!

Areas that need attention include Section Trips, Recreation Advocacy, Beginner Instruction and Advanced courses. The relatively low scoring of Section Trips was also highlighted in 2005, and should therefore be prioritised. Recreation Advocacy is another area which under-performed in 2005 – this is most probably an issue of better communicating the efforts made and outcomes achieved in this area, with the wider membership, and is therefore not a high priority. Last but not least, Beginner Instruction and Advanced courses are both areas in need of improvement – Beginner Instruction has slipped in performance since 2005, and Advanced courses continue to under-perform.

Also in relation to this question, members were asked for suggestions on other activities/services that the Club could be involved in. These suggestions are summarised below:

- More specific courses
- Family + youth events/courses x 2
- More activities based out of Wanaka /Q'town
- NZAC camps closer to actual climbs
- Discounts for DOC huts
- Annual or bi-annual NZAC overseas trip
- Encourage young members
- Consolidate with CMC + NZMF for effectiveness
- Bolting courses; broaden access advocacy to mtb and paragliding; back country huts in vicinity of Otago ski fields
- More club trips; more info for new members
- Subsidise courses using funds re-allocated from the expedition funding of the few who get it; instead pay good climbers to get further instruction so that they can pass on

skills to rest of membership

Some services not readily accessible from Southland eg. Films, instruction

Better connections amongst Australian members; advertising 2nd hand gear in more obvious way

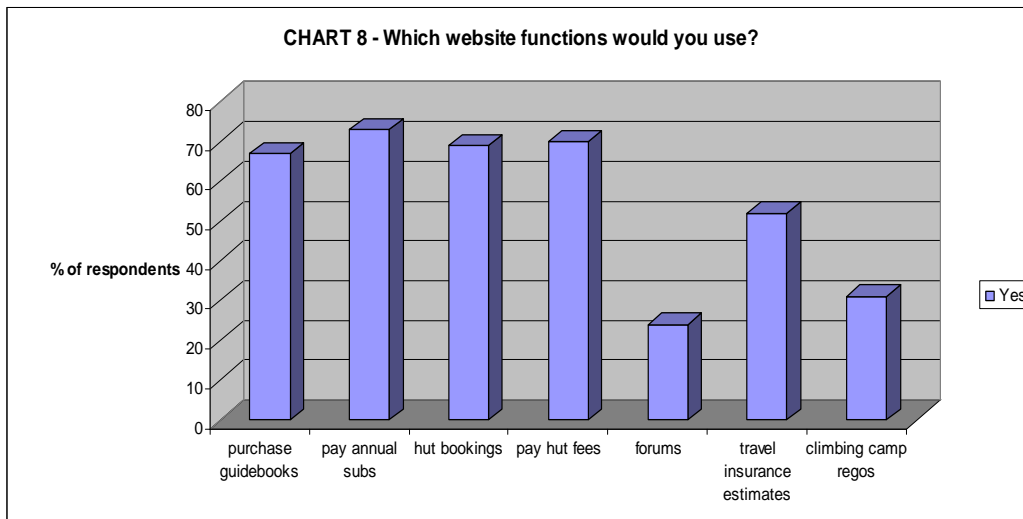
Insurance for overseas members

New members are not made welcome at section evenings; each section should address this issue

These suggestions were fairly wide-ranging, and nothing really conclusive can be drawn from them.

Website

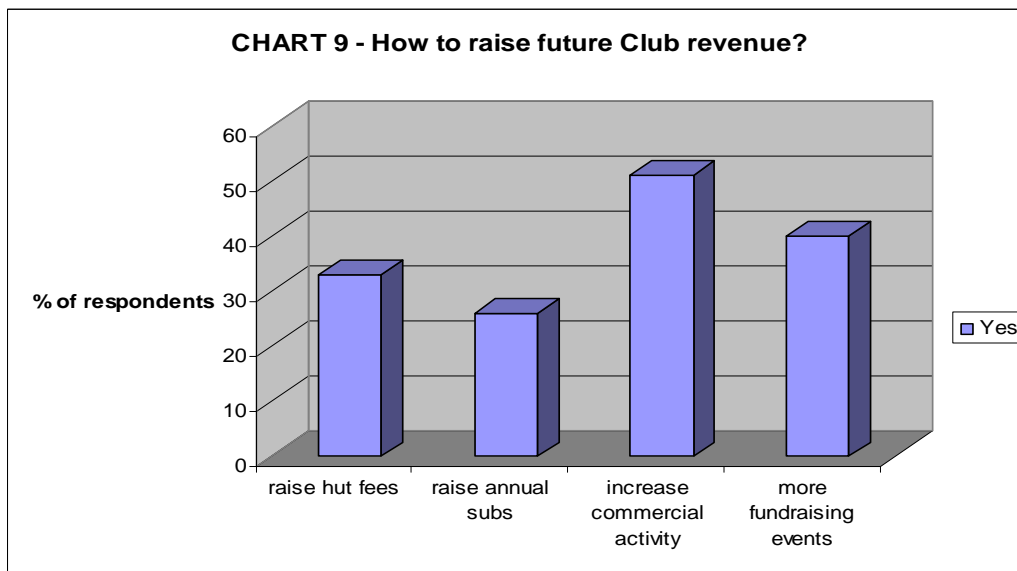
This question was new to the 2007 survey, given the redevelopment plans for the Club website, and increased use of web based services generally amongst members and wider society. The results are shown in CHART 8 below:



These results simply confirm our educated guesses, and highlight the need to progress the redevelopment of the Club website.

Future Club revenue

The final question of the 2007 survey asked members how the Club should raise additional revenue in the future. The results, illustrated in CHART 9 below, show that none of the options given were especially popular, with “raise annual subs” being the least popular option.



A range of comments were received as part of this question, which are summarised below:

Unwin as commercial accommodation
NZAC good value for active members, but not necessarily for less active
Sponsorship grants + donations, bequests, SPARC x 2
Climber mag: more advertising + wider distribution
More intro courses ones -> raising subs + hut fees would be discouraging
Instruction courses + fees for overseas users
More fundraising for specific projects e.g HOM + Centennial hut
Promote base lodges more to non-members
Focus on preferred activities implied by this survey
Hut fess + subs already recently increased?
Model camps on Canadian Alpine Club
Raise hut fees for non-members x 3
Huts/lodges should cover costs, not make a profit
Reduce expenses x 2
Equipment co-op (cf. Canada)
Retain services with lower costs (more volunteer work :)
Appreciative of waived membership fee ; subs would not stop my membership
Hut maintenance top priority ; otherwise balance expenses with services
Combination of strategies preferred
Discount to ski passes could attract some skiers
Shouldn't subsidise private trips, equipment or training courses.
Are huts a necessary obligation/service for NZAC? Is their cost too great?
Market journal pre-Christmas as "Alpine NZ" to general public
Make NZAC courses available to other groups e.g. Schools, polytechs, public
User pays revenue rather than broad brush approach; thanks for great job done by executive etc
Retail activity; NZAC act as internet-based warehouse retailer
Incentive of some sort for members able to make donations, to do so, as NZAC is an excellent organisation and its support is deserved
Perhaps a greater commercial focus
NZAC better value than AAC (USA) therefore sub increase might be fair
Keep hut fees as low as possible so that participation is not restricted
Climbing competitions, film festivals and similar bigger events
Discourage increased hut fees as that leads to non-payment; increased fees might discourage some including young members
Industry tax on all equipment; be more pro-active with getting donations
Fund raising somehow; NZAC costs already expensive for me
Activities/services should be self funding if possible

Some of these ideas may be useful in developing fundraising strategies for the Club in the future. The strongest theme which came through with these comments was the opposition to any hut fee or annual subscription increases.

Recommendations

The key recommendations of the 2007 Member Survey are that:

1. Future member surveys are distributed by post only.
2. Consideration be given to doing a member survey on an annual basis, given some of the important trends which need to be monitored around Club activity.
3. A Youth Strategy be developed which aims to double the percentage of Club members under the age of 30 in the next five years.
4. Fundraising initiatives aimed specifically at Club members should continue.
5. NZAC section trips need to be improved to somehow allow a greater level of member participation.
6. Our Base Lodges, and the climbing opportunities available in the adjacent areas, should be better promoted, especially to new members.
7. More family-friendly Club activities be developed.
8. Where possible, all Club activities/services should be made available in the smaller centres.
9. Better communication of the efforts made and outcomes achieved in the Club's Recreation Advocacy be made with the wider Club membership.

10. Both Beginner Instruction and Advanced level courses need to be improved to meet member expectations.
11. The redevelopment of the Club website should be progressed ASAP.
12. Any planning relating to future additional revenue for the Club should give regard to the opposition to any hut fee or annual subscription increases expressed in this survey.

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