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GENDER DIFFERENCES & THE EFFECT OF PROMOTIONAL
TECHNIQUES ON FAN ATTENDANCE AT MLB GAMES
DURING A LOSING SEASON

by
Melanie Mount

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
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Approved by _____
Advisor

Date Approved July 3, 2007

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ABSTRACT

Melanie Mount
GENDER DIFFERENCES & THE EFFECT OF PROMOTIONAL
TECHNIQUES ON FAN ATTENDANCE AT MLB GAMES
DURING A LOSING SEASON
2006/07
Dr. Suzanne Sparks FitzGerald
Master of Arts in Public Relations

The thesis' purposes were to (a) determine what promotional techniques engender ticket sales during a MLB team's losing season and (b) discover gender differences associated with promotions and game attendance. All losing teams of the 2006 season were analyzed, 16 total.

Promotional schedules, interviews with MLB promotions practitioners and gender focus panels provided the primary research for this study. The quantitative data from content analyzing promotional schedules were charted by how often promotions were offered and ranked by attendance popularity. Qualitative data gathered from interviews and focus panels provided detailed insight into promotional development, targeted audiences and gender preferences.

Results showed that only certain promotions engender ticket sales during a losing season, including: bobbleheads, fireworks, home-openers and fan appreciation days. In addition, it was proven that female fans are more likely than male fans to attend games during a losing season.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Maya Angelou once wrote, “All great accomplishments require time.” With that thought, I thank those who gave me their time and helped me reach the completion of my master’s degree and this thesis: my advisor, Dr. Suzanne Sparks FitzGerald, for her guidance, patience, encouragement and confidence in my study and its contribution to the public relations field; my classmates, for providing comfort while listening to my stresses and my best friend, Dave, for his unconditional love and support.

Finally, I thank my parents, Dennis and Theresa Mount, for not only believing me, but for teaching me to believe in myself. I dedicate this thesis to them.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Public relations strives not only to build relationships between organizations and publics, but also to maintain them. In sports, many relationships must exist to maintain a sports franchise, from corporate relationships to player-coach relationships. But, the one most important relationship that holds a sports franchise afloat is the relationship with the sports fan.

Consequently, a form of public relations known as fan relations, focuses on forging relationships between a sports franchise and new fans while maintaining relationships with already-existing fans.

The job of a fan relations practitioner is to maintain fan satisfaction and increase ticket sales. Litrenta (1999) notes, fan relations practitioners “must strive to produce winning, profitable teams and strong bond with their fans. Forming these successful bonds helps sports organizations retain their public and remain strong corporate competitors.” To financially compete with other franchises, teams must win. As Ostrowski (2006) says, “Nothing rings the cash register like a winner ...and if a team loses, fans stay away in droves.”

Litrenta also indicates, “Sports relations obstacles often emerge when organizations fail to satisfy their primary audience, the fans. In these instances, fan dissatisfaction can cause organizations’ reputations and profits to plummet.” Thus, when sports fans are most dissatisfied, when their team loses, new techniques must be created to bridge relationships and keep fans coming to the ticket booth.

Problem

This researcher will examine the techniques used by practitioners to sustain and/or increase fan attendance at sporting events during a losing season.

According to Webb Nichols (1998), "Today an [team] owner senses he must provide an experience for the spectator that is greater than the sum of any aggravation the spectator has had to endure, including rising costs, inconvenience, even losing." So it is that when a sports team worst nightmare occurs – a losing season on the field, a losing season occurs at the ticket booth, as well.

Ultimately, this researcher will test and recommend promotion techniques teams can use during a losing season to increase ticket sales and bring fans to the game. Cramer of *Sales & Marketing Management* quotes former Philadelphia 76'ers President Pat Croce, "When your team is losing ... you have to do anything you can to build loyalty in the fan."

Delimitations

This thesis does not consider several fan relations areas. This thesis will not study the relationships between high school, collegiate or amateur sports teams and their fans. This thesis will not cover other professional sports such as football, basketball, hockey or golf.

Purpose

This thesis will produce original research for the field of public relations. More specifically, this research will provide sports relations practitioners with valuable information regarding their fans. The results will reveal techniques that practitioners can

incorporate into the sport season that will increase fan attendance and ticket sales particularly during a losing season, hence the significance of this study.

These hypotheses form the basis for this research.

H1: It is expected that certain promotional techniques, not all, will engender significant ticket sales, even during a losing season.

Fans will still buy tickets to games during a losing season, when they are guaranteed a 'sure thing' – a gift for attending the game. Marchetti (2003) says, “Sports fans are suckers for free stuff. Whether it’s bats or the latest craze – boobleheads, premiums are a badge of true fandom as well as a surefire lure for those people obsessed with adding to their show of collectibles.” In addition, de Gale (2003) notes that publicity stunts are as old as baseball itself. The “sideshow,” she says, has become just as important as what’s happening on the field.

H2: It is expected that female fans are more willing than male fans to attend baseball games during a losing season.

Females are becoming more prevalent at sporting events, especially when it comes to social connection and bonding. Schmelzer (2006) discusses the Major League Baseball’s (MLB) Commissioner’s Initiative on Women and Baseball and says that “women are their households’ primary decision-makers regarding purchases and leisure activities, and a trip to the ballpark provides the quality time and atmosphere they want for their families.” In addition, James and Ridinger (2002) say that men have a stronger connection with sports, in general than women do. But women tend to have a stronger connection with a particular team than men. Their results also suggested that women felt

significantly more empathy when a team lost and less achievement when a team won than did males.

Procedure

In testing these hypotheses, the research included both quantitative and qualitative research. A content analysis of teams' web sites provided quantitative research focusing on frequency of promotions and targeted publics.

In-depth interviews with fan relations practitioners provided qualitative research. Practitioners supplied promotion strategies and revealed what successful and unsuccessful promotions have been conducted.

In addition, two separate focus panels were conducted – one male, one female. Each focus panel consisted of eight members of one gender. Participants granted feedback on current promotional techniques used by practitioners to draw in crowds during a losing season and whether or not they would buy tickets if certain techniques were used.

The most important relationship that holds a sports franchise afloat is the relationship with the sports fan. Consequently, a form of public relations known as fan relations, focuses on forging relationships between a sports franchise and new fans while maintaining relationships with already-existing fans.

It is the job of the fan relations practitioner to get these fans to purchase tickets – to make a profit at the box office. However, ticket sales plummet when a team is losing, so fan relations practitioners must create ways to drive audiences into the stadium. One way of doing this is with promotions.

Ultimately, this thesis will test and recommend promotion techniques professional baseball teams can use during a losing season to increase ticket sales and bring fans to the game.

In the following chapter, this researcher will demonstrate the need for this research by exploring broad areas of study and narrowing them down, showing that there is no significant existing research practitioners can use to determine what promotional techniques will engender ticket sales during a professional baseball team's losing season.

Terminology

Understanding the purpose, research recommendations and overall content of this thesis requires the researcher to define key terms incorporated within the study.

Brand - Litwin (2005) says, "A name sign symbol or design, or some combination of these, used to identify a product and to differentiate it from competitors' products."

Cause-related marketing - Litwin (2005) says, "The public association of a for-profit company with a non-profit organization, intended to promote the company's product or service and to raise money for the non-profit (both parties benefit).

Content analysis – Litwin (2005) states, "The technique of reading publications, advertisements or other messages to find references to an organization or an idea then coding and analyzing the content to determine trends and opinions."

Fan (spectator) – short for *fanatic*; an enthusiastic devotee to a sport or sports team. Fans follow and support their sport or team by attending games, watching the game on television or listening on the radio, participating in web forums, tracking player statistics, reading related articles and purchasing merchandise.

Fan relations – a segment of sports relations that focuses on forging relationships between a sports franchise and new fans while maintaining relationships with already existing fans.

Focus group – “A qualitative public relations/marketing research technique where an independent facilitator interviews a small group of consumers from the target audience in an informal setting to get a reaction to an issue, new product, brand name, advertising or other communication efforts,” according to Litwin.

Losing season – when a team records more losses than wins in a regular season. In professional baseball, teams play 162 games. A baseball team records a losing season when they lose 82 games or more.

Marketing – “Business activities that direct the exchange of goods and services between producers and consumers. It focuses on developing, expanding and facilitating the profitable introduction and promotion of a company’s products and/or services. Traditionally, this is taken to include the original “4Ps” – Product, Price, Promotion and Place,” according to Litwin.

Promotion – “All forms of communication other than advertising that call attention to products and services by adding extra values toward the purchase,” according to Litwin.

Promotional strategy – “The element of a firm’s decision-making concerned with choosing the appropriate mix of public relations, advertising, sales promotion, personal selling and publicity for communication with its target market,” according to Litwin.

Sports marketing - “Application of marketing principles ... to sport products and the marketing of non-sports products through associations with sport,” according to Wikipedia.

Sports relations - a type of public relations that fosters a relationship between a sports organization and its publics, including the media and the fans, through research, counseling and other communication methods, according to Litrenta.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This researcher explored the need for what promotional techniques that engender MLB ticket sales during a losing season. To do so, a literature review was conducted exploring important closely related topics.

Sports Marketing

To define sports marketing, one must first define marketing.

Litwin (2005) defines marketing as such,

Business activities that direct the exchange of goods and services between producers and consumers. It focuses on developing, expanding and facilitating the profitable introduction and promotion of a company's products and/or services. Traditionally, this is taken to include the original "4Ps" – Product, Price, Promotion and Place. (p. 274)

Accordingly, Wikipedia defines sports marketing as the "specific application of marketing principles and processes to sport products and the marketing of non-sports products through associations with sport."

Sports marketing primarily emerged in the 1960s when firms such as International Management Group, Woolf Associates and ProServ began managing endorsement deals and contract negotiations for professional coaches and athletes. In the '70s, sports marketing expanded beyond athlete management and into event production and sponsorship negotiations.

Wikipedia explains that the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles contributed to the explosive growth of sports marketing, when corporate sponsors used the Games as

a platform to market their brands. Coca-Cola, for example, spent nearly \$30 million in official sponsorship.

The CEO and chief organizer of the 1984 Olympics, Peter Ueberroth, brought the impact of the '84 Games to the MLB when he became commissioner.

According to Shank (2004), the sports marketing industry experienced tremendous growth in the '90s and is now a \$350 billion industry in the United States. This figure includes sports-related advertising and venue signage, athlete endorsements, facility construction, sporting goods and licensed merchandise, event management and marketing services, sponsorship and ticket sales, media broadcast rights, and multimedia — including sports-related websites, magazines, books, and video games.

Thorne, Wright and Jones (2001), note that “the marketing of sport involves the promotion of the game itself ...marketing through sports has become increasingly popular as companies outside of the sports industry recognize sports as a medium for marketing their own products and services.” A popular example of this today is the common practice of corporations purchasing stadium naming rights.

According to Mason (2005), “Marketers strive to make positive connections with consumers via numerous tools such as advertising, public relations, promotional tie-ins, and sponsorship. At present corporate sport sponsorship is becoming a very prominent marketing vehicle.”

Corporate sport sponsorship is becoming increasingly attractive in the United States and Europe because of the value that these cultures place upon entertainment, competition, and accomplishment, (McCook, Turco and Riley 2004).

According to Meenaghan (2001), there are several benefits of sponsorship over mass advertising. Sponsorship engages the consumer by bestowing benefit on an activity which the consumer has an intense emotional response to. In turn, goodwill feeling comes to the company which influences attitude and behavior toward the brand. It is this goodwill that really makes sponsorship different from advertising. Harvey (2001) adds that while advertising changes a consumer's perception of a specific product, sponsorship changes the perception of a specific sponsor which will rub off on the brands.

People are more accepting of sponsorship than advertising because people know many events would not exist without sponsorship, says (Lardinoit and Quester, 2001).

Mason says:

Sponsorship is an indirect/disguised attempt to persuade, unlike advertising which is seen as direct with an overt intent to persuade. These factors, combined with the goodwill from sponsorship, make a consumer's defense mechanisms low when perceiving sponsorship, while these same mechanisms are high when watching commercials. For example, a person receives sponsorship in goodwill while they will be skeptical of advertising. Since one of the functions of an attitude is to keep a person's world pleasant by blocking out unwanted stimuli, sponsorship holds great potential for overcoming this. (p. 34)

Fan Relations

Since sports marketing has become such a huge industry, many sports teams, both amateur and professional, have developed fan relations departments. These departments focus on the team-fan relationship. Moreover, these fan relations practitioners act as strategic brand managers.

Thorne et al state that “as the core consumers of the sports product, fans and spectators use sports as entertainment and leisure activities. These people often develop a

strong affiliation with teams and athletes, which enables a link to marketing exchange and the ultimate financial success of the team and league.”

Litrenta (1999) notes:

Public relations plays a predominate role in the maintenance of fan satisfaction and loyalty. As sports teams suffer defeating challenges during a losing season, their fans experience a sense of devastating loss as well. Therefore, sports teams must identify and recognize their fans and develop positive relationships that help dissolve the frustration of a losing season and retain interest in and support for the organization. (p. 19)

In a *Maclean's* poll (1996), sociologist Phil White says that fans will remain interested in their favorite teams because the industry romanticizes and markets sports to develop identity within communities.

Research has shown that a winning season, although very important in branding, is not the only determinant of a team's brand equity and long-term revenues. Other variables include star athletes, aesthetic qualities of the venue, media coverage, general support of the team, and logo design (Gladden and Milne, 1999).

Since other variables besides winning determine a team's "value," practitioners must develop promotional techniques to draw in a crowd during a losing season.

In 2004, Harasta examined "how economic factors, team management, athletes and sports media influence the relationship between fans and their favorite teams." He discusses a study conducted by Eric Fisher about factors affecting fan relations – especially economic factors.

According to Fisher (2002), Fisher points to the "general state of the economy, higher ticket prices, increasing demands on free time, labor strife within pro leagues, duplicitous team owners, boorish millionaire players, lengthening game times and

competing forms of entertainment" as the main reasons why fans are becoming less interested in sports.

Harasta says:

That interest in all professional American sports is waning. In addition, even those teams that experience great success are not immune to the effects of fan disinterest. The Atlanta Braves, winners of 11 straight division championships, once drew nearly four million fans per season, now they attract half that number following five years of steadily declining attendance. Baseball's most successful team, the New York Yankees, is experiencing similar problems. The team's attendance was down 16 percent during the 2003 season compared to the year before. (p. 39)

The rising cost of becoming involved in sports as a fan is another factor affecting teams' relationships with their fans.

The League of Fans (2003) says:

As loyal fans, we commit ourselves to a team, purchase tickets to the games, buy merchandise, pay for parking and concessions, and what do we get in return? The team owners threaten to leave town if we don't pay for new stadiums with our tax dollars, the players leave for bigger salaries, the owners and players feud to the point of a strike or lockout, and ticket prices go up year after year. (<http://www.leagueoffans.org/sportsfans/index.html>)

According to Team Marketing Report, the cost of a family of four to attend a hockey game after buying tickets, parking, concessions and souvenirs costs on average \$258.50 (2006_b). In the NBA, the costs come to \$263.44 (2005_a). The most expensive is the NFL costing \$329.82 (2005_b). The least expensive is \$171.19 in the MLB (2006_a).

Philadelphia Daily News columnist Sam Donnellon says that fans have every right to criticize the costs of being a sports fan, especially when revenues from fans finance the teams. He says to the fans, "They (team management) accuse you fans of being unfaithful when your mouths open as wide as your wallet has over the years, and

boos come out. Well, open them all you want, people. You pay their salaries. And you pay for their mistakes, too."

Athletes also affect a team's relationship with its spectators.

According to Harasta, "Factors such as escalating player salaries, poor player performance and disloyalty to the team and fans affect the relationship between fans and their favorite teams." He continues to state that these factors result in mistrust and resentment towards players.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman says that no matter how quickly revenue, attendance and exposure grows, player salaries grow faster, (Rovell, January 2003).

Anaheim Mighty Ducks senior vice president of operations Al Coates says fans truly care about the players and thrive on player actions, (Rovell, September 2003).

Harasta says "In addition to rising player salaries, player indiscretions also affect the relationship between players and fans ... the court of public opinion can often judge players more harshly than the court of law and without considering the facts of an athlete's case."

An example of this is Kobe Bryant's felony sexual assault case. Bryant and his team the Los Angeles Lakers could have used public relations to maintain positive fan relations during the trial.

PR Tactics (2003) discussed the Bryant case with several practitioners. Michael Paul, president of MGP & Associates PR said, "If every aspect of this case is not handled properly, Kobe can be exonerated of the criminal charges and still be ruined for life." Chip Tuttle of the PR firm, Conover Tuttle, said, "In today's media environment, you have Web sites thrown up for the sole purpose of reporting rumors and concocting

theories about them." Dean Bender of the PR firm, Bender/Helper Impact, adds, "You have to control these things carefully or they're not going to work."

From Kobe to OJ, Cynthia Hennig, PR director for ICE, Inc. adds it is best for troubled athletes to, "retreat for a time, say little, speak humbly and become a nice guy. Public service would be a good start," (PR Watch, 1996).

Fan relations practitioners must juggle all variables that affect the team's relationship with its fans. From star athletes' to escalating costs, practitioners must find ways to build and maintain fan relationships, especially during a losing season – when attendance rates are known to drop.

Promotions

Litwin (2005) defines promotions as "all forms of communication other than advertising that call attention to products and services by adding extra values toward the purchase."

In sports, new promotions need to be constantly devised to keep up with the competition and to maintain ticket sales. This is especially important during a losing season. According to de Gale (2003), "publicity stunts are almost as old as baseball and if not every one creates a crowd, sports marketing gurus say the sideshow has become as important as what's going on on the field when it comes to luring spectators."

In the past, some of promotions have hit big, others failed.

Successes:

"Bobbleheads are still a hit at the baseball stadium, providing teams and corporate sponsors with a home run giveaway," says Marchetti.

In 2004, the Milwaukee Brewers promoted three eight-inch bobbleheads (one of a current star player and two retirees) which was worth an extra \$840,000 in revenue by drawing in an extra 10,000 fans to three games, when one bobblehead from the collection would be given out per game (Kass, 2004).

Schlesinger said in the Kass article that bobbleheads “are very popular. They have high perceived value and people really want them.” At \$2 each to manufacture, the payoff was considerable. On average fans spend \$28 each on tickets, parking, food and merchandise.

Unlike the Brewers who give a bobblehead to every fan who attends the game, some teams such as the Minnesota Twins, limit their bobbleheads to the first few thousand fans in line.

It’s a “collectible craze,” according to Gardner (2000).

“It’s interesting to watch people with these at a game,” says Malcolm Alexander of Alexander Global Promotions USA in *Potentials*. “On Bat Day, people in the stadium will be waving their bats. But nobody’s waving the bobblehead. It’s in the box, under the seat and in the bag. It’s going home.” Bernie Mullin, senior vice president of marketing and team operations for the NBA, told *Incentives* about the bobblehead collection craze. He said, “people get excited about the idea and want to have the entire series, so they’re more likely to increase their frequency of attendance.”

Although Marchetti says bobbleheads are still a hit, she reports that Babooshkahs, or Russian nesting dolls, are raising in popularity. The Texas Rangers were the first baseball team to give out the dolls and it paid off. Despite having a losing record (15-20), more than 25,000 fans showed up for giveaway.

Also a huge promotion now are “Celebriducks.” Marchetti asks people who have never seen a “Celebriduck” to picture the “bathtime rubber ducky. Attach cornrows to the duck’s head, paint the body in colors of the 76ers, add a few tattoos and voila – you’ve got the Allen Iverson ‘Celebriduck.’” According to David Poskey, president of marketing for Comcast Spectacor – the Philadelphia sports and entertainment firm which owns the ‘76ers – auctioned an autographed Iverson “Celebriduck” on eBay one week before the item was to be given away at the sports arena. The “Celebriduck” sold for \$3,000.

A unique promotion was initiated by an amateur baseball team in 2004. The Memphis Redbirds teamed up with First Tennessee Bank and gave the first 1,500 fans enveloped containing either \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20 or \$100.

By giving away money before the game, the Redbirds recouped some of the money because people spend the “free” money inside the ballpark. “You get some free money and you’re more likely to spend it on things you wouldn’t buy,” said Kerry Seweel, vice president of marketing for the RedBirds, (Sheffield, 2004).

Failures:

Brandweek listed the top ten worst and strange baseball promotions in a recent April, 2006 article by Barry Janoff:

1. Disco Sucks Night, July 12, 1979: Chicago DJ Steve Dahl had White Sox fans bring disco records, which were blown up between games of a doubleheader. The explosion triggered a riot.
2. 10-Cent Beer Night, June 4, 1974: The Cleveland Indians offered fans unlimited beer for a dime a pop. Drunks soon pelted umpires and players with cheap brew, followed by chairs, batteries, rocks, and golf balls.

3. Free Baseballs, August 19, 1995: Many teams give away balls. Few have them throw back at them. LA Dodgers fans did it en masse 11 years ago, ending the game.
4. Hidden Diamond, August 22, 2002: The minor league Orlando Rays had 250 women race across the field to dig for a hidden diamond. In the frenzy, one had a seizure and died.
5. Whack the Sausage, July 9, 2003: A race among sausage mascots at a Milwaukee Brewers game ended when a Pittsburgh Pirates player hit one with a bat. The weiner fell and was run over by a hot dog.
6. Stress Relief Night, August 18, 2003: The minor league Las Vegas 51s handed out stress relief balls, but one distressed fan threw his at a Portland Beavers player. Teammates rushed into the stands, leading to a free-for-all.
7. Ted Williams Popsicle Night, June 3, 2003: Ted Williams' body was cryogenically frozen in 2002, and at the one-year anniversary Arizona's minor league Copper Kings handed out Popsicles to "honor" him.
8. Baseball's All-Star Tie, July 9, 2002: When Commissioner Bud Selig declared the 2002 MLB All-Star Game end in a tie after both teams "ran out" of players, fans threw bottles, plastic cups and promotional seat cushions.
9. Tonya Harding Bat Night: Several minor league teams have "celebrated" the 1994 baton attack on Nancy Kerrigan, at which Harding signs minibats and recalls her career "highs."
10. Awful Night, July 14, 2003: The minor league Altoona, PA Curve blasted music by William Shatner and Milli Vanilli while fans popped bubble wrap.

Although the above promotions failed, one minor league Maryland baseball team has garnered national attention for its creative promotions.

In 2003, *ESPN* gave the Hagerstown Suns the Veeckie Promotion of the Year Award named for its pre-planned funeral giveaway (Quad-State Business Journal, 2005). “Like many of the Suns’ promotions,” Kurt Landes, general manager of the Suns, “the funeral idea began with the needs of a sponsor. The Gerald N. Minnich Funeral Home wanted to create top-of-mind awareness about the importance of pre-planning. This promotion proved that we can be creative and partner with anyone, no matter what business.”

Other Suns promotions include one game broadcast entirely in Japanese, and another game announced by a 10-year-old boy, earned a listing in the Guinness Book of World Records for the youngest broadcaster.

“Nationally, teams are copying our ideas. We’ve got a reputation for being creative and doing a good job at it. I’m proud that people expect great promotions from the Suns. Some promotions, like the youngest broadcaster, don’t bring in more attendance, but they do keep us in people’s minds, that this is a fun and family-oriented place, and that increase attendance,” Landes said.

With the help of promotions, the Suns attendance grew 27% from the year before despite their losing record. So, even with a losing record, sports teams can engender ticket sales by cleverly and creatively executing promotions. Some of these promotions should be targeted specifically toward gender.

Gender and Sports Marketing

According to Bush, Bush, Clark, and Bush (2005), the female market has the greatest consumer potential in sports. Bush et al contribute this to an increase in female athletics because of Title 9 of the Education Acts Amendment, which in 1972, mandated that education institutions that receive federal funds must provide equal opportunities to men and women, including in the sports realm.

According to a 2002 Scarborough Marketing study, 50 million women avidly follow professional sports (Gaffney, 2002).

“Females have role models to look to such as the Williams sisters, Denise Lewis and Katerina Kluff. Link this to the development and active promotion of sports opportunities for women and the result is a change in attitude of women towards sport – whether as participants, consumers or fans,” says Bush et al.

Further research suggests that males engage in more sports fan behavior (e.g watching sports shows, listening to sports radio), whereas, females report sports behavior more as social event to be with family and friends. Women see sporting events as an entertainment in which they can fulfill a social need to with loves ones (Dietz – Uhler, Harrick, End and Jacquemotte, 2000).

James and Riddinger (2002) say that men tend to have a stronger connection to sports in general, whereas women tend to have a stronger connection to a specific team. Results suggest that women felt significantly more empathy when a team lost and less achievement when a team won than did males. Bush et al findings state that females were influenced by sports celebrities more than males.

The MLB has seen an increase in its women fan base and addressed it by releasing the Commissioner's Initiative on Women and Baseball in an effort to establish and develop "stronger relationships with female audiences," in 2000.

In May 2005, the Los Angeles Dodgers launched the Dodgers Women's Initiative Network (WIN), inspired by Jamie McCourt, Dodgers president and highest-ranking woman in baseball (Schmelzer, 2006).

WIN seeks to provide all women "the opportunity to enjoy their passion and baseball and get more acquainted with the sport itself," said Camille Johnstown, Dodgers senior vice president of communications. "Forty percent of our fan base is women."

WIN planned more than a dozen activities, including baseball and softball clinics, for women to enjoy and take part in baseball activities.

Considering WIN targets women and women are their families' primary decision makers, corporations such as Macy*s and Trader Joe's came on board as sponsors of the project.

"It's about connection," Johnstown said. All people, both male and female, "want to feel connected to those they are rooting for."

This thesis will determine what promotional techniques will engender ticket sales during a MLB's baseball team's losing season. This thesis will test techniques on both males and females and see if gender plays a role in purchasing tickets during a losing season. This thesis will also explore what promotions will work best with men and best on women and which ones do not work at all.

In the following chapter, this researcher will provide the methodology for primary research with content analyses, focus panels and in-depth interviews as research methods.

Chapter 3

Research Design

Data Needed

This researcher will explore what promotions techniques engender ticket sales during a MLB team's losing season. Three research methods will be utilized to uncover this information. This investigator will investigate attendance records and fans' opinions to compare the audience's attraction to a promotion. This information will be obtained with a content analysis and focus panels. In-depth interviews with fan-relations practitioners will provide this researcher with information about successful and unsuccessful past promotion strategies.

Data Sources

Content analyses: A content analysis will be performed to determine fan attendance at promotions during a losing home team's game. Attendance records from the 2006 season will be obtained by analyzing promotion schedules and MLB records from the 16 losing teams. Once all promotions are gathered, they will be categorized by types of promotion to determine frequency and compare attendance rates. Promotions will be organized into the following categories:

- 1) Home-opener
- 2) Giveaways/Keepsakes
 - i. Gender-specific
 - ii. Age-specific
 - iii. All fans
 - iv. First x amount of fans
 - v. Age-specific/First x amount of fans
 - vi. Age-specific/Gender-specific

- vii. Gender-specific/First x amount of fans
- viii. Gender-specific/Age-specific/First x amount of fans

3) Ticket Pricing

- i. All fans
- ii. Groups

4) Raffles (a number of randomly selected fans receive a prize)

5) Games/Activities

6) Concerts

7) Fireworks

8) Food Discounts

9) Themed Nights

- i. Family
- ii. Fan Appreciation
- iii. Players
- iv. Groups
- v. Students
- vi. Culture (e.g. Hispanic Heritage Night)
- vii. Other

10) Cause-related Marketing

Focus panels: Two focus panels will be conducted at Rowan University, one focus panel for each gender. There are no age or race specifications. Each focus panel will consist of eight participants. E-mails and word of mouth will be used to encourage participation. The focus panels will be held in a secluded, quiet room with refreshments.

The protocol will include five topics:

- Ballpark Atmosphere
- Costs
- Motivation
- Promotions

- Sponsorship

Sample promotions will be evaluated. Participants will provide feedback on last season's promotional techniques used by practitioners to draw in crowds during a losing season and whether or not they would buy tickets if certain techniques were used.

In-depth interviews: This researcher will conduct in-depth phone interviews with MLB fans relations, marketing and promotions practitioners, who's team had a losing record in 2006, to discuss promotion strategies that have been both successful and unsuccessful. Initial phone calls will be placed to make scheduled appointments with the participants, as to ensure enough time will be allotted to answer questions. Participants will be asked primarily about promotion development, research and losing seasons.

Focus panels will be completed by March 19, 2007. Content analyses and interviews will be completed by March 21, 2007.

Data Analysis

Data analysis and charts will be computed with Microsoft Excel. Frequency of promotion categorization will be tabulated by hand.

The content analyses, focus panels and in-depth interviews will provide primary research that will support or not support my hypotheses. The following chapter will provide the results of this research.

Chapter 4

Results

The researcher obtained the following data by conducting in-depth interviews with three MLB promotions professionals. Each professional was from a 2006 losing team. In addition, the researcher analyzed the content of all 2006 losing teams' (16 in total) promotional schedules and attendance records. The researcher also conducted two focus groups, one male, and one female. Each focus group consisted of eight participants.

H1: It is expected that certain promotional techniques, not all, will engender significant ticket sales, even during a losing season.

Content Analyses

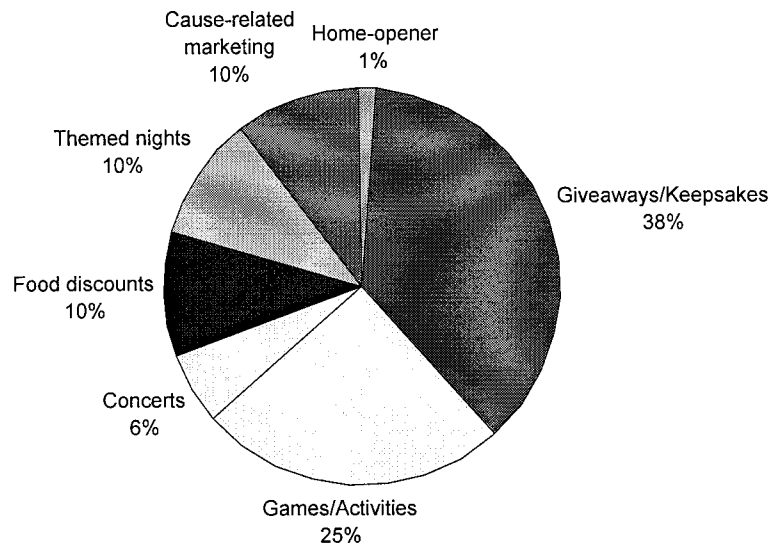
Every promotional schedule from a 2006 MLB losing team was analyzed and cross-referenced with attendance records from that particular game. In addition, each team's promotions were categorized as follows:

- 1) Home-opener
- 2) Giveaways/Keepsakes
 - i. Gender-specific
 - ii. Age-specific
 - iii. All fans
 - iv. First x amount of fans
 - v. Age-specific/First x amount of fans
 - vi. Age-specific/Gender-specific
 - vii. Gender-specific/First x amount of fans
 - viii. Gender-specific/Age-specific/First x amount of fans
- 3) Ticket Pricing
 - i. All fans
 - ii. Groups
- 4) Raffles (a number of randomly selected fans receive a prize)

- 5) Games/Activities
- 6) Concerts
- 7) Fireworks
- 8) Food Discounts
- 9) Themed Nights
 - i. Family
 - ii. Fan Appreciation
 - iii. Players
 - iv. Groups
 - v. Students
 - vi. Culture (e.g. Hispanic Heritage Night)
 - vii. Other
- 10) Cause-related Marketing

The following is a breakdown of each team’s promotions:

Figure 1: Arizona Diamondbacks Promotions Breakdown

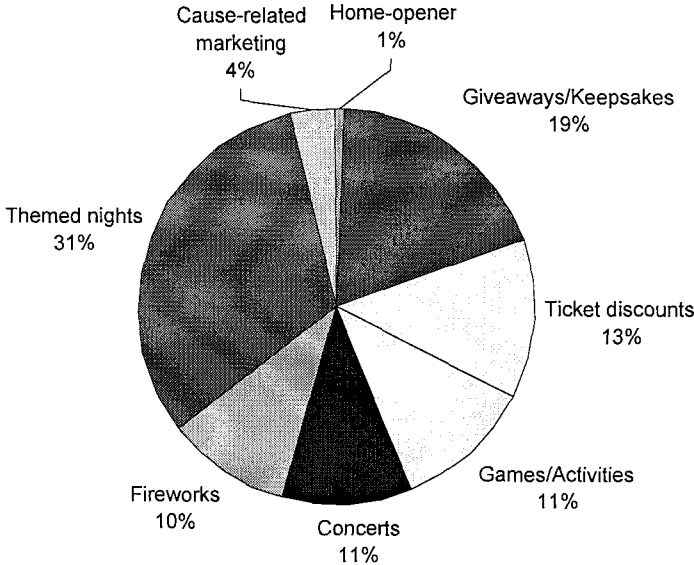


The majority of the Diamondbacks' promotions were giveaways/keepsakes. Bobbleheads, kids' jerseys, baseballs, caps, lunch bags, baseball gloves and concerts were included. Games/activities make up 25% of total promotions offered. They included kids base-running and baseball bingo.

Repeated food discounts were offered including "Kids Eat Free on Wednesdays" and \$1 hot dogs. Themed nights included Native American, domestic violence awareness and family safety nights.

The Diamondbacks Foundation, the team's charitable organization, held several cause-related marketing events including player participation in "Shirts Off Our Backs." The organization also held several equipment drives to benefit local Little League teams. Concerts were also featured, some cultural, but most were country music.

Figure 2: Atlanta Braves Promotions Breakdown



At 31 percent, themed nights were the most common promotion offered by the Atlanta Braves. These nights included among others, holiday celebrations, ladies' night, disco night, Elvis night and '80s night.

The Braves also promoted giveaways/keepsakes. Bobbleheads, commemorative anniversary pins, t-shirts, player statues, baseball bats, fleece blankets and plush dolls were given to fans. The anniversary pins and player statues were part of series promotions – items are given away as “sets,” but each item in the set is released on a different date. So, to receive all three of the limited edition player statues, a fan would have to attend the three scheduled promotion dates.

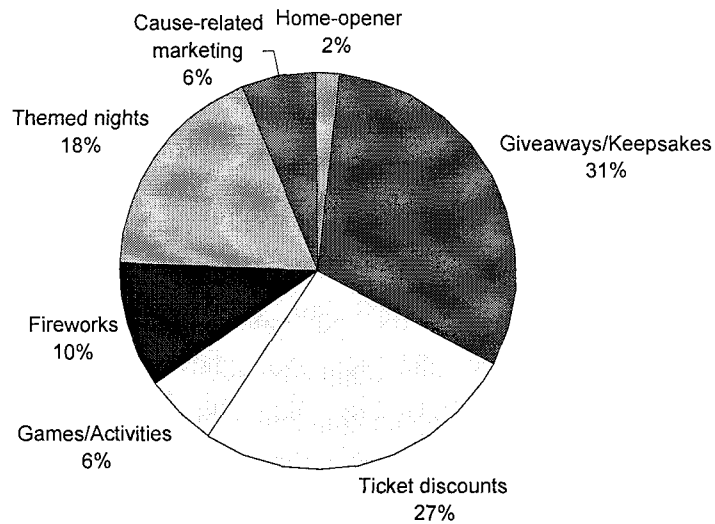
Ticket discounts were also available to fans. One particular promotion sponsored by a local radio station offered tickets for 96 cents.

Games/activities were offered on a regular basis. Every Sunday home game, The Braves held “Alumni Sundays”. During the day, fans could receive autographs from former Braves players. Kids base-running was also available.

Fireworks and concerts were often offered together on Friday nights.

Cause-related marketing events were often memorabilia auctions. “Brown Bag Bonanza” was organized by the players' wives to benefit the Atlanta Day Shelter for Women & Children. During the event, the wives traveled the stadium concourse asking fans to purchase a brown bag for a flat fee. The bag contained an autographed baseball from a player.

Figure 3: Baltimore Orioles Promotions Breakdown



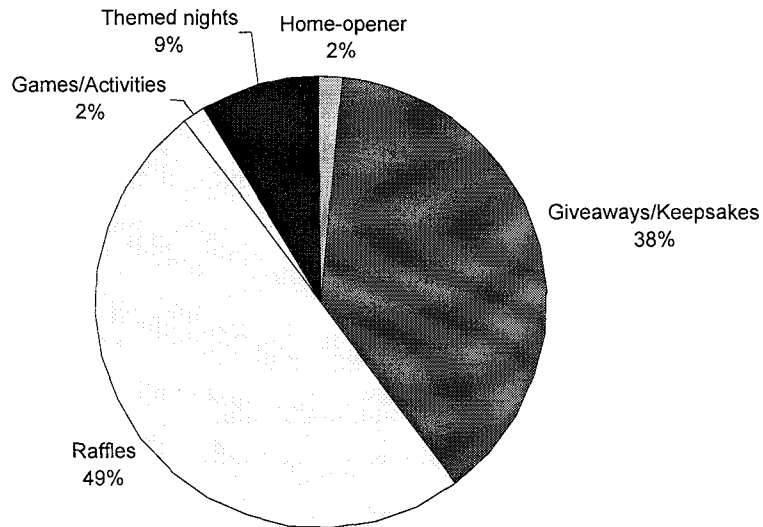
Giveaways/keepsakes were the most common promotion offered by the Baltimore Orioles. Fleece blankets, hats, beach towels, bobbleheads, posters and baseball card sets were available to fans.

Ticket discounts were a close second with 27 percent. The majority of ticket discounts were offered to students. Students could purchase selected tickets for \$5.

Themed nights included fan appreciation nights, student nights, Little League days Latino night, photo day and camper day.

Cause-related marketing events included food drives and memorabilia auctions.

Figure 4: Chicago Cubs Promotions Breakdown



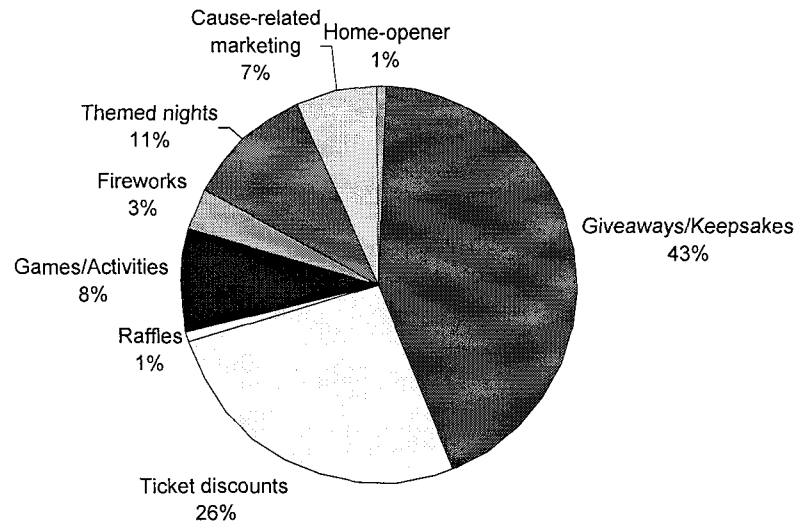
The Chicago Cubs offered mostly promotion raffles. Fans were randomly selected (usually 100-500 fans) to receive autographed items from current and former Cubs.

Schedule magnets, hats, plush dolls, Precious Moments® figurines, t-shirts, batting helmets, school supplies, key chains, pins, American Girl® doll-sized Chicago Cubs apparel and growth charts were included in giveaways/keepsakes.

Themed nights included fan appreciation days, '70s night and country music night.

In addition to themed night activities, the Cubs once offered a post-game snack foods sampling.

Figure 5: Cincinnati Reds Promotions Breakdown



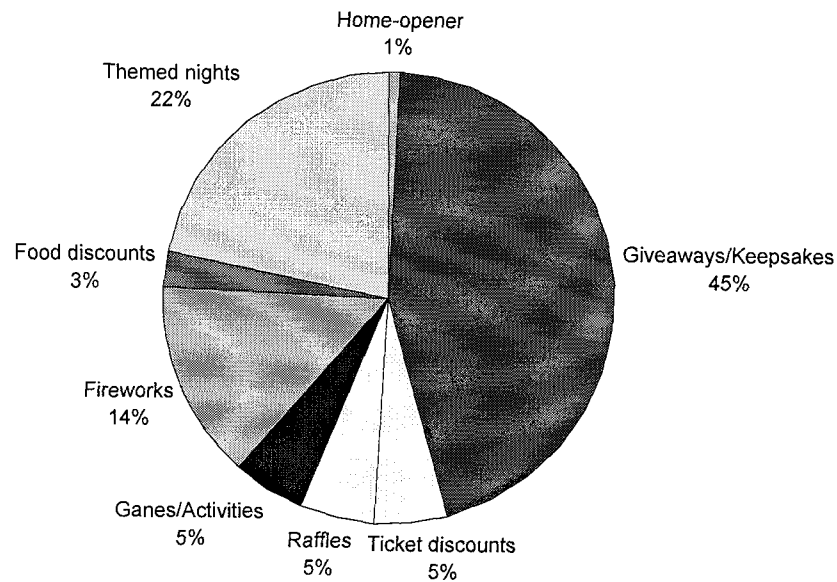
Giveaways made up 43 percent of the Cincinnati Reds' promotions. They consisted of lottery tickets, calendars, baseball cards, player figurines, water bottles, bobbleheads, posters, t-shirts, hats, plush dolls, Hot Wheels® and Mr. Potato Head™ toys.

Ticket discounts were also prevalent. Senior citizens, families and students were offered discounted seats. A repeated ticket discount was bleacher seats for \$4.

Themed nights included family days, student nights, teen nights, and businessperson days.

A book signing and haircuts constituted cause-related marketing events. During one game, a former player signed copies of his biography with portions of the sales going towards local charities. During several games, a local salon franchise would give haircuts to fans for \$10 with proceeds going to charity.

Figure 6: Cleveland Indians Promotions Breakdown

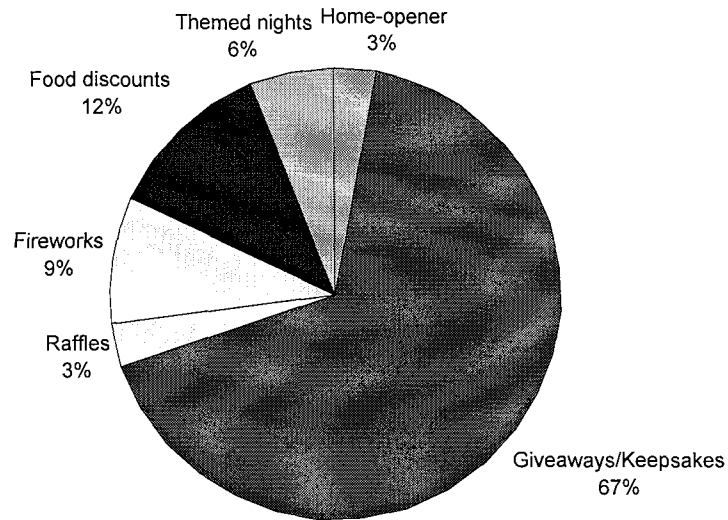


Almost half of all the Cleveland Indians' promotions were giveaways/keepsakes. Baseballs, baseball bats, umbrellas, lottery tickets, bobbleheads, player figurines, mesh jerseys, t-shirts, coolers, beach towels, player puppets, coupons for local businesses, sunscreen, flashlights, baseball gloves, toolboxes, retro alarm clocks, die-cast cars, cosmetic bags and puzzles were included.

Themed nights constituted 25 percent of all Indians' promotions. These nights included repeated ladies' nights, movie nights, fan appreciation days, travel days, students nights, kids days, spring cleaning day (different spring-cleaning items were showcased at the game – e.g. patio furniture), education day and '80s night.

Firework games offered different themes to the fireworks display. The '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s cultures were represented during the show. Broadway and movies were also featured.

Figure 7: Colorado Rockies Promotions Breakdown

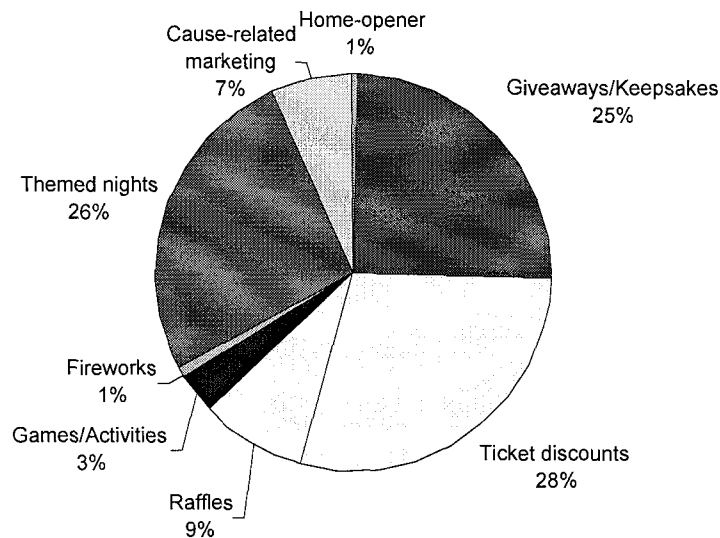


Caps, t-shirts, calendars baseball cards, totes, backpacks and posters made up 67 percent of promotions as giveaways/keepsakes.

Food discounts were given as \$1 hot dog coupons. Fans were given a coupon to redeem at a food-stand for one hot dog. This promotion was repeated throughout the season.

A Fourth of July celebration, fan appreciation day and player nights were among themed games.

Figure 8: Florida Marlins Promotions Breakdown

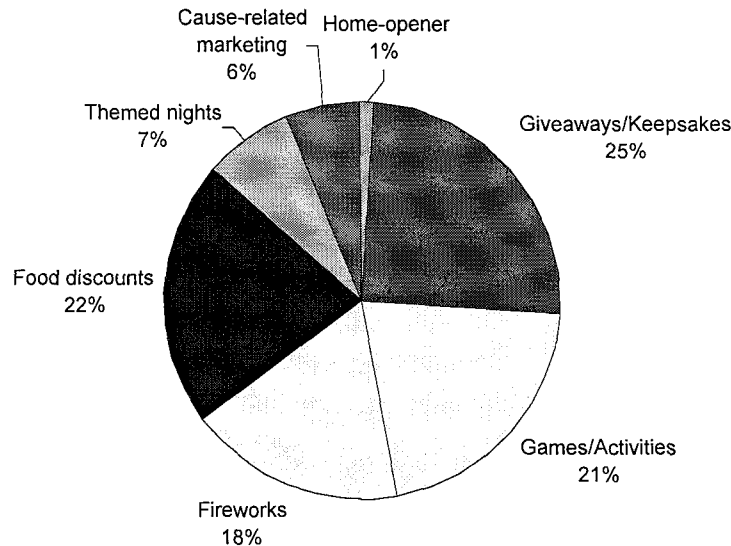


Ticket discounts made up for 28 percent of the Florida Marlins' promotions. Fans who brought coupons from the *Miami Herald* (coupons available every Tuesday) or a receipt from particular businesses would receive tickets at discounted rates. Ticket and food packages were also available at discount.

Themed nights included youth baseball and softball days, ladies' nights, Mardis Gras Mondays, fan appreciation days, NASCAR night, military appreciation night, camp day and ten cultural nights.

Calendars, team flags, hats, baseball bats, dominos, baseball gloves, t-shirts, flashlights, golf tee sets, playing cards, die-cast cars, photoballs (baseballs with player images), posters, backpacks, retro alarm clocks, Mr. Potato Head™ toys, bobbleheads, mesh jerseys, water bottles and duffle bags were giveaways/keepsakes.

Figure 9: Kansas City Royals Promotions Breakdown



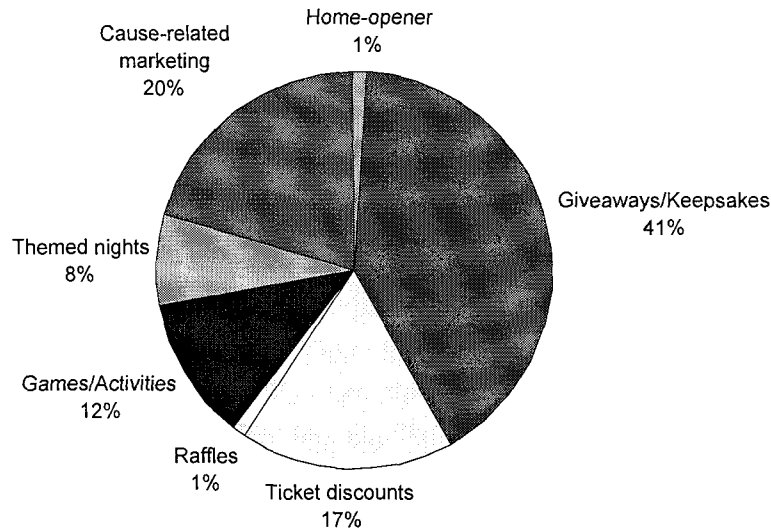
Giveaways/keepsakes made up 25 percent of the Kansas City Royals’ promotions. Giveaways included team wristbands, baseball cards, t-shirts, growth charts, plush dolls, bobbleheads, caps, coolers, lunch boxes, baseball bats and coupons for local businesses.

Food discounts followed with 22 percent. The Royals’ promoted repeated food discounts throughout the season. Each Sunday home game, children aged 14 and younger ate for free. Children received a hot dog and small soda. The Royals also offered “Buck Nights”. During these eight games, Hot dogs, small sodas and peanuts were \$1.

Games/activities were another repeated promotions. “Family Fun Runs,” when all fans can run the bases post-game, and “Autograph Afternoons” were available to fans during select games.

Fireworks were shown every Friday night during the season. Themed nights included family days and a *Star Wars* Day.

Figure 10: Milwaukee Brewers Promotions Breakdown

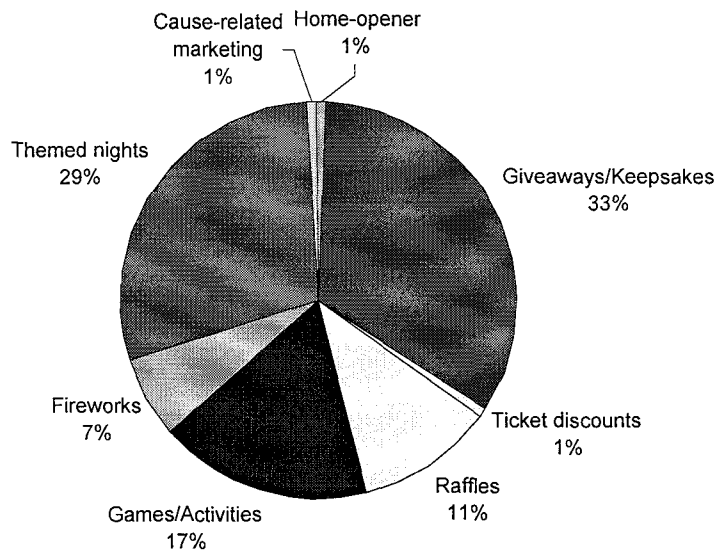


More than 40 percent of the Milwaukee Brewers' promotions were giveaways/keepsakes. Posters, baseball cards, caps, bobbleheads, comic books, mouse pads, key chains, fleece blankets, nesting dolls, water bottles, video games, t-shirts and gift cards/coupons for local businesses

Cause-related marketing events constituted 20 percent of the Brewers' promotions. Book, equipment, food, coat and school supplies drives were held regularly during the season.

The Brewers had different discount tickets promotions available to different audiences. For five game days, residents from five neighboring counties were offered half price admission. During another promotions, kids and senior citizens were offered ticket discounts to seven games. In other cases, all fans were treated to ticket discounts.

Figure 11: Pittsburgh Pirates Promotions Breakdown

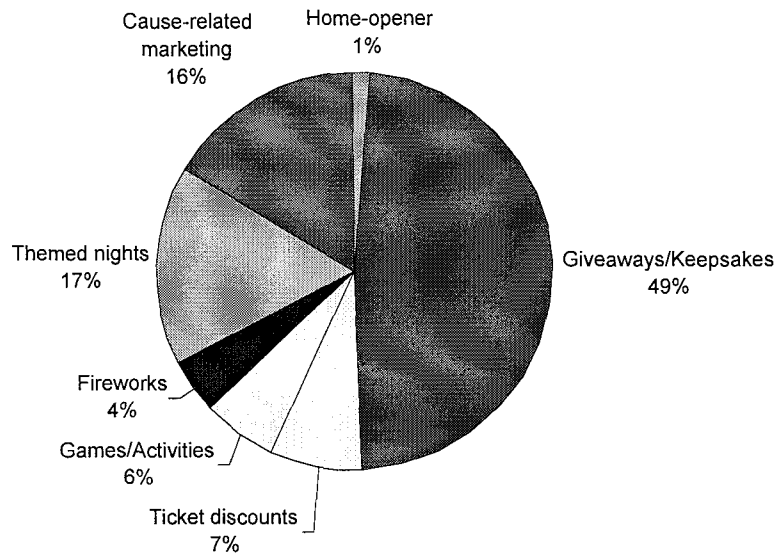


Caps, bobbleheads, plush dolls, commemorative pins, fleece blankets, baseball gloves, player figurines, baseball cards, replica stadium statues, kids jerseys, commemorative coins, die-cast cars, beach towels, art kits and photo frames were included as giveaways/keepsakes.

Themed nights included among others, repeated ladies' nights, kids days, businessperson specials, alumni player nights and bike nights. Bike nights included free parking for fans that rode a motorcycle to the game. Pup night was also a cause-related marketing event. During the same, owners could bring his/her dog to the game. Dogs received treats and toys during the game. Tickets for owners were \$20 with \$5 of each ticket going toward a local animal shelter. Dogs were free.

Games/activities mostly included player autographs and several character appearances, including Dora the Explorer and the Cat in the Hat. There were also classic and customized cars displayed before several games.

Figure 12: San Francisco Giants Promotions Breakdown

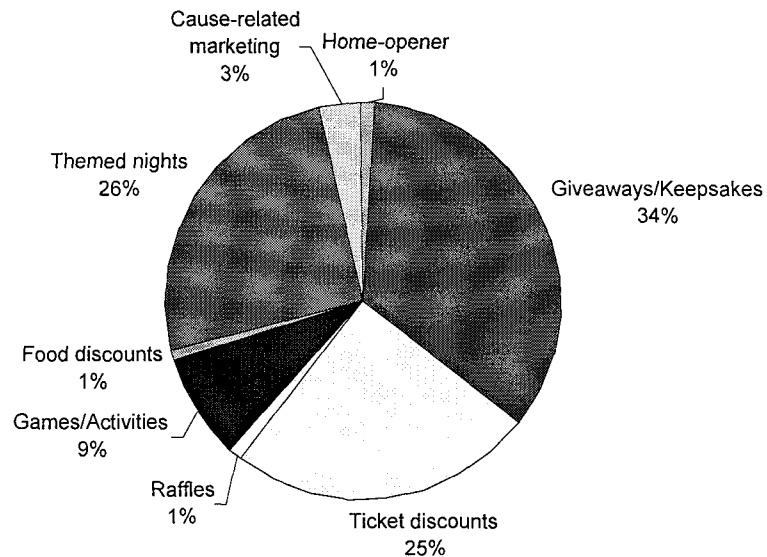


Nearly half (49%) of the San Francisco Giants’ promotions were giveaways/keepsakes. Growth charts, caps, commemorative pins, duffle bags, posters, orange wigs (Giants’ team color), tote bags, headbands, bobbleheads, Mr. Potato Head™ toys, travel mugs, baseball card albums, lanyards, plush dolls, backpacks, baseball cards and rally towels were included.

Themed nights made up 17 percent of the promotions. These nights included photo day, Hispanic heritage day, marine mammal awareness day, ‘80s night, kids day, fan appreciation day, education night and a commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the San Francisco Earthquake.

Cause-related marketing events included toy drives, baseball glove drives, memorabilia auctions, cancer and violence prevention fund-raisers.

Figure 13: Seattle Mariners Promotions Breakdown



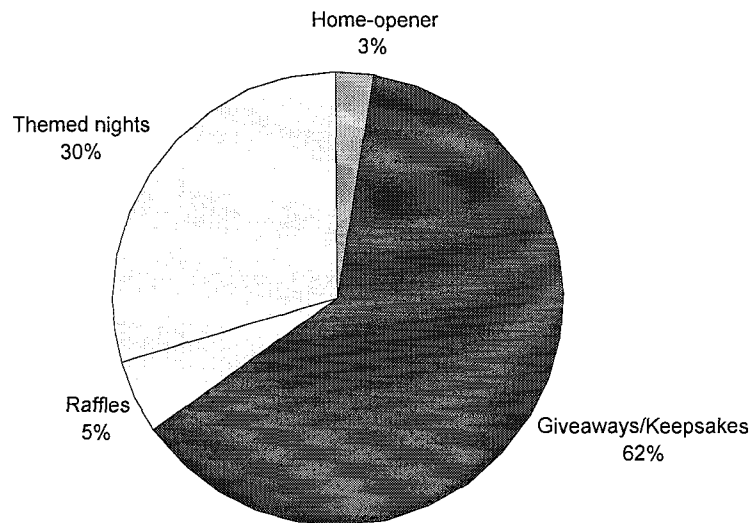
Giveaways/keepsakes were the most common promotions offered by the Seattle Mariners. Calendars, posters, bobbleheads, t-shirts, train car series piece (a different piece is offered each season), backpacks, caps, baseball cards, die-cast cars, growth charts, rally towels, lunch boxes and binders were included.

Themed nights constituted more than a quarter of the promotions. These included family days, player days, kid days, Little League days, singles nights, ladies nights, fan appreciation day, day camp day, armed forces night. Turn-back-the-clock night has players dress in vintage uniforms.

Ticket discounts were offered as “family packs.” Several games offered four tickets, four hot dogs and four sodas at a discounted package rate.

Many activities revolved around children. Kids base-running and parades were offered. In addition, a softball game with former players was played pre-game.

Figure 14: Tampa Bay Devil Rays Promotions Breakdown

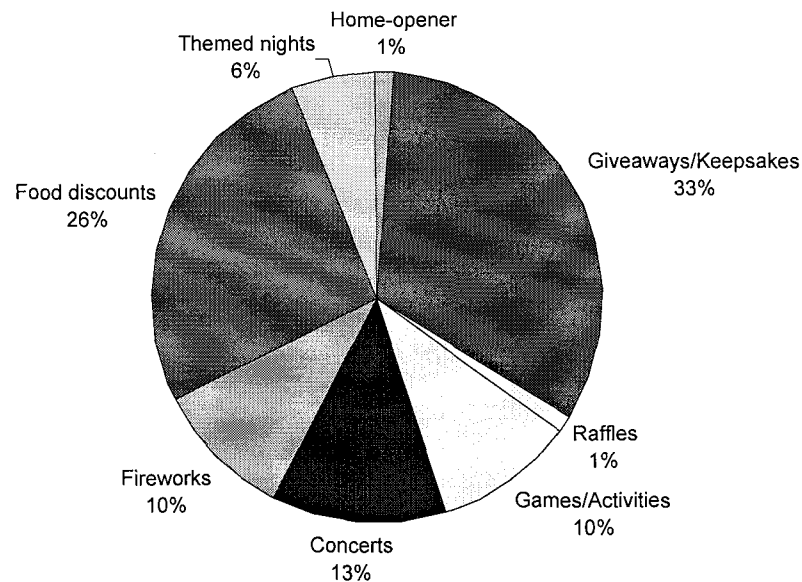


Giveaways/keepsakes made up 62 percent of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays' promotions. Player figurines, retro Joe Maddon (former player) glasses, batting helmets, caps, fishing lures, golf club covers, t-shirts, beach towels, die-cast cars, cowbells, baseball bats, lunch boxes, baseball gloves, bobbleheads, kazoos, inflatable chatter bats and baseball equipment bags.

Themed nights constituted 30 percent of Giants' promotions. These included fishing night, NASCAR night, turn back the clock night, bike night, family days, Hispanic heritage night and fan appreciation days.

Raffles in the form of scratch and win game pieces were given to fans during some games.

Figure 15: Texas Rangers Promotions Breakdown



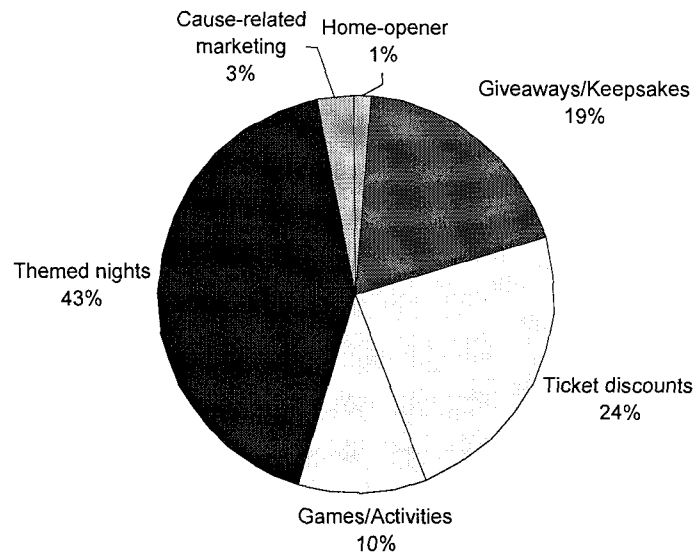
At 33 percent, the Texas Rangers' giveaways/keepsakes included baseball cards, caps, bobbleheads, coupons from local businesses, t-shirts, inflatable chatter bats, plush dolls, blankets, baseball bats, commemorative pins, baseball gloves and calendars.

Food discounts were repeated throughout the season. Every Sunday, ice cream was \$1. Every Wednesday hot dogs were \$1.

Post-game concerts provided entertainment at several games. Local artists were featured. During one show, *Radio Disney* sponsored a performance from one of their popular teen singers, Katelyn Tarver.

Every Wednesday, fans were treated to autographs. Other themed nights included military appreciation night, dog night, mascot day and fan appreciation day.

Figure 16: Washington Nationals Promotions Breakdown



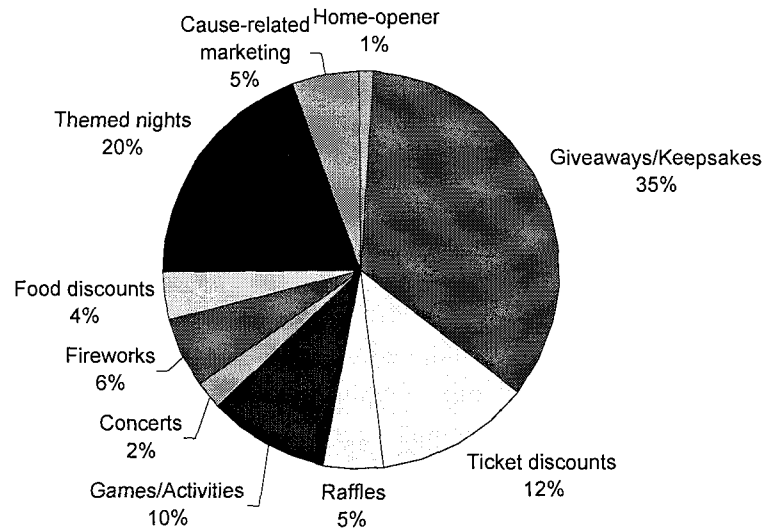
Themed nights comprised 43 percent of the Washington Nationals' promotions. College nights were the most repeated themed night promotion. Others included family days, youth baseball day, faith days (religious organizations received group discounts), scout days, school spirit days, veteran appreciation day, armed forces appreciation day, camp day, Negro league tribute night and fan appreciation day.

Ticket discounts were offered to students and groups. Ticket packages were also available to fans.

Giveaways/keepsakes included bobbleheads, team photos, t-shirts, pennants, caps, coolers, school supplies, fleece blankets and player dog tags.

Thanksgiving in June food drives were cause-related marketing events.

Figure 17: All Losing Teams' Promotions Breakdown



After combining all of the losing teams' promotions, giveaways/keepsakes were the most frequent at 35 percent. Themed nights made up 20 percent, followed by ticket discounts (12 percent), games/activities (10 percent) and fireworks (six percent). Both raffles and cause-related marketing events constituted five percent each of the promotions breakdown. Food discounts at four percent, concerts at two percent and home-openers at one percent followed.

Table 1: All Losing Teams' Promotion Frequencies

| Team | Giveaways Keepsakes | Ticket discounts | Raffles | Games Activities | Concerts | Fireworks | Food discounts | Themed nights | Cause-related marketing |
|---------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------|---------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Arizona | 25 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 4 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Atlanta | 27 | 18 | 0 | 16 | 15 | 14 | 0 | 46 | 5 |
| Baltimore | 15 | 13 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 9 | 3 |
| Chicago | 22 | 0 | 29 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Cincinnati | 52 | 32 | 1 | 10 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 13 | 8 |
| Cleveland | 51 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 16 | 3 | 25 | 0 |
| Colorado | 22 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| Florida | 37 | 42 | 13 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 39 | 10 |
| Kansas | 24 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 1 | 17 | 21 | 7 | 6 |
| Milwaukee | 38 | 16 | 1 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 19 |
| Pittsburgh | 39 | 1 | 13 | 20 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 34 | 1 |
| San Francisco | 32 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 11 | 11 |
| Seattle | 32 | 23 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 24 | 3 |
| Tampa Bay | 23 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 |
| Texas | 26 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 21 | 5 | 0 |
| Washington | 13 | 16 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 2 |
| Total | 478 | 172 | 68 | 136 | 30 | 79 | 57 | 273 | 75 |

Table 1 shows each team's promotion frequencies. Giveaways/keepsakes were the most common promotion with 478 occurrences. Themed nights followed with 273 occurrences. Other promotion occurrences included ticket discounts at 172, games/activities at 136, fireworks at 79, cause-related marketing at 75, food discounts at 57 and concerts at 30.

Teams offered an average of 84 promotions. The Florida Marlins offered the most promotions (147). The Colorado Rockies offered the least number of promotions (32).

Table 2: Most Popular Promotions Ranked by Attendance (Arizona to Florida)

| Team | Most Popular Promotion | Second Most Popular Promotion | Third Most Popular Promotion | *Avg. Attendance | **Max. Seating Capacity (Sell-out) |
|------------|--|--|---|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Arizona | Fan Appreciation Day Kids Lanyard Giveaway Foundation Auction Kids Run the Bases <i>Attendance: 48,977</i> | Current Player Bobblehead <i>Attendance: 40,388</i> | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 37,351</i> | 25,821 | 49,033 |
| Atlanta | July Fourth Celebration Fireworks <i>Attendance: 53,493</i> | Fireworks Pre-game Concert Foundation events <i>Attendance: 51,038</i> | Baseball Bat Keepsake Player Jerseys Charity Auction NASCAR Weekend <i>Attendance: 49,047</i> | 31,869 | 50,096 |
| Baltimore | Fireworks Student Ticket Discount <i>Attendance: 48,331</i> | Player Photo Day <i>Attendance: 47,535</i> | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 46,986</i> | 26,583 | 48,190 |
| Chicago | Kids Helmet Giveaway <i>Attendance: 41,698</i> | Auto. Baseball Raffle <i>Attendance: 41,526</i> | Auto. Bat Raffle <i>Attendance: 41,368</i> | 39,040 | 41,118 |
| Cincinnati | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 42,591</i> | Family Day Hot Wheels Giveaway <i>Attendance: 41,913</i> | Retro Player Bobblehead <i>Attendance: 41,648</i> | 26,351 | 42,271 |
| Cleveland | Fireworks Chevy Car Raffle On-field Baseball Clinic <i>Attendance: 43,105</i> | Fireworks <i>Attendance: 42,706</i> | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 42,445</i> | 24,667 | 43,405 |
| Colorado | Fireworks <i>Attendance: 48,364</i> | Fireworks <i>Attendance: 48,078</i> | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 47,278</i> | 25,999 | 50,445 |
| Florida | Prize Scratch-off Tickets Fireworks Ticket/Food Package Military Night <i>Attendance: 38,014</i> | Fan Appreciation Day Schedule Magnet Giveaway Baseball/Softball Day <i>Attendance: 36,768</i> | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 31,308</i> | 14,384 | 36,331 |

Table 2 shows the most popular promotions ranked by fan attendance in Arizona, Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Colorado and Florida. Five of the eight most popular promotion days offered more than one promotion. In total, nine multi-promotional games were ranked.

Home-openers were consistently listed as a top three promotion in six of the eight teams. Other popular promotions included fireworks, fan appreciation days, bobbleheads and other giveaways/keepsakes.

Table 3: Most Popular Promotions Ranked by Attendance (Kansas to Washington)

| Team | Most Popular Promotion | Second Most Popular Promotion | Third Most Popular Promotion | *Avg. Attendance | **Max. Seating Capacity (Sell-out) |
|---------------|---|--|--|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Kansas | Fan Appreciation Day Lanyard Giveaway Foundation Auction Kids Run the Bases <i>Attendance: 48,977</i> | Current Player Bobblehead <i>Attendance: 40,388</i> | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 37,351</i> | 25,821 | 49,033 |
| Milwaukee | Current Player Bobblehead <i>Attendance: 45,150</i> | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 45,023</i> | Current Player Bobblehead <i>Attendance: 43,422</i> | 28,835 | 41,900 |
| Pittsburgh | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 39,129</i> | Current Player Bobblehead <i>Attendance: 38,373</i> | Fireworks <i>Attendance: 38,092</i> | 23,269 | 38,496 |
| San Francisco | Mother's Day Totes <i>Attendance: 42,985</i> | 1980s Retro Night <i>Attendance: 42,948</i> | Commemorative Pin Charity Equipment Drive Charity Auction <i>Attendance: 42,864</i> | 38,645 | 41,600 |
| Seattle | T-shirt Giveaway Charity Equipment Drive <i>Attendance: 46,112</i> | Baseball Cards Giveaway <i>Attendance: 45,976</i> | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 45,509</i> | 30,626 | 47,447 |
| Tampa Bay | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 40,199</i> | Bike Night <i>Attendance: 34,787</i> | Fan Appreciation Day Hispanic Heritage Day <i>Attendance: 33,492</i> | 16,901 | 43,772 |
| Texas | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 51,573</i> | Chatter Bat Giveaway <i>Attendance: 48,654</i> | Chatter Bat Giveaway Post-game Concert Food discount <i>Attendance: 46,062</i> | 29,490 | 48,911 |
| Washington | Kids Run the Bases <i>Attendance: 45,157</i> | Faith Day (Church Groups) <i>Attendance: 42,507</i> | Home-opener <i>Attendance: 40,514</i> | 26,582 | 46,382 |

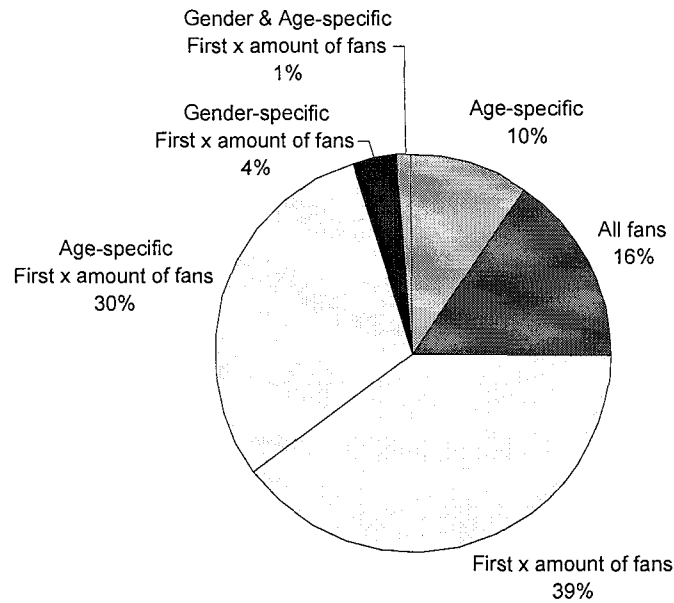
*ESPN MLB Attendance Report: 2006, http://sports.espn.go.com/mlb/attendance?sort=home_avg&year=2006&seasonType=2

**Ballparks of Baseball, <http://www.ballparksbaseball.com/>; does not include "standing room"

Table 3 shows the most popular promotions ranked by fan attendance in Kansas, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Seattle, Tampa Bay, Texas and Washington. Unlike Table 2, not many multi-promotional games were ranked in Table 3. Five made the list.

Home-openers were consistently listed as a top three promotion in seven of the eight teams. Like Table 2, other popular promotions in Table 3 included fireworks, fan appreciation days, bobbleheads and other giveaways/keepsakes.

Figure 18: All Losing Teams' Giveaways/Keepsakes Audience Distributions

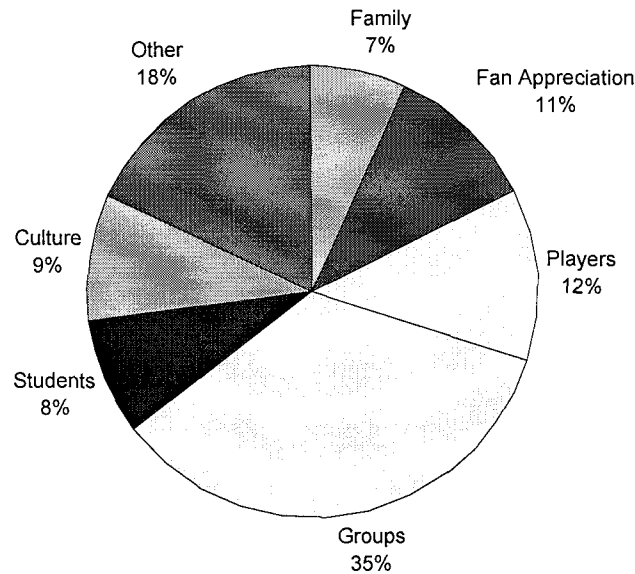


After combining all the teams' giveaways/keepsakes audience distributions, most giveaways were offered to the first x number of fans. This means, for example, that the first 5,000 fans to enter the gates were given a bobblehead.

The first x amount of fans of certain ages were the second most targeted audience. At 30 percent, this means that the first 10,000 children 14 and younger would receive a backpack. The age specifications were clearly meant for separating children from adults. For example, lottery ticket giveaways could only be given to fans 18 and older.

Age-specific promotions were given to all fans of a certain age group.

Figure 19: All Losing Teams' Themed Nights Breakdown



“Groups” were the theme 35 percent of the time. Groups include among others: military personnel, Little League players, teachers, seniors, campers, bikers and ladies.

Other themed nights included nights that did not fit in any of the main categories. These included, among others: Elvis night, disco night, Wild West night, Jimmy Buffet night, ‘80s nights and NASCAR nights.

Player-themed nights included autograph nights. Also, these player nights included ceremonies held for certain players honoring their commitment to a team. Many current players also had days named after them, particularly when a promotion was given away using that player’s image.

Family days included ticket packages as well as activities for the family, more specifically child friendly activities such as character appearances, face painting, and base-running.

Focus Groups

Both focus groups indicated that promotions could influence their decision to attend a baseball game. In both panels, the most popular promotions, ones the participants wanted to see more of, were discounts, especially food.

In addition, participants favored apparel, fireworks and bobblehead promotions. Females agreed, but were not fans of the bobbleheads. Males also stated that any promotion featuring baseball legends, hall-of-famers would be an incentive to attend rather than current player promotions.

Both groups did not like raffles as a promotion nor nesting dolls. Both groups were open to concerts, but agreed it would depend on what artist(s) would perform.

Approximately 50% of focus panel participants said they would rather attend a themed nights offering discounts and activities than receive a keepsake. The half wanting a keepsake said they would rather have something they can take home with them.

Repeated promotions were popular, especially with males. A collectible series would influence decisions to attend games. For example, if a team was offering three bobbleheads in a series and each bobblehead was given at a different game, male participants said they would try to collect the entire set. For the most part, females said they would not seek out series items.

In addition, both groups said they would attend games with promotions they have enjoyed before. For example, participants would attend \$1 dog nights because they enjoyed the discount during a prior game.

Interviews

Interviews suggested that certain promotions work to boost ticket sales during a losing season. Professionals agreed that repeat or series promotions draw in crowds. Also, professionals noted that “rival series” or inter-league play boost ticket sales dramatically.

Professionals stated that promotions are geared towards certain demographics to intrigue people who would not usually attend a baseball game in hopes of having them enjoy their promotion and return to the ballpark. In addition, interviewees said limited promotions to the first x amount of fans make the item “rare” in the fans’ eyes. In other words, the fan feels special knowing he/she has a limited item, the same goes for targeting gender and age groups. If only certain members of the population receive an item, it’s “more special.” Also, fans “feel good” knowing they fit the criteria to receive the item and others did not. Series giveaways are also popular, according to the interviewees.

Professionals were quick to note that no promotion will engender ticket sales during a losing season as much as winning would.

All of the data from the content analyses, focus groups and interviews supports the first hypothesis that certain promotional techniques will engender significant ticket sales, even during a losing season.

H2: It is expected that female fans are more willing than male fans to attend baseball games during a losing season.

Focus Groups

Men and women had different reasons for attending games. Women attend games to fulfill a need to interact with family and friends, whereas men were motivated to attend purely for love of the game.

The team's record has little to no effect on a woman's decision to attend a game. Basically, it's not critical that the team has a winning record. However, men said they were more likely to attend if a team is winning. They were very unlikely to attend a losing team's game unless attractive promotions were offered.

Women stated that gender-specific promotions have or would influence their decision to attend a baseball game. The most popular gender-promotions for females included feminine apparel and ladies' night discounts. Also, women said they would enjoy bringing children to the games to enjoy child promotions and family days.

Interviews

Interviews revealed that female attendance and interest in baseball is on the rise. Because of this, interviewees stated that more promotions are being geared towards women. These promotions include giveaways/keepsakes such as pink caps and tote bags. Themed nights include family days, ladies' nights and Stitch 'n' Pitch. Stitch 'n' Pitch is an event that became popular last season in MLB. This season more teams are promoting the event. During Stitch 'n' Pitch, women can bring or are given needle arts tools to knit, crochet, embroider, cross-stitch and needlepoint during the game.

All of the data from the focus groups and interviews supports the second hypothesis that women are more likely than men to attend games during a losing season.

General Findings

The focus panels, content analyses and interviews yielded many general findings.

Focus panels: Both men and women felt that ticket prices are not too expensive and all agreed it is the least expensive professional sporting event to attend. Men would rather attend games with friends than significant others. Women, however, stated that they would enjoy attending games with their significant others. It could be a “date night.”

Both groups said they do not feel they are “owed” any material things for attending the game, but they do feel they are owed good on-field player performances. Both admitted they would be more likely to donate or volunteer to a non-profit organization that sponsored a promotion, than buy a product from a corporate sponsor solely because the company funded a promotion.

Content analyses: After analyzing attendance records, rival and inter-league series were big ticket sellers. Of all age-specific promotions, children giveaways and activities were the most frequent. In addition, cause-related marketing events were often scheduled with another promotion. For example, a food drive took place during a bobblehead giveaway. Also, many teams combined giveaways and cause-related marketing. This means that if a fan brought a canned good or a book, he/she would receive a team water bottle, mug or other souvenir.

Interviews: MLB promotions and marketing practitioners hold an annual summit to discuss promotion ideas. The summit is why many team have similar promotions. MLB practitioners readily share information about past and future promotions with one another. In conducting research, many teams use a service known as FanTrak. During games, this service polls fans using palm pilots.

All practitioners stated that sponsorships are usually long-term relationships the team has with an organization. Practitioners try to match a promotion with a company based on the company's products. Sponsors have a say as to what promotion they sponsor. They also have a say as to what the final product looks like.

After conducting primary research through content analyses, focus panels and interviews, both hypotheses were supported. General findings also surfaced to provide additional information for practitioners. The following chapter will discuss the interpretation of the findings and future research.

Chapter 5

Discussion

By conducting both quantitative and qualitative studies, this researcher concluded that certain promotional techniques engender ticket sales during a MLB team's losing season. Furthermore, the data supports the notion that women are more willing to attend a game during a losing season.

Gender focus panels, in-depth interviews with MLB promotions practitioners and content analyses of promotional schedules and attendance records generated the findings that support the hypotheses. In addition, the findings serve as the basis for this researcher's discussion of the study and recommendations for future research.

H1: It is expected that certain promotional techniques, not all, will engender significant ticket sales, even during a losing season.

H1 was supported indicating that certain promotions engender ticket sales during a losing season. As stated in Chapter 2, promotions are a "collectible craze." The data supports this notion. Focus panel participants, the content analyses and interviews verified that fans see certain promotions as "rare" collectibles, especially those that are offered to a segmented audience, such as the first x number of fans. Fans also feel a need to complete a promotional series. For example, the fans need to complete his/her set of commemorative pins given out over the course of the season.

Attendance records revealed that home-openers were very popular with fans. This is because "the slate is wiped clean," as one focus panel participant said.

Although fans stated they are not owed souvenirs or keepsakes for attending the game, they did say it would influence their decision on what games they attended during a losing season. Basically, it's a bonus for attending.

Some teams do not need to focus on promotions during a losing season. These teams include those with historic fields or popular players. In 2006, these teams comprised the Chicago Cubs and the San Francisco Giants.

Wrigley Field is home to the Cubs. Wrigley is the second-oldest ballpark in MLB. While the Cubs primarily offered raffles to its crowds, tourists and fans alike flocked to Wrigley because of its historic value in the midst of new stadiums popping up all over the country. Promotions had little impact on attendance. According to the content analyses, the Cubs had an average attendance of 39,040 with a maximum seating capacity of 41,118.

The Giants also had a successful ticket sales season with an average attendance of 38,645 in a stadium with a maximum seating capacity of 41,600. This is due largely to the fact that Barry Bonds, a Giants' outfielder and popular player across the league, was chasing the all-time homerun record set by Henry Aaron.

Another team, however, needs to take into account too many promotions. The Florida Marlins had the second lowest attendance rate in MLB in 2006, yet offered the most promotions. The average attendance was 14,384 with a maximum capacity of 36,331. The Marlins had low attendance despite offering 147 promotions. The mass number of promotions limits the "rare" factor that fans crave when collecting promotions. With too many promotions, the value is lost to the fan.

In addition, too many promotions give fans “too much” choice when deciding what games to attend. For example, many teams offer ticket discounts only a few times a season, meaning when a ticket discount is offered only once a month, fans have to attend that game to receive the discount or wait another month for the opportunity. So, when the Marlins offer ticket discounts every Tuesday, the constant promotion allows fans to “shrug off” attending the game. They can attend any Tuesday game for a discounted rate. There’s no rush to take advantage of the promotion.

Fan-relations practitioners need to take into account what the fans want and balance it. According to the focus panels, fans want more food discounts. Food discounts accounted for only four percent of all losing teams’ promotions in 2006.

Nothing beats winning, but promotions help ticket sales to some extent in a losing season. Practitioners need to take greater steps in investigating what fans really want when it comes to promotions.

H2: It is expected that female fans are more willing than male fans to attend baseball games during a losing season.

The research supported H2 in that females were more willing than males to attend games during a losing season. The data verified the research in Chapter 2 that women attend games to fulfill a social need. It also verified that women feel more empathy for a team when they lose, hence a woman’s willingness to attend a game during a losing season. Since women see sporting events as a venue to interact with family and friends, the team’s record has little to no effect on attendance.

In the focus panels, women stated that gender-specific promotions make them feel wanted at the game. They also said promotions have and may again influence decisions

to attend games. Women enjoyed feminine apparel, totes and ladies' nights as promotions. Any promotion targeting women, was viewed positively in the focus groups. Women also wanted to see more family and children promotions, since they attend to fulfill that social need.

Fan-relations practitioners have noticed the attendance increase in women. Some have taken action. Women's-only promotions, ladies' nights, family days and Stitch 'n' Pitch events have increased at stadiums over the past few seasons.

In upcoming seasons, practitioners must promote the ballpark as a place for everyone, especially families, to further increase ticket sales. More feminine promotions should be offered to reflect the increase in female attendance. According to research in Chapter 2, these promotions should focus on a specific player, since women are influenced more by sports celebrities than men. Take for example the Philadelphia Phillies' 2007 Mother's Day giveaway – a fleece blanket featuring the team's second baseman, Chase Utley, offered to all women over 15. Although the team was in a slump with a losing record, 45,129 tickets were sold - the most so far in the season. True, it was Mothers' Day, but so many women attended the game that the team ran out of blankets and had to issue vouchers until more could be manufactured.

Practitioners need to realize that, for the most part, women are an untapped market in the sports industry. During a losing season, women are more willing to attend a game, so they should be ideal promotional targets when a team is losing. Since promotions sway decisions on attendance, more promotions should be offered to women and families to fulfill that social need.

Future Research

Since this study focused on all MLB losing teams, data may only reflect the feelings of baseball fans. Therefore, this researcher suggests that a future study replicates this thesis, but spans one team in particular to gauge opinions of specific fans.

Researchers should examine fan attitudes, behaviors and suggestions aligned with one team. Specific fans' suggestions will assist the team's fan relations department in identifying fans' needs and desires.

In addition, since this study focused on one sport, it would be wise to study other professional and amateur sports because the data may not reflect general sports fans' opinions of promotions and their teams.

With the increase in women attendance in baseball, researchers should track the change over the next few seasons to determine if fan-relations practitioners succeed in targeting this audience. Also, it would be interesting to track female attendance at other sporting events and compare each sport.

When conducting future research, the researcher should use surveys to poll a larger universe and gain varied opinions. Surveys, in addition to other forms of quantitative and qualitative data will enrich the findings and form a more comprehensive analysis of fans, promotions and the relationship between them.

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APPENDIX A

Focus Group Protocol

Ballpark Atmosphere

1. What do you enjoy about going to a professional baseball park?
Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion.
2. What don't you enjoy about going to a professional baseball park?
Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion.

Costs

1. Do you believe it is expensive to attend a professional baseball game? The average ticket price to see a professional game is \$22.21.
Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion.
Probe: If not already discussed, seek opinion on ticket prices.
Probe: If not already discussed, seek opinion on concessions.
Probe: Seek if participants would attend games with discounts.

Motivation

1. Why have you attended professional baseball games in the past?
Probe: If not already discussed, seek for game-watching or social outing.
2. Do you think you will attend baseball games this upcoming season? Why or Why not?
Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion.
3. If you plan on attending a game, will you be the person purchasing tickets or will someone else purchase your ticket for you?
Probe: Seek specifically who will purchase the tickets and if the person is the primary decision maker.
Probe: Seek who participants attend games with.
4. Would you be more willing to attend a sporting event when the team playing has a winning record?
Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion.
5. Would you be less likely to attend a sporting event when the team playing has a losing record? LEAD INTO NEXT QUESTION
Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion.

Promotions

1. Do you feel you are “owed” something for attending a sporting event?
Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion (note if its performance or promotion related).
Probe: Seek whether or not the team’s winning or losing influences thought.
2. Have you ever attended a sporting event, not just baseball, for a promotional item or themed night?
Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion.
Probe: Seek specifics on what items/themes were.
3. Would you purchase tickets for a sporting event offering a promotional item or themed night? For example, many stadiums hold family nights, college nights and culture nights?
Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion.
Probe: Seek specifics as to what would draw them into the ballpark. LEAD INTO NEXT QUESTION
4. Discuss/show examples of promotions to gain opinions. Would you attend to receive this promotion?
 - Bobbleheads
 - Art prints
 - Nesting Dolls
 - Apparel
 - Discounts – ticket, concessions
 - Raffles
 - Concerts
 - Fireworks
 - Gender promotions (female: pink totes) (male: caps) LEAD INTO NEXT QUESTION*Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion on promotions not listed.*
5. Do you/Would you feel appreciated knowing you were targeted for gender promotions?
Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion.
6. What’s more appealing – receiving a promotional keepsake or attending a themed night, such as a college night?
Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion.

Sponsorship

1. Promotions offered to the public are sponsored by companies. Have you bought a company's product because they sponsored a specific promotion or stadium event? Do you think you would in the future?

Probe: Seek general uncoached opinion.

Probe: Seek specifics on what products would gain attention for sponsors

2. If a non-profit sponsored a promotion, would you be more inclined to contribute to that organization? (e.g. American Red Cross sponsors bobbleheads)

In the remaining time, please share additional thoughts you have about how sports public relations practitioners could persuade you to purchase tickets to sporting events.

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. What promotions have been the most successful?
2. Have you tried basing promotions on another team's promotion success? If so, did it work?
3. Do repeat promotions work (i.e. buy one get one free tickets every Tuesday)?
4. What promotions were not successful?
5. How are promotions selected and developed?
6. Is any research conducted, specifically with the target audience, when the promotions are developed?
7. Why chose promotions targeted towards a specific gender or age group instead of promoting items to 'all fans'?
8. During a losing season, do promotions draw additional attendance?
9. How are promotional sponsors chosen?
10. What is the role of a corporate sponsor?
11. Does the role of a non-profit sponsor differ?
12. What is your average attendance during the season?
13. What is the maximum seating capacity?
14. Additional comments?

