

A STUDY OF THE FAN'S PERCEPTIONS OF PROMOTIONS OF AN
INDEPENDENT MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL CLUB

by

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ABSTRACT

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The intent of baseball marketers is to promote and sell a memorable experience. An experience that would be memorable enough to encourage return visitors. A Member of the Independent Northern league, the St. Paul Saints Baseball Club, depends upon creativity, humor, and authenticity in order to create an inviting atmosphere, maximize attendance levels, and generate profits through promotion. Although the marketing dollars of a parent team would provide a foundation, the Saints value their marketing independence and they highly regard the opinions or perceptions of their fans. The perceptions of the fans is an information tool that allows the Saints organization to determine if their marketing efforts coincide with the entertainment needs and wants of the fans.

The purpose of this study is to identify the St. Paul Saints' fans' perceptions of current promotional methods. Perceptions were gathered from a large diverse fan base and then analyzed in regards to perception differences of target market groups.

The procedure used in this study was a systematically distributed survey to Saints fans during the game. The fans were asked to indicate whether or not they have any interest in participating in on-field promotions, rank possible game time themes, indicate which promotional giveaways would encourage attendance, and rating the on-field promotions for entertainment value. Next the survey asked the fan to volunteer demographical information that allowed the researcher to describe the market. Finally the survey asked the fan who they came to the ballpark with. This question provided the segmentation of three market groups including family, friends, and the large group (i.e. Corporate, Club, and Organizations).

This study generated interest and the need for future research along with implemental results. The results revealed that fans have a relatively high level of interest in participating in on-field promotions, a potential relationship between socialization and promotion, the favoritism of giveaways that associate the fan with the players, the preference of on-field between-inning contests, and significant perception differences of the target market groups.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Baseball, known as America's favorite pastime is a multibillion-dollar industry that is based on the decisions of the fans. The fan, "An enthusiast or devotee of a sport or amusement", ultimately determines the success of sport marketing (Kellerman, 1984, p. 354).

The most common first thought of baseball and this multibillion-dollar industry is that of the Major Leagues and their minor league affiliates, although there is another facet of this industry that contributes to baseball's industrial success. This contributor and the subject matter of this study is a part of the baseball industry that thrives on creative and strategic marketing efforts to fulfill the entertainment needs of the fans; the Saint Paul Saints Baseball Club, a member of the Independent Northern League.

The Independent Northern League is a professional Minor League baseball organization that is independent from Major League Baseball and its minor league affiliates. Without a major league parent team, the Northern League depends on itself to generate marketing dollars in order to turn a profit. The key to generating these marketing dollars is to design promotions that will encourage attendance, provide a

sociable atmosphere, and leave a lasting good impression on the fans to ensure repeat visitors.

The concept of promotion relies on how effectively the promotional message is delivered and how the baseball fan perceives this message. Standing behind the communication between an organization and the consumer is the theory of image. Gartner (1996) defines image as “the sum of beliefs, impressions, ideas, and perceptions that people hold of objects, behaviors, and events” (p.456). There are three components of image that a destination promoter should be aware of: cognitive, affective, and conative. Cognitive is the understanding or sum of beliefs that the consumer holds about a destination, the affective component is how a consumer feels or values a destination under consideration, and conative imagery is the decision that is made whether or not to travel to the destination (Gartner, 1996). The consumer’s beliefs, values, and decision-making ability aids the promoter in delivering a promotional message that is authentic.

Authenticity is a modern value that entails the opposition between self and society, a modern value that the consumer is continually searching for. When society fails to deliver authentic experiences, the consumer chooses to look within themselves to determine reality (Cohen, 1988). Destination seekers today are becoming more and more astute of deciphering between what is real and authentic; and what is false and staged entertainment.

Sport marketing promoters are continually dealing with the communication process between themselves and the fan. The Saint Paul Saints Baseball Club, a member of the Northern League, looks within themselves to deliver a message that is authentic and then to the beliefs, values, and decision-making abilities of their fans. The Saints

believe that promotions can be authentic; they can be real and associated with everyday occurrences, occurrences that are common and relate to the markets in which their consumers reside.

Delivering the Promotional Message

“Image is nothing, we are not pretending, this is who we are. People think that we are some type of circus act, when in fact we are not acting at all. Image is a reflection of people and who they are” (M. Veeck, personal communication, August 1998).

“Image is nothing. We are not pretending, this is who we are.” This definition of image, stated by Mike Veeck Co-owner and President of the Independent Northern League Baseball’s Saint Paul Saints, is the foundation of this study in discovering the art of promotion. In relation to image, the picture of the Saints Baseball Club, this study takes an in-depth look at the alternate side of image; perception. Perceptions as to how the fans interpret, judge, or view the promotional efforts of the Saint Paul Saints.

The Saints deliver their promotional message through creative venues. One example of deliverance is the attachment of unique themes to each game night in an effort to create a fun atmosphere. In order to create a fun atmosphere the theme idea has

been frequently exercised in the entertainment industry. “Uniqueness of theme is getting harder to create. Creativity and even a sense of humor have helped some communities find a theme that both expresses local heritage and is bound to capture attention” (Getz, 1991, P. 205). For the creative directors of the Saint Paul Saints, an unusual promotional theme is not difficult to create; rather it is quite simple. The Saints have attached unusual themes to their game nights such as: “You Run the Show – Fans Takeover the Ballpark Duties, Celebrating Truck Stop Culture, and Nerds Night Out.” The Saints believe anything that is fun and makes the fans laugh is good and the laughter will capture the attention of the fans. The Saints have overcome the difficulties in creating unique themes by applying simple and natural humor.

In addition to setting a theme to each game, the Saints have designed on-field between-inning promotional contests that help bring the fans closer to the game. The contests, giveaways, and theme nights are sponsored by local businesses in the St. Paul area drawing a diverse community fan base. All fans are encouraged to drop their name in an entry box in the main concourse at the entrance of the stadium. Names are then randomly selected and announced over the PA to the tune of The Price’s Right theme song. Fans that are selected are escorted down onto the field to participate in contests such as: mascot race, dice roll, sumo wrestling, cereal toss, dizzy bat race, pop fly contest, graffiti contest, and what’s in the bag? Allowing the fans to physically step onto the field enables the Saints organization and the fan to turn an intangible product into a tangible sensation. The intangible product is the message or image communicated by the Saints to the fans and the conversion of this message, the perception, is a tangible product

that the fans are able to experience as they walk out onto the field to actually become apart of the game or show.

Perceiving the Promotional Message

Veeck's theory of image is a philosophy that promotes an authentic deliverance and perception of an experience. Perception by the fans, in regards to promotion, is a clear reflection of the Saint Paul Saints true and real image. Image and perception are two major aspects of communicating a promotional message. Serious consideration must be given to areas such as: sources of communication, interpretation of the message, ethical issues, and creativity and innovation (Kolter, 1996, p. 424-430).

The Saint Paul Saints have given new meaning to the marketing terms perception and promotion in the business of sports. At Midway Stadium in St. Paul Minnesota the marketing concept is structured by three words of wisdom, "Fun is good." In its simplicity, this motto, created by Mike Veeck, portrays to baseball fans that image is nothing, what you see is what you get, and the measure of the value of promotion lies within the roar of laughter in an outdoor stadium. By succumbing to the stress-relieving pleasure that humor provides, people are forced to remind themselves of the reason they came, to have fun. "It isn't enough for a promotion to be entertaining or even amusing; it must create conversation. When the fan goes home and talks about what he has seen he is getting an additional kick out of being able to say he was there" (Veeck & Linn, 1996, p. 4).

The St. Paul Saints concept of promotional marketing is truly an art form that can be used to bring life, approval, support and enthusiasm back into the game of baseball. The Saints have developed an incredible promotional marketing mix with great

dedication and emotion. When the researcher asked Mike Veeck what he would like the fans to take home with them when they leave the ballpark, he replied, “I want them to have the feeling that they have spent the evening in the living room of my own home. I hope that the fans have an experience very much like being in a curiosity shop by Charles Dickens and most of all I want them to have had a good time” (M. Veeck, personal communication, August 1998). This study of the St. Paul Saints Baseball Club will focus on the fan perceptions of the promotional mix and how the perceptions vary between market segments.

Need for the Study

This study could potentially serve as a tool to provide direction to future team owners, marketing and promotion directors, tourism developers, community relation officials, entrepreneurs, etc. Its findings will allow the St. Paul Saints organization to evaluate their own current promotional status and will also allow other organizations in similar situations to adopt successful promotional ideas. This study will help to answer the question, What can we learn from the Saint’s genuine creativity?

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study is to identify the St. Paul Saints’ fans’ perceptions of current promotional methods.

Objectives

This study will focus on the following objectives:

1. To determine visitor perceptions of the current promotions of the St. Paul Saints Baseball Club.

2. To analyze differences in visitor perceptions of the St. Paul Saints promotions by target market type.

Limitations

This study has a few important limitations to address. First, even though this is a cross-sectional quantitative, descriptive study, the sampling was collected over a two-week time span that could have possibly introduced confounding variables that may have influenced people's responses.

Secondly, the researcher can only assume that the perceptions are accurate in that the responses are well thought-out and unhurried.

Thirdly, the results cannot be generalized to other ballparks in other geographic locations, however, the perceptions gathered in this study are representative to the demographic market information listed in Chapter 4 (St. Paul Saints Fan Survey Profile).

Finally, the researcher was employed by the St. Paul Saints Baseball Club. As an insider the researcher could possibly bias the conclusions of the study, however the insight of the researcher also provided more reasonable interpretations and application of the data.

Significance of the Study

Independent Northern League Baseball and baseball in general is a business. The basis of this business, in regards to marketing, is the importance of communicating a message to the consumer. The art of promotion is one vehicle that baseball can utilize to deliver this message, however, the perception of the message by the fans is equally as important as how the message and the promotion is delivered. There is difficulty in determining how the fans interpret a promotional message; therefore marketing surveys

are utilized to make an effort towards determining promotional effectiveness. Lamb (1991b) discusses fan attendance in his book about life in the minor leagues.

But what seems unusual is that an industry as pervasive as baseball doesn't know why [fans attend or don't attend]...It doesn't know because it never bothered to ask. Baseball, after all, is the national pastime and, the reasoning goes, its draw is mystical and beyond the realm of ordinary market surveys. The premise is a dangerous one if baseball expects to compete for leisure dollars in the decades ahead (p. 126).

Therefore, this study is significant in that it identifies a possible method to assess the baseball fan's perception of promotional activities.

Definitions

“A” Baseball (Single-A). A Minor league baseball Club that is affiliated with a Major League team, but is considered three steps below the Major League level. Also see “Minor League Baseball.”

“AA Baseball (Double-A). A Minor league baseball Club that is affiliated with a Major League team, but is considered two steps below the Major League level. Also see “Minor League Baseball.”

“AAA” Baseball (Triple-A). A Minor league baseball Club that is affiliated with a Major League team, but is considered one step below the Major League level. Also see “Minor League Baseball.”

Dice Roll Contest. A between-inning promotional contest, in which two large foam dice are rolled by the fans, starting at the top of the grandstand to on-field. A randomly selected fan will win a prize if both of the dice land on the same number. Also see “Promotional Contest.”

Dizzy Bat Race Contest. A between-inning promotional contest, in which two fans are randomly selected to compete against each other on the baseball field by spinning around a baseball bat 10 times and then racing to a orange cone. Also

see “Promotional Contest.”

Baseball Fan. A person, who enjoys, shows admiration or supports a baseball team.

G-Kids Cereal Toss. A between-inning promotional contest skit, in which two randomly selected children, along with a staff member, are dressed like spies. The children are escorted along the baseline to toss boxes of cereal to the fans. Also see “Promotional Contest.”

Graffiti Art Contest. A-between-inning promotional contest, in which two randomly selected children compete against each other on-field by spray painting a theme related picture. The fans cheer to determine the winner. Also see “Promotional Contest.”

Independent Northern League Baseball. A baseball league that is independent or non-affiliated with the major league teams. Despite it’s independence, the Northern League has helped players develop and rehabilitate to reach the Major League level. Also see “Major League Baseball.”

Major League Baseball. The highest level of professional baseball; consists of twenty-eight clubs in two leagues.

Marketing. A process by which a product or service is offered and delivered to the final consumer in response to that consumer’s needs or desires for the product.

Perception. An opinion or an impression of a communicated promotional idea.

Pop Fly Contest. A between-inning promotional contest, in which a fan is selected to attempt to catch water-soaked sponge balls that are launched by a sling-shot. Also see “Promotional Contest.”

Promotion. Communicating a message to the consumer through creative venues in order

to encourage attendance and maximize occupancy levels.

Promotional Contest. Creative and entertaining contests that take place on the baseball field in an effort to bring the fan closer to the game. The contests promote a sponsor's product along with the baseball club. Also see "Sponsor."

Race the Mascot Contest. A between-inning promotional contest, in which a child is randomly selected to race a sponsor's mascot around the bases. Also see "Promotional Contest."

Sponsor. A company that pays advertising dollars to a baseball club in order to have their products or services promoted through a variety of promotional vehicles including: visuals, announcements, activities, promotional contests, giveaways, etc. Also see "Promotion and Promotional Contest."

Sport Marketing. The process by which consumers and spectators of sporting activities, either in a passive or active role, are offered products and services which they seek.

Sumo Wrestling. A between-inning promotional contest, in which two fans are randomly selected to compete by wearing a sumo suit and wrestling on field. Also see "Promotional Contest."

Target Markets. A group or class of people that a company or organization focuses their marketing efforts towards in order to maximize profit.

Theme. Applying a subject or setting the atmosphere of an event to create a certain feeling or mood.

Truck T-Shirt Launch. A between-inning promotional skit in which a truck circles the warning track. An air compressed canon shoots t-shirts into the crowd.

Also see “Promotional Contest.”

What’s In The Bag? A between-inning promotional contest, in which a fan is selected to choose either a 5lb. chocolate bar or what is behind a bag on the baseball field. Also see “Promotional Contest.”

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Sports and Marketing Orientation

The world of professional sports plays a very important role in the United States as it also does internationally. Sports have an inadvertent way of executing financial implications. Whether all those who are involved in the business of sport realize the prospering financial impact, it is an industry on the rise. “The appeal and wealth of sports is at an all-time high. The industry employs over 4.5 million people and generates enough international commerce to be the twenty-second largest industry in the world” (Schaaf, 1995, 21).

Baseball, one segment of the world’s twenty-second largest industry, draws attendance figures in the 60-million-plus range each year (Schlossberg, 1996, p. 14). The four fundamental elements of the baseball segment in the professional sports industry include: the fans, players, owners and operators, and the corporations that sponsor the ball clubs. Each facet plays a unique role in sports and marketing.

The word fan is derived from the word fanatic meaning “An enthusiast or devotee of a sport or amusement” (Kellerman, 1984, p. 354). The business of professional sports is a multibillion-dollar industry that is based on the decisions of the fans. As a

consequence, the success of professional sports is determined by the first and foremost the focus of marketing, the fan.

The baseball players of professional sports provide a foundation for entertainment as they may travel through the system in hopes of working at the highest level, Major League Baseball. Before entering a major league system, players may play for a semi-professional team, or an independent professional team. Neither of these organizations are affiliated with a major league system, although major league teams may purchase player's contract from an independent organization. Once a player is invited to join a major league system they progress through different levels starting with "A" (Single A) baseball, then to "AA" (Double A) baseball, advancing to "AAA" (Triple A) baseball, until finally reaching the majors a final destination called "The Show". Even though a player's objective is to reach "The Show", a performance to entertain fans, is put on at all levels.

Owners and operators of baseball work to sell an experience. Their goal is to establish and nurture long-term relationships with the fans and potential sponsors (Derrick, 1996, p. 18).

Corporations and their sponsorships are financially helping to support the game of baseball through advertising. Along with special promotions this advertising is also a vehicle enabling fans to attend the games at a fair price. "Corporations use the game to let fans feel closer to it through them" (Schlossberg, 1996, p.18).

The preceding four facets of baseball must work together to make up a realistic concept of sports marketing. As the owners and operators work hand in hand with corporate sponsors to economically pilot a business entity, the players work towards

providing the foundation of entertainment through their talents, while the fans take in the experience and show their appreciation through their attendance and participation at games and through purchasing advertised products. There are a variety of ways each of these elements participate in sports marketing.

Owners and operators cooperate with sponsors to create a variety of techniques to attract fans such as: product giveaways at the entrance of games, setting a theme to a particular game night, destination/trip giveaways, promotional contests requiring fans as the contestants, etc. Players also participate in sports marketing through autograph sessions and special appearances.

As sports and marketing is defined by the individuals who make up the industry it can also be simply defined as, “Sports marketing is simply any sales or publicity-related activity associated with an organized sporting event (or events), its personalities, or the celebrity lifestyle of its participants” (Schaaf, 1995, p. 22).

Promotion

Sales and publicity in the sports marketing of baseball relies on the art of promotion. Kolter (1996) defines promotion as “communicating information between seller and potential buyer or others in the channel to influence attitudes and behavior” (p. 420). In the promotion of baseball the product is the experience that the fan takes home with them from the ballpark. In this instance there is no physical product, and an attitude and behavior must make its mark to create a memorable experience, for the ultimate goal is to encourage repeat visits.

Kolter (1996) also discusses the objectives of promotion. In order for a promotion to be effective the objective must be clearly defined. Basic objectives to start with include: to persuade, to inform, and to remind the target consumer of the product.

An organization may not have to put a great deal of effort into informing the customer if the product is new. For example when a new car with a unique design is put out on the market the company may gain free publicity through car magazines and newspapers. Another example of free publicity is the organization that is the basis of this study, the St. Paul Saints Baseball Club. The Saints have gained free publicity through media such as Reader's Digest, CNN Sports Illustrated, and the Discovery Channel. These media sources have helped the Saints to gain worldwide recognition for their creative marketing techniques. In cases in which the product may not be recognized through free media publicity, an organization can utilize and encourage other methods to inform including: word of mouth, demonstrations, direct mail, telemarketing, trade shows, etc.

Persuading the customer to buy a product is basically achieved by developing a set of attributes that are appealing to the target market. Persuasion is often used to differentiate product brands.

Once a customer is familiar with a product and has also established a positive relationship with the supplier, it is essential for that supplier to remind the customer about their product. Even though the customer has purchased the product on a regular basis, that customer can easily fall subject to a new competitor.

Planning is the key to promotion. "Promotion is a state of mind long before it becomes a state of action. A promoter should be thinking not for the day, but for the

year, the decade, the era” (Veeck & Linn, 1996, p. 9). The planning process for promotions takes time and serious consideration must be given to areas such as: sources of communication, interpretation of the message, ethical issues, creativity and innovation, and creating a promotional budget (Kolter, 1996, p.424-430).

Different means of communication can deliver a different message. For example television can be more convincing since the customer views the product in action, whereas an ad in a newspaper must rely on unique writing style and positioning to attract attention. Credibility of the source is critical in capturing a market. The customer will be looking for a higher source of approval. In baseball, for instance the customer will take notice of the sponsor of the promotion or event. The sponsor’s reputation in the community may dictate whether or not the customer or fan will buy the product being promoted.

The consumer may interpret a particular message communicated by the promoter in a variety of different ways. Humor is often used to communicate a message to the customer. During the construction of the humorous message planners must take into consideration the variety of sense of humor in the market place. This style of planning relies directly on how well an organization knows its target market. Promoters can design questions to test or predict an outcome. Will the message make the customer laugh or cause intrigue? Will the message cause a lasting effect or is it a memorable message in regards to the product? In this type of promotion, if the message is not found to be humorous by the customer, the message was not delivered properly.

It is important to evaluate ethical issues to ensure communications are consistently honest and fair. The degree of skepticism among customers grows along

with the volume of product market. Promoters must take into consideration the personal values of the customer and strive to make the promotions specific and believable.

Innovation and creativity are founded on the basis of the new and different. There is a great deal of risk when implementing new ideas. Large and specialized firms are known to be innovators, but it is apparent small entrepreneurial companies are also willing to take creative risks.

In the entertainment industry innovative promotions prosper through the art of creativity to provide a memorable experience. Bill Veeck, (1996) former owner of the Chicago White Sox, states, “It isn’t enough for a promotion to be entertaining or even amusing; it must create conversation. When the fan goes home and talks about what he has seen, he is getting an additional kick out of being able to say that he was there. Do not deny him that simple pleasure, especially since he is giving you invaluable word-of-mouth advertising to add to the newspaper reports” (p.4). A fan’s memory of the experience enhances its original value.

Veeck has used unusual promotions to not only bring people to the ballpark, but to bring them closer to the players and the game itself. One of Veeck’s favorite promotions was entitled “The Name’s the Same”, in which Veeck was honoring a player named Al Smith. He invited everyone with the last name of Smith, and any variation of the last name of Smith, to the ballpark for free and arranged for these guests to sit behind him and cheer for him during the game. “By wrapping a promotion around a player, you are bringing the ceremonies out of the stands and onto the field, providing a focal point for exploitation and giving everybody at the game the added pleasure of having somebody special to root for” (Veeck & Linn, 1996, p.7).

Promoting can be very expensive and if promotional effects are not carefully budgeted it can bring down the entire system. Kotler (1996) discusses four methods for constructing a promotional budget. (1). Analyzing the competitors expenditures. (2). Utilizing past sales and future potential sales, assign a dollars and cents number according to each sales unit. (3). Consider promotions as an investment for the future; the company will direct uncommitted revenue towards future promotions. (4.) Follow the task method which involves constructing a budget based on each individual promotional task (p.442).

Promotions can vary significantly in price, and not all promotions have to be expensive in order to be successful. Veeck & Linn (1996) consult that promotions can be as simple as finding a common denominator among the customers or fans and expensive promotions do not always produce a sell out crowd. A sell out fan base can be derived through emotion and creativity. “Don’t worry about letting people in free. Seats you have aplenty. Anything that brings people into your park is going to help you, one way or another, in the long run” (Veeck & Linn, 1996, p.9).

Sponsorship

In the world of promotion there are two counter parts, the seller and the buyer. The sellers are the promoters. Schaaf (1995) explains that the seller’s objectives are to generate leads, locate potential buyers, construct proposals, display opportunities, and in result they are hopeful in selling a promotional idea. On and off the field promoters package and price the athletic appeal of competition. The buyers are the sponsors; generally companies who negotiate to increase sales, create enthusiasm within retailers, attract customers, and motivate employees to follow through with campaigns (p.29).

According to Sherry, (1998) as a result of the seller-buyer sales relationship, spending on sports sponsorship was expected to reach \$4.55 billion in 1998 (p. 24).

Large scale sponsorship, as in selling a sports promotion in Los Angeles, involves many different sport teams such as: the Lakers, Clippers, Angels, Dodgers, Kings, Mighty Ducks, USC, UCLA, etc. In this case, an abundance of teams translates into a buyer's market. A buyer, or sponsor, can choose which team or sporting event in which they prefer to invest in or sponsor.

In the arena of celebrity promotions, according to Schaaf (1995), companies such as: Hanes, Nike, and Quaker Oats pay Michael Jordon \$30 million, a total that is naturally based on a perceived return of investment (p. 29). A great deal of money is spent on corporate sponsorship on the large-scale major league level of sports.

This study concentrates on the small scale or minor league baseball promotional events. "Minor league baseball, is, by name, a smaller scale event. That does not mean, however, that it is in any way inferior in terms of entertainment quality" (Schaaf, 1995, p. 163).

The Independent Northern League's St. Paul Saints fall into this small-scale type of event promotions. The Saints provide quality entertainment to their fans by creating unique ideas for a promotion. Once a promotion idea is born, the Saints offer a number of sponsors, the buyer, an opportunity to purchase promotions which carry their company name, utilizing this promotion as an advertising vehicle. The Saints create and sell their ideas for promotions in order to develop theme nights and on-field promotional contests.

Small-scale events differ from large-scale events in that the economies of small market entertainment, in this case minor league baseball, cannot successfully support the

financial needs of a professional franchise. “Small scale professional franchises not only need fans in the stands, they need cable subscribers, merchandise clients, and promotional targets for event sponsors. Sponsors, in turn, need a market size that can support the advertising investment in a team” (Schaaf, 1995, p. 165). In any event, sports sponsorship also benefits the local community in that the corporate sponsors help to present events that attract visitors to an area in which these visitors spend money outside the stadium. The fees paid by the sponsor also help to keep ticket prices affordable for the fans and help the ball club offset expenses.

Sponsors and promoters buy and sell promotional ideas on all levels and for a variety of sporting events. Although the buyer and the seller seem to take a different side of sports marketing, they are both in search of creating and displaying a positive image to the fan or customer.

Image

For many years and for a great number of people professional sports have created powerful and moving memories. At early ages individuals have a mind set or an image of their first experience at a sporting event or the experience of witnessing a monumental event in sporting history. At a very young age Rosentraub (1997) reveals his first impression and image of baseball:

“The defining moments in my life include my first visit to Yankee Stadium; I was eight and can recreate that entire day in my memory, together with my first visions of that green grass and red clay running track circling the field. I have never seen grass so green nor clay so red since. My father also held my hand as we descended closer and closer to our seats. I still remember that Yogi Berra had

failed to shave before the game and had quite a shadow. Such are things eight-year-olds remember” (p. 36).

According to Rosentraub (1997), the world of sports plays on the idea of imagery and psyche by: (a.) The image of sports as a romanticized ideal (b.) An important role in everyday life (c.) It’s relationship to the media (d.) Political symbolism (e.) And it’s imagery for economic development (p. 36). This type of gripping emotional imagery can effect a community positively and also negatively. If sports are viewed entirely as a romanticized ideal, a community may have to deal with the effects from shortcomings of profits and resources. If a positive imagery is combined with carefully planned promotional efforts, the image of sports can help to increase attendance and participation resulting in an increase in revenue.

In order to gain feedback as to the success of its promotional efforts, it is important for the Saints to take into consideration the desired image that the organization hopes to portray to the fans. The fan’s perception of this image will be discussed in the next section. According to Kotler (1997), “Image is the set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person holds regarding an object. People’s attitudes and actions toward an object are highly conditioned by that object’s image” (p. 607).

As it relates to this study, the object referred to in the above definition of image as it relates to this study is the service provided by the Independent Northern League St. Paul Saints. The Saints are a part of the entertainment industry supplying the end product of a memorable experience for the fans.

In an interview with Mike Veeck, former founder, owner and president of the Saints, Mike was asked to give his own personal definition of image. Mike responded,

“Image is nothing, we are not pretending, this is who we are. People think that we are some type of circus act, when in fact we are not acting at all” (M. Veeck, personal communication, August, 1998). Mike’s definition reveals the importance of utilizing marketing techniques that are simple, personable, creative, fun, and that avoid being contrived and shallow.

In the interview Mike was also asked to describe the feeling that he would hope that the fans would take home with them after leaving the ballpark. Mike stated, “I want the fan to have the feeling that they have spent the evening in my own living room” (M. Veeck, personal communication, August, 1998).

An image, whether it is pure and simple or putting on a show, may not always be interpreted by the fan in the way it was intended by the organization. The interpretation or perception of the fan depends greatly on how the promotion is communicated by the promoters.

Perception

“Images are ‘sticky’; they persist long after the organization has changed. Image persistence is explained by the fact that once people have a certain image of an object, they selectively perceive further data. It will take highly disconfirming information to raise doubts and open their minds to new information. Thus, an image has a life of its own” (Kotler, 1997, 609). The first impression that an organization displays to the customer is crucial, for once an image message is communicated, it is difficult to reverse how the customer perceives it.

“For service marketers there may be a tying, tangible object associated with the product, the attributes of the product are largely the result of a process or event that *happens* to the consumer, not what the consumer *gets*” (Murray, & Schlacter, 1995, p. 506). In the entertainment industry there is no tangible product, the product is an experience that is subject to the benefits derived from an intangible product, the service.

The perception process defines the quality of the experience. The perception process can be conducted and evaluated through market research in an effort to analyze consumer behavior and invite personal consumer opinions. The fan’s perspective is ultimately dependent on whether or not the experience meets their personal needs and satisfies their expectations (Getz, 1991, p. 63).

According to Kolter (1997), once a promotional plan is implemented the promoter must measure the impact that the promotion has made on the target audience. The promoter measures the impact by simply asking the guest whether they recognize, recall, and how they feel or their attitude toward the promotion. The promoter can also analyze fans’ perceptions by being aware of behavior patterns as in: observing or recording how many people attend the games, how many fans repeatedly attend games, and are the fans talking to others about current promotions (p. 629).

Minor League Baseball Research

A key to effective message communication and evaluation of the perception process regarding promotions is knowing exactly who the audience is and incorporating their personal opinions and behavior patterns into the organization’s marketing thoughts. Consumer opinions and personal information such as: gender, age, marital status, income

levels, life style preferences, etc. can help minor league baseball, and small-scale event operators, learn more about the guest and amend services accordingly.

A recent study by Jeffery Derrick (1996) discusses the concept of gathering marketing data and to what extent this information is actually utilized in the decision-making process by minor league baseball clubs. A survey was distributed to minor league baseball managers to determine if marketing research studies are conducted at their facility, the type of information that is collected, and what type of impact this information has on the organization. In addition to researching whether or not marketing research is conducted, the study also explored the importance of marketing research within the different levels of minor league baseball.

The conclusions of the study are as follows:

- Minor league general managers indicated that they conduct market research to discover fans' attitudes toward their experience at the games.
- These studies are generally in a written form, such as a survey.
- Minor league general managers indicated that marketing research is important to the operation of their teams, and there is no significant difference among the three levels (Triple-A, Double-A, and Single-A) in terms of this importance.

(Derrick, 1996, p. 103)

Northern League Baseball

The Independent Northern League is a professional minor league baseball organization that is independent from Major League Baseball and its minor league affiliates. Today, throughout the United States, there are seven independent leagues.

Independent leagues, unlike AAA, AA, A and Rookie minor league teams who depend on major league organizations for financial and directive support, are self-

sufficient. “The independent’s goal is to field a winning team that generates excitement and community loyalty. Communities benefit from having baseball teams that exist to win rather than develop players for their next stop in the organization, sometimes to the detriment of the team as a whole” ([http: www.nothernleague.com](http://www.nothernleague.com)). As the league works for the local community it also assists major, minor, and college players to advance or re-enter the major league organizations.

From 1902 to 1998 the Northern League has gone through incredible changes, moving through a total of four distinct versions. The first version of the league began in 1902 and joined the National Association of Baseball in 1903. At this time the league was mostly made up of college players that would travel by train to entertain fans in the local communities of the Upper Midwest. The teams that were members of the league by 1908 included: the St. Paul Saints, Minneapolis Millers, Fargo Nines, Duluth Dukes, and the Winnipeg Goldeyes. At the end of the 1908 season the league disbanded. Understandably, this brought about disappointment, but also the celebration of the historic movement of a player named Richard Brookins, who was the first African-American to play in organized baseball in the twentieth century.

The second version of the league ran from 1912 to 1917. Duluth, Grand Forks, and Winnipeg were the only members and the league was disbanded because of World War I restrictions.

The third version of the league was formed during the midst of the depression in 1933. Despite setbacks such as the sale and moves between owners and towns, and also the inoperative years such as 1943-1945, the league was a success. In 1971 the third

version of the league came to an end, and at this time the Northern League was the last and oldest National Association league to be allowed by organized baseball.

Sixty years later the Northern League was resurrected. In 1993 the Northern League opened its gates in six franchises across the Upper Midwest. Miles Wolff, a former Owner/General Manager of the Atlanta Braves affiliate, the Durham Bulls, revived the independent league of professional baseball.

The league was revived for its rich history and because of the passionate tradition of outdoor baseball in the region. “Wolff in conjunction with several interested individuals, began the process of resurrecting the Northern League with the notion that town-based teams, rather than organization-grounded clubs could flourish in the right communities. During the fall of 1992, after over two years of planning, the fourth generation Northern League was born” (<http://www.northerleague.com>).

At the present time this modern era of independent league baseball consists of eight teams, which are divided into eastern and western divisions. In the east the members include: St. Paul, Thunder Bay, Madison, and Duluth; whereas the western division consists of: Fargo, Sioux Falls, Sioux City, and Winnipeg.

St. Paul Saints Baseball Club

Miles Wolff, Mike Veeck, and Marv Goldklang founded the St. Paul Saints, a member of the Independent Northern League. All three of the foremost founders have a rich history and passion for the game of baseball. Miles Wolff is the Commissioner of the Northern League. Mike Veeck is currently the Vice President of Marketing and Co-Owner of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays and former Owner of the Saints. Mike is also the son of Bill Veeck, former Owner of the Chicago White Sox. Marv Goldklang is a former Wall Street attorney who owns the Fort Myers Miracle, the Charleston River Dogs, and

the Hudson Valley Renegades, which are major league affiliates, and also holds a limited partnership with the New York Yankees.

The experience of these owners and operators has brought a very important marketing rule of thumb back to the game of baseball and its fans. “At a time when major-league baseball is a troubled big business beset by stadium wars, contract holdouts, ticket price increases, and labor management disputes, the independent Saints sell out every night by putting the customer first” (Grunwald, 1997, Page A1).

Mike Veeck brought his creative engines to St. Paul with a marketing and promotional strategy entitled, “Fun is Good”. In its simplicity, this concept is breathing life back into the game of baseball in St. Paul Minnesota. As Bill Veeck once stated, “We can’t always guarantee that the ballgame is going to be good, but we can guarantee that the fan will have fun” (Fatsis, 1995, Page 12).

The marketing philosophy of “Fun is Good” perfectly describes the Saints outdoor baseball atmosphere and also portrays to the customer that their feelings and entertainment needs are recognized. Attending a baseball game is exciting, but when the fan actually becomes apart of the game, that is when it becomes fun. Between every half inning selected fans are escorted onto the field to take part in a promotional contests: sumo wrestling, dizzy bat races, graffiti contest, race the mascot, etc. These contests always produce laughter, and where there is laughter, there is fun.

“We have respect for our fans,” Veeck said, “But we don’t take just the one-dimensional view of them that the major league teams do. We don’t believe they come for the game and nothing else. My dad always believed if you catered only to the purists your stadium would be 75 percent empty” (Sounder, 1997).

St. Paul Saints Fans

A study completed by the St. Paul Saints Baseball Club in the summer of 1996 identifies who their fans really are. Approximately 900 surveys were completed. “The surveys were distributed over four different games, each game promotion designed to reach a different demographic group (i.e. Fireworks draw a younger crowd, Friday games draw a crowd in the under 40 category, etc.)” (St. Paul Saints Marketing Department, 1996).

The demographical categories of this study include: age, gender, marital status, household size, education, income, disposable income, home owners, radio listeners, TV watchers, etc. It is important for the Saints to know their customer. This information enables the Saints to appropriately market its entertainment product. For example, in determining ticket prices, the results of the balance sheet will naturally influence the need to adjust prices, and the Saints feel that it is very important to consider the disposable income levels of the fans. It is imperative to determine what the community will endure in regards to ticket prices.

The main objective of this study is to define the Saints community. Those who have chosen to attend the games and also those who have agreed to share personal information have helped give further direction to the development of Saints Baseball.

1996 Fan Survey Results

- Age – 38% of Saints fans are between the ages of 25 and 39. Another 38% are between the ages of 45 and 54.
- Gender – Saints fans are relatively equally split by gender. 56% are male and 44% are female.
- Marital Status – 62% are married.

- Household Size – Most Saints fans have small families. 31% of the respondents have two member households. 39% of Saints fans have household sizes of three to four members.
- Education – The Saints draw a highly educated group of fans. 37% are college graduates with an additional 22% that are graduates of professional graduate schools.
- Income – A majority of Saints fans would be considered affluent. 39% earn between \$50,000 and \$100,000 annually. In fact, another 12% earn over \$100,000 annually.
- Disposable Income – Due to their high incomes and small family sizes, Saints fans tend to have a large amount of disposable income. Case in point, 43% of respondents claim that they spend an average of \$50 or more per week on entertainment.

(St. Paul Saints Marketing Department, 1996)

The Growing Popularity of Minor League Baseball

Americans today are in search of the historic spirit of baseball. “A generation of Americans who grew up watching games played on artificial turf in impersonal stadiums are returning to minor league baseball because they feel that this is where the true spirit of the game has been kept alive” (Minors Go Big, 1994, Page 87).

Minor league owners are exercising marketing beliefs on a personal and humanistic level through promotions that allow the fan to walk onto the field before, during, and after the game to participate in entertainment-based contests and presentations.

Owners are utilizing promotional tactics during the games such as: inviting local community organizations and clubs to perform, clowns and mascots, theme nights, etc. in

order to create an environment that is fun and to also increase the popularity of community based Minor League Baseball.

Tom Dickson, Owner and President of the Class A Lansing Michigan Lugnuts Baseball team states, “It is the delivery of the product, not the product itself. Minor League Baseball is part of the entertainment business, and as such, fans should be treated to more than just nine innings of baseball. We create an experience...that ensures fans will have a wildly enthusiastic time” (Zoltak, 1997, Page 19).

This Chapter provided a foundation of general marketing with an emphasis on promotion. A discussion of Minor League Baseball, the Independent Northern League, and the St. Paul Saints Baseball Club was needed to provide the reader with a background in the type of baseball promotions researched in this study. Chapter III will address the procedures of the study including research design, selection of the sample, instrumentation, validity, and analysis of the data.

Chapter III

PROCEDURES

Research Design

The study involved quantitative research using a questionnaire designed jointly by the St. Paul Saints front office staff and the researcher (See Appendix A). A large portion of the questionnaire was used to compile marketing data for advertisers and sponsors with additional questions added to aid the researcher in fulfilling the research objectives.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate fan perceptions of promotions that were conducted throughout the 1998 St. Paul Saints Baseball season. Once the information on perceptions of current promotions was gathered, these perceptions were then identified by target market type. Identifying fan perceptions by target market type or group will allow the Saints marketing team to focus their marketing efforts on groups that value specific forms of entertainment. Determining statistically significant relationships between target market groups and specific promotions will help achieve overall visitor satisfaction.

Selection of the Sample

The surveys were distributed to 1,800 fans. The Saints draw a different fan base depending upon the time of day and day of the week the games are scheduled. According

to the Saints staff, the three different categories of fan base include: weeknight games, weekend night games, and weekend afternoon games. Weeknight games tend to draw middle-aged fans, weekend night games a younger crowd, and weekend afternoon games a family and variety-based crowd.

In order to gain a more complete perspective from each of the three categories, two games from each category were selected for a total of six games. In order to achieve the goal of distributing 1,800 surveys a total of 300 surveys per game were distributed. Because of its length, the survey was distributed to the fans during the game after they were already seated. The researcher, along with the isle game time ushers, invited every fourth fan seated at the end of each isle to complete a survey. This involved all sections of the ballpark including: grandstand seating (Reserved), bleacher reserved seating (Bleacher-Reserved), and general admission bleacher seating (General Admission - based on a first come first serve seating). Each person that completed the survey was rewarded with a Saints souvenir.

In an effort to avoid surveying season ticket holders more than once, those distributing the surveys in the grandstand, where season ticket holders are seated, alternated the number of rows throughout the different surveyed games. The selection process was constructed to provide a systematic sample that would properly represent the overall general population of Saints visitors.

Instrumentation

Questions asked of the fans were grouped into two sections. Section one consisted of promotional questions designed to determine visitor perceptions of current promotions and section two concentrated on identifying perceptions by target market type or group.

The section one promotional questions consisted of part “yes” or “no” answers while other questions asked respondents to indicate the strength of their feelings on a five point Likert scale. In addition, one promotional question was based on a 5-point rating scale. Target market type, section two, was designed to gather perceptions by target market type. Question #7 (Which of the following best describes you or your party today?) allowed the visitor to be grouped into a corresponding market segment.

The fan perceptions of promotions (Section 1) were as follows:

1. Primary reason for coming to a Saints game.
2. Promotions or giveaways that would encourage the fan to attend a game.
3. Rating on-field promotional contests for entertainment value.
4. Interest in participation in an on-field contest.
5. Actual participation by the fan.
6. Ranking promotional theme games for entertainment value.
7. Rating elements of a Saints game on an enjoyment level.

Determining market segments will allow the Saints to direct specific marketing efforts toward a specific target market or markets.

The target market variables (Section 2) were categorized according to fan typology including:

1. Family
2. Friends
3. A combination of Club or Organization, Corporate Function, and other.

The responses of both sections one and two revealed opinions of current promotions and also segregated these opinions into specific market segments.

Validity

The validity of the instrument is derived from the Saints staff who constructed and approved the research questions (See Appendix B). Staff members designed the survey through their knowledge and expertise in minor league baseball administration. The survey used for this study is based on a previous version of a Saints' fan survey that was modified for this study. The staff members' suggestions for revising certain questions were incorporated into the survey.

Analysis of the Data

The first procedure undertaken in the analysis phase was entering the completed surveys into a SPSS data program. This process produced frequency distributions of market segments and fan perceptions of current promotions. In addition to frequencies and percentages, a mean and standard deviation was calculated for each promotional question (section one).

Cross tabulations were analyzed in order to determine the relationship between the variables of target market groups and the fans' perceptions of promotions. The study then utilized One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) in conjunction with Chi Squared to identify variances of perceptions by target market. Significant differences were concluded based upon a p value of $< \text{or} = .05$.

This Chapter discussed the design of the research, how the sample was selected, the instrument used to gather perceptions of the fans, validity of the study, and how the data was analyzed. Chapter IV will illustrate results and discuss the findings of the fan's perceptions of promotions.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study of the St. Paul Saints Northern League Baseball Club was to determine visitor perceptions of current promotional methods and to identify those perceptions by target market type. The Independent Northern League Baseball functions as a business. As such, it relies upon marketing tools such as identifying target markets, utilizing market segmentation, and understanding the customers needs and desires in products and services.

The business of baseball is to sell an experience. At all levels of the industry, the product is entertainment. In providing an overall leisure experience baseball offers its fans many products and services including, entertainment, concessions, community relations, media relations, and game promotions. The promotional aspect of service aspires to develop, offer, and enhance the visitor experience by integrating activities that will create a unique experience for each individual theme night or day game. To satisfy product and service needs, the business of baseball relies on the art of promotion as its marketing tool. Veeck (1996) States:

The average customer comes to the park no more than two or three times a year. If you can put on a good-enough show to get him to come five or six times, he has become a source of pride to you. A source of revenue, too. The customer comes out to the park with nothing except the illusion that he is going to have a good time. He leaves with nothing except a memory. If the memory brings on either yawns or head pains you have lost him until next year (p. 10).

Descriptive quantitative research was conducted to fulfill the objectives of determining promotional perceptions and identifying perceptions by target market type.

Scope of the Study

The study included randomly selected fans that attended a St. Paul Saints game over a period of six games in the month of August, 1998. The surveyed game days were as follows:

Saturday, August 08
Sunday, August 09
Monday, August 10
Tuesday, August 11
Friday, August 21
Sunday, August 23

The survey was distributed to the fans during the third inning of each game. The fans were offered a Saints souvenir in exchange for the completed survey. By the end of the sixth home game in which a total of 1,800 surveys were offered, 1,352 completed surveys were collected for a response rate of 75.1%.

Table 1 illustrates the demographics of the Saints fan survey profile. The demographics resulted in 54% of the fans that are male and 46% female. Fans of all ages were asked to complete the survey, however the majority of the fans were between the ages of 25 and 54. In addition, 57% of fans are married, the average household income is between \$50-100,000, and 59% have earned a college degree.

Table 1

St. Paul Saints Fan Survey Profile

Gender	54% Male	46% Female
Age Scale	42% (25-39)	30% (40-54)
Percent of Fans that are Married	57%	
Average Household size	2-4	
Average Household Income	\$50-100,000	
Percentage of Fan's that Own a Home	75%	
Percent that are College Graduates	59%	

Interpretation begins with the researcher looking at the results of the “Saints fan profile”. Fifty-nine percent of the fans surveyed hold a college degree (Table 1), leading the researcher to believe that the fans value the importance of higher education. In relation to highly educated respondents the average household income earned is between \$50-100,000 leading to the possible assumption of the fans having adequate disposable income levels. The fan profile also indicated that the equal number of male and female respondents eliminates the bias of gender related responses.

Findings

Perceptions of Promotions

Section 1

In response to the question “What was your primary reason for coming to the game today?” Table 2 shows that forty-one percent of the fans answered that their main reason for attending was to take in the Social Atmosphere. Secondly, twenty-six percent of the fans chose Baseball Action for their main reason for attending the game. While social atmosphere was the main reason for attending a Saints game, promotional giveaways and on-field contest promotions were rated as the least motivational attendance factors.

Table 2

Primary Reason for Coming to the Game

Response	Frequency	Percent
Social Atmosphere	514	41%
Baseball Action	328	26%
Entertainment /Special Appearances	159	13%
Affordability	136	11%
Giveaways	67	5%
On-field Contest Promotions	15	1%
Total	1237	100%

n = Multiple Responses=3%

“The Primary Reason for Coming to the Game” (Table 2), can be directly related to “Rating the Elements of a Saints Game for Entertainment Value” (Table 6), in regards to the concepts of promotions and socialization. The fans were surveyed after the third inning, allowing the fans to experience a few of the on-field between-inning promotions and the social atmosphere of the game.

In Table 2, the question, the “Primary Reason for coming to the Game,” forty-one percent of the fans surveyed indicated that the primary reason for coming was for the social atmosphere. This table also showed that only one percent of the fans valued on-field between-inning contest promotions as the primary reason for coming to the game. In relation to the question of “Rating the Elements of a Saints Game for Entertainment Value” (Table 6), sixty percent of the fans enjoyed the social atmosphere the most, equal to the results in primary reason for coming to the game. However, thirty percent of the fans rated on-field between-inning promotions as the most enjoyable element of the game.

The two questions, reason for coming and rating the elements for entertainment value, asked the respondent to answer two similar questions through two different question formats. The question of “Primary Reason for Coming to the Game” (Table 2), asked the respondent to choose only one reason for coming to the game in which those responses were calculated by frequencies and percentages. “Rating the Elements of a Saints Game for Entertainment Value” (Table 6), asked the respondent to rate the elements of a game on a five point likert scale, five being the most enjoyable. These two questions provide evidence that the on-field between-inning contests add to the social atmosphere of the game as the fans interact with one another during between-inning promotional contests.

The second question asked of the fans was “Please indicate which promotions or giveaways that would encourage you to attend a Saints game.” The fan was asked to circle all of the promotions or giveaways that would appeal to them.

According to Table 3, a baseball jersey was most frequently chosen as the most appealing giveaway. Forty-six percent of the fans also chose a Sport Bag and forty-three percent chose a Beach Towel as an appealing giveaway. The two least favorite giveaways, a Poster and Schedule Magnet, were visual or informational promotions.

Table 3

Promotions or Giveaways That Would Encourage Attendance

Response	Frequency	Percent
Jersey	715	56%
Cap	651	51%
Sport Bag	579	46%
Beach Towel	546	43%
Bat	474	37%
Umbrella	453	36%
Glove	437	34%
Logo Ball	423	33%
Backpack	413	33%
Coffee Cup	324	26%
Player Cards	234	19%
Poster	186	15%
Schedule Magnet	185	15%

n = Multiple Response Question

In regards to the question of “Giveaways that would encourage attendance” (Table 3), the fans favored a jersey at fifty-six percent and a baseball cap at fifty-one percent. This favoritism of player apparel allows the researcher to assume that the fans have a need or desire to associate themselves to the players. These results fall into the Saints promoter’s objective of trying to make the fans feel as though they are a part of the game and the aspect of wrapping a promotion around a player.

The next question asked of Saints fans was “On a scale of 1 to 5 please rate the following on-field promotional contests for entertainment value (with 5 being most enjoyable). The two contests that resulted as “Enjoyed Most”, illustrated in Table 4, were Sumo Wrestling and the Dizzy Bat Race, both rated by the fans at forty-six percent. The second most enjoyable contests included the Race the Mascot and the Truck T-Shirt Launch. Just as it is important to determine the most enjoyable contests it is also important to take notice of those responses in the “Don’t Know” column. These response rates show the researcher which contests the fans are unaware of and if the promotion has

made a lasting impression. The responses imply a relationship to the assertions made by Kolter (1996) in regards to using humor to deliver a message. When analyzing fan responses the researcher must consider that the consumer may interpret a particular message communicated by the promoter in a variety of different ways. If the message was not found to be humorous by the customer, than the message was not delivered properly.

Table 4

Rating of On-Field Promotional Contests for Entertainment Value

Response	Enjoy Most		Enjoy Least			Don't Know	Mean	SD
	5	4	3	2	1			
Sumo Wrestling	46%	28%	14%	6%	3%	3%	4.12	1.068
Dizzy Bat Race	46%	28%	15%	4%	3%	3%	4.16	1.02
Race the Mascot	26%	30%	25%	8%	3%	8%	3.73	1.073
Truck T-Shirt Launch	26%	25%	22%	9%	6%	12%	3.66	1.19
Pop Fly Contest	20%	29%	29%	8%	3%	11%	3.61	1.043
Graffiti Art Contest	19%	22%	28%	13%	5%	13%	3.43	1.149
What's in the bag?	17%	24%	27%	13%	5%	14%	3.40	1.138
G-Kids Cereal Toss	15%	19%	24%	15%	12%	15%	3.07	1.304
Dice Roll	12%	18%	31%	19%	11%	9%	3.01	1.198

The results of the question, “Rating of the On-field Promotional Contests for Entertainment Value” (Table 4), allowed the Saints staff to consider which contests to carry on into future seasons. As indicated by the fans, the Sumo Wrestling and the Dizzy Bat Race were the most enjoyable contests. As the intent of the question was to find out which contests the fans enjoyed the most, the researcher also found that the fans mostly enjoyed the two contests in which the fans competed physically against one another. The Don’t Know column in this table is important in an effort to find out which promotional

contest that the fans are unaware of. The table shows that the G-Kids Cereal Toss received the highest percentage under the Don't Know column. This is a promotional contest in which children are escorted along the baseline and then through the side bullpen gates of the field. The on-field appearance of the children is very brief and does not utilize the full 90 seconds of between-inning contest time allotted by the league, therefore the chance of the contest being seen by the fans is not as great.

Once the fans rated the on-field contest for entertainment value, they were asked whether or not they have any interest in participating in the contests and also if they have actually participated in any of the contests in the past. In regards to interest in participating, fifty-six percent of the fans said yes they are interested in participating. Actual past participation resulted in seven percent of the fans that have participated and ninety-three percent who have not. Participation levels are a unique part of this study as the Saints are focusing their marketing strategies towards allowing the fans to step out onto the field converting an intangible product into a tangible memorable experience.

In addition to evaluating on-field promotions, the fans were asked to rank promotional theme night/day categories that would encourage them to attend a game (On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the most entertaining). Referring to Table 5, Fireworks was ranked #1 followed by Musical Themes and Honoring Famous People.

Table 5

Please rank the following promotional theme night/day categories that would encourage you to attend a game.

- a. 1 Fireworks
- b. 2 Musical Themes (Example: Oldies, Classical, Jazz, Rock)
- c. 3 Honoring Famous People (Example: Jerry Garcia, Frank Sinatra)
- d. 4 Special Holiday/Recognition (Example: St. Patrick's Day, Father's Day)
- e. 5 TV Sitcoms or Movie Themes (Example: MASH Night, Star Wars Night)

The first games to sell-out during the spring ticket sale event are the nights in which fireworks are displayed, therefore it is not surprising that the fans chose fireworks as the number one “Theme night/day categories that would encourage you to attend a game” (Table 5). The purpose of this question was to ask the fans which theme ideas they would enjoy the most. This information will aid the Saints staff in the development of future theme game nights.

The last question in section one asked the fans “On a scale of 1 to 5 rate how much you enjoy the following elements of a Saints game (5 being Enjoy Most).” Table 6 shows that the sixty percent of the fans rated Social Atmosphere as the “Most Enjoyable” element of a game followed by Affordability. On-Field Promotions and Promotional Giveaways resulted in a mean of 3.8-3.9 indicating that the fans rated these two promotional efforts between 3 and 4 on the scale of 1 to 5. This question is closely related to Question one, “What was your primary reason for coming to the game today?” The importance of this question (elements of a Saints game) and Question one is the relationship between rating a reason for coming and rating the elements after the fan has been seated, as the fans were surveyed after the third inning of each game.

Table 6

Rating the Elements of a Saints Game for Entertainment Value

Response	Enjoy Most		Enjoy Least			Don't Know	Mean	SD
	5	4	3	2	1			
Baseball Action	47%	34%	15%	2%	1%	1%	4.234	0.885
Special Appearances	18%	36%	30%	11%	3%	5%	3.557	1.008
Fireworks	46%	32%	16%	4%	2%	7%	4.142	0.987
Giveaways	36%	32%	22%	6%	2%	2%	3.96	1.016
On-Field Promotions	30%	35%	26%	7%	3%	2%	3.823	1.014
Social Atmosphere	60%	29%	8%	2%	1%	1%	4.44	0.817
Affordability	59%	28%	9%	2%	1%	2%	4.418	0.839
Mascot	28%	30%	24%	11%	6%	3%	3.612	1.187

Analysis by Target Market Type

Section II

This section of the survey fulfilled the second objective of the study to identify perceptions by target market type. The fans were asked, “Which of the following best describes you or your party today?” The three market segments and responses were Family, Friends, Corporate/Club/Organization or Other (CO/CL/OT). This question was analyzed in conjunction with the questions from Section I by one way ANOVA with a student Newman-Keuls multiple range test, which was used to determine the statistical significant difference between the three market groups.

Section two, analysis by target market type, allowed the researcher the ability to determine if there was a statistical significant difference of perceptions between the three market segments that attend a Saints game; Family, Friends, Corporate/Club/Organization or Other (CO/CL/OT). One-way ANOVA produced only four variables in which the groups were significantly different including: the Dice Roll Contest, Baseball Action, Social Atmosphere, and Fireworks.

The contest, illustrated in Table 7, that was determined as significantly different amongst the three groups was the Dice Roll Contest. Friends and CO/CL/OT were significantly different from the Family group as well as the CO/CL/OT was different from the Friends group. The mean of 3.2637, illustrates that the CO/CO/OT group enjoyed this contest the most in relation to the other two groups. In addition the table shows that the Family and Friend groups were not significantly different in regards to their opinions of the Dice Roll Contest.

Table 7

Dice Roll Contest		Family	Friends	CO/CL/OT
<u>Mean</u>				
2.8482	Family			
3.0524	Friends	*		
3.2637	CO/CL/OT	*	*	

*Significant at p=.05 level

The CO/CL/OT group enjoyed the Dice Roll Contest the most in relation to the other two groups (Table 7). The Dice Roll Contest requires a large group of people to be involved as the large foam dice is carried to the top row in the grandstand by a staff member who encourages the crowd below to stand up roll the large dice onto the field. It is understandable why this group enjoyed this promotion, as it is an event that a large group can partake in.

The next question that determined a significant difference between the groups, Table 8, was the element of Baseball Action. The Family group was significantly different from Friends and CO/CL/OT. The Family group, with a mean of 4.3685, shows that this group enjoys the element of baseball action more than the other two groups. Of

the three groups, the friends group showed the least amount of interest in Baseball Action with a mean of 4.0921.

Table 8

Baseball Action

		Friends	CO/CL/OT	Family
<u>Mean</u>				
4.0921	Friends			
4.1461	CO/CL/OT			
4.3685	Family	*	*	

*Significant at p=.05 level

The family group was significantly different from friends and CO/CL/OT in regards to Baseball Action and Fireworks (Table 8 and 10). The family group may share commonalties of interests. In this instance their commonalties may be the enjoyment of the game of baseball and the spirit of celebrating a national holiday together as a family. As the family group favored the fireworks variable, an assumption can be made that possibly children enjoy the firework display more than adults.

Social Atmosphere was also an element of Saints game in which significant differences occurred. With a mean of 4.5273, illustrated in Table 9, the Friends group significantly differed from the Family group. This result shows that the Friends group is more likely to attend a game for the social atmosphere element. The table also shows that the Family and CO/CL/OT groups were not significantly different in regards to their opinion of the Social Atmosphere element of the game.

Table 9

Social Atmosphere

		Family Mean	CO/CL/OT	Friends
4.3649	Family			
4.4253	CO/CL/OT			
4.5273	Friends	*		

*Significant at p=.05 level

The friends group enjoyed the Social Atmosphere the most (Table 9). As fans attend a Saints game with their friends their purpose may be to have the opportunity to socialize amongst themselves as well as to meet new people. The family and CO/CL/OT groups may attend the game to socialize with other family members or with the large group of people that they came to the game with.

The final item showing a significant difference between the groups was the Theme Night/Day question in regards to Fireworks. The ranking scale for this question was 1-5, 1 being the most favorite theme. Table 10 shows that Family differed from the Friends group with a mean of 2.3616. This mean signifies that the Family group preferred the firework theme more than the Friends or CO/CL/OT groups.

Table 10

Fireworks

		Family Mean	CO/CL/OT	Friends
2.3616	Family			
2.4317	CO/CL/OT			
2.7464	Friends	*		

*Significant at p=.05 level

Overall, as the three market groups indicated significant differences of only four variables, the researcher is able to assume that the three groups have relatively similar perceptions of all other promotions.

The results and findings discussed in Chapter IV provided the statistical applications that were needed to satisfy the objectives of this study; visitor perceptions and significant differences between the market groups that attend St. Paul Saints Baseball games. Chapter V will assess interpretations, conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations based on these results.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Baseball is a business, a business that strives to sell a memorable experience. Unlike other businesses, the St. Paul Saints focus their efforts towards selling an authentic memorable experience. Without the financial enrichment of a parent Major League team the Saints have relied on creativity and authenticity to generate profits through their promotions.

The Saints value authentic image versus something that is staged. Image is a theory, a theory that the Saints disregard or consider a staged authenticity. Although the Saints disregard image, their deliverance of the promotional message supports Gartner's components of image; beliefs, feelings, and actions of the consumer, which are tied directly to the Saints authentic presentations of promotion. A sense of reality in their promotional message enables the individual Saints fan as well as the market groups to accept and perceive the message at face value.

St. Paul Saints and Promotion

The authenticity of promotion and its theoretical basis has been the backbone to Mike Veeck's definition of image, "We are not pretending, this is who we are". In an outdoor stadium in St. Paul Minnesota promotions are based on true and outlandish humor. The Saints promotional endeavors encourage socialization by creating promotions that create conversation at the ballpark and later when the fan shares the experience with those that did not attend.

The Saints objective is to sell an authentic and memorable experience. The way that they fulfill this objective is to bring the fan as close to the game as possible. With this objective in mind, determining fan participation interest levels of promotional activities was a very important part of this study. The Saints front office staff along with the researcher designed the study with aspirations of matching the fans needs with current promotional efforts.

The Saints promoters put on a show to a sell-out fan base of 6, 329 fans each night. Their popularity derives from their ability to create a close knit community fan

base. They create this community feeling by: selling their promotional ideas to local sponsors, wrapping promotions around a player, inviting fans down onto the field to participate in on-field between-inning promotional contests, and encouraging a sociable atmosphere.

The Research

Eighteen hundred surveys were distributed over six home games in order to achieve the high response rate of seventy-five percent. The question format of likert scales, ranking, and yes/no answers enabled the fan to respond to thought provoking questions. The specific need for the research allowed the Saints Baseball Club to evaluate whether or not the fans perceived the promotional message as it was initially intended or communicated. The objectives of the research, individual responses and market group responses, allowed the researcher and the Saints to evaluate opinions by individual needs and the needs of a large market base

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study the researcher has found conclusions that fulfill the purpose of identifying the fan's perceptions of current promotions of the St. Paul Saints Baseball Club. The following conclusions reflect the intended objectives of determining visitor perceptions of current promotions and analyzing differences in visitor perceptions by target market type. The outstanding conclusions include: fan participation, a potential relationship between socialization and promotions, the Saints assumption of the need for the fans to become a part of the game, fan preference of on-

field between inning promotional contests, and significant perception differences of the target market groups.

The Saints philosophy and design of promotion is based on their assumption that the fans have a need to be a part of the game. The Saints are in business to sell an experience, as this experience is the sale of a intangible product, the Saints are hopeful that they can convert a intangible product into a tangible product by allowing the fans to step out onto the field to physically feel the experience. High levels of participation and interest in on-field between-inning contests, as indicated by the fans, is relevant to the Saints assumptions that the fans need to be a part of the game.

This study indicates the great potential of the close relationship between promotions and the highly desired socialization needs of the fans. Although the fans did not indicate that promotions were a motivator for coming to the game, the results indicated the on-field between-inning promotions were enjoyable. Combined on a likert scale of “Most Enjoyable” and “Enjoyable” sixty-five percent of the fans rated promotions as a respectable element of the game. This potential relationship between socialization and promotions is something that the fans may not be aware of. They may not be aware of the possible fact that promotions cause interaction, which in turn enhances the favoritism of socialization.

The fans chose a baseball cap and jersey as the most desirable giveaway promotions. The fan chose appeal type giveaways possibly in an effort to associate themselves with the players. Association to the players could also be relevant to the Saints assumptions that the fans need to be a part of the game.

Fans find on-field between-inning promotional contests that involve fans competing physically against one another most enjoyable. The physical competition between fans invites all those in attendance to cheer for one fan or the other just as they would for the two teams involved in a baseball contest. As the fans enjoy the competition factor, the Saints have wrapped this event of competition around a promotion in an effort to sell an idea or product.

The three market groups that attend a Saints game (Family, Friends, CO/CL/OT) indicated significant differences in only four overall variables of promotions: Dice Roll Contest, Baseball Action, Social Atmosphere, and Fireworks as a theme. The Family group may share common interests such as the enjoyment of Baseball Action and have children who highly favor the firework displays. The Friends group may attend the game to socialize amongst themselves as well as meeting new people. The CO/CL/OT group may be in search of entertainment in which their entire group can participate. The three market groups found to be significantly different in only four overall variables of promotion, therefore the researcher can assume that the groups were relatively similar in their perceptions of current promotions.

Implications

The Saints highly regard the opinion and perception of their fans. The Saints will use the results of this study to evaluate current promotions and also to aid in the development of future promotional ideas. The study's results were sent to the sponsors of the 1998 promotional season and potential future sponsors in hopes of continuing and encouraging future sponsorships.

In addition to enhancing sponsor relationships this study's findings could potentially serve as a tool to provide direction to future team owners, promotion directors, tourism developers, community relation officials, etc.

Recommendations

This study has provided a foundation for future research. The following recommendations for further research are directed towards sample size, collection of the

data, possible qualitative studies, elements of consideration for academicians and practitioners in the entertainment industry, and further research for the St. Paul Saints Baseball Club and the Northern League. These recommendations are designed to further the understanding of visitor perceptions in the baseball and entertainment industries.

1. The size of the sample in further research should be reduced. The reduction of the sample size could still be representative to the overall population and would also reduce the amount of data collected.
2. Collect the data over a shorter time period to eliminate possible confounding variables. The data could also be collected over a longer period of time. A longer time frame could filter out possible confounding variables.
3. As this study looked at the quantitative measurement of fan perceptions, a qualitative study could be conducted by interviewing fans in an effort to gather perceptions of the quality of the experience. Personal interviews could also be targeted towards individuals or market groups (i.e. interviewing family members or groups of friends). Personal interviewing could be used to determine the quality of the fan's experience and possibly determine whether or not the fan would be a potential return visitor.
4. This study provides a foundation for further study by academicians and practitioners in the entertainment industry. Certain elements of this study suggest the need for further study such as socialization, participation,

promotion, entertainment value, perception, etc. Any one element of this study could be further researched depending upon the researchers problem and objectives.

5. The St. Paul Saints Baseball Club could pursue a further study of the potential relationship between the highly desired socialization factor and promotions.
6. Independent Northern League officials would benefit from gathering perceptions from visitors of each individual team in an effort to increase overall attendance levels and maximize profits.

This study of fan's perceptions of promotions was derived from the St. Paul Saints Baseball Club's endeavor of satisfying the entertainment needs and wants of their fans. Saints Baseball is a contributor to a multibillion-dollar industry in which its product is the sale of a memorable experience.

The Saints constructed unique promotions in hopes of enhancing the game of baseball. In order to deliver a memorable experience this study identified the fan's perceptions of current promotions and analyzed the differences of perceptions by target market type. By asking the fans to evaluate current promotions for entertainment value, the Saints can further their endeavors of fulfilling the needs and wants of their fans.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

199
St.  aints
Fall Survey

Please complete the following survey and return it to Fan Services to pick up your free gift.

Dear Baseball Fans:

The Saints would like to know more about the most important part of their organization, you, the fans. Your responses will help toward improving customer service. Thank you for your time, we sincerely value our fans' input.

Your responses will be kept confidential.

I understand that by returning this questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

Note: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher or research advisor and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-STOUT Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-STOUT, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.

1. What was your primary reason for coming to the game today? (Circle only one.)

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. Baseball Action | b. Entertainment/Special Appearances |
| c. Giveaways | d. On-field Contest Promotions |
| e. Social Atmosphere | f. Affordability |

2. Please indicate which promotions or giveaways that would encourage you to attend a Saints game. (Circle all that apply)

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|
| a. Sport bag | b. Logo ball | c. Bat |
| d. Player cards | e. Schedule magnet | f. Coffee cup |

11. The size of your household is:

- a. 1 b. 2 c. 3) d. 4 e. 5 f. 6 or more

12. Your yearly household income is:

- a. Less than \$15,000 b. \$15,001-\$24,000 c. \$24,001-\$35,000
d. \$35,001-\$50,000 e. \$50,001-\$100,000 f. \$100,000 +

13. In regard to your home, do you:

- a. Rent/lease b. Own c. Other

14. Your highest level of education is:

- a. Grammar/Jr. High School b. Attended High School c. Graduated High School
d. Attended College e. Graduated College f. Professional or Grad School

15. Which of the following best describes you or your party today? (Circle only one.)

- a. Came alone b. Family
c. Friends d. Corporate function
e. Club or organization f. Other _____

Thank you! Please return this survey to fan services to pick up your free gift.

APPENDIX B
SAINTS STAFF

1998 ST. PAUL SAINTS STAFF

Mike Veeck	President
Marvin Goldklang	Chairman
Bill Murray	Co-Owner
Bill Fanning	Vice President/General Manager
Tom Waley	Operations Manager
Liz Adams	Promotions Director
Eric Webster	Media Relations Director/P.A. Announcer
Bob St. Pierre	Director of Corporate Advertising
Jason Lonstein	Assistant Director of Merchandising
Bill Fisher	Director of Merchandising
Kelly Komppa	Office Manager
John & Steve Marso	Directors of Food and Beverage Operations

