

PROMOTIONAL FACTORS AFFECTING POTENTIAL COLLEGE STUDENT CONSUMER'S DECISIONS TO ATTEND MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL GAMES

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This study explored different types of promotions within the selected factors (game day, distance, ticket price discount, concession discount, giveaway, and special event), their influence on a potential consumer's choice of attending a Minor League Baseball (MiLB) game, and the influences of consumption situation (attending with friends versus significant other). Two hypothetical consumption situations were used to examine college students' ($N = 201$) preferences of promotional situations. Conjoint analyses indicated that the relative importance of all factors did not largely depend on the consumption situation. However, there was a significant difference of the consumer's decision to attend based on the type of promotion within each factor. This study encourages sport managers of MiLB teams to consider these types of promotions that most affect the potential consumer's decision to attend games.

Key words: Event attributes; Promotion factors; Conjoint analysis; Minor League Baseball; Event attendance

Introduction

Spectator spending in the sports industry is approximately \$26.17 billion per year, and the sport industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the world (Howard & Crompton, 2003). Due to the increasing growth of the sport and entertainment industry, the spectator's discretionary spending has become more stratified. This has caused a significant challenge for sport managers to retain and increase consumers' attendance at sporting

events, which is vital for the survival of sport organizations. As a result, sport researchers and practitioners have begun to focus their attention on the factors affecting game attendance, such as winning percentage, opponent quality, ticket price, promotions, and day of the week (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2003, 2006; Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; Gifis & Sommers, 2006; Lee & Won, 2012; McDonald & Rascher, 2000). While factors such as winning percentage may impact game attendance (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2006), the core product of a team (e.g.,

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winning performance) cannot be controlled by the marketer (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007). The issue for sport marketers is that they are responsible for developing strategies to sell the sporting event to potential consumers even though they have no control over the core product.

Fortunately for sport marketers, they do have control over the peripheral products of the team (e.g., marketing promotions). Previous research has indicated these peripheral factors (i.e., promotions) have gained more interest because they can be controlled by the sport marketer (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2003, 2006; McDonald & Rascher, 2000), unlike the team's performance. The results of the sport marketing studies have shown marketing promotions are influential on a consumer's decision to attend a sporting event (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2003, 2006; Fink et al., 2002; Gifis & Sommers, 2006; Lee & Won, 2012; McDonald & Rascher, 2000). In fact, previous research has shown that these promotional efforts are indeed effective at increasing attendance (19.6%), and the positive effects of marketing promotions are on the rise (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2003, 2006; Gifis & Sommers, 2006; McDonald & Rascher, 2000). This means these marketing promotions products can help minimize the impacts of a poor team performance (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2006) and assist sport marketers in achieving their goal to maintain and increase attendance levels, as well as generate revenue.

There are various types of marketing promotions in the sport industry, and Boyd and Krehbiel (2003, 2006) categorized them into three groups: price discount, special events, and giveaways. They studied the effects of the different types of marketing promotions on Major League Baseball (MLB) game attendance and found that the promotions degree of effectiveness on attendance at MLB games depends on the specific types and number of promotions. This supported the findings by McDonald and Rascher (2000), who also found that the various types of promotions impact the attendance levels at MLB games differently.

The minimal studies that have been completed on Minor League Baseball (MiLB) found factors such as winning percentage affect game attendance differently than for MLB games (Gifis & Sommers, 2006). More specifically, winning percentage has little to no effect on attendance at MiLB games (Gifis & Sommers, 2006). These differences are

crucial for sport researchers and practitioners to understand because tickets sales and concessions are two of the primary sources of revenue for MiLB teams. MLB teams have other significant primary sources of revenue such as stadium naming rights, broadcast rights fee, and merchandise sales (Howard & Crompton, 2003); therefore, those sport organizations are not primarily dependent on game attendance levels. For the MiLB, however, sport marketers need to have a better understanding about the factors that have the greatest impact on consumers' decisions to attend a game.

Research in the economics literature has been conducted to examine which promotions have the greatest impact on consumers' decisions to attend MiLB games. Gifis and Sommers (2006) conducted a regression analysis on various types of promotions at MiLB games to find which ones positively affected attendance the most. They found that firework shows (usually on Thursdays and Saturdays) had a significant effect and increased attendance the most out of all of the promotions (i.e., fireworks, bobble head, special guest appearance, and giveaways) tested. They also concluded that special events such as celebrity autograph signings were predictably positive and highly significant.

Boyd and Krehbiel's (2006) MLB study examined three different types of promotions (price discount, giveaways, and special events) and their effects when combined with timing variables (day vs. night; weekday vs. weekend). They found that the bobble head promotion, the most expensive giveaway, had the greatest impact on attendance. When promotions were grouped or "stacked" in the study, a giveaway and special event combined had the second most significant effect on attendance. Two or more special events combined during the game had the third most significant effect on attendance overall. While the bobble head promotion had the most significant impact on attendance, Boyd and Krehbiel (2006) noted that the bobble head's significant effect on attendance was more likely based on the popularity of the fad and not long lasting. Therefore, Boyd and Krehbiel concluded that stacking promotions might have a more enduring effect on consumers' decisions to attend MLB games than individual promotions. For MiLB, minimal research has been conducted to examine the specific types of promotional items that have the greatest impact on consumers' decisions to

attend MiLB games; only bobble heads and fireworks have been examined by Gifis and Sommers (2006). In addition, no research has been conducted on the stacking of promotional items to determine which have the greatest effect on the consumers' decisions to attend MiLB games. Based on the fact that there are approximately 160 MiLB teams in the US with charged admission (Minor League Baseball [MiLB], 2012), and minor league sports are a portion of the total sport spectator spending in the sport industry, creating an attractive bundle of desired product attributes for MiLB games warrants examination.

Social contexts are also an important part of a spectators experience and affect their attendance decisions (Mullin et al., 2007). Wakefield and Inman (2003) found that consumers' price sensitivity is affected by the social context (i.e., consuming the product alone or with others) in which individuals consume products. More specifically, Wakefield and Inman concluded that consumers are less price sensitive when consuming products with other people. Various studies have also consistently found that attending sporting events with family and friends have a significant influence on consumers' attendance decisions (Boyd & Krehbiel, 1999, 2003, 2006; Lee & Won, 2012; McDonald & Rascher, 2000).

MiLB often promotes games as a way to spend time with family members; however, James and Ross' (2002) study found that MiLB consumers' motives to attend games in order to spend time with family members were neutral. MiLB fans did agree that the "opportunity to spend time with friends" was a stronger motive to attend games than fans of MLB (James & Ross, 2002). To capitalize on consumers' motives to attend games to socialize with family and friends, sport marketers should emphasize the social aspects of attending a game by offering promotions such as group ticket discounts and seating (Fink et al., 2002; Funk, Mahony, & Ridinger, 2002; James & Ross, 2002).

Minimal studies have been conducted in the sport marketing literature that examines the influence of consumption situations on sport consumers' purchase behaviors. Because Wakefield and Inman (2003) found that consumers' price sensitivity is indeed affected by their social context, this study attempted to identify which type of social situation (i.e., "with your friend" or "with your significant other") has the greatest effect on the sport

consumers' decision to attend a MiLB game when combined with various types of promotions. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore what types of promotions (i.e., price promotion, special events, and giveaways) and which stackings of those specific types of promotional items have the greatest effect on potential consumers' decisions to attend MiLB games, and whether these attributes differ according to the consumers' social situation.

Method

Participants

Previous research has found large portions of consumers who attend minor league games are under the age of 40 and single (Bernthal & Graham, 2003; James & Ross, 2002; Zhang et al., 2001). The minor league team used in the current study is located in a large metropolitan area in the southeast region of the US that has 20+ colleges and universities within a 1-hour driving distance to the team stadium; therefore, college age students are a significant target market for MiLB. Likewise, the majority of undergraduate college students are single in terms of marital status, which is another reason the college student population is of interest to MiLB sport marketers. Based on these findings, we felt it was relevant to study a population of individuals who were predominantly under the age of 40 and single, and who were also located in a MiLB market. Using convenience sampling, we surveyed a total of 201 sport management and physical activity students enrolled in a large university in the southeastern US who voluntarily participated in the study. This was a convenient target population to identify and access because the population already had a relationship with sport through their collegiate studies in sport. Males constituted 64.2% of the sample and females constituted 35.8% of the sample. Participants were undergraduate students with a mean age of 21.15 years ($SD = 1.58$).

Procedures

After receiving approval through the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the data were collected using a cross-sectional survey design. The pencil-and-paper surveys were administered face to face, and

they were self-administered by the participants. We deemed it appropriate to recruit the participants through various sport management and physical activity courses at the university because it was highly probable that those students already held some interest in sports because they were actively engaged in studying sport at the collegiate level. The respondents were given the purpose of the study and asked to consent before proceeding to the paper-and-pencil survey. The participants of the study received no compensation for participation in the study.

Measurement

Using previous studies that examined different types of marketing promotions (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2003, 2006; McDonald & Rascher, 2000), we established six common attributes that influence a potential consumer’s decision to attend a MiLB game: game day, travel distance, ticket price discount, concession discount, giveaway, and special event. Each of these factors contained three levels that were specific to each particular attribute, except the “game day” attribute, which had only two levels (see Fig. 1). The “game day” attribute referred to whether the game was occurring on a weekday or weekend. The “travel distance” included three travel distances: 20 minutes, 40 minutes, and 60 minutes. The four other attributes were related to the marketing promotions

that occur at MiLB games: ticket price promotion, concession discount, giveaway, and special event. The “ticket price promotion” included buy one/get one (BOGO) free, \$3 off with student ID, and no discount. “Concession discount” included three possible options: reduced food items, reduced beverage items, and no reduction. The marketing promotion “giveaway” attribute included a t-shirt, bobble head, or no giveaway. Lastly, the “special event” marketing promotion attribute included an autograph sessions with a star athlete, a popular character appearance (i.e., ZOOperstars), and no event. Based on conjoint analysis, the survey was required to have a total of 18 scenarios, which were made up of different combinations of attribute levels to create various promotional stacking options for the potential consumers. The participants were required to rate each MiLB game scenario on an 11-point scale (0 = *do not prefer* to 10 = *definitely prefer*) for each of the social situations. There were a total of two social situations (situation 1 = with your friend; situation 2 = with your significant other); therefore, there were a total of 36 scenarios presented to the participants of the study. The two social situations were used to determine if college age consumers’ decisions to attend MiLB games differ according the social situation. Even though the target sample in the study was identified as single according to their marital status, the participants could have a significant other (i.e., boyfriend or

Selected Five Attributes and Factor Attributes	
1. <u>Ticket Price Discount</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ BOGO➤ \$3 off with student ID➤ No discount	4. <u>Concession</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Reduced food items➤ Reduced beverage items➤ No reduction
2. <u>Game Day</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Weekday➤ Weekend	5. <u>Giveaway</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ T-shirt➤ Bobblehead➤ No giveaway
3. <u>Distance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ 20 minutes➤ 40 minutes➤ 60 minutes	6. <u>Special Event</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Autograph session w/star athlete➤ ZOOperstars➤ No event

Figure 1. Promotional items.

girlfriend). We examined whether these “significant others” impacted the effects the promotional stackings had on the consumers’ decisions to attend MiLB games compared to the impact of “friends.”

Data Analyses

We used SPSS Conjoint 12.0 to conduct a conjoint analysis to analyze the different factors and promotional stacking scenarios potential sport consumers may encounter when deciding to attend a MiLB game. Conjoint analysis is a measurement method that is useful for market segmentation and product positioning (Green & Krieger, 1991). This type of analysis provides sport managers with the tools to better understand the consumers and offer the optimal promotional setting in the pursuit to increase attendance (Won, Hwang, & Kleiber, 2009). We also conducted a correlation analysis to explore the tradeoff patterns between the different game attributes. Finally, we conducted a cluster analysis to group the prioritized choice attributes.

Results

Table 1 reports the relative importance scores of each MiLB game attribute for two consumption situations. The aggregate conjoint analyses revealed that, when attending a MiLB game with friends, travel distance (31.28%) was the most important game attribute, followed by giveaway (17.13%), concession (15.31%), ticket price discount (13.34%), special event (11.07%), and game day (11.07%). As reported in Table 1, there was no significant difference when attending a MiLB game with their significant other. For college students, travel distance was about three times ($2.83 = 31.28/11.07$ in situation 1; $2.74 = 31.13/11.36$ in situation 2) more important than game day, while it was twice ($1.83 = 31.28/17.13$; $1.97 = 31.13/15.79$) more important than the second most important factor, giveaway. Among the promotional items examined in this study, the ideal promotional combination would be a weekend game within a 20-minute distance with BOGO, reduced food price, bobble head, and an autograph session with a star athlete. In addition, such promotional items as \$3 off and t-shirt giveaway were deemed very attractive for college-aged potential consumers.

Table 1
Results of Conjoint Analyses

Promotional Item	Relative Importance Score (Ranking)	
	Situation 1	Situation 2
Travel distance	31.28 (1)	31.13 (1)
Giveaway	17.13 (2)	15.79 (2)
Concession	15.31 (3)	14.95 (3)
Ticket price discount	13.43 (4)	13.97 (4)
Special event	11.77 (5)	12.80 (5)
Game day	11.07 (6)	11.36 (6)

Correlational Analyses

Table 2 reports the correlation coefficients among the relative importance scores of the six selected MiLB event attributes. The lower and upper diagonals represent the correlation coefficients for situations 1 and 2, respectively. For situation 1, the results show that respondents make trade-offs among choice factors, especially with regard to the travel distance. When attending a game with friends, college students might be more willing to travel further distance if there are special events ($r = -0.33$, $p < 0.001$), price discount ($r = -0.30$, $p < 0.001$), or concession deals ($r = -0.28$, $p < 0.001$). Those who prioritize giveaway items are willing to travel greater distance ($r = -0.20$, $p < 0.01$), care less about price discount ($r = -0.29$, $p < 0.001$), and attend a game on a less preferred day ($r = -0.21$, $p < 0.01$).

For situation 2, the two highest correlations were found between distance and special events ($r = -0.49$, $p < 0.001$) and between distance and price discount ($r = -0.41$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that college students make clearer trade-offs when deciding to attend MiLB games with their significant other compared to attending games with their friend. For example, they are willing to travel greater distance with a significant other if there are preferred special events or ticket price discount. The results also indicated that giveaways ($r = -0.26$, $p < 0.001$), price discount ($r = -0.15$, $p < 0.05$), and special events ($r = -0.14$, $p < 0.05$) might be good options to attract a couple to a game on less preferred days.

Cluster Analyses

K-means cluster analyses were conducted to segment college-aged spectators based on their

Table 2
Correlations Among MiLB Game Attributes per Consumption Situations

Situation	Attributes	Distance	Giveaways	Concession	Price Disc	Events	Days
1. With friends	Distance	—					
	Giveaways	-0.20**	—				
	Concession	-0.28***	-0.13	—			
	Price discount	-0.30***	-0.29***	-0.28***	—		
	Events	-0.33***	-0.11	-0.01	-0.02	—	
	Day	-0.28***	-0.21**	-0.10	-0.11	-0.25***	—
2. With significant other	Distance	—					
	Giveaways	0.03	—				
	Concession	-0.21**	-0.27***	—			
	Price discount	-0.41***	-0.26***	-0.20**	—		
	Events	-0.49***	-0.11	-0.11	0.07	—	
	Day	-0.29***	-0.26***	-0.05	-0.15*	-0.14*	—

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

preferences concerning promotional items (see Table 3). In situation 1, while “travel distance” was the most important game attribute in general when participants considered attending a MiLB game with a friend, this was not true for all college students. Therefore, it was important to examine the cluster analyses to gain a better understanding of the college-age potential consumers. The first and biggest cluster ($n = 97$) was named the “distance bounded” because individuals in this cluster were concerned most with “travel distance.” The second

cluster was labeled “bottom line driven” ($n = 58$) as this cluster was concerned more with ticket price and game day. The last cluster ($n = 46$) was named “event driven” as individuals in this cluster were influenced by giveaways, concession-related promotions, and special events.

To further understand the fan clusters in situation 1, subsequent ANOVA and chi-square tests were conducted to investigate the differences in fan profiles based on respondents’ prioritized event attributes (i.e., cluster memberships). The “bottom

Table 3
Summary Statistics of Cluster Preferences

Cluster	Mean Values (Relative Importance: %)						Cluster Size (<i>N</i>)
	Driving Distance	Give-away	Concession	Ticket Price	Special Event	Game Day	
Situation 1							
1: Distance-bounded	39.60	16.18	14.58	10.37	10.83	8.44	97
2: Bottom line-driven	25.50	12.85	13.75	19.55	10.90	17.46	58
3: Event-driven	21.02	24.53	18.84	12.17	14.87	8.57	46
Significance of cluster differences							
<i>F</i> Value	170.08	44.29	8.31	29.94	7.38	38.86	
Significance	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	
Situation 2							
1: Distance-bounded	39.29	16.79	15.26	9.28	9.74	9.63	95
2: Comp-driven	24.48	16.70	12.43	22.42	19.81	8.72	66
3: Day & food-driven	22.72	11.94	18.39	11.16	15.98	19.81	40
Significance of cluster differences							
<i>F</i> Value	107.55	7.72	10.18	110.82	18.43	44.58	
Significance	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

Note. $df(1, 199)$ for each attribute.

line-driven" cluster had a statistically higher level of fan identification ($M = 3.84$) than the "distance-bounded" (3.34) and "event-driven" (3.22) clusters [$F(2, 197) = 4.19, p = 0.017$]. The "bottom line driven" cluster also attended MLB games more frequently ($M = 6.97$) in comparison to other two clusters (3.77 and 2.79 games per season, respectively) [$F(2, 197) = 3.13, p = 0.046$]. While the results were not statistically significant ($\eta^2 = 5.78, p = 0.056$), the female proportion was greater in the distance-bounded cluster (42.3%), in comparison to other two clusters (34.5% and 21.7%).

For situation 2, "travel distance" was again the most important promotional item in general, but not all college students considered it to be the most important promotional item when considering attending a game with a significant other. Similar to situation 1, the first and biggest cluster ($n = 95$) was named the "distance bounded" because individuals in this cluster were concerned most with "travel distance" and moderately influenced by "giveaways." The second cluster was labeled "comp driven" ($n = 66$) as this cluster was concerned more with the complimentary promotions: giveaways, ticket price, and special events. The final cluster ($n = 40$) was named "day and food driven" as individuals in this cluster were influenced by the day of the week and concession discounts. In terms of game attendance frequencies and spending behaviors, there were no statistical differences across clusters based on the results of ANOVAs and chi-square tests.

Discussion

With the sagging economy and the competition of consumers' dollars, sport managers are facing many new challenges to increasing game attendance. Sport marketers are being encouraged to focus on game attractiveness factors, such sales promotions, they can actually control, instead of the attractiveness factors (e.g., opponent, winning percentage) that they have little to no control over (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2003, 2006; McDonald & Rascher, 2000). Some findings have contradicting results regarding the extent to which promotions are effective and other studies have begun to examine the types, timing, and stacking of promotions that are effective. However, all of the studies have found that promotions do effectively increase attendance

at professional baseball games (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2003, 2006; McDonald & Rascher, 2000). Therefore, the current study contributed to the current literature by examining specific types of promotions and promotional stacking in MiLB. These findings also have the potential to assist sport marketers in creating better strategic marketing plans to reach their goal of increasing game attendance.

There were several key findings in the current research that are consistent with previous studies (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2003; Zhang et al., 1997). Price discounts have been shown to increase attendance at sporting events, and the results in our study indicate that price discounts do have an effect on consumers' decisions to attend MiLB games. Specifically, the current study found that the BOGO ticket price was preferred to the \$3 off promotion by the potential consumers of MiLB. Similarly, Zhang et al. (1997) found that BOGO is a promotion that should be utilized to increase attendance, especially when attendance is expected to be low. The finding in the current study makes sense because the MiLB team studied is relatively new (less than 5 years old) and has low attendance. Therefore, a BOGO promotion would have an impact on the consumers' decisions to attend a game.

The study also found that weekend games were preferred over weekday, even when combined with four other promotions. This supports Boyd and Krehbiel's (2003) finding that any promotions added to already attractive games (i.e., weekend games) does not negatively affect attendance. Boyd and Krehbiel (2006) found promotions such as bobble heads, with the greater impact compared to other promotions, were most effective for weekday games. However, when the promotions were stacked in our study, weekend games grouped with other promotions had a greater effect on attendance decisions than weekday games. The sample in this study being college students could explain the difference because their class schedules may not allow them to travel to the weekday games.

Giveaway was the second type of promotion we included in the various promotional stacking scenarios. In our study, bobble heads were found to favorably affect attendance more than a t-shirt, which was consistent with previous findings (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2006; Gifis & Sommers, 2006). Boyd and Krehbiel's (2003) study discovered that giveaways were more

effective than special events, concluding it is because giveaways have monetary value and are a collectable, thus adding value. Therefore, Boyd and Krehbiel (2006) completed a subsequent study and found that the more expensive giveaway promotions ($> \$5$) had the greatest effect on attendance. While bobble heads are a giveaway promotion costing more than \$5 each, Boyd and Krehbiel (2006) created a separate category for bobble heads to determine their impact alone. The researchers found that bobble heads alone had the most significant effect on attendance over any other single promotion or "stacked" promotion. It can be concluded that, while Boyd and Krehbiel (2006) explained these results as bobble heads merely being a fad that would soon give way to something else, this study shows bobble heads continue to have a significant effect on fans' attendance decisions. This means that either the fad still continues or bobble heads are more than just a fad. Future studies will need to continue to be conducted to determine this bobble head phenomenon.

Special event was the third type of promotion that we examined in our study. Our results were consistent with Gifis and Sommers' (2006) findings in that an "autograph session with star athlete" was preferred over a famous performing group of inflatable sports characters called the "ZOOperstars." We are aware this may be due to the fact that the participants were not knowledgeable of the "ZOOperstars" characters; therefore, this illustrates how important it is for the sport marketers to advertise their promotions in order to educate the potential consumers about the special guest they will be hosting.

Concession price discounts was the fourth type of promotion we included in our study, but it is not a promotional factor that has been studied much in the past. The results indicate that concession price discounts do have an effect on potential consumers' attendance decisions, specifically when there are "reduced food items." We would have expected reduced beverage items to be the most preferred concession promotion based on the population studied (i.e., college students), but reduced food items was more preferred by the potential MiLB consumers. This may be due to the wording on the survey being "beverage" and not wording referring to "adult beverages."

The social situation of the potential consumers and how it effects their attendance decisions was

examined; however, we found there was no significant difference in the potential consumers' decisions to attend a MiLB game based on their social situation. We can conclude that it is not necessary for sport managers to create promotions that differentiate spending time "with your friend" versus spending time "with your significant other." Future research needs to be conducted to determine whether the effects of "stacking" promotions are dependent on social factors in general. The current study also found that there was no statistical difference in social situation based on the gender of potential consumers. This is consistent with the previous study completed by Fink et al. (2002), which found that the influence of family and friends did not have a significant impact on attendance decisions based on the consumer's gender.

There were some significant trade-off patterns that sport marketers should take into consideration when developing a strategic marketing plan. For example, potential college student consumers who care more about special events and ticket prices are willing to travel greater distances to a game. On the other hand, potential college student consumers who do not like to travel far distances are less sensitive to price discounts and special events. These patterns were more significant for consumers' potential to attend games with a significant other. Furthermore, potential consumers are more willing to travel further distances with a significant other to a game when there are giveaways, but the same is not true when traveling far distances with a friend. This indicates that promoting giveaways to consumers further distances from the stadium may be most beneficial when coupled with a "date night" theme.

Based on the situation 1 cluster analysis, the consumer profiles developed in this study can also be used by sport marketers to develop more effective marketing plans. For instance, sport marketers should not expend much time or money marketing to females who live far away from the baseball stadium. They should spend more resources that market to bottom-line driven potential consumers because they had a statistically higher level of fan identification over the distance-bounded and event-driven clusters. In addition, it may also be beneficial to the MLB sport marketers to promote more to the bottom line-driven consumers because they

also attended MLB games more frequently than the other two groups.

Marketing Implications

There was no difference in the potential consumers' decisions to attend a MiLB game based on their social situation; therefore, marketers should not designate resources to promotions catering to a consumer's specific social situation (attending with a "friend" vs. "significant other"). According to our findings, the potential consumers ranked giveaways as the most important marketing promotion; therefore, sport marketers should implement giveaways into their strategic marketing plans when attempting to attract college-aged consumers to MiLB games. Sport marketers should also focus on concession promotions (i.e., "reduced food items" and "reduced beverage items") because these promotions had the second greatest impact on college-aged consumers' decisions to attend MiLB games. These promotions can be presented in various different ways, such as "50 Cent Hot Dog Night," "TWOsday," which offers \$2 hot dogs and popcorn, and "Thirsty Thursday," which discounts sodas and adult beverages (MiLB.com). However, further research does need to be conducted to determine if the effectiveness of these concession promotions differs, and if so, which are the most effective. Special events were the least important marketing promotion to the study participants. Therefore, sport marketers should focus on this type of promotion least when marketing to potential college-aged MiLB consumers.

The current study and previous research has made it clear that the timing, types, and stacking of promotions do matter (Boyd & Krehbiel, 2003, 2006). While our findings contradicted previous findings concerning promotional timing (weekend promotions more effective than weekday promotions), this is evidence that there is not a one size fits all philosophy in professional sports, specifically baseball. It is possible that the effectiveness of promotional timing is different for MLB and MiLB; therefore, there needs to be more extensive studies on MiLB as there has been in MLB. Regardless, it is important for sport managers in general to realize that promotional timing is a controllable factor that can significantly increase attendance; therefore,

they must know their individuals markets and utilize the promotions efficiently. Otherwise, sport managers may be spending valuable resources on promotions that have minimal attendance effects because the promotions are being implemented during the wrong "time" or to the wrong market.

Future Studies and Limitations

While the current study examined promotional factors that affect potential consumers' attendance decisions for MiLB games, further studies need to be conducted to measure the actual increase of attendance. Even though the participants ranked which combination promotional factors were most important to them, this does not indicate whether they actually do decide to attend a MiLB game. Future studies need to be conducted at the MiLB games with actual consumers and the factors that affected their decisions to attend the game. These future studies could help sport managers understand why specific promotions are more effective than others and with whom they are most effective.

Further research on MiLB games needs to be completed in order to support or reject Boyd and Krehbiel's (2003) MLB findings that promotions for already attractive games may have a saturation effect or diminishing returns on attendance. In other words, future research needs to be conducted to determine if promotions are less effective for already attractive MiLB games (i.e., weekend game). Otherwise, sport organizations could be wasting their valuable time and money by "overstacking" promotions.

As with any research, this study had various limitations that were recognized by the researchers. First, this study was limited because it did not take the "with family" social context into consideration; therefore, future research should examine how attending "with family" impacts marketing promotions and attendance decisions. As previously mentioned, future research also needs to be conducted to determine whether the effects of "stacking" promotions are dependent on social factors in general. Second, this study was limited because it used a convenience sample and only examined factors that affect potential consumers' decisions, specifically college students, to attend MiLB games, which made the generalizability of the results of this difficult.

More research needs to be conducted using a random sample of members from the local community to establish more generalizable findings. The population also included mostly participants who were single in relation to their marital status; therefore, future research should examine the factors that affect married consumers' decisions to attend MiLB games because they may differ. Third, this study was also limited because it only explored one MiLB market. Further research should include other MiLB team markets to make more generalizable conclusions.

A fourth limitation to this research was the fact that the study included the use of the "BOGO" term and the "ZOOperstar" marketing promotion. Based on the participant feedback we received, many individuals did not know what "BOGO" meant nor had knowledge of the "ZOOperstars." Consumers must be knowledgeable of the description of the promotion before it can be effective, and sport marketers must make sure they are promoting their idea clearly. Fifth, this study was also limited because each type of marketing promotion included two specific promotions (e.g., giveaway = t-shirt and bobble head); however, there are numerous other specific promotions (e.g., miniature bats and gym sacks) that could have been listed for each category. Future research needs to be conducted that includes a more comprehensive list of each type of marketing promotion to determine which specific promotions are most important to consumers' decisions to attend MiLB games. Additionally, future studies should consider other game attributes, such as time of day and opponent, which may impact the effectiveness of the marketing promotions. The results of this type of study could impact which promotional "stacking" is most effect during day versus night games or during rival versus nonrival games.

Lastly, the study was limited because it was a cross-sectional design. A longitudinal study may provide more representative results of the factors that affect consumers' decisions to attend MiLB games.

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