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THE PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES: WHY DO THEY PLAY
TO AN EMPTY STADIUM?

by
Christine A. Bosco

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 1, 2002

Approved by _____
(Professor)

Date Approved 5/1/02

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ABSTRACT

Christine A. Bosco
THE PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES: WHY DO THEY PLAY
TO AN EMPTY STADIUM?
2001/02
Dr. Donald Bagin
Master of Arts in Public Relations

The purpose of this study was threefold: 1) to determine fans' attitudes about the Philadelphia Phillies, 2) to determine why there is low attendance at Phillies home games, and 3) to determine how fans can be lured back to the stadium. A sample (n = 100) from the Philadelphia and southern New Jersey areas was chosen to complete a 12-question survey. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. Data was processed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for frequencies and cross-tabulations. Major findings from the study include: 36% of respondents indicated that ticket price was their first consideration when deciding to attend a game, 37% of respondents need to see a winning team as incentive to attend a game, and 24% of respondents identified themselves as Phillies fans and did not attend a single home game last season. Suggestions of ways to improve attendance at Phillies home games were discussed.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Christine A. Bosco
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TO AN EMPTY STADIUM?

2001/02

Dr. Donald Bagin
Master of Arts in Public Relations

The purpose of this study was to determine fans' attitudes about the Philadelphia Phillies, to determine why there is low attendance at Phillies' home games and to determine how fans can be lured back to the stadium. Results indicated that ticket price and team record were the most important factors considered when fans were determining whether or not to attend a game.

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I would like to use this page
to thank the following people
who played an important role in my life
over the past year.

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Christine Koehler – my best friend – for providing moral and technical support

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Preface

The year is 1985. I am a fifth-grader at D'Ippolito Intermediate School in Vineland, New Jersey, a suburb of Philadelphia. As the end of the third semester nears, I am anticipating a straight-A report card. I have been working very hard this semester. I just *have* to earn all A's. If I make the Principal's List a great prize awaits me. I will receive four tickets to a Philadelphia Phillies baseball game! I can already see myself coming home from school, breathlessly rushing through the front door, tickets in hand, surprising my family. Growing up in a working-class family, free baseball tickets were nothing to laugh at. I can hardly wait. Going to a Phillies game will be so much fun. And seeing Mike Schmidt play ball will make it even better. Oh, how jealous the other kids in my class will be when they hear that I get to go to a game. I wait in agony for the last day of the semester to come. At last, the coveted tickets are in my hands. Next stop, Veterans Stadium for a sunny spring day of baseball.

This scenario is a true story taken from my life as a child growing up in a south Jersey suburb in the 1980s. At that time, baseball was the sport that all the neighborhood boys played. I attended all of my older brother's baseball games and watched closely from the bleachers since girls were not allowed to play on the boys' teams. If only there had been a pigtail league for me to play in. Eventually, the coach felt bad for me and let me be the "bat boy" for the team, as long as I wore my hair under my cap and a team jersey so I would blend in with the other players.

We all watched baseball games on television with our fathers at night. Even my grandmother knew the names of the Phillies players. All the kids knew who Mike Schmidt was. Children and adults were drawn to Veterans Stadium to watch him play ball. A day at the ballpark was nothing short of magical. I vividly remember the hotdogs, the popcorn, the baseball caps, and the stadium filled to capacity with cheering fans on their feet at the near mention of Mike Schmidt. It was an exciting time that both children and adults alike would not forget.

Fast forward to the year 2001. The Phillies are playing a home game. The promotion for the night is a rally towel. I decide to go to a game and enjoy a warm, end-of-season fall night of old-fashioned baseball. Imagine my dismay to find that the night's attendance barely breaks 17,000 people and that half of the concession stands are closed because there are not enough fans to support them. It's not like the old days I think to myself as I trudge down an entire stadium level to buy a \$4 soda. Something is not right here.

Then it hits me: Someone needs to figure out why this stadium is not filled to capacity with cheering Phillies fans. Someone needs to find ways to draw fans into the stadium. And I know just the person to do it: me.

Chapter One

Statement of the Problem

The Philadelphia Phillies had a winning season in 2001. It was the team's first winning season since 1993. One would think the level of fan support in Philadelphia and the southern New Jersey suburbs would be overwhelming. Not so. Fan attendance is at a low point at Veterans Stadium, home of the Philadelphia Phillies major league baseball team. The stadium, which holds approximately 65,000 people, saw an attendance range in the 2001 season from a low of 11,311 to a high of 47,529 with an average of 22,975 people per game. These figures indicate that on average the stadium is only about one-third full on any given home game day. It is obvious that there is a problem selling tickets to Philadelphia Phillies home games.

Local sports talk radio and newspapers discuss the Phillies fans' general attitudes toward the team quite frequently. Callers to the radio show voice different opinions to explain why they do not support the Phillies and why they are disgusted with sports in the City of Brotherly Love. Some reasons for lack of support are given repeatedly. It is these reasons that need more attention since they may be an indication of what Phillies franchise management is doing wrong. By uncovering what the Phillies fans want and expect from the team, it will be possible to communicate to the franchise what improvements need to be made before the next season is spent playing to another half-hearted crowd.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to make suggestions to the Phillies franchise that may increase fan attendance at Philadelphia Phillies home games. To have an end result of increased fan attendance, the study will attempt to determine:

- 1) Phillies' fans' attitudes about the team;
- 2) Why there is low fan attendance at Phillies home games; and
- 3) How fans can be lured back to the stadium.

At the conclusion of this study, it will be possible to make suggestions to the public relations and marketing offices of the Phillies franchise on ways they can build their fan base again. If a fan base can be rebuilt, the stadium will once again be full and a feeling of community spirit and support will surround the team, making baseball games an enjoyable family outing for residents of the Philadelphia area.

Initial research indicates several factors that influence fan attendance at sports events. This study will attempt to find the most important factors affecting fan attendance at Phillies games. Some of the factors that may be considered in this study include: age of the franchise, age or "newness" of the stadium, effect of the television telecast, game schedules, other major sports teams in the same location, household income, population size in the immediate area of the event, stadium capacity, star players, substitution of the event for other forms of entertainment, ticket prices, time of games, weather and winning percentage.¹ For example, winning percentage has been identified as the primary determinant for attendance at major league baseball games.

¹ Pan, D., Zhu, Z., Gabert, T., & Brown, J., "Team Performance, Market Characteristics, and Attendance of Major League Baseball: A Panel Data Analysis," The Mid-Atlantic Journal of Business 35 (1999): 78.

Generally speaking, some problems plague all major league baseball franchises. These include the feelings surrounding the baseball strike of 1994. When the season was cut short, fans felt betrayed by the owners, players, and the game of baseball itself. A survey taken during the strike indicated that 44% of the country did not miss baseball at all and did not care if the strike ended. High ticket prices and the strike have left many baseball fans disgusted with baseball. The cost of a day at the ballpark is high, which makes it difficult for people of ordinary incomes to attend games. The average cost of attending a major league ball game for a family of four was \$97.25 in 1995. This high price tag may make it impossible for families to afford a day at the stadium. The pursuit of profit has caused both players and owners to lose touch with the fans, their most important customers.² According to Teenage Research Unlimited's Fall 1995 Teenage Marketing and Lifestyle Study, baseball is the least likely of the major sports to be described as "in" by people aged 12 to 19. The study indicated that only 57% of teenagers said baseball was "in," compared to 83% for basketball, 82% for football and 63% for hockey. These statistics sound an alarm about the future of baseball. "People think baseball is old, old, old," said Jim Masterson, vice president of Major League Baseball. "And the perception is the problem." More and more kids are turning to soccer and hockey instead of playing Little League baseball.³

Specifically, in Philadelphia, fans have given multiple reasons for abandoning the Phillies. Fans have said that the Phillies franchise has a small-market mentality and is unwilling to spend the money necessary to compete for top free agents. Although the

² Dortch, S., "The Future of Baseball," American Demographics 18.4 (1996): 28.

³ St. John, A., "Baseball's Billion-dollar Question: Who's on Deck?" American Demographics 20.10 (1998): 62.

Phillies play in the fifth-largest city by population, they have the seventh-lowest payroll at \$41,664,167. Phillies home game attendance ranked 27th out of the 30 major league teams.⁴ Fans attribute this lack of attendance to negative residual feelings from the strike. “This city has got a lot of blue-collar people,” said Phillies manager Larry Bowa. “When you shut the doors on them with a strike, that hurts them and they don’t forget too easily something like that. I think they felt violated...,” he said.

Importance of the study

This study is important to both the Phillies franchise and the fans. It is important to the franchise because fan ticket purchase revenue is second only to television broadcast revenue for the franchise.⁵ If more fans purchase tickets, the Phillies franchise will realize increased revenue. With this new money, the team may be able to attract star players, provide better promotions to the fans and eventually lower ticket prices. It is possible that if ticket prices were lower, families would once again make a day out of going to the ballpark. This would result in even better attendance rates and the Phillies might again be able to play to a sold-out crowd.

This study is important to Phillies fans because it will be an outlet for them to express themselves and have their opinions recognized and documented through a formal study. If the fans see management making improvements that are for the fans’ benefit, they may decide to return to the stadium to watch the Phillies play. Just as with any person or group that feels slighted, if the offending party tries legitimately to make things

⁴ Goldenbach, A., “Playing to a Difficult House – at Home: Famously Churlish Fans Slow to Embrace Phillies,” The Washington Post 18 June 2001: D6.

⁵ Pan 1999, 86.

better, the complaining party is more likely to forgive them. In this case, the fans need to see that Phillies management takes their complaints seriously and is truly interested in reviving team support by keeping the fans' needs in mind at all times.

In addition to the benefits that the Phillies franchise will receive, the results of this study may be useful to other professional sports teams that are experiencing a lack of fan support at their home stadiums. It may present warning signs that they may recognize and enable them to head off a disgruntled fan abandonment before it happens. It may also provide them with ideas on how to rebuild their fan base if they should ever find themselves in the situation that the Phillies are facing now.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used throughout this thesis.

- 1) Phillies: Refers to the Philadelphia Phillies major league baseball franchise.
- 2) Home game: Any Philadelphia Phillies baseball game played at Veterans Stadium.
- 3) Fan: Any person who supports the Philadelphia Phillies through ticket sales, by watching Phillies games on television or by listening to Phillies games on the radio.
- 4) Turnstile attendance: The number of people sitting in the fan sections of the stadium during a game. This number is measured by official attendance records and is supplied by a sports almanac.
- 5) Paid attendance: The number of tickets sold for a game as measured by official ticket sales of the stadium box office.

- 6) Promotion: Any item, discount or special event that is given/offered to a fan in attendance at a Phillies game.

Assumptions and Limitations

A primary assumption the researcher will make during this study is that any person asked to respond to a survey will answer honestly. There would be no reason to answer otherwise.

The researcher will also make the assumption that both the turnstile attendance and the paid attendance figures gathered through research are from a reliable source and have been authorized by the Phillies franchise and by Major League Baseball to be used as official data.

A limitation to this study is the length of time allotted to complete the study. The study will be conducted during the time frame of September 2001 to May 2002. Data will be use for the time period April 2001 to November 2001, which is the length of the major league baseball season.

Another limitation to the study will be the fact that the researcher is going to survey people that live in the Philadelphia and South Jersey area. There may be other Phillies fans outside this area that would like to contribute to the study but they will not have that opportunity.

Plan of Study

The plan of study will begin with an analysis of Phillies attendance records for the 2001 season. Next, the researcher will select a sample of 100 Phillies fans to participate in a survey. The researcher will strive for a 100% response rate. The survey will be designed with questions aimed to determine several attitudes of Phillies fans. The responses to this survey will indicate why fans do not attend Phillies home games as frequently as in the past, why fans are not supporting the Phillies team and what would draw the fans back to Phillies games. The survey instrument will contain both closed-ended and open-ended questions and will therefore have a mix of both quantitative and qualitative data to tabulate. After the surveys are returned, they will be coded and entered into statistical software, namely SPSS. After a statistical analysis of the data gathered through the survey, the researcher hopes to be able to make suggestions to the public relations and marketing divisions of the Phillies franchise on ways to implement new ideas to draw fans back to Phillies home games.

Chapter 2

Introduction

This chapter will discuss all of the available literature the researcher could find that is relevant to the thesis topic. The researcher used two libraries and online searches to find information. Newspapers were used as a source and included the New York Times, the Philadelphia Daily News, The Philadelphia Inquirer, the Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post. Journals were another source used by the researcher. Relevant journals that were examined included American Demographics, American Economic Review, The American Economist, Amusement Business, Applied Economics, Atlantic Economic Journal, Economic Inquiry, Incentive, International Review of Sport Psychology, Journal of Sport Behavior, Journal of Sport and Social Issues, Maclean's, The Mid-Atlantic Journal of Business, Quarterly Review of Economics and Business, Social Science Quarterly, Sociology of Sport Journal and Sport Marketing Quarterly. Other sources used by the researcher included books and online resources.

Each topic discusses possible reasons for the decline in fan attendance at major league baseball games. The researcher suspects that some of these reasons may be directly applicable to the Phillies' franchise. The chapter is separated into seven subtopics for ease of reading. The subtopics are: fan attendance, fan age and interests, promotions/advertising by franchise, franchise attitudes, baseball strike of 1994, ticket prices and players' attitudes.

Literature Review

Fan Attendance

One of the questions to be explored in this thesis aims at finding a reason for the paltry attendance figures recorded by the Phillies ticket office. According to a 1998 article in *The Washington Post*, baseball still attracts more ticket buyers than football, basketball and hockey combined. Although attendance is up overall for the third year in a row, half of the 28 teams that were in the majors in 1997 actually lost customers in the 1998 season.⁶ If it is true that fan attendance is on the rise it must be in cities other than Philadelphia. The Phillies attendance record ranked 27th out of the 30 major league teams in 2001.⁷ “I could sit here and talk about our team for 10 hours and whatever I say, it’s not going to make more people come out,” Phillies manager Larry Bowa said. “If you’re asking me if I want to see a full house, yes, I want to see a full house every game.”⁸

What’s a team to do to lure fans back into its stadium? According to the “Strike Legacy Index” discussed in a 1996 article in *American Demographics*, even a winning year can’t lure fans back if they lose interest in the game. Having a higher than average games won ratio has helped other teams lessen post-1994 strike attendance declines. The teams successful in retaining fans include the Boston Red Sox, Texas Rangers and Los Angeles Dodgers. Teams with winning seasons such as the Atlanta Braves and the Philadelphia Phillies were not so lucky. An analysis of attendance records for teams in

⁶ Farhi, P. & Maske, M., “A Hit After a Strike: Baseball is Bouncing Back as a Business, But Can it Last?” *The Washington Post* 19 Jul 1998: H3.

⁷ Goldenbach D6.

⁸ Brookover, B., “Phillies Looking For a Full House,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 11 July 2001.

new stadia showed that fans were quicker to forgive a team if they had a new ballpark. This was the case in Cleveland, Colorado and Baltimore, where attendance rates were higher than average. The novelty of a new stadium seems to draw fans.⁹

A panel data analysis procedure was used to differentiate the effects of team attributes and market characteristics on attendance in Major League Baseball in addition to winning percentage. Researchers at Seton Hall University concluded that the size of the county population was a significant predictor of attendance potential in major metropolitan cities. They also discovered that the relationship between consumer demand and admission cost was inelastic. This means the cost of admission to a baseball game does not vary with the number of people who want to attend a game. In addition, these same researchers found that the presence of another major professional sports team in the same market would decrease attendance potential in Major League Baseball. Lastly, they point out that population growth in certain age groups could serve as a long-term indicator for the improvement of attendance ratio to the capacity of the stadium.¹⁰

Many studies have focused primarily on factors affecting attendance at sporting events. Siegfried and Eisenberg¹¹ cite the age of the franchise; Baade,¹² Quirk¹³ and Coffin¹⁴ cite the age or “newness” of the stadium; Demmert,¹⁵ Fizel,¹⁶ Hill¹⁷ and

⁹ Dortch 26

¹⁰ Pan 1999, 78

¹¹ Siegfried, J., & Eisenberg, J., “The Demand for Minor League Baseball,” Atlantic Economic Journal 8 1980: 61.

¹² Baade, R., & Tiehen, L., “An Analysis of Major League Baseball Attendance, 1969-1987,” Journal of Sport and Social Issues 14.1 (1990): 17.

¹³ Quirk, J., & Fort, R., Pay Dirt: The Business of Professional Team Sports (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992) 138.

¹⁴ Coffin, D. “If You Build It, Will They Come? Attendance and New Stadium

Bruggink¹⁸ cite the effect of the television telecast; Hill¹⁹ and Zhang²⁰ cite game schedules; Coffin,²¹ Demmert²² and Noll²³ cite other major sports teams in the same location; Bird²⁴ and Pan²⁵ cite per capita income or household income; Baade,²⁶ Branvold,²⁷ Bruggink,²⁸ Coffin,²⁹ Knowles³⁰ and Siegfried³¹ cite the population size in

Construction," In Baseball Economics, eds. J. Fizel, E. Gustafson, & L. Hadley (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996) 38.

¹⁵ Demmert, H., The Economics of Professional Team Sports (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1973) 26.

¹⁶ Fizel, J., & Bennett, R. "The Impact of College Football Telecasts on College Football Attendance," Social Science Quarterly 70.4 (1989): 984.

¹⁷ Hill, J., Madura, J., & Zuber, R., "The Short Run Demand For Major League Baseball," Atlantic Economic Journal 10. 9 (1982): 32.

¹⁸ Bruggink, T., & Eaton, J., "Rebuilding Attendance in Major League Baseball: The Demand For Individual Games," In Baseball Economics eds. J. Fizel, E. Gustafson, & L. Hadley (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996) 14.

¹⁹ Hill 35.

²⁰ Zhang, J., Pease, D., Hui, S., & Michaud, T., "Variables Affecting the Spectator Decision to Attend NBA Games," Sport Marketing Quarterly 4.4 (1995): 29.

²¹ Coffin 37.

²² Demmert 62.

²³ Noll, R., Government and the Sports Business (Washington: The Brookings Institute, 1974) 117.

²⁴ Bird, R., "The Demand For League Football," Applied Economics 14 (1982) 648.

²⁵ Pan, D., Gabert, T., McGaugh, E., & Branvold, S., "Factors and Differential Demographic Effects on Purchases of Season Tickets for Intercollegiate Basketball Games," Journal of Sport Behavior 20.4 (1997): 453.

²⁶ Baade 16.

²⁷ Branvold, S., Pan, D., Gabert, T., "The Effects of Winning Percentage and Market Size on Attendance in Minor League Baseball," Sport Marketing Quarterly 6.4 (1997): 36.

²⁸ Bruggink 18.

²⁹ Coffin 37.

³⁰ Knowles, G., Sherony, K., & Hauptert, M., "The Demand For Major League Baseball: A Test of the Uncertainty of Outcome Hypothesis," The American Economist 36.2 (1992): 75.

³¹ Siegfried 64.

the immediate locale of the event; Baade³² cites the stadium capacity; Baade,³³ Jones,³⁴ Schurr,³⁵ Schwartz³⁶ and Scully³⁷ cite star players; Hill,³⁸ Medoff³⁹ and Pan⁴⁰ cite the substitution of the event for other forms of entertainment; Baade,⁴¹ Bird⁴² and Siegfried⁴³ cite ticket prices; Knowles⁴⁴ and Marcum⁴⁵ cite the time of games; Baade,⁴⁶ Marcum⁴⁷

³² Baade 29.

³³ Baade 30.

³⁴ Jones, J., "Winners, Losers, and Hosers: Demand and Survival in the National Hockey League," Atlantic Economic Journal 12.3 (1984): 57.

³⁵ Schurr, K., Wittig, A., Ruble, V., & Ellen A., "Demographic and Personality Characteristics Associated with Persistent, Occasional, and Non-attendance of University Male Basketball Games by College Students," Journal of Sport Behavior 11.1 (1987): 10.

³⁶ Schwartz, J. "Causes and Effects of Spectator Sports," International Review of Sport Psychology 34.8 (1973): 28.

³⁷ Scully, G., "Pay and Performance in Major League Baseball," American Economic Review 64.6 (1974): 924.

³⁸ Hill 32.

³⁹ Medoff, M., "On Monopsonistic Exploitation in Professional Baseball," Quarterly Review of Economics and Business 16.2 (1976): 114.

⁴⁰ Pan 1997, 447.

⁴¹ Baade 28.

⁴² Bird 648.

⁴³ Siegfried 60.

⁴⁴ Knowles 77.

⁴⁵ Marcum, J., & Greenstein, T. "Factors Affecting Attendance in Major League Baseball II: A Within-season Analysis," Sociology of Sport Journal 2 (1985): 318.

⁴⁶ Baade 29.

⁴⁷ Marcum 319.

and Noll⁴⁸ cite the weather; and Baade,⁴⁹ Demmert,⁵⁰ Jones,⁵¹ Noll,⁵² Scully⁵³ and Whitney⁵⁴ cite winning percentage.

Some common excuses for not attending Phillies games have been cited in local newspapers. These excuses include Veterans Stadium being a poor facility for watching a game, the lower-cost tickets associated with minor-league baseball games and the strike causing fans to become disenfranchised with the highly paid players.⁵⁵ "...the other thing I've heard is that a lot of fans don't like to watch a game at the Vet," said Bowa.⁵⁶

Fans: Age & Interests

Baseball's core customers are aging. Baseball is losing its fan base in the younger demographic. Teens seem to be more interested in basketball and football and "extreme" sports are also attracting the younger crowd.⁵⁷ Fewer kids are playing baseball in the United States. Baseball now competes with sports such as soccer and lacrosse that were not so popular years ago. There is also new technology to contend with. Video games

⁴⁸ Noll 119.

⁴⁹ Baade 21.

⁵⁰ Demmert 26.

⁵¹ Jones 56.

⁵² Noll 117

⁵³ Scully 919.

⁵⁴ Whitney, J., "Winning Games Versus Winning Championships: The Economics of Fan Interest and Team Performance," Economic Inquiry 26.10 (1988): 704.

⁵⁵ Fitzpatrick, F., "Fanning Out: Phillies Can't Find the Fans," The Philadelphia Inquirer 16 Aug. 2001.

⁵⁶ Brookover

⁵⁷ St. John 62.

and Internet chat rooms seem to occupy a huge chunk of young people's free time. Years ago this same free time would have been spent outdoors participating in sports activities.⁵⁸ Other research claims that baseball needs a new star player, someone the younger crowd can follow and look up to. Baseball's pursuit of profit may also be a turnoff for young adults. These young people have lower incomes than people their age did ten years ago. Why would struggling young people watch pompous millionaires who aren't decent enough to acknowledge their fans' existence?⁵⁹

In addition to the younger generation's waning interest in baseball, there appears to be a weakening interest among adults as well. According to a Gallup Poll conducted for USA Today and CNN, almost seven in ten baseball fans said they were less interested in Major League Baseball now than they had been at the start of the 1994 season and only 25% of adult sports fans say they avidly follow baseball.⁶⁰ The average baseball fan is a white male, between 37 and 38 years old, according to Major League Baseball statistics. This is not the kind of demographic that makes media buyers eager to purchase advertising or production time.⁶¹ A Gallup Poll sponsored by USA Today and CNN conducted in June 2001 via telephone of 1,011 people asked the following question: Are you a fan of professional baseball, or not? The results indicated that 35% of adults said "yes, they were a fan", 14% said "somewhat" and 51% said "no they were not a fan." At this rate, the sport of major league baseball cannot afford to alienate the fans they are clinging to so desperately.

⁵⁸ Levin, B., "The Baseball Blues," Maclean's 114.36 (2001): 64.

⁵⁹ Dortch 27.

⁶⁰ Dortch 24.

⁶¹ St. John 62.

Promotions/Advertising

Other reasons given for poor fan attendance at baseball games are lackluster promotions and bland advertising. Fans want to come to a game and receive a gift that is practical and that they can take home and use afterwards. In the 1998 season, the Phillies attracted almost a quarter-million more fans than the previous season. Dave Buck, the Phillies vice president of advertising/sales attributes this attendance boost to several promotions. These include "Darren Daulton Night" and a very aggressive outdoor billboard campaign called "Rockin' and Rolen," a takeoff on Phillies third baseman Scott Rolen.⁶²

In 2000, the Minnesota Twins used the Bobblehead doll as a fan promotional item. Bobblehead dolls, popular in the 1960s, made a huge comeback in 2000. When the Bobblehead dolls were given out at the Twins games, attendance increased 70% on each promotion night. Patrick Klinger, director of marketing for the Twins, claims the Bobblehead dolls were so successful because they possess a lot of nostalgia. The Bobblehead dolls are not the average promotional item, not the standard giveaway. Fans lined up for hours to make sure they received their Bobblehead doll. Scalpers even tried to get a piece of the action. These same Bobblehead dolls can be found on the popular Internet auction site E-bay. Ray Finfer, director of marketing for Promotional Products Association International, says Bobblehead dolls are popular because they are a collector's item. They attract more people who would not ordinarily come to a game.⁶³

⁶² Muret, D., "MLB Attendance Soars Out of the Park, Up 12% in '98," Amusement Business 110.43 (1998): 3.

⁶³ Casison, J., "Something of a Phenomenon," Incentive 174.10 (2000): 13.

Interestingly, the Phillies gave away Bobblehead dolls in the 2001 season, just one year after the success of the Twins giveaway promotion.

In a discussion about the Phillies-Reds game at the end of the 2001 season, a point is made about winning baseball not being the attraction it once was in Philadelphia. On this particular night, the attendance was over 38,000 with over 16,000 in walk-up sales, the largest walk-up sales figure in 19 years. The article speculates that the draw for the fans was the Larry Bowa Bobblehead doll promotion that night. Fans were actually accepting vouchers for the dolls when the supply of 36,000 ran out. Seems gimmicks might be the way in Philadelphia.⁶⁴ Of course, fans attending the Phillies-Marlins game earlier in the same month as the Bobblehead doll giveaway received a magnetic schedule for the coming season and a Pez dispenser for Fan Appreciation Day.⁶⁵

An article written during the 1994 season discussed the Phillies promotional schedule. If one were to compare the items mentioned in this article to any other year's promotional schedule, it would be almost identical. That is a problem. When the promotions become predictable, people get bored. How many years will a fan return to a Phillies game to receive a hat or T-shirt? Some of the promotions offered by the Phillies include Businessperson's Specials, magnetic game schedules, Phillies Phanatic & Tastycake birthday parties, Phanatic caps, T-shirts, beach towels, Kodak photo night, team photo pack day, fireworks shows, watches, equipment bags, ski caps, Rosenbluth travel Instant Vacation Night and Fan Appreciation Night.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Jerardi, D., "Phillies Still Dealing With Attendance Issues," The Philadelphia Daily News 28 Sept. 2001.

⁶⁵ Donnellon, S., "Phillies' Fans Deserve More," The Philadelphia Daily News 4 Sept. 2001.

⁶⁶ Hall, W., "Phillies' Promotional Schedule Loaded," Amusement Business 106.16 (1994): 7-8.

Franchise Attitudes

Fans have said they see the Phillies as a franchise with a small-market mentality. The fans think the franchise is not willing to spend the money necessary to compete for top free agents. This is evident when considering the Phillies play in the fifth-largest city (population 1,417,601) and have the seventh-lowest payroll (\$41,664,167) in baseball. This payroll is expected to remain at the same level until the new stadium opens in 2004.⁶⁷

An article written by an anonymous angry young fan in Philadelphia goes on to say that the owners of the Phillies franchise seem to care only for themselves and not for the teams or fans. He cites two major reasons for the drop in fan loyalty: lack of owner loyalty and the perception by fans that owners are simply cunning businessmen with little regard for the game and even less for the fans. Owners have shown a lack of commitment to their cities and the players on their teams as well. Some owners even use cities in a game to get what they want, such as new stadiums. Phillies owners show disregard for the team and fans with their unwillingness to spend enough money to be competitive in the major leagues. Bill Giles, the majority owner of the Phillies, stated in an interview, “the team will not spend any money on big time free agents because the team already has a good nucleus.”⁶⁸

Another author adds that baseball’s owners now see the fans – their customers – as a minor concern. The owners see fans as a little piece of the business best handled by Ticketmaster. It seems the owners have opted for short-term profits at the expense of

⁶⁷ Goldenbach D5

⁶⁸ “Take me out to the ballgame?” <<http://www.geocities.com/Colosseum/Field/8390/ballgame.html>. >

long-term brand equity. The teams see attracting fans to their ballparks as a second-place priority. This is because television revenue is so lucrative in the bigger cities that it surpasses ticket sales as the largest share of a team's revenue. It seems that the pursuit of profit has caused the owners to lose touch with their customers.⁶⁹

Baseball Strike of 1994

Some say baseball has never been the same since the strike of 1994. There's proof of that in writing everywhere. Philadelphians fell hard for the 1993 Phillies that captured the National League pennant that year. But those same fans have shunned the team after the strike that forced the cancellation of the 1994 World Series.⁷⁰ The 1994 strike cancelled the post-season and culminating championship; there was no World Series for the first time since 1904. Many fans see that season as unresolved, as a season that is not "real."⁷¹ The strike was the culmination of all the problems that baseball had been experiencing. It left many fans disheartened with the sport and they stopped attending games. The 1994 season was one in which many players had the potential to break single-season performance records. When the season was cut short, these record performances were not achieved, and fans felt betrayed by owners, players and the sport itself. The strike forced fans to admit that baseball primarily is a business before all else. A survey taken during the strike found that only 25% of fans missed baseball "a lot" and 31% missed baseball "somewhat." Another 44% of fans "did not miss the game at all

⁶⁹ Dortch 23.

⁷⁰ Goldenbach D7.

⁷¹ Barra, A., "Sports: Fans Suspect Baseball Might Quit and Run," The Wall Street Journal 30 June 1995: B11.

and did not care if the strike ever ended.”⁷² According to a Gallup Poll conducted for USA Today and CNN, almost seven in ten baseball fans said they were less interested in Major League Baseball now than they had been at the start of the 1994 season.⁷³

Interestingly, fan sentiment was the same even for pre-season games. The Phillies played an exhibition game in Clearwater, Florida against the Toronto Blue Jays in March 1995. Anyone who approached the ticket window that day was given a free admission ticket. The game would include replacement players and drew a crowd of over four thousand fans. A fan commented, “As far as I’m concerned, let them stay on strike if we get into baseball games free. You can tell I have no sympathy for these characters.”⁷⁴

Phillies manager Larry Bowa believes the Phillies were one of the hardest-hit teams from the strike. “They took it personally in this town,” he said. “I really think the fans here got scarred by that...”⁷⁵

Ticket Prices

A fan concern that surfaces frequently is the price of tickets to major league baseball games. It seems that the players earn increasingly larger salaries. The fans fund these generous paychecks. The price of an average baseball ticket increased about 30% over the five-year span from 1992 to 1996. Fans that are tired of these climbing prices show their discontent by not going to as many games as they used to. It seems as though

⁷² Take Me Out

⁷³ Dortch 24.

⁷⁴ “Phillies Try to Lure Fans Back With Free Tickets,” The News & Observer Publishing Company 11 March 1995.

⁷⁵ Brookover

owners are not alarmed by the decrease in attendance. This is evident when considering that seventeen teams raised the price of tickets for the 1997 season after realizing an attendance decrease of 8% the year before.⁷⁶

Because the cost of a day at the ballpark is rather high, it is difficult for families of moderate incomes to go to games. The likelihood of attending a baseball game increases steadily with household income. Twenty-one percent of adults with household incomes of \$75,000 or more attend baseball games, making them 72% more likely than average to do so. Recent findings indicate that baseball's customers are much more upscale than they were ten years ago. Fans with household incomes of \$50,000 or more were more likely in 1995 than in 1985 to attend games. Attendance rates held steady for adults with incomes between \$30,000 and \$39,999 while rates decreased for adults at lower incomes. According to the Chicago-based Team Marketing Report's annual Fan Cost Index, the average cost of a day at a major league ballpark for a family of four was \$97.25 in 1995. This price tag is high enough to keep families from attending even one game per year.⁷⁷

Players' Attitudes

Baseball fans are like any other sports fans. The adults work hard to be able to afford to take their families to baseball games. The children sometimes idolize the players and dream about someday playing major league baseball. Imagine their disappointment when they finally get close to a professional baseball player, summon the

⁷⁶ Take Me Out

⁷⁷ Dortch 24.

courage to ask for an autograph and then are denied, turned away. The researcher has firsthand experience with autograph denial. The researcher remembers writing to a Philadelphia Phillies star player in 1983, when she was in fourth grade, and never receiving so much as an acknowledgment in return, let alone the autograph she requested. Looking forward from 1983 to the present, it seems as though nothing has changed in the world of baseball autographs. Professional ballplayers are still routinely ignoring requests from children for autographs.⁷⁸ These players walk off the field after a game without so much as an acknowledging glance up at the house, where their devoted fans stand, cheering them win or lose. It seems the players have forgotten what it is like to be a fan, have forgotten what it was like as a youngster attending games, dreaming about baseball. Again, it seems the pursuit of profit has caused most players to lose touch with their customers.

Summary

After a thorough review of the literature available on the research topic, it is evident that this topic has not been explored in depth. After examining the various problems encountered by major league baseball fans, owners and players, the researcher has concluded that no two cities and franchises are the same and that individual research into the city of Philadelphia and the Phillies franchise must be conducted. The next logical step to determine the attitudes and opinions of Phillies fans is to conduct a survey of local fans. This survey will attempt to answer the original research questions as stated in Chapter 1 of this thesis. Until this study has been completed, it is not possible to

⁷⁸ Take Me Out

speculate on the mindset of Phillies fans and how they truly feel about the Phillies franchise.

Chapter Three

The researcher used two general sources when researching information for this thesis: 1) a search of online databases offered through the Rowan University Library and the Vineland Public Library and 2) a search through publicly available search engines on the Internet.

The databases searched at the two above-mentioned libraries included ABI/Inform, Academic Search Premier – EBSCO, Academic Universe (Lexis-Nexis), Digital Dissertations, ERIC, Jake, JStor, New York Times, VALE and WebSpirs. The Interlibrary Loan system was used to attain books and copies of articles that were not available on the library premises.

In addition to online databases, the researcher examined the contents of the microfilm and microfiche collections in the Rowan University library as well as the bound journals and current periodicals.

The search engines used to search the Internet included AltaVista, Google, NetFind and Yahoo!

Selection of the Sample

The researcher administered a survey instrument to 100 participants. The participants identified themselves as willing to complete the survey by accepting the survey when approached. The participants were selected through intercept interviews in

a public place. This was not a randomly selected sample because not everyone in the larger universe had an equal chance of being selected. The reason for using the intercept interview was that if participants were approached in person, the researcher knew immediately if the person would complete the survey. The researcher then tried repeatedly to gather responses until 100 were collected. This approach also guaranteed a response rate of 100% for all surveys given to participants. If a mail survey were used, the researcher must wait for responses to be returned and might never collect the desired number of surveys in a timely manner. The researcher provided an incentive for people to complete the survey such as the opportunity to have an advance copy of the outcomes and results emailed to them before they are available in public as part of the finished thesis.

Measuring Instrument

The measuring instrument was a twelve-question print survey. All participants received the same survey. Questions on the survey instrument were both open-ended and closed-ended. The open-ended questions allowed for qualitative data while the closed-ended questions provided data that can be analyzed through basic statistical methods. Demographic questions also appeared on the survey. All data analyzed in this study was gathered solely from the survey instruments. The survey questions were designed in such a way that responses elicited information to answer the original research intent as stated in Chapter One: Phillies fans' attitudes about the team, why there is low attendance at Phillies home games, and how fans can be lured back to the stadium.

Procedures

To administer the survey instrument, the researcher first tested a draft of the survey on a small audience to check for readability and ease of completion of the survey. In addition, the researcher's thesis advisor and graduate seminar classmates tested the survey instrument. After taking into consideration any comments and suggestions made by the practice group, a final survey was written. The researcher then reproduced 100 surveys on paper that is light in color and in the Times New Roman serif font that is easy to read. The survey was printed on one sheet of paper and was printed in a double-sided fashion. The researcher hoped that using a single sheet of paper would encourage people to complete the survey by reducing the appearance of its length while also conserving resources by reducing the number of sheets of paper used.

Following the reproduction of the survey, a suitable location was determined for administering the survey. If permission was needed to conduct the survey on the desired premises, a letter of introduction would be written and followed with an in-person meeting to establish consent of the owner of the property.

After the location was guaranteed, the researcher picked a day where an adequate number of people would be available to complete the survey. When 100 surveys were complete, the researcher stopped the intercept interview process.

Analysis of Data

After the surveys were completed, a coding sheet was developed. Each closed-ended answer on the survey was coded in such a way to make data entry efficient. Data codes along with variable names and labels were then entered into the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software application. After data entry was complete, the data was run to determine the most frequent answers to the survey questions. Specifically, the researcher was looking for frequencies that elicited information pertaining to the original research questions as stated in Chapter 1. Cross-tabulations were conducted to combine data from closed-ended questions with data from demographic questions.

To tabulate open-ended questions, all descriptive comments were typed up and analyzed. If there were any comments that appeared repeatedly, these comments may indicate a common feeling or attitude of survey participants and would be included in the results section of the study.

Upon completion of all data analysis, a summary report was produced. This report included an original copy of the survey instrument along with final statistics showing the total number of responses for each part of every question in percent relative to the total number of participants. The summary contains conclusions drawn from the data analysis and recommendations for Phillies fan attendance improvement. Data is displayed in both graph and chart formats as well as in paragraph format. A copy of the summary was given to the Phillies franchise management team when the thesis was completed.

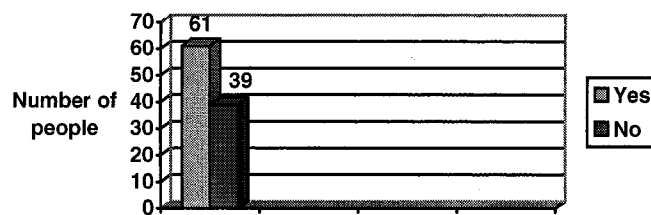
Chapter 4

Results

The following statistics are a result of the analysis of exactly 100 surveys returned to the researcher.

Question 1: Are you a baseball fan?

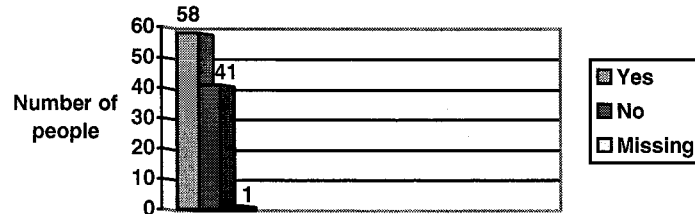
Graph 1: Baseball Fans



Of all respondents, 61% indicated that they were baseball fans while 39% indicated that they were not baseball fans. It should be noted that respondents who did not identify themselves as baseball fans frequently indicated on subsequent questions that they attended baseball games in the 2001 season. This could indicate a potential to turn non-fans into fans.

Question 2: Are you a Philadelphia Phillies fan?

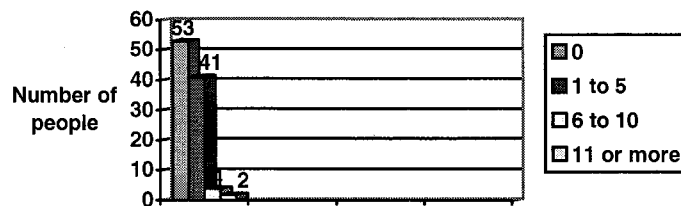
Graph 2: Phillies Fans



In relation to the above question, 58% of respondents indicated that they consider themselves fans of the Philadelphia Phillies. Although 41% of respondents did not identify themselves specifically as Phillies fans, their opinions were still considered important because, even as non-fans, they may have attended games in the 2001 season.

Question 3: How many Phillies home games did you attend in the 2001 season?

Graph 3: Home Games Attended

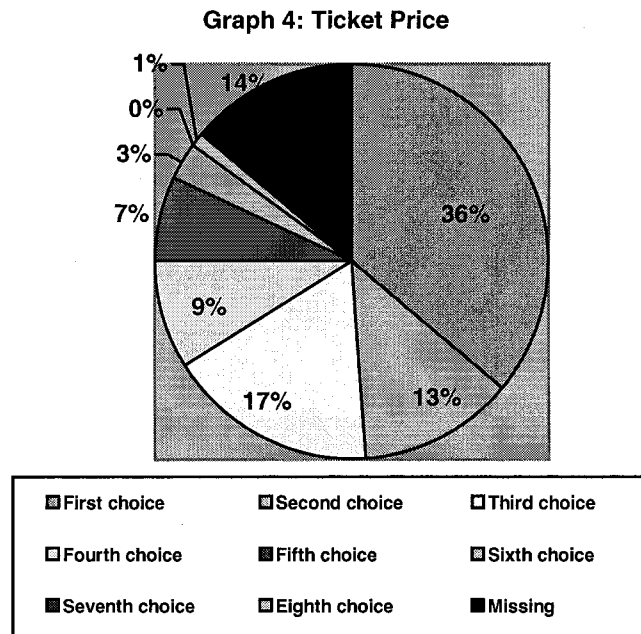


This is the first question in the survey that points to a problem. The results of this question show that 53% of respondents did not attend a single Phillies home game in the 2001 season. In reference to question two above, where 58% of respondents indicated that they were Phillies fans, one must begin to wonder why 53% did not attend a game.

A cross-tabulation of questions two and three revealed that 24% of respondents indicated that they were both a Phillies fan and did not attend a game in the 2001 season.

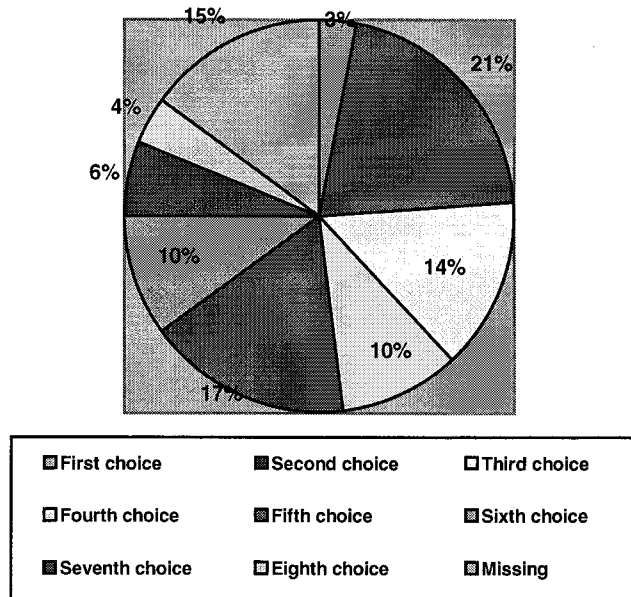
Question 4: Rank the importance of the following factors in your decision to attend a Phillies home game.

Results from each of the ranking choices are shown below in pie-graph format.



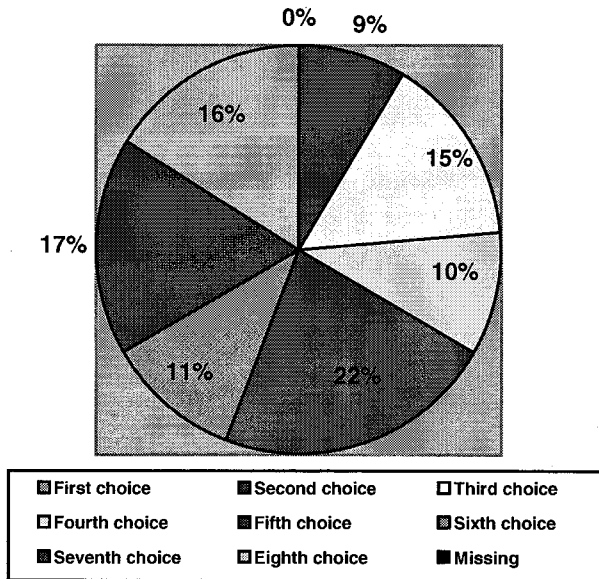
The results of the first ranking choice are in regards to ticket price and are displayed in Graph 4 above. According to the survey, 36% of respondents indicated that the price of tickets is most important to them when considering whether or not they will attend a game. For 66% of respondents, ticket price ranked in the top three most important factors affecting their decision to attend a game.

Graph 5: Parking Fee



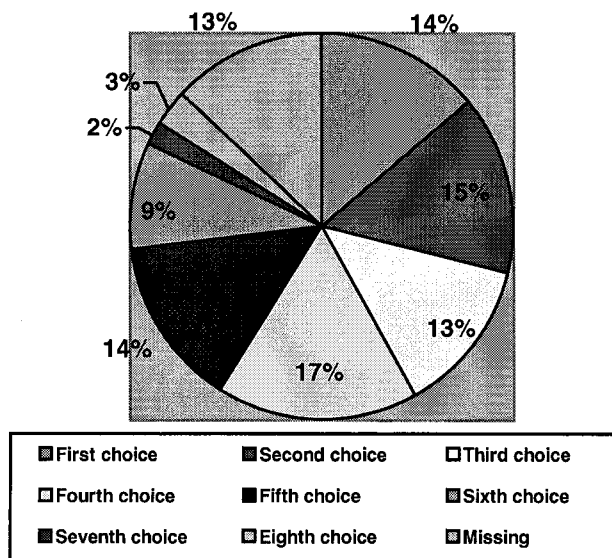
The results of the second ranking choice are in regards to parking fees and are displayed in Graph 5 above. Only 3% of respondents indicated that parking fees are their primary consideration when deciding whether or not to attend a game. However small this percentage seems, 38% rank parking fees in their top three factors affecting their decision to attend a game. That means that over one-third of respondents are aware of the cost of parking for a game and consider it an important factor.

Graph 6: Concession Prices



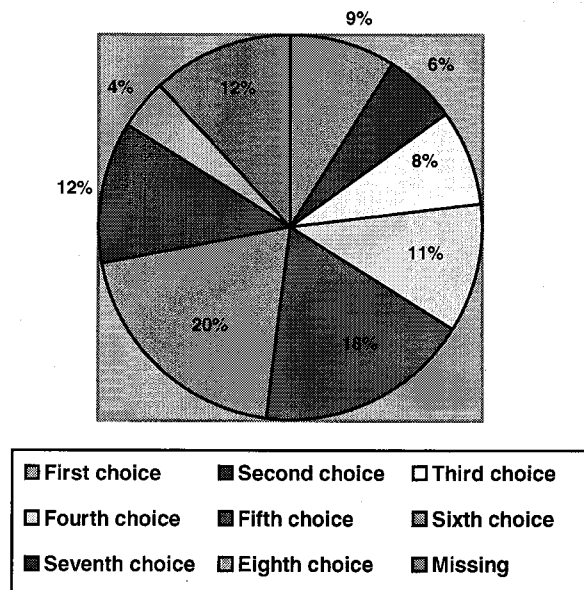
The results of the third ranking choice are in regards to concession prices and are displayed in Graph 6 above. No respondents ranked concession prices as their primary consideration when deciding whether or not to attend a game. When looking at the second and third choice ranking, it is evident that 22% of respondents chose concession prices as a factor that is important to them.

Graph 7: Time of Game



The results of the fourth ranking question are in regards to the times of games and are displayed in Graph 7 above. The survey shows that 14% of respondents ranked the times of games as their primary consideration when deciding whether or not to attend a game. In addition, time of game ranked in the top three most important factors for 42% of all respondents.

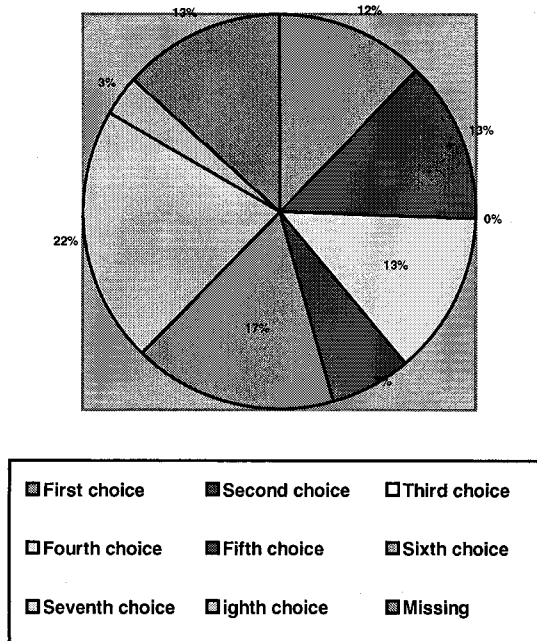
Graph 8: Location of Stadium



The results of the fifth ranking question are in regards to the location of Veterans Stadium and are displayed in Graph 8 above. Only 9% of respondents indicated that the location of the stadium was the primary factor they considered when deciding whether or not to attend a game. However, that number rises to 23% when looking at the respondents that indicated stadium location as one of their top three factors affecting their decision to attend a game. The survey then shows that an estimated one-quarter of all respondents are somewhat concerned with the location of the stadium. The Phillies' new stadium will be built in the same area as the existing Veterans Stadium. If this is the

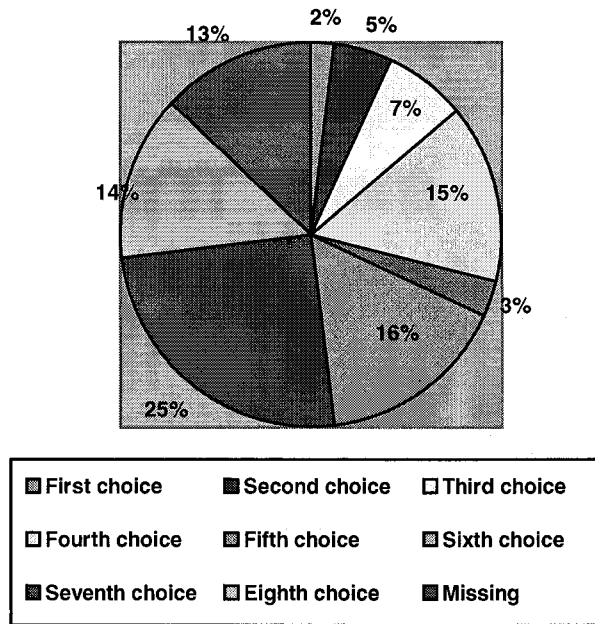
case, there may continue to be a significant number of people who consider the location of the stadium in the future.

Graph 9: Record of Team



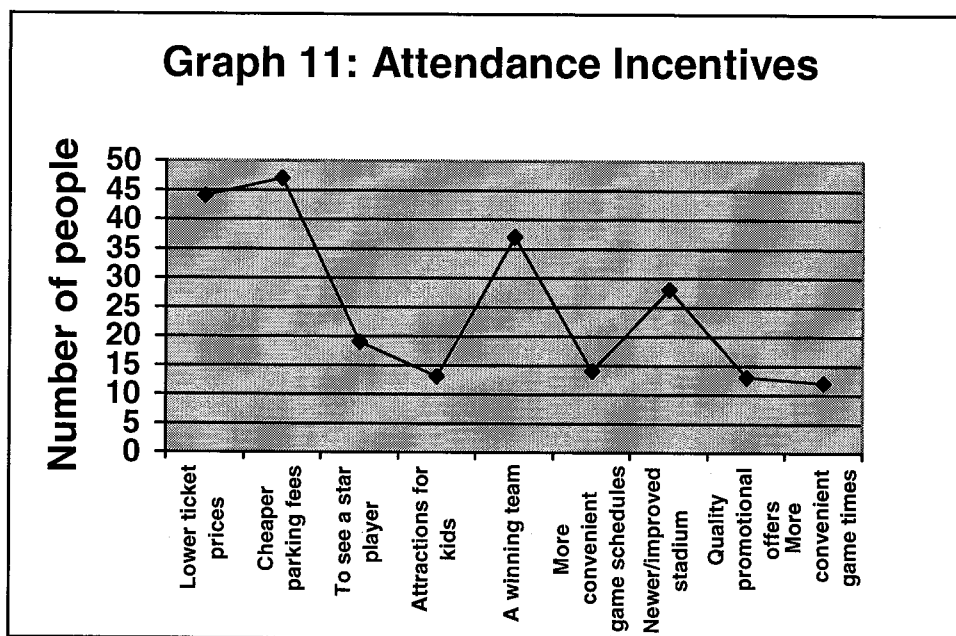
The results of the sixth ranking question are in regards to the record of the team and are displayed in Graph 9 above. It makes sense that fans want to see a winning team and for 11% of respondents the team record is the primary factor they consider when deciding whether or not to attend a game. When combining the number of respondents who ranked team record as one of their top three considerations that percentage increases to 33%. This number is significant because even though the Phillies had a winning record in the 2001 season their attendance was low.

Graph 10: Promotional Schedule



The results of the seventh ranking question are in regards to the promotional schedule at the stadium and are displayed in Graph 10 above. It is apparent that only 2% of respondents ranked the promotional schedule as their primary consideration when deciding whether or not to attend a game. This number seems rather low when considering previous research that shows that attendance hits a high point on such days as Bobblehead Doll day or Dollar Hotdog day. A reason for this ranking could be because respondents may want to attend a game with a special promotion but may not be able to attend due to a conflicting schedule.

Question 6: Please check all of the answers that apply to you: In order for me to attend a game, I need:



Graph 11 above delineates the responses to question six of the survey. It is obvious that almost half of all respondents need lower ticket prices and cheaper parking fees as incentives to attend a game. Originally, the researcher would have thought that fans would want to see a winning team. One theory is that a winning team draws more people. The other theory is that a true fan is a fan through the good seasons and the bad seasons as well. Either way, it is evident that respondents to this survey are more concerned about the costs associated with attending the game even more than the record of the team.

As expected, a more convenient game schedule and more convenient game times were slightly important, selected 14% and 12% of the time, respectively. Again, two schools of thought could be considered here. One would be that a true fan would make it

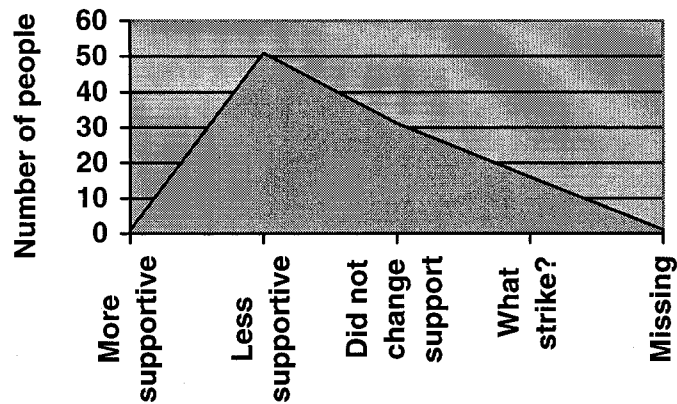
to a game regardless of what time it takes place or on what day of the week it is played. Another is that if the Phillies want to increase attendance at games, they need to make the games more convenient for people. This may mean booking as many weekend games as possible or holding weeknight games at a time when working people can make it to the game at a reasonable time.

One surprising result of this question is that pertaining to star players. The researcher thought that seeing a star player would rank the highest as an incentive for people to go to a game. The survey used in this thesis indicated that only 19% of respondents needed to see a star player in order to attend a game. According to some respondents, this is an easy problem for the Phillies to fix. Several respondents wrote that the Phillies do not spend enough money to attract star players. The answer to this problem may lie solely in the Phillies' salary budget.

At almost double the 19% who need to see a star player, 37% of respondents need to see a winning team. So it seems that the fans of Philadelphia do not necessarily need one big star on the team, but would rather see some teamwork so that the entire team has a winning record. It would make sense that fans like to go to a ballgame if there is a good chance their team will emerge victorious from that night's competition. It is usually more fun to cheer a winning team than to go home disappointed.

Question 7: How did the baseball strike of 1994 affect your attitude toward major league baseball?

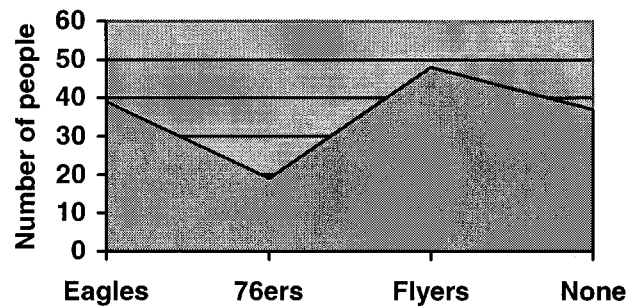
Graph 12: Strike of 1994



Area graph 12 above shows responses to a question on the survey about the baseball strike of 1994. Just over half (51%) of respondents indicated that as a result of the strike they were less supportive of major league baseball. This number is significant because it could have led to the decline in fan attendance of major league ball games in recent years. A cross-tabulation of data shows that over a quarter (27%) of respondents who reported being less supportive of major league baseball after the strike also did not attend a game in the 2001 season.

Question 8: Which other professional sports teams' home games do you attend in Philadelphia?

Graph 13: Other Professional Sports Teams' Attendance



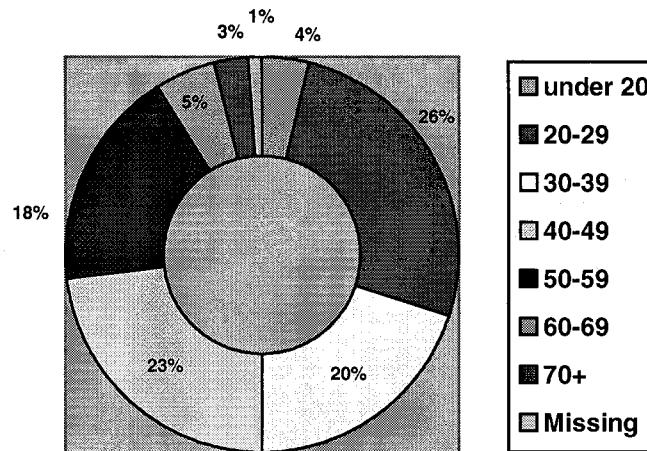
Area graph 13 above depicts the attendance of survey respondents at other professional sports teams' home games in Philadelphia. A cross-tabulation of the data suggests the following:

- ❖ 16% of respondents that did not attend a Phillies game in 2001 indicated that they attend Eagles games.
- ❖ 19% of respondents that did not attend a Phillies game in 2001 indicated that they attend Flyers games.
- ❖ 5% of respondents that did not attend a Phillies game in 2001 indicated that they attend 76ers games.

This could mean that sports fans in the Philadelphia area are not loyal to one particular sport and therefore spread their resources out so that they can attend games of several professional sports teams.

Question 9: What is your age?

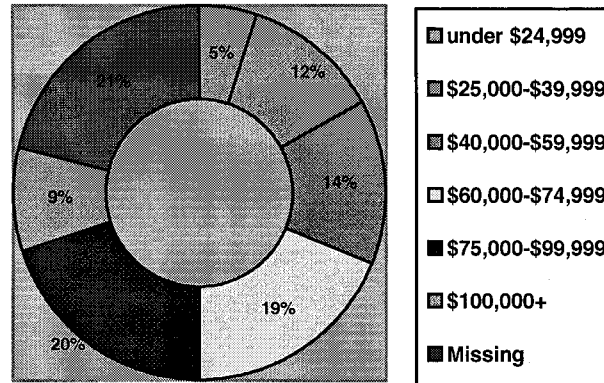
Graph 14: Age Demographic



The respondents of this survey were mainly between 20 and 59 years of age (87%). Input from other age categories is limited simply due to the fact that people in those age ranges were not readily available to participate in the study. It is not the intent of this study to discount those age categories entirely but to be realistic in hoping to accurately represent the fan demographic. It is possible to speculate that most fans under the age of 20 (4%) cannot afford to attend a major league baseball game due to limited income and that many fans over the age of 59 (8%) may not be able to afford to attend a major league baseball game due to a fixed income or may be unable to attend due to health or transportation issues.

Question 10: What is your annual household income?

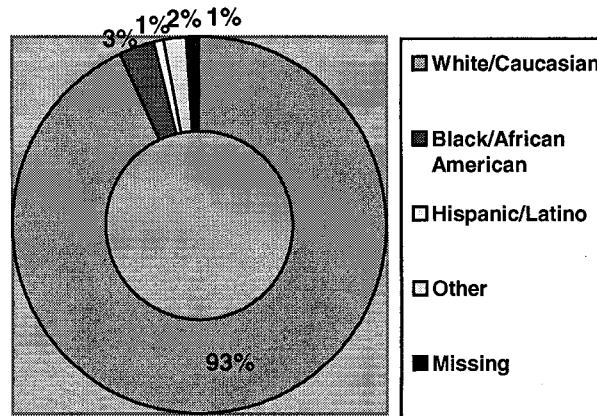
Graph 15: Income Demographic



A question concerning annual household income was added to the survey for two reasons. The first reason was to find out which income level contained the highest number of fans (20% at \$75,000-\$99,000) to see if the average fan had a particularly high income. Second, the researcher was interested in finding out if the respondents with the highest incomes (9% at \$100,000+) were the same people attending the home games. Unfortunately, even with a promise of anonymity, 21% of survey respondents chose not to answer the annual household income question.

Question 11: What is your ethnicity?

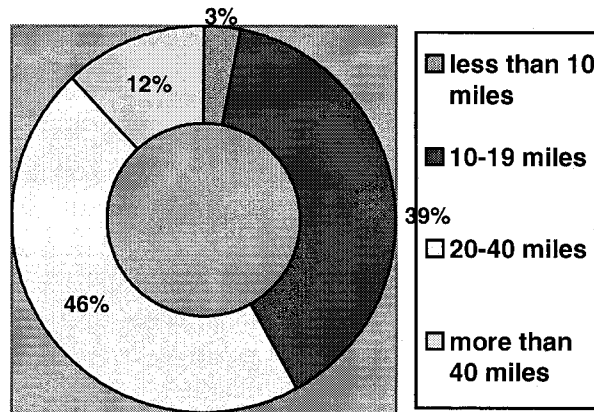
Graph 16: Ethnicity Demographic



The ethnic demographic surveyed in this study was predominantly made up of White/Caucasian people (93%). Again, it was not the intent of the study to discount the opinions of those of other ethnic backgrounds; however, on the day the surveys were completed, the majority of the people solicited that agreed to participate in the study were of that ethnic group.

Question 12: What distance is Veterans Stadium from your house?

Graph 17: Stadium Distance



As expected, the majority (85%) of respondents live between 10 and 40 miles from Veterans Stadium. These respondents live in areas close enough to drive to the stadium in a reasonable amount of time and could be residents of the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey or Delaware. A cross-tabulation of data showed that 18% of both respondents that live 10 to 19 miles from the stadium and respondents that live 20 to 40 miles from the stadium attended between one and five home games in the 2001 season. This indicates that people who live closer to the stadium are generally not more likely to attend a game than people who live a bit farther from the stadium. For residents of New Jersey there is no option to see a major league baseball game in-state; the only places within reasonable driving distance are the cities of Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore. This might explain why 3% of the respondents who live more than 40 miles from Veterans Stadium attended between one and five home games in the 2001 season.

Discussion

One of the research questions to be answered by this thesis is why there is such low attendance at Philadelphia Phillies home games. A plethora of studies have named factors important in influencing people to attend games. The factors both identified in previous research and deemed important through the survey used in this thesis include: the age of the stadium, game schedules and game times, other professional sports teams in the area, household income, ticket prices, star players and a winning team record. Other factors to be discussed are promotions and the baseball strike of 1994.

According to Dortch, an analysis of attendance records showed that fans were more likely to forgive a team after the strike of 1994 if they played in a new ballpark. When considering Veterans Stadium as the home for the Phillies, a cross-tabulation of respondents showed that 14% of respondents did not attend a game and need a newer or improved stadium as an incentive to attend a game in the future. One respondent added, "Hate Vet Stadium – What a dump!" With the opening of a new stadium for the Phillies in April 2004, there may be some hope for increased attendance figures. That is, at least until the novelty of a new stadium wears off.

For some, attending a Phillies game is a matter of convenience. Of all respondents, 14% said that they consider the times of games the primary factor in deciding if they will attend a game. More than a quarter (26%) of respondents indicated that that they either consider the time of the game (12%) or the game schedule (14%) when deciding if they will attend a game. A small number of respondents (9%) indicated that they need both more convenient game times and a more convenient game schedule to attend games. These reasons are understandable when considering that most adults work

during the day and cannot leave early for a game. With city traffic, some find it a struggle to make it on time to weeknight games.

A statistic related to convenience describes the relationship between game attendance and the distance the stadium is from a respondent's home. It seems of the respondents that attended between one and five games last season, 36% live between 10 and 40 miles from Veterans Stadium. At distances greater than 40 miles from the stadium, that number falls to just 3% out of a possible 12% surveyed. It is evident that fans are willing to drive only a certain distance to attend a game. Again, when the new stadium opens in 2004, people may drive farther just to attend a game there but that enthusiasm will probably diminish after a few years.

A study conducted at Seton Hall University found that the presence of another major professional sports team in the same market would decrease attendance in major league baseball. The survey used in this thesis indicated that a significant number of people in the Philadelphia area support other professional sports teams: 48% support the Flyers hockey team, 39% support the Eagles football team and 19% support the 76ers basketball team. These other sports teams may be luring fans away from baseball. On closer analysis of the responses, 19% of respondents indicated that they supported the Flyers at home and did not attend a Phillies game last season. Also, 16% of respondents supported the Eagles at home and did not attend a Phillies game and 5% supported the 76ers at home and did not attend a Phillies game.

Household income is another factor that plays an important part in the decision to attend a game. The likelihood of attending a game increases with household income up to a point. A cross-tabulation of data from the survey showed that 25% of respondents

who earned between \$40,000 and \$74,999 per year attended from one to five games. At higher income levels, the number of games attended decreases. Recent findings suggest that baseball's fans are much more upscale than they were ten years ago.

The latest available figures show that the average cost of a day at a major league ballpark was almost \$100 in 1995 for a family of four. It is almost as if Phillies management is willing to lose its core crowd of families without a struggle. Group sales for the Phillies are hardly an incentive to attend games. In 2001, a group needed a minimum of 25 people to qualify for a discount of \$2 off a \$26 ticket. That discount would not even get a fan from New Jersey over the Walt Whitman Bridge to see the game. Why would a fan pay that much and go to the trouble of organizing a group to save \$2? Especially when they can watch the game for free from their living room. One respondent commented, "Comcast makes it really convenient by showing all games on TV." It is almost insulting.

Concern over ticket prices goes hand-in-hand with household income consideration. The cost of attending a baseball game at Veterans Stadium is high. So high, in fact, that 47% of respondents to the survey used in this thesis said they need cheaper parking fees to attend a game and 44% said they need to see lower ticket prices to attend. Of all respondents, 36% cite ticket prices as their first consideration of whether or not to attend a game. Interestingly, a cross-tabulation of all respondents indicated that 19% ranked ticket prices as their first consideration when deciding to attend a game and did not attend a game in the 2001 season. It seems that those 19% are adamant about seeing lower ticket prices and will not attend a game until prices drop.

Other research points to the sport of baseball needing a new star player that younger people can admire. From the survey used in this thesis, it was evident that 19% of respondents needed to see a star player to attend a Phillies home game. One respondent answered, "Get real talent."

Although a star player would logically attract more fans to a game, qualitative responses from this survey indicated that 12% of respondents considered the Phillies' opponent when deciding whether or not to attend a game. The researcher had firsthand knowledge of this experience in the summer of the 2001 season. The researcher attended a Phillies-Yankees game and was a walk-up ticket purchaser. At the ticket window, the researcher paid \$5 for a standing-room only ticket. The stadium was completely filled and people were standing on the concourse to watch the game. This would be the season after the Yankees won the World Series. Judging by the number of people in the stadium cheering for the opponent, it was plain to see the majority of them came to see the champs, not the home team.

The strike of 1994 seems to have had an adverse effect on home game attendance in Philadelphia. Having a winning season did not seem to boost attendance for the Phillies. The survey used in this thesis indicated that 11% of respondents consider the team's record as the primary factor in determining if they will attend a game. Consequently, 37 % of respondents indicated that the Phillies must have a winning record for them to attend a game.

Promotional offers are another source of unhappiness for Phillies fans. According to the survey used in this thesis, 14% of respondents indicated that considering promotional offers ranked in their top three factors helping them to decide whether or not

to attend a game. Of all respondents, 13% said they would attend games if there were better quality promotions. As Jerardi pointed out, fans were taking vouchers for Bobblehead dolls the night the stadium ran out of its supply because it underestimated fan demand for this product. Phillies management should take notice of this. If the Phillies want high attendance and a huge number of walk-up sales for a game, they should give the fans what they want – a quality item, not a Pez dispenser or magnetic game schedule. One respondent added, “I hate the blaring music they have at stadiums these days. I hate the contests, and throwing things into the stands. Baseball should just be baseball.”

The strike of 1994 had a widespread effect on area fans. Of all respondents, 2% said the primary consideration for them to attend a game is player attitude. A small percentage (2%) of respondents indicated that players’ attitudes during and after the strike were a reason for not attending games. Additionally, 1% cited overpaid players and another 1% cited lack of teamwork between players as reasons they did not attend a game. It is evident that fans see the players in a different light since the strike. Responses to the survey used in this thesis indicate that 51% of fans are less supportive of baseball now than they were before the strike. In addition, 24% of respondents who identified themselves as Phillies fans did not attend a game in 2001. Dortch cites a Gallup Poll from June 2001 that showed seven in 10, or 70% of, baseball fans were less interested in major league baseball after the strike of 1994. The survey used in this thesis indicated that 51% of respondents were less supportive of baseball after the aforementioned strike. Either way, at 51% or as high as 70%, it is obvious that fans were disenfranchised by the strike. One respondent added that he lost 50% of his interest in the sport of baseball after the strike.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The findings from this thesis study indicate that Phillies fans in the region are not satisfied with the franchise. Several findings have led the researcher to this conclusion. These indicative findings include:

- ❖ The poor attendance figures for Phillies home games for those surveyed.
- ❖ The survey responses to questions asking about the importance of specific factors as they relate to fan attendance.
- ❖ The survey responses to questions regarding incentives to attend games.

The researcher will address the attendance issue first. The Philadelphia Phillies play in one of the largest cities on the east coast of this country. In addition to Pennsylvania residents, the stadium where the Phillies play their home games is easily accessible to people in the state of New Jersey and Delaware. The Phillies do draw fans from these neighboring states. However, as this study has shown, the attendance figures at Phillies home games leave a lot to be desired.

Specifically, this study found that people who identified themselves as Phillies fans were just as likely to attend one to five games in 2001 as they were to attend none. The fans just are not going to the games. This study was conducted after a winning season for the Phillies and the attendance was no better than the previous year when they

did not have a winning season. This finding points toward a deeper attendance problem than this study could even begin to address.

Another conclusion that the researcher deduced from this study is that financial considerations are prominent concerns of the fans. This is evident from the number of responses indicating that ticket price, parking fees and concession prices are important factors that fans consider when deciding whether or not to attend a game. With most people indicating that, in general, prices are too high for the above-mentioned factors, it is logical to conclude that if the price of attending a major league ball game were decreased, more fans would come to games.

A related conclusion stems from the incentives that fans indicated they needed to attend a game. Again, lower ticket prices and cheaper parking fees received a large number of responses. Also, fans indicated they want to see a team with a winning record and they would rather attend a game in a newer or improved stadium. Although the Phillies had a winning season in 2001, it is apparent that this record was not good enough to draw many fans.

However, for those fans that indicated they prefer a newer or improved stadium, they will soon have their chance to attend Phillies games in their new stadium projected to open in 2004. If the survey used in this study is at all indicative of Phillies fans' attitudes, there should be a surge in attendance like the Phillies have not seen in a long time with the opening of their new stadium.

Recommendations

All of the above conclusions of course need to be brought to the attention of Phillies management. The management needs ideas on how to lure fans back to watch Phillies home games.

The researcher recommends a thorough evaluation of the existing ticket pricing structure. Lowering ticket prices could be a good way to jump-start attendance. The researcher recommends more affordable tickets, family packs of tickets and better group sales incentives.

In the survey, fans indicated that they could not afford to take their entire family to a baseball game because of the high price of tickets in addition to parking fees and concession prices. The price for a family to attend a game was out of the budget for many families. The researcher recommends a package designed for families where tickets, a parking pass and coupons for food and beverages are included for a reasonable price. This package would make it easy for a family to order tickets and plan their day at the ballpark. It would also be economical and might encourage more families to come to home games.

Group sales are also a way to boost attendance significantly. Phillies management could encourage groups to attend games by reducing the price of tickets more than they do now. Groups could also have designated parking places that would make the trip easier when the groups include large numbers of people, specifically children or the elderly. If parking and entering the stadium as a group was easy, more groups might attend games. In addition, the group sales office should keep a database of groups that have attended games in the past and mail a special bulletin to them prior to

each season. With the number of special interest groups in the Philadelphia and south Jersey area, group sales could become a significant boost to home game attendance.

Another recommendation that the researcher makes is to have the players be more accessible to the fans. Professional baseball players are involuntary role models for children. As such, they are assigned a “star” quality and children and some adults look to them for leadership. Recognizing this, Phillies management should allow fans a chance to meet these players and interact with them on occasion. This might mean holding a special event where a fixed number of fans attend a “meet and greet” reception or holding a drawing for fans where the winners attend a dinner with the players. Also, management could arrange for fans to attend an event designed for the purpose of having players sign memorabilia. These types of events go beyond the scope of promotional items. These events would differentiate between watching the players from afar and actually having the experience of a lifetime.

Recommendations for Further Study

The researcher recommends that two additional studies could be done. The first study might want to focus strictly on attendance figures. There has been some research conducted in the field that indicates that when a new stadium is built, there is a surge in attendance for about five years. According to Quirk, on average, moving into a new stadium increases attendance by 62% during the first five years the team is in the stadium as compared to the previous five years. The new Phillies stadium is slated to open for the 2004 season. It would be interesting to see if Phillies attendance follows the trend and increases for five years or if the new stadium does not have a significant impact on

attendance records. Of course, the researcher might also want to take into consideration that fact that Veterans Stadium has a capacity of over 60,000 and the new baseball stadium will have a capacity of about 43,000. It would be worthy to note if the new stadium is just a novelty for some fans.

A second study that the researcher suggests is one with a more diverse ethnicity. The study conducted in this thesis had a response rate that was not representative of the population in the Philadelphia area. A good place to conduct a study on Phillies fans would be at the stadium itself. If a researcher could get permission to conduct a study on the concourse of the stadium, he might be better able to get a characteristic sample of Phillies fans. This method could not be used in this thesis because this thesis was written during the off-season for baseball.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

1) Are you a baseball fan?

_____ yes

_____ no

2) Are you a Philadelphia Phillies fan?

_____ yes

_____ no

3) How many Phillies home games did you attend in the 2001 season?

_____ 0

_____ 1-5

_____ 6-10

_____ 11 or more

4) Rank the importance of the following factors in your decision to attend a Phillies home game. Place a 1 next to the item you feel is most important and continue numbering through 8, the least important item.

_____ ticket price

_____ parking fee

_____ concession prices

_____ time of game

_____ location of stadium

_____ record of team

_____ promotional events scheduled

_____ other: please specify _____

5) If you did not attend a Phillies home game in 2001, what was the primary reason?
[If you did attend a home game, skip to question #6]

6) Please check all of the answers that apply to you: In order for me to attend a Phillies home game, I need:

_____ lower ticket prices

_____ more convenient game schedule

_____ cheaper parking fees

_____ newer/improved stadium

_____ to see a star player

_____ quality promotional offers

_____ attractions for kids

_____ more convenient game times

_____ a winning team

_____ other: please specify _____

7) How did the baseball strike of 1994 affect your attitude toward major league baseball?

_____ made me more supportive _____ made me less supportive
_____ did not change my support _____ what strike?

8) Which other professional sports teams' home games do you attend in Philadelphia?

_____ Eagles _____ Flyers
_____ 76ers _____ none

9) What is your age?

_____ under 20 _____ 20-29
_____ 30-39 _____ 40-49
_____ 50-59 _____ 60-69
_____ 70 +

10) What is your annual household income?

_____ under \$24,999 _____ \$25,000-\$39,999
_____ \$40,000-\$59,999 _____ \$60,000-\$74,999
_____ \$75,000-\$99,999 _____ \$100,000 +

11) What is your ethnicity?

_____ White/Caucasian _____ Black/African American
_____ Hispanic/Latino _____ Native American
_____ Asian/Pacific Islander _____ Other: please specify _____

12) What distance is Veterans Stadium from your house?

_____ less than 10 miles _____ 10-19 miles
_____ 20-40 miles _____ more than 40 miles

Thank you for answering this questionnaire. If you would like a summary of the outcome emailed to you, please write your email address on the blank below.

Appendix B

SURVEY DATA CODING SHEET

	Q15-AttractionsKids		Code
	Q16-WinningTeam		
	Q17-GameSchedule		
	Q18-NewerStadium		Q1-BaseballFan
	Q19-QualityPromotions		Q2-PhilliesFan
	Q20-GameTimes		Q3-HowManyGames
	Q21-Other		Q4-TicketPrice
	Q22-Strike1994		Q5-ParkingFee
	Q23-Eagles		Q6-ConcessionPrices
	Q24-76ers		Q7-TimeofGame
	Q25-Flyers		Q8-LocationStadium
	Q26-None		Q9-RecordTeam
	Q27-Age		Q10-Promotions
	Q28-Income		Q11-Other
	Q29-Ethnicity		Q12-LowerPrice
	Q30-StadiumDistance		Q13-CheaperParking
			Q14-StarPlayer



	Q15-AttractionsKids		Code
	Q16-WinningTeam		
	Q17-GameSchedule		
	Q18-NewerStadium		Q1-BaseballFan
	Q19-QualityPromotions		Q2-PhilliesFan
	Q20-GameTimes		Q3-HowManyGames
	Q21-Other		Q4-TicketPrice
	Q22-Strike1994		Q5-ParkingFee
	Q23-Eagles		Q6-ConcessionPrices
	Q24-76ers		Q7-TimeofGame
	Q25-Flyers		Q8-LocationStadium
	Q26-None		Q9-RecordTeam
	Q27-Age		Q10-Promotions
	Q28-Income		Q11-Other
	Q29-Ethnicity		Q12-LowerPrice
	Q30-StadiumDistance		Q13-CheaperParking
			Q14-StarPlayer