

Researchers study importance of nongame entertainment in minor league baseball

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Recent research by a Pennsylvania College of Technology faculty member shows the importance of nongame entertainment in drawing fans to minor league baseball games.

The findings, published in Volume 23, No. 2 of the Pennsylvania Economic Review, were the result of six years of research by Chip D. Baumgardner, associate professor of business administration/management at Penn College, and Michael J. Gallagher, of DeSales University. Their article is titled "State College Spikes: Examining the Promotion of Minor League Baseball."

"At one point in time, little supplementary activity was designed to augment the [game](#) as a way to entertain fans," they wrote. "Today it is common to see a myriad of events occurring throughout the course of the baseball game."

Baumgardner and Gallagher set out to discover what effect those supplementary events have on minor league game attendance. They analyzed ticket sales for the State College Spikes minor league baseball team from its inaugural season in 2006 through 2011.

What they found is that the entertainment that surrounds the [baseball](#) game—including fireworks, giveaways and other promotions—has a bigger impact on game attendance than the team's win-loss percentage or the weather.

Part of the reason is that minor league clubs often have little control over the on-the-field performance of their teams, since their players are assigned by their parent organizations. In addition, games serve as entertainment for the whole family, since in many markets, tickets cost less than other family-entertainment options, such as movies or amusement parks.

"Attendees of (minor league) games expect the venue to include fireworks, giveaways, celebrity appearances and other such activities that serve to provide a level of entertainment that extends beyond the actual game," Baumgardner and Gallagher note.

Their research shows that attendance at games with fireworks was 30 percent higher than games with no promotions on weekdays, and 20.3 percent higher on weekends. Giveaways yielded a 13 percent weekday increase in attendance compared to games with no promotions, with a 12.3 percent increase on weekends. Celebrity appearances yielded a much smaller increase—a little under 3 percent—but still attracted a larger audience than games with no promotions.

"Because owners of minor league teams receive their primary revenue stream from sponsors, ticket sales and concessions, it is vital to offer an experience that matches the environment expected by fans," the authors wrote.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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