

Report: Yankees Top, Astros Bottom for MLB Fan Loyalty

Written by Maury Brown
Monday, 25 March 2013 16:21



When it comes to sports, what every owner looks for is repeat business. And, if you want repeat business, “loyalty” is king. Through good times and bad, the stronger your fan loyalty, the better off you are.

So, with Opening Day this Sunday, Brand Keys has released their 21st annual report, the Brand Keys 2013 Sports Fan Loyalty Index. Even with a roster that’s old as dirt and a trade for Vernon Wells in the offing (believe it or not, this makes more sense than you think), the New York Yankees return to the #1 spot, knocking the Phillies off the top perch after seeing two consecutive disappointing seasons. The 2012 World Series Champion San Francisco Giants move from the #4 to the #3 position while Cardinals and Braves move up the list. If you’re in Boston, a concern is the Red Sox who held the top position from 2008-10 and haven’t been out of the top five for a considerable period of time. After two consecutive years of controversy, the Red Sox drop completely out of the top 5.

At the bottom of the list, the Astros, who have taken on extreme cost cutting, and move from the NL to the AL this year, drop to the “least loyal fans” spot at #30 after never being in the bottom five since The Biz of Baseball began tracking yearly data back to 2008. The Royals, who continue to languish move from 28 to 29 while the Pirates “improve” from the worst in 2012 to 28th. In news that is bound to make Baltimore happy, after years of being on the wrong side of winning, the Orioles drop out of the bottom five after holding the #30 position in 2008 and the #29 position last year. Winning does cure ills. Rounding out the bottom five, the Mets, who are just now beginning to crawl out from under the Bernie Madoff scandal, and Mariners, who have languished at the bottom of the AL West standings for years now, hold their spots at 27 and 26 from last year.

The *Brand Keys Sports Fan Loyalty Index* was designed to help professional sports team management identify precise fan loyalty rankings in their home and national markets. “These insights enable league and team management to identify areas, particularly emotional ones, that need strategic brand coaching,” said Robert Passikoff, Brand Keys’ founder and president.

Current **2013 MLB** top-5 and bottom-5 brand standings are listed
(Note: #'s in parentheses are team rankings for 2012):

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Top-5 Teams – 2013 (2012 rankings)

1. New York Yankees (#2)
2. Philadelphia Phillies (#1)
3. San Francisco Giants (#4)
4. St. Louis Cardinals (#5)
5. Atlanta Braves (#6)

Cellar Dwellers 2013 (2012 ranking)

30. Houston Astros (#23)
29. Kansas City Royals (#28)
28. Pittsburgh Pirates (#30)
27. Seattle Mariners (#27)
26. New York Mets (#26)

The Sports Fan Loyalty Index, which measures all the teams in the four Major Leagues, provides an apples-to-apples comparison of the intensity with which fans within a team's SMSA support the home team versus corresponding values for fans of other teams in that market.

“That’s important because fan loyalty correlates very highly with broadcast viewership, merchandise purchase, and ticket revenues. And happier fans as well,” noted Passikoff. “Everybody loves a winner, but it’s important to note that win/loss ratios do not entirely govern fan loyalty. There are three other emotionally based factors that must be taken into account.”

SELECT [READ MORE](#) TO SEE HISTORICAL BRAND LOYALTY DATA AND HOW THE METHODOLOGY FOR THE RANKINGS

Below are the rankings of the Top 5 and Bottom 5 MLB teams by fan loyalty dating back to 2008, according to Brand Keys

Top Five MLB teams in Brand Keys

Sports Loyalty Index

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2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

1

Red Sox

Red Sox

Red Sox

Phillies

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Phillies

Yankees

2

Yankees

Phillies

Yankees

Yankees

Yankees

Phillies

3

Indians

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Yankees

Phillies

Red Sox

Red Sox

Giants

4

Astros

Mets

Dodgers

Giants

Giants

Cardinals

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5

Mets

Athletics

Angels

Dodgers

Cardinals

Braves

Bottom Five MLB teams in Brand Keys

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2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

30

Orioles

Pirates

Pirates

Pirates

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Pirates

Astros

29

Pirates

Orioles

Orioles

Orioles

Orioles

Royals

28

Royals

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Royals

Royals

Royals

Royals

Pirates

27

Rangers

Rangers

Nationals

D-backs

Mariners

Mariners

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26

Marlins

Rockies

Diamondbacks

Mariners

Mets

Mets

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The four emotional drivers of fan loyalty:

Pure Entertainment:

How well a team does, sure. But even more importantly than a win-loss ratio, how exciting is their play?

Authenticity:

How well they play as a team. A new stadium and, often, new managers, can help lift this driver.

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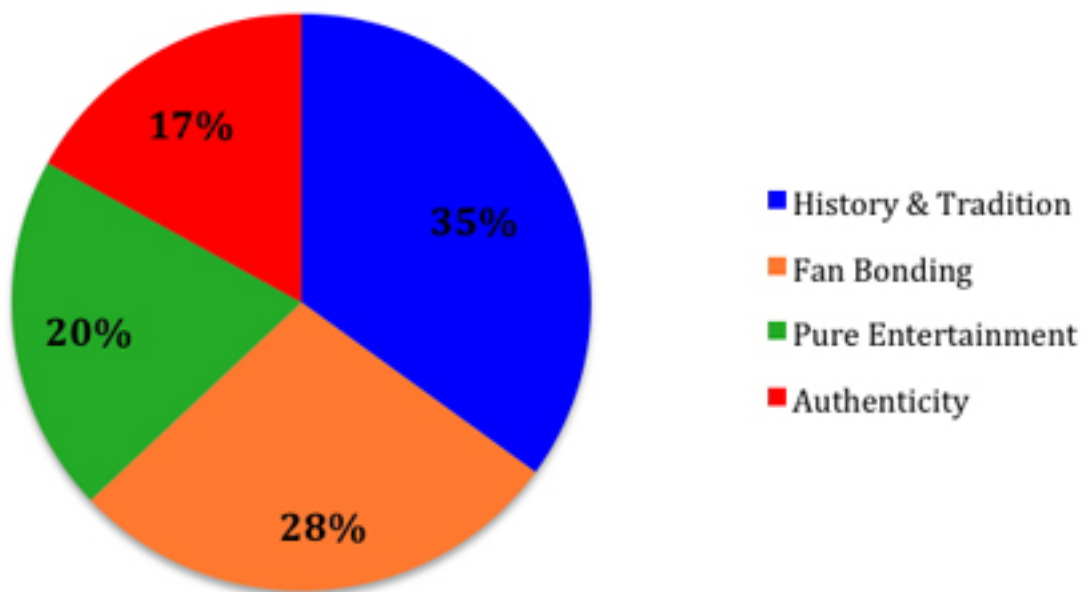
Fan Bonding:

Are players particularly respected and admired?

History and Tradition:

Is the game and the team part of fans' and community rituals, institutions and beliefs?

Emotional Driver Contributions to Sports Fan Loyalty - 2013



Source: Brand Keys (www.BrandKeys.com)

“Overall league and team rankings correlate with viewership and merchandise sales, and since rankings can be influenced depending upon how loyalty drivers are managed, it’s critical that team marketers do accurate scouting regarding the strategic ball they intend to pitch to fans,” said Passikoff.

“All teams can benefit from increased fan loyalty levels, but as baseball is traditionally called America’s ‘National Pastime,’ there’s a real emotional connection for fans.” said Passikoff, “It’s worth quoting Hall of Famer pitcher, Bob Feller, who said, ‘every day is a new opportunity. You can build on yesterday’s success or put its failures behind and start over again. That’s the way

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life is, with a new game every day, and that's the way baseball is.' That's also the way it is when you have emotional metrics, and that's the way fan loyalty works for sports teams," noted Passikoff.



Maury Brown is the Founder and President of the [Business of Sports Network](#) , which includes The Biz of Baseball, The Biz of Football, The Biz of Basketball and The Biz of Hockey. He [writes for Baseball Prospectus](#)

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