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**GUERRILLA MARKETING: REVITALIZING THE  
ADVERTISING INDUSTRY**

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# Guerrilla Marketing: Revitalizing the Advertising Industry

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**Abstract – Guerrilla marketing is an unconventional and low cost marketing strategy that achieves significant and distinctive effects compared with traditional marketing strategies. Undoubtedly it is successful in practical applications, still new, fresh and not as explicitly explored academically as other marketing methods. The research investigates the guerrilla marketing strategy as an important, creative, innovative technique and low cost in marketing process. It presents an approach of Guerrilla marketing; definition, principals, advantages and its role to enrich the Aesthetic and functional values of brand. The researcher believes that the benefit from Guerrilla marketing strategies will contribute to revitalize the advertising industry and commercial movement in the Indian market, which will activate the Indian economy. The paper serves to explore the uses and needs for the guerilla marketing approach and how they are superior and different from the traditional marketing tactics. The associated marketing techniques of innovative marketing in the new era of cost cutting but bearing maximum impact on the consumer will also be highlighted. While this paper also would try and understand the terminology, its literature, application to the small business and profitability.**

**Keywords: Guerrilla Marketing, Brand Image, Advertising, Consumer Perception, Small Business.**

## INTRODUCTION

Marketing is essential for the organic growth of a company. Not surprising, firms spend lots of money on marketing. Given that these consist of investments, marketing managers have the responsibility to optimally allocate their resources and demonstrate that these investments generate appropriate returns for their firms. A knowledgeable manager knows if pricing, advertisement or distribution is crucial for the growth of his business (Gupta & Steenburgh, 2008). Levinson, (1983) made the term “guerrilla marketing” known as a philosophy for small and start-up companies to successfully market their products and services with a small amount of money. He based the success of a marketing strategy on the use of non-traditional marketing channels, customer proximity, insistency and patience. Through the drastic technological development seen today and its complementary change in the advertising market, guerrilla marketing has developed into a marketing form that is mostly used for promotion and retention of customers’ attention and interest. New forms such as “ambush” and “viral” marketing have evolved (Druing & Fahrenholz, 2008). Guerilla marketing distinguishes itself from other promotion tools by its surprise effect and it has become a very popular marketing strategy in recent times.

The name Guerrilla originally describes a group that uses a violent approach to achieve the implementation of their belief and ideology. Then opponents are often a tremendous force consisting of more people and resources such as weapons or money. The Guerrilla fighter’s only advantage is the fact that they only know where and when they will strike. The original approach of Guerrilla marketing is as an alternative marketing strategy that suits small and medium sizes enterprises to act like guerrilla fighters have done in the past: hit valuable targets of large enemies by taking them by surprise.

According to Levinson, Guerilla marketing - means a non-standard, non-traditional, non-elementary truths and increased flexibility, good results with limited capabilities. Guerilla marketing - is the use of a powerful enemy against precision strikes and sabotage, relatively inexpensive, but very effective. It is in fact a partisan need less money, and most of all brains. An element of surprise is arguably guerrilla marketing’s greatest asset. It caches consumers off – guard and has high impact and recall.

## ORIGIN OF GUERRILLA:

Initially, the expression “Guerilla” (not to be confused with “Gorilla” which is the largest anthropoid ape) appeared at the beginning of the 19th century during the independence war between Spain and Portugal.

This word can be translated as “battle” from Spanish and its meaning lies in a military tactic which was used by small armed forces against the massive ones. The term gained its publicity through Ernesto Che Guevara Lynchde la Serna (1928 – 1967), who used that guerilla military tactic against opponents for political concept domination. Since Che Guevara and his forces did not own many resources, like money, weapon and advantage of fighters’ quantity, the only chance to accomplish a successful revolution in Cuba was to base their operations on acts of sabotage. Due to Che Guevara’s small army, it was well-coordinated and flexible which led them to victory over enemies. Over time the Spanish leader summarized basic principles in the book “Guerilla Warfare” which was written in 1961. The most important elements that he pointed out were the following:

- a) ultimate goal,
- b) usage of surprise effects and
- c) Tactical superiority that subsequently had become a starting point for Guerilla marketing principles.

That’s why Guerrilla marketing is characterized by surprise effect, diffusion effect and low cost effect. It is flexible in application and advocates for effective resources leverage.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW:

**Levinson (1983)**, defined the root of the idea in his book “Guerrilla Marketing”, his publication provided not only an explanation of the essential marketing idea, but also a philosophy for small business owners who wanted to follow the Guerrilla marketing idea. He introduced new ways of advertising and presenting a business well with small budget, and based the success of marketing strategy on the use of non-traditional marketing channels, customer proximity, insistence and patience. A company should create as many points of contact with customers and prospects as possible in order to stay in their memory. Conrad Levinson is today the father of “Guerrilla Marketing” as his book has been translated into more than 40 languages.

**Al Ries and Jack Trout (1983)** wrote agreeing with Levinson, but improved on what he wrote. Like Levinson, Trout and Ries believed that Guerrilla marketing is best suited for small and medium-size enterprises. Trout pointed out that the market size also has to be manageable with the limited and available resources. Therefore they suggested specializing and investing in niche product and/or market niche. Theirs is that small and medium enterprises should adopt niche approach which will allow flexibility and change, surprise and diffusion at low cost.

**Garsombke, (1987)** said “Guerrilla marketing, as the name implies, gives an indication of controversy and

warfare, since the name is associated with military tactics, but it should not be associated with a bloody battleground. It is more of a strategy that one uses in order to conquer a market through a well-planned approach in a smaller scale. Enterprises use warfare tactics to fight on the battleground of today marketplace, which is the consumers’ mind-where words and pictures are the weapons used and where the owner-manager of every enterprise acts as a general.”

**Kotler, (1990)** suggests that Guerrilla marketing should be adopted by market challengers that try to increase their own profitability by gaining more market share from other enterprises in the same industry. A competitive advantage over the challenged firm is the foundation for a good strategy but also involves high risks, especially when the potential gain is high. Kotler, et al. (2005), argue that many smaller financially weaker companies are now using an aggressive guerrilla attack. Such a campaign can even be a tool to fight the current market leader. Unlike Levinson (1998), Ries, Trout (1983), and Kotler (1990) believe that the main purpose of guerrilla marketing is to destabilize the opponent or best to destroy the competitors with the help of attrition tactics.

**Egan, (2007), McAllister, and Turow, (2002)** posit that Guerrilla Marketing is an umbrella terms that covers the various innovative approaches that marketers adopt in the marketplace to gain market-share and profit, namely: renegade marketing, covert marketing, diffusion marketing, under-the-radar marketing or vanguard marketing. Further, marketers developed several instruments which are applied under the roof of guerrilla marketing, such as ambush marketing, ambient marketing, sensation marketing, buzz marketing or viral marketing (Carter, 2003, Notarantonio & Quigley Jr., 2009, Hutter & Hoffmann, 2011a).

**Levinson, (2007)** says, guerilla marketing is often ideal for small businesses that need to reach a large audience without breaking the bank. It is also used by big companies in grassroots campaigns to compliment ongoing mass media campaigns.

**Druing and Fahrenholz, (2008)** found in their research result that financially strong companies use guerrilla marketing as a complementary tool to present the brand in a multimodal way. Smaller firms can make use of the cost-effective strategy to get the spotlight on their brand. Good co-operation with, for instance, the public relations department is essential to increase the guerrilla marketing effect enormously. They concluded in their research that guerrilla marketing would blend with the customers by finding ways to surprise them and interest them by putting the idea in the forefront, not the brand. The evolved guerrilla marketing form is now used by companies of all sizes.

**Wensen, (2008)** asserts that one can win the battle for the consumers' attention by being smarter and more creative than his opponent, instead of spending more money for TV commercials than his competitor does. His definition of guerrilla marketing is a broad one and an unexpected brand program through alternative media. Guerrilla marketing includes, for example, viral marketing, ambush marketing, buzz marketing and also events, but guerrilla marketing is far more than the definition. It is a mentality too, because the mentality of thinking is outside the box and thinking for solutions for communications problems in a broader way, instead of thinking in terms of just TV commercials. Traditional advertising on TV, radio, print and even traditional outdoor advertising is not what is meant by guerrilla marketing. Guerrilla marketing is a way of thinking, (Gallagher, 2004).

**Turkel, (2009)** describes the evolution of advertising by discussing how it gets affected by technology and the importance of guerrilla advertising. The study presents guerrilla advertisement and uses alternative communication strategies to attract customer's attention. The more the impact of advertising on message gets larger, the more it draws the attention of the media. There is also a chance for worldwide advertising agencies to compare their innovative ideas besides the print media. In his thesis, he analyzed the different perspective of guerrilla advertising to highlight the necessity of guerrilla advertising in Turkey.

**Allie, (2009)** opined that the original approach of guerrilla marketing is an alternative marketing strategy that suits small and medium sized companies to act like the guerrilla fighters have in the past: hit vulnerable targets of larger enemies by taking them by surprise. The unexpected and unusual guerrilla marketing campaigns helped smaller companies to successfully reach their target group, even though their bigger market competitors had a larger marketing budget, more experience, and a better spread to advance the market by using traditional marketing strategies (Levinson, 1999; Meerman Scot, 2008).

#### **OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY:**

The research aims to clarify the role of guerrilla marketing strategy to enrich the aesthetic and functional values of Brand and to attract the customer's attention to brand by enriching creative and innovative aspects of it. This paper also attempts to throw light on the conceptual issues associated with guerrilla marketing. The present study is exploratory in nature to provide a clear guidance for empirical research. It is also descriptive where the focus is on fact finding investigation with adequate interpretation. For this purpose secondary data were collected. The secondary data were collected through newspapers, magazines, books, journals, conference proceedings, Government reports and websites.

#### **NEED OF GUERRILLA MARKETING:**

1. Because of big business downsizing, decentralization, relaxation of government regulations, affordable technology, and a revolution in consciousness, people around the world are gravitating to small business in record numbers.
2. Small business failures are also establishing record numbers and one of the main reasons for the failures is a failure to understand marketing.
3. Guerrilla marketing has been proven in action to work for small businesses around the world. It works because it's simple to understand, easy to implement and outrageously inexpensive.

Guerrilla marketing is needed because it gives small businesses a delightfully unfair advantage: certainty in an uncertain world, economy in a high-priced world, simplicity in a complicated world, marketing awareness in a clueless world.

#### **LEVINSON'S PRINCIPLES:**

Levinson identifies the following principles as the foundation of guerrilla marketing:

- Guerrilla marketing is specifically geared for the small business and entrepreneur.
- It should be based on human psychology rather than experience, judgment, and guesswork.
- Instead of money, the primary investments of marketing should be time, energy, and imagination.
- The primary statistic to measure your business is the amount of profits, not sales.
- The marketer should also concentrate on how many new relationships are made each month.
- Create a standard of excellence with an acute focus instead of trying to diversify by offering too many diverse products and services.
- Instead of concentrating on getting new customers, aim for more referrals, more transactions with existing customers, and larger transactions.

- Forget about the competition and concentrate more on cooperating with other businesses.
- Guerrilla marketers should use a combination of marketing methods for a campaign.
- Use current technology as a tool to build your business.
- Messages are aimed at individuals or small groups, the smaller the better.
- Focuses on gaining the consent of the individual to send them more information rather than trying to make the sale.
- Commit to your campaign. Use Effective frequency instead of creating a new message theme for each campaign.

**PRINCIPLES OF THE GUERRILLA MARKETING:**

- Find a Segment Small Enough to Defend:** Try to pick a segment small enough so that you can become the leader. Small is beautiful.
- Psychological warfare:** A guerrilla can take advantage of its smallness to make quick decisions. This can be a precious asset when competing with the big companies.
- Flexibility and restlessness:** Don't hesitate to abandon a position or a product if the battle turns against you. A guerrilla doesn't have the resources to waste on a lost cause. He should be quick to give up and move on in the small company, one person's hunch can be enough to launch a new product.
- It has to be excitement and humorous.** Make your customers remember you with smiling faces, that they will always desire to buy from you.

**GUERRILLA VERSUS TRADITIONAL MARKETING:**

In order to understand the principles of guerrilla marketing performance, the significant differences between traditional marketing and guerilla marketing have to be identified. Referring to Levinson (2006), conventional advertising require a certain capital addressed for promotion plan while time, energy, imagination and knowledge assets are a primary investment in Guerrilla approach. Big businesses with correspondingly substantial budgets are potential users of traditional marketing, which measure its success only by sales and number of responses or store traffic. Traditional marketers neglect future relationships with customers since the purchase is made by the customers.

It is concerned mostly about short-term value from marketing. In contrast, Guerrilla strategies are mostly oriented towards small or middle-sized firms with tiny budgets, and concerned that only the size of profits can measure what you are striving for. It looks for long-term relationship with the customers. Gallagher, (2004) explains an explicit difference as: "what matters in guerrilla marketing is, rather than what the firm does to be successful; it is what it does to differentiate itself from its rivals and its success in reaching broader potential customers".

**Comparison guerrilla marketing versus Traditional marketing is shown on Table 1**

Traditional marketing	Guerrilla marketing
Requires that you invest money in the marketing process.	Primary investment should be time, energy an imagination.
Geared to big business with large budget.	Geared to business owners with big dream, but a small bank account.
Measure of success is sales.	Primary measuring stick is profit.
Based upon experience and judgement.	Based upon experience and judgement.
Suggests that you make your business larger and diversify.	Focuses on creating excellence instead of diversifying.
Encourages you to grow your business linearly by adding new customers.	Encourages you to grow your business geometrically. Aims for more transactions with existing members, larger transactions and referrals.
Ask that you look around for opportunities to obliterate the competition	Asks that you scout opportunities to cooperate with other businesses, supporting each other in a mutual quest for profits.
Suggest that advertising, direct mail or website works by itself.	Suggesting that marketing combination work best, complementing each other's.
Counts the sales receipts.	Concentrates on how many new relationships

	are created.
Doesn't rely upon technology as it is perceiving as having limited potential.	Embraces technology for simplicity and limitless potential.
Identifies a handful of ways, all at a costs, to promote the business.	Identifies numerous ways, many of them free, to boost profits.
Centered on talking.	Centered on giving: free gifts, information, consultations and samples.
Aim at large groups.	Aimed at individuals.
Often unintentional and formalized and typically embraces mass media.	Always intentional; details such as answering the phone are as important as an advertisements.

(Source: Levinson 1999)

### PREVALENT TYPES OF GUERRILLA MARKETING:

One of the main advantages of guerrilla marketing is that it's unexpected. It catches us off guard and causes an emotional response: laughter, shock or sadness is great sellers. It's easy to see why marketers would rather you didn't know just how they're using guerrilla marketing to their advantage. If you know their secrets, you may just stop responding.

The prevalent types of Guerrilla Marketing are;

1. **Viral marketing** is a highly visible form of guerrilla marketing these days. A successful viral campaign uses existing communication networks (you tell two friends, they each tell two friends, and so on), doesn't require much in terms of resources, and has the potential to be unstoppable.
2. **Ambient marketing** allows a business to create brand recognition without necessarily pushing their products. It's about placing ads on unusual items or in unusual places you wouldn't normally see an ad. The key to a successful ambient media campaign is to choose the best media format available and combined with effective message. These kinds of ads often make someone think about a certain place or thing differently.
3. **Presence marketing** is along the same lines as ambient marketing. It's about making the

business name recognizable and familiar and always there. You know that saying, "out of sight, out of mind?"

4. **Wild postings** may seem old-fashioned, but they are still wildly popular with indie bands and products that want to portray that indie image. Have you ever walked down a city street and seen a wall plastered with multiple copies of a poster for a movie, concert, or alcoholic beverage? Those would be wild postings, and parts of their effectiveness lies in the way that they can make us believe we're witnessing something momentous.
5. **Tissue-pack advertising** was made popular in Japan, but today it's spreading to infiltrate the rest of the world. Knowing that advertising fliers were almost never accepted, much less read, Japanese businesses began to hand out pocket packs of tissues with ads on them. This simple but ingenious marketing method works because, well, who would turn down free stuff? Because the giveaway is a useful item, it stays close to the target consumer until it's been used up.
6. **Astroturfing** is widely considered to be the slimiest of all guerrilla marketing practices. It involves creating an artificial buzz about a product or company, and it's mighty risky in the information age. Postings are created in online forums, singing the praises of a certain product or service – but they aren't made by the public. They're made by shills, or people associated with the company who are paid to express a positive opinion.
7. **Alternative marketing** is low cost ways to target specific neighborhoods, age groups, ethnic communities, and/or low literacy families with special cancer messages. Such strategies include the use of low cost flyers, posters, payroll stuffers, and program announcements scattered throughout a community to deliver a message. Ideally, these alternative strategies can also be used to complement traditional media efforts.
8. **Experiential marketing** is increasingly embraced by all types of companies and brands today. It aims to give you an experience rather than send you a one-way message. Experiential marketing lets you interact with the product and associate your immediate emotional responses with that brand.

9. **Live-in Marketing** is a term used to describe a variant of marketing and advertising in which the target consumer is allowed to sample or use a brand's product in a relaxed atmosphere over a longer period of time. Much like product placement in film and television, LIM was developed as a means to reach select target demographics in a non-invasive and much less garish manner than traditional advertising.

Now, in places like the USA and Europe, Guerrilla Marketing has been widely used in pretty interesting ways. In India, it's still in its infancy but pacing well. But traditional Out-of-Home marketing is losing sheen quickly and only this form can save it from fading out. Some examples of Guerrilla Marketing in India are-

- An ambient exercise to promote Eatalica burgers. A 'Caution Wet Floor' board was placed near an Eatalica burger signboard. The copy on the board reads 'Oogling at the burger may involuntarily cause drooling which may in turn lead to a wet floor. Issued for your safety by the management of Eatalica restaurant'. Eatalica is an American-Italian Food Joint in Chennai, India.



- Life-size stickers of people were stuck on automatic sliding doors at a mall in Mumbai, India. When someone approaches the doors move apart and it feels like the people on the door are moving away. The person enters to find the message 'People Move Away When You Have Body Odour'.



- The latest entrant is our very own 'Future Group'- Big Bazaar, Pantaloons, Future Bazaar, eZone are all part of this group and they are taking on the biggies like Shoppers Stop, Lifestyle, and Tata's Westside. In order to do the same, Future Group have come up with 3 catchy/cocky and cheeky ad campaign

which surely does catch your eyes (whether one changes their loyalty or not, only time will tell) and surely one can't resist appreciating the same.

**Keep West-aSide. Make a smart choice!**

**Shoppers! Stop. Make a smart choice!**

**Change Your Lifestyle. Make a smart choice!**

Don't know whether Big Bazaar will send positive vibes through these because the target market is fairly different.

- Anando Milk, from India, wanted to increase milk consumption among children, so the McCann Erikson Agency came up with this amazingly creative ad placed on one of Mumbai's buildings, where you can see a child strong enough –a benefit of the milk, of course– to move part of the building itself.



**ADVANTAGES OF GUERRILLA MARKETING IN BRAND:**

Guerrilla marketing has many advantages in brand world; the researcher can identify the role of Guerrilla marketing to enrich the aesthetic and functional values of Brand as following:

- Guerrilla marketing relies heavily on unconventional marketing strategy, high energy and imagination, which works to

promote creative and innovative aspects of brand and creates a distinctive image.

- Guerrilla marketing makes a more valuable impression with customer in comparison with traditional forms of advertising and marketing, which works on strengthening the relationship with the customer and save his loyalty to the brand.
- Guerrilla marketing strategy aims to strike the customer at a more personal and memorable level, which effect on customer emotion toward brand.
- The goals of guerrilla marketing are relatively simple: use unconventional tactics to advertise on a small budget. Think and create a trapezoid instead of a box, which suit the brand advertising.
- Guerrilla marketing makes campaign so shocking, funny, unique, clever, or creative that people can't stop talking about it, which achieves brand reputation.
- Guerrilla marketing creates an indelible effect and a vital positive engagement to specific brand in a crowded media environment, where customers are multi-task and low attention.
- Guerilla marketing can create brand recognition without necessarily pushing products.
- Creative and innovative ideas of Guerrilla marketing give brand the opportunity to contribute in elevation public taste and culture of the recipient.
- Guerrilla marketing is ideal for all brands, small businesses that need to reach a lot of customers and also large companies who are trying to have valuable brand and distinctive Competitive position.

#### **DISADVANTAGES OF GUERRILLA MARKETING:**

- Not completely fail safe
- Not be able to pinpoint exactly what works and what doesn't
- Requires a greater level of dedication and energy
- Investment of time is required

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Guerilla Marketing is much more than just a trend today. It is rather an instrument that is utilized by companies of all sizes. Today's Guerilla Marketing, though, differs from the Guerilla Marketing philosophy that Levinson developed in the 1980s. Neither the majority of small nor the majority of large companies take over the original Levinson idea. But still many companies partly use the aspects of the root philosophy. Basic ideas such as the setup of a corporate identity were taken over by almost every company. Many others use new forms of Guerilla Marketing such as Viral Marketing or Guerilla Sensation. It is very effective, but it requires right research, preparations and finds the right information. Guerrilla marketing is not working if you do not focus on the right target and send out a relevant message using the right vehicle on the right frequency. The aspect of Guerrilla marketing is focusing on uniqueness to the target, which in several cases leads to publicity, which could result in attention in the media, an economical way of getting the message to the target market.

Guerrilla marketing is not a model one can study in the textbook or a marketing method described as one practice; it is a state of mind, a way of thinking, a mindset for marketers and business people. The ones who use guerrilla marketing have a more open mind then the ones not using it, the people that believe in the phenomenon of guerilla marketing is open to new and creative ideas. Guerrilla marketing is a good compliment for organizations using a more traditional approach, it is a way to spice up the consisting marketing and a way to get attention which will make it easier to come through the clutter and reach the target market. Guerrilla marketer would be much more enthusiastic and open to the new idea then a traditional marketer would be.

Since beginning, guerrilla marketing always brings inspiration to the marketers and especially small businesses. However big companies have definitely been quick enough to benefit out of this concept. It requires imagination instead of money from marketers to promote the products and services. It encourages community sharing from the marketers to their customers. It also recommends marketers to create joyful experience for customers by giving away surprises. All in all, guerrilla marketing can help any business build an innovative image for them.

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