

GUERRILLA MARKETING : WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT BENEFITS SMES



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ABSTRACT

Despite the expansion of research on guerrilla marketing, the concept of this practice related to SMEs needs to be scrutinized more. This article highlights the benefits of guerrilla campaigns for small and medium-sized companies. The guerrilla marketing concept revolves around unconventional tactics to obtain maximum results with minimal costs. As its nature is emphasized on unusual and creative approaches this may help companies get their brand noticed and increase visibility. It also promotes customer engagement and targets specific audiences through the concept of “you” marketing where every word and idea is about meeting customer needs and wants. However, the outcome of guerrilla campaigns can only be desirable if the content is well received by its targeted audiences. This means the campaign's success does not rely on mind-blowing ideas but rather on proper social acceptance. This study used a literature review approach to analyze research problems and generate a rationale for the issue. The data were obtained through the use of secondary sources such as documents, academic journals, textbooks, media releases, articles, and online sources to gain useful information.

Keywords: *Guerrilla Marketing; SMEs; Benefits*

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INTRODUCTION

Advertisements have never been so prevalent as they are today. The improvement of technology has increased the availability and changed the face of advertisements. The enhancement of technology also contributes to the growing importance of the Internet (Bernritter et al., 2022). This enables businesses to advertise more than ever (Gillert, 2021). Companies may capture this opportunity to enhance their products and brand visibility and create a positive brand image. However, some businesses may also find it difficult to attract the attention of potential customers. This is because mass advertising may trigger a habituation effect where people become more accustomed to those mass campaigns and pay less attention to the information provided, leading to diminished response (Gillert, 2021). Small companies with tight budgets might find it difficult to significantly finance investments in advertisements on common channels like television, radio or printed media. Therefore, companies have to be extra cautious in understanding this situation. Perhaps adding unconventional methods in promoting their products may give companies extraordinary competitive advantages (Gkarane et al., 2019). One solution could be the implementation of marketing tactics called guerrilla marketing.

This marketing concept was first coined in 1984 by Jay Conrad Levinson (Gillert, 2021). Jay conceptualized guerrilla marketing as eccentric campaigns with low expense to generate buzz in public spaces. This innovative and small-budget campaign presents strength from creativity and the power of imagination. This statement is supported by research done by Reed (as cited in Roxas et al., 2020) who said that guerrilla marketing offers a creative way to clean up the noise of brand communications. Shifting mass markets to more fragmented segments that encompass various surprising elements, concepts, and approaches (Chamráth, 2017). It is simple and not complicated; it is also ideal for the internet and the idea of a connected world (Levinson, 2021).

Guerrilla campaign utilizes innovative materials and methods to obtain maximum results with a smaller budget which makes it more suitable for small companies (Gkarane et al., 2019; Levinson 2021). This statement frames the entire argument done by Kotler who mentioned that guerrilla marketing is a marketing idea practiced by smaller businesses to achieve a desired outcome at the lowest possible cost and it is affordable no matter how dismal the economy (Levinson, 2021; Yüaksebilgili, 2014). However, is it true that guerrilla marketing carries more benefits than drawbacks for SMEs as people touted? For this reason, this article aims to analyze the original concept of the guerrilla campaign and describe the advantages of using this campaign for small and medium-sized enterprises.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of “Guerrilla Marketing”

The word guerrilla marketing originated from the Spanish word “Guerra”. Guerrilla fighters are a small number of unofficially armed forces to disrupt enemy military operations. They mostly fight with stolen weapons and usually fight against official military forces with superior equipment, and they are considered stronger opponents (Gillert, 2021; Chamráth, 2017). Guerrilla fighters are characterized as forces that fight with unorthodox and extraordinary tactics, fast and aiming to win against the opponent with sabotage. Che Guevara in his book mentioned guerrilla tactics/ guerrilla warfare as those that are based on raids and ambush attacks (Chamrath (2017). This term is then used in marketing known as marketing warfare. Perceiving marketing activities as a battle to master the consumer's mind (Levinson, 2021).

Jay Conrad Levinson, known as the father of guerrilla marketing (Gillert, 2021; Autelitano, 2013; Levinson, 1998) wrote in his book *Guerrilla Marketing. Secrets for making big profits from your small business*. Gillert (2021) identify guerrilla marketing as a tool to help bypass classical advertising that is highly competitive and expensive but the outcome is less efficient. Consumers lost interest in repeated and usual advertising campaigns. The main focus of guerrilla marketing is on revenue and earnings by utilizing tactics and approaches that are very different from mainstream marketing. Companies can increase sales numbers by using these techniques (Isaac, 2014). Its innovative communication strategy achieves elements of surprise where consumers may not expect that advertising will be displayed in certain locations such as public facilities or street action like flash mob events (Isaac, 2014). These forms of innovation may last longer in the consumer's mind. Its campaign may touch consumers and trigger feelings such as amusement, delight and interest as those targeted will most likely to laugh, show surprise or even be startled (Textbroker, n.d.). Jay and Levinson (2021) stated that guerrilla tactics can market to customers' unconscious minds and provoke their feelings. Gives the unconscious mind a set of marketing messages that can be assembled to generate a coherent marketing overview that impacts consumer decisions (Levinson, 2021).

Distinction from Traditional Marketing

The substantial differences between guerrilla campaigns and traditional ones need to be identified. Guerrilla campaigns have the objective to bait or triumph over the customer through creativity and innovation (Levinson, 1998). Exposing a large group of people to brand advertising with relatively low cost and the involvement of diffusion. Guerrilla marketing is also incredibly efficient in reaching potential customers. The uniqueness and novelty of the campaign, also an element of surprise, may attract customers to deliver advertising messages deliberately (Hutter & Hoffman, 2011; Levinson, 1998). Meanwhile, conventional advertising requires a certain amount of money for mass media and some advertising platforms to draw consumers' attention (Isaac, 2014). Therefore, to see the differences between the two (conventional marketing & unconventional/ guerrilla marketing) here are some data provided as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Conventional Marketing vs Unconventional Marketing

Traditional Marketing	Guerilla Marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires money • Designed for large companies with big budgets • Measured by amount of sales • Based on experience and conjecture • Increases production and diversity • Grows with the number of clients • Eliminates competition • Uses individual marketing weapons • Counts its sales • 'My' marketing: look at 'my company' • Wrapped in mystique • Effective marketing is expensive • Oriented toward one sale at a time • Does not make use of technology • Aims messages at large groups • Unintentional • Uses marketing to make sales • Tries to catch the client 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires energy and imagination • Designed for small companies with big dreams • Measured by earnings • Based on psychology and human behavior • Creates excellent focus • Grows through existing clients and references • Cooperates with other companies • Marketing combinations are more effective • Counts connections • 'Your' marketing : 'How can we help you?' • Eliminates mystery and increases control • Good marketing is free • Follow-up oriented • Should be tech-friendly • Aims messages at individuals and small groups • Highly intentional • Uses marketing to gain the customer's approval • Tries to offer something to the client

Source: Based on Caudron (2001) as cited in Gutiérrez et al., (2019)

Instruments of Guerrilla Marketing

Some subdivisions of guerrilla marketing serve as the theoretical classification of different marketing actions (Gillert, 2021). These instruments are then classified as ambush marketing, viral marketing, buzz marketing, ambient marketing, and sensation marketing (Gillert, 2021; Nufer 2013).

Firstly, ambush marketing, according to Gillert (2021) and Nufer (2013) ambush marketing is a situation where companies may take advantage of a competitor's hype or marketing campaign. In other words, the competitor is the one who is sponsoring events. Ambush marketing or also known as "parasite marketing" (Gillert, 2021; Runia et al. 2015; Nufer et al. 2008). It is not only taking a free ride of the competitor's sponsoring events. Instead, the ambusher conveys the impression as if its brand is the one who sponsored the event without contributing to its cost" (Gillert, 2021; Runia et al. 2015; Nufer et al. 2008). One example of ambush marketing is the Olympic event in 2016. Usain Bolt a runner won the Olympic Games in 2016. The Olympics event was initially sponsored by the brand Nike. Bolt has been Puma's brand ambassador since he was 15 years old. As soon as he won, in celebration of his victory, he removed his golden Puma shoes, held them up and carried them around the stadium. The mass media was filming that moment, resulting in the Puma brand getting the attention of all mass media that reported Bolt's gold medal. Though Puma was not the sponsor of the event, it got the attention and utilized the event to promote its brand worldwide without any cost (Gillert, 2021).

Moving to viral marketing, the word viral originated from the medical term “virus”. A virus may spread rapidly and aggressively. It can infect tonnes of people in no time. Likewise, the goal of viral marketing is to distribute the promotion message in a similar manner using any mass media platforms, especially the internet and social media platforms (Gillert, 2021). Viral marketing also resembles the power of the word-of-mouth effect (Hendrayati & Pamungkas, 2020). The content can go viral, if the user sees its content on social media platforms, finds it appealing and shares it with others (Hendrayati & Pamungkas, 2020). Those other people will do the same thing, click, share and repeat. This moves content from one user to another user and creates a viral loop (Hirvijarvi, 2017). One example of viral marketing could be the ambush action of Puma where the campaign attracts wide media coverage and trending on social media platforms. It may attract a high number of customers without having to pay extra to promote the brand.

The third one is buzz marketing; the word “buzz” refers to bees, when flying around bees tend to make noise. Copying this mechanism to marketing concepts. Companies can instruct social media users to behave as real fans of these companies’ brands and promote those brands on their social media platforms (Gillert, 2021; Runia et al. 2015). Instead of money, these buzz agents often receive discount codes or product samples. The buzz agents may carry a task to convince consumers by sharing enthusiasm and emphasizing the advantages of using the brands (Gillert, 2021; Runia et al. 2015). They are not allowed to openly express themselves if they are instructed to endorse the brands (Gillert, 2021; Runia et al. 2015). Conveying product recommendations is authentic and credible and not tied to any commercial interests. This method gives companies the possibility to conduct low-cost and efficient advertisements (Gillert, 2021; Runia et al. 2015). Many argue that this activity may lead to legal issues.

The fourth one is ambient marketing known as environment marketing (Rosengren et al., 2015). This instrument of guerrilla marketing is defined by its characteristics which is presented in public and high-traffic areas such as shopping areas, pedestrian streets and train stations to ensure a high visibility while at the same time requiring a small amount of investment (Behal & Sareen, 2014; Gillert, 2021; Gkarane, et al., 2018; Isoraite, 2018; Yuksekbilgili, 2014). The purpose of this advertisement is to create a long-lasting impression among the targeted consumers. Like other instruments of guerrilla marketing, this ambient also requires creativity and innovation, besides the combination of surrounding elements (Behal & Sareen, 2014; Gillert, 2021; Gkarane, et al., 2018; Isoraite, 2018; Yuksekbilgili, 2014; Wojciechowski & Fichnova, 2022). One example of ambient marketing is an American multinational fast food chain McDonald’s. McDonald’s took advantage of common elements on the streets to display their products such as french fries, chicken nuggets with dipping sauces and coffee potholes or street markings that look like fries sticking out of McDonald’s fries’ package (Gillert, 2021).

The last instrument of guerrilla marketing is sensation marketing or guerrilla sensation (Behal & Sareen, 2014; Gillert 2021). It aims to provoke emotional and cognitive reactions to stimulate consumer purchases. This sensation marketing is quite similar to ambient marketing. It involves surrounding elements and requires creativity and innovation (Behal & Sareen, 2014; Gillert 2021). This sensation marketing provokes consumers’s senses and may influence their behaviour, decision-making and overall perception of products (Krishna, 2011). It may trigger desirable brand attributes (Krishna, 2011). An example of sensation marketing is Dasani's drinking and mineral water company. The campaign included a spectacular static installation which captivated an incredible amount of attention from bystanders. The campaign illustrates a woman in

a billboard wearing a swimsuit and having a straw in her mouth that reaches into a huge Dasani bottle installation next to that billboard (Gillert, 2021).

Small Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Small, and medium-sized enterprises cover a wide range of definitions and measures (Ayyagari & Demirguc-Kunt, 2007). Some may characterize small, and medium-sized enterprises by the number of employees, the total assets, sales and investment performances. The other specifically mentioned that small and medium-sized enterprises consist of no more than 250 employees (Ayyagari & Demirguc-Kunt, 2007).

Similarly, the size of a business is considered through the company's total assets, turnover, and number of staff employed. Businesses with high equity cannot be defined as SMEs. State-owned enterprises and private-owned enterprises, joint ventures and foreign-owned companies with high turnover for example (bca.co.id, 2022; Jiang & Du 2018; Varga, 2021).

SMEs business exist in almost any industry. SMEs can be seen in many forms of industries that require fewer staff-employed and smaller capital investment. Those industries range from food carts, grocery stores, services, cafes, legal firms, dental offices, bars and even minimarkets (bca.co.id, 2022; Jiang & Du, 2018; Varga 2021).

Small enterprises have a revenue of around 300 up to 500 million (IDR), with annual total sales equal to 2 billion (IDR). Businesses that are considered small enterprises include motorcycle repair shops, catering businesses and minimarkets. This small business is likely to be run by individuals or several people with a considerable amount of funds (bca.co.id, 2020). Medium-sized businesses are the largest type of business in SMEs. This business is classified as a company with a higher turnover rate but cannot be classified as a big enterprise. This medium-sized business has an annual turnover rate of around 500 million up to 100 billion (IDR). Examples of medium-sized businesses could be the food industry, bakery factories and hardware stores with the number of staff employed being higher than that of small ones (bca.co.id, 2020). Comparably, SMEs are defined as businesses employing a relatively small number of employees, typically around 250 people (Varga, 2021). According to the EU classification, small enterprises have fewer than 50 employees, with an annual net turnover at around 10 million HUF, whereas medium-sized enterprises generally employ around 250 individuals, with an annual net turnover at 50 million HUF (Varga, 2021).

Benefit

According to Merriam-Webster.com (n.d.), the word benefit represents something that produces good or helpful results or effects that promote well-being. It is commonly associated with an advantageous situation. In this article, the benefit might be perceived as a belief that guerrilla marketing instruments may improve small and medium-sized business performances.

METHOD

The main objective of this article is to study the concept of guerrilla marketing and how it benefits small and medium enterprises through the use of a literature review approach and qualitative descriptive method. The main idea of using a literature review is to scrutinize the research problem and provide a rationale for the issue (Gegung, 2023). Qualitative descriptive research is a method for describing, exploring, and examining the characteristics of the phenomenon studied (Gergin et al., 2022).

Collecting data was done through the use of secondary sources meaning data was obtained by someone else and already exists, such as documents, academic journals, textbooks, media releases, articles and online sources in gaining useful information and present the findings (Gegung, 2023; Chirisa et al., 2020). Meanwhile, an approach focused on qualitative data was taken to identify the concept of guerrilla marketing and the benefits of using this campaign for small and medium-sized enterprises.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals the following findings. First, guerrilla campaigns carry benefits for a company that requires a low-budget instrument for marketing products and services. Guerrilla campaigns are known for their cost-effective way to market brands. Many businesses, especially those who seek low-budget instruments with high profits may find guerrilla campaigns as one of the best alternatives to boost their business performance. This statement is supported by a study done by Levinson (2011) who said that the soul and spirit of guerrilla campaigns is for small businesses. Those with big dreams but small budgets aim to enhance the size of the company's profits.

Second, guerrilla marketing generates buzz and increases brand awareness. Not surprisingly the idea of guerrilla campaigns is for grabbing attention and generating buzz. Using unexpected tactics may draw mass attention and interest towards the brands. The message delivered may stand out from the other competitors. Making guerrilla marketing as the best instrument to enhance brand awareness and visibility. Ahmed et al., (2019) mentioned in their study the higher the brand awareness resulting in the higher the likelihood of consumers purchasing products and repeat orders. Take an example of ambush marketing, Go Heinrich Go in 1996. This campaign was done by Nike during the Berlin Marathon. The main sponsor of the event was Adidas, but Nike took advantage of Heinrich Blumchen, a 78-year-old runner and the oldest participant at the time. Nike placed a board that stated "Go Heinrich Go" side by side with Nike's ad slogan "Just do it". Also, Heinrich was fully dressed in Nike clothes. Owing to his age Heinrich became the spotlight and was depicted all over the media. Making Nike the center of attention (Gillert, 2021).

Third, guerrilla marketing tends to target specific audiences. A marketing campaign can be more effective and impactful if it is tailored to specific audiences and uses tactics that work with them. It may create lasting impressions and add brand recognition as well as enhance customer engagement. Most traditional marketing uses "me" marketing concepts such as *"about our company"*, *"about our history"*, *"about our products/services"* or even *"about our management"* (Levinson, 2011). People simply are not interested in that information at all. This "me" marketing makes consumers feel sleepy and reluctant. On the other hand, guerrilla marketing always finds a way to engage with customers through the concept of "you" marketing where every word and idea is about meeting customer needs and wants. Levinson (2011) stated customers' main priority is themselves if companies can talk to those about themselves, then that companies may obtain full attention from their customers.

A case in point is the campaign "Real Beauty Sketches" published by Dove. Using the uplifting short movie video that highlights the beauty of all women. The message of the video is, that women in many cases overly underestimate their appearances without realizing that their "real beauty" lies beyond what they see in the mirror. Interestingly, the video did not promote any products and only showed the Dove logo at the end of the video (Gillert, 2021). However, Dove's Real Beauty campaign has left a lasting impression on consumers. It succeeds in cultivating a worldwide feeling of self-love and acceptance

which is worth celebrating (Taylor, 2023). As a result, the video became viral and was watched by more than 114 million within a month after its release and shared almost four million times. Make this video the most shared ad ever on social media platforms (Gillert, 2021). According to Barletta (n.d.) within two months, sales of Dove's products increased by almost 1000 per cent and surpassed the global sales.

It is true with further arguments that the potential benefits of guerrilla marketing are impressive, but it is also essential to consider the challenges of using this campaign. Some would argue that ambush marketing may potentially lead to legal issues. The purpose of ambush marketing is to hijack a competitor's marketing campaign or the event that the competitor sponsors, without contributing to its cost (Gillert, 2021). Ambushers may advertise their brands at the cost of competitors or even take the spotlight and advertising effect of the original sponsor (Gillert, 2021). While, a buzz campaign straddles the line between generating genuine interest and manipulating the perception of consumers (Behal & Sareen, 2013). Furthermore, the success of a guerrilla campaign may not be predicted. What works for one brand cannot be generalized to work for the other ones. Also, there is the possibility of misinterpretation. Customers may feel confused, misled, or offended by the campaigns. This is because the unusual and creative approach in guerrilla marketing may sometimes be construed differently than that proposed (Behal & Sareen 2014).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

As there is no single concept of guerrilla marketing there are multiple advantages that come along with this practice. This innovative and small-budget campaign presents strength from creativity and the power of imagination. It is suitable for small companies which mostly have tiny marketing budgets. Guerrilla campaigns may also help companies get their brand noticed and increase visibility. It promotes customer engagement and targets specific audiences through the concept of "you" marketing where every word and idea is about meeting customer needs and wants.

However, there are also some challenges revolving around this concept of marketing. Things such as legal issues, unpredictable outcomes, and misinterpretation may hinder small companies from achieving their goal. Therefore, companies should understand their target audiences. The success of the campaign hinges on how well it echoes the target market. Perhaps conducting surveys, interviews, and social media analysis to gain useful insights for creating guerrilla strategies as well as avoiding deceptive practices. Ensuring that campaigns are conducted by respecting others and do not invade others' privacy.

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