

# Guerrilla Marketing: Small Budget, Big Impact

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**Abstract**—Today the cut-throat competition faced by firms forces them to undertake aggressive marketing strategies in order to create a positive image of their brands in minds of the customers. Consumers are so deluged with advertising these days that they have learnt to completely ignore them. Consumers walk right past the billboards or skip the commercials at their homes, advertising some outstanding products. Thus, the need of the hour is to do conventional things unconventionally.

Guerrilla Marketing works outside of mainstream that zooms directly into the target customers creating an electrifying impression that helps the businesses to get their products or brands noticed. Guerrilla Marketing tactics help the firms to be a step or two ahead of the competition by using innovative methods and promotional tactics. It provides the businesses with various opportunities to boost their sales with unusual strategies in an economical way.

The paper outlines the conceptual framework and discusses the various forms of guerrilla marketing. It serves to discuss the characteristics and need for a guerrilla marketing campaign. The innovative promotional tactics with low budgets but maximum impact are also studied. The paper discusses various examples of guerrilla tactics used for social causes and gives some tips to undertake effective marketing campaign.

**Keywords:** *Guerrilla marketing, Guerrilla advertising, unconventional promotion, innovative tactics.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Imagine you buy an ice-cream bar and as you finish it you find a toothbrush shaped wooden popsicle inset into the ice-cream bar with a logo of Colgate on it. You are reminded of the importance of brushing and that too with Colgate to keep your teeth germ-free. If you come across some faded zebra – crossing line with one line absolutely white with a logo of Mr. White under it, you are easily able to store that product in your mind. These simple yet impactful ways to market the products come under Guerrilla Marketing.

Guerrilla Marketing is an unusual system of promotions on a very low budget that relies on time, energy and imagination instead of huge marketing budgets.

According to the father of Guerrilla Marketing, Jay Conrad Levinson, achieving conventional goals such as profits and joy, with unconventional methods, such as investing energy instead of money is Guerrilla Marketing.[1]

Earlier it was believed by the firms that marketing requires huge budgets. Thus, the gigantic firms could easily promote their products using conventional techniques such as TV commercials, print ads etc by spending enormous amounts.

Lakhs of money was being spent on advertising and many a times the messages to be conveyed were targeted at the wrong audiences, simply ignored or misunderstood by the prospective customers. The small businesses usually did not have the funds to be spent on marketing. They could not afford to waste funds on ineffective marketing campaigns. Limited funds had to be spent to lure the right targets. As competition among the firms increased, it was mandatory for the firms irrespective of their size, scale and funds to promote their products and lure the customers to buy them in order to survive and grow.

Thus, the firms wanted maximum impact and word-of-mouth with smallest portion of their advertising budget being spent. This required coming out with creative, innovative and attention grabbing campaigns that smack the target market in their face. Rather than shouting vague messages to vague audiences, whispering just the right word in the right ears was required.[2] Therefore, Guerrilla marketing was born due to the need of the small business marketers but today even the major corporations are adopting the guerrilla tactics to interact with the prospective customers and hit their nerve to take an action.

Guerrilla marketing can be a great tool for the new and small businesses with limited funds who simply want to make the noise and grab attention. It is also a powerful tool for the old and big businesses to revive the interest of customers in them and give a new perspective to their products and services.

In a busy marketplace not standing out is same as being invisible.[3] Thus, guerrilla marketing is a key concept to have maximum impact with minimum budget by using creative, surprising, innovative, unconventional, and entertaining ways and achieve competitive edge in today's fiercely competitive world.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

1. To provide an understanding of the concept of guerrilla marketing.

2. To discuss the need for guerrilla marketing and the main characteristics of a guerrilla campaign.
3. To analyze the difference between traditional and guerrilla marketing and define a marketing mix under guerrilla campaign.
4. To discuss various types of guerrilla tactics with examples.
5. To discuss various examples in which guerrilla tactics are used for social causes.
6. To provide certain tips for launching an effective guerrilla marketing campaign.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

(Pervot, 2009)[4] in the paper explained the various effects of guerrilla marketing on brand equity and concluded that there can be three effects –positive, neutral and negative. It said that if guerrilla campaign is properly filtered through the spectrum of consumer perceptions, it creates a positive impact on their minds. However, it is possible to have a negative or a neutral effect when there is a possibility of backlash or it falls deaf on their ears.

(Nufer, 2013) [5] Provided a conceptual framework on Guerrilla marketing explaining the marketing mix and concluded that it is increasingly developing into an effective spearhead of marketing and communication mix to gain an advantage in the battle of attention and receptiveness of the consumer.

(Pathal and Makwana, 2014) [6] in their paper discuss various innovative tools of promotion for small enterprises.

(Shakeel and Khan, 2011) [7] in their research paper tried to find out the association between celebrity endorsements on consumer perception and also stressed that a right celebrity endorser is important.

(Hutter and Huffman, 2011) [8] in their paper discussed the three effects of guerrilla marketing –surprise effect, diffusion effect and low-cost effect and also the various instruments used in it.

(Yuksekgilgili,2014) [9] analyzed the use of guerrilla marketing in SMEs of different sectors in Istanbul and concluded that though 82% of SMEs were aware of the concept, only 16% had actually used or were willing to use it in future.

### 4. WHAT IS GUERRILLA MARKETING?

The term “Guerrilla Marketing” was termed by Jay Conrad Levinson in his book *Guerrilla Marketing* in 1984 as “the act of executing an unusual or unexpected marketing activity in a common, everyday place in order to generate a buzz for products or services.”

Guerrilla marketing is about taking the consumer by surprise, make an indelible impression and create ample amounts of

social buzz. Guerrilla Marketing tactics are used to reach the customers at a more personal level, amuse or interact with them to give them a bodacious experience. It focuses on all kinds of advertising strategies that strike the customers by surprise when they least expect it in order to leave a surpassing impression. The whole idea is to get the consumer to interact with the product in a way which is unexpected but enduring.

And the next question that comes up is do we need a huge advertising budget for it?

The answer is No.

The basic concept of Guerrilla Marketing is to have a big impact with a small budget. In other words, it incorporates all kinds of low-cost unconventional marketing tactics that yield greatest results. The basic requirements for undertaking a guerrilla campaign are the power of imagination, innovation, energy, creativity and patience rather than a big budget.

The concept designates the selection of flexible and deviant marketing activities in order to achieve the greatest possible impact with minimum investment. The aim of guerrilla marketing is to maximize public interest in a firm’s goods and services while minimizing the costs of advertising. Thus, guerrilla marketing is all about standing out in the crowd of competitors in a cost effective way as creativity is the heart of the campaign and not the budget.

#### 4.1. Development of the concept

The term Guerrilla marketing has been inspired from guerrilla warfare. Guerrilla warfare is a form of irregular warfare in which a small group of combatants such as armed civilians use military tactics including ambushes, sabotage, raids, petty warfare, hit and run and mobility to fight a larger traditional military. The strategy and tactics of guerrilla warfare tend to focus around the use of a small, mobile force competing against a larger, more unwieldy one. Guerrilla marketing uses the same sort of tactics in marketing industry.[10]

The small and medium sized firms faced intensive competition from the large firms and were urged to come out with innovative marketing tactics with their low advertising budget. Unconventional marketing techniques were used by these small sized firms in the dynamic business environment to compete with the giants.

The concept gained popularity when Levinson published his first comprehensive book on guerrilla marketing for small businesses. The new strategy of “small budgets, big impact” helped small and medium enterprises to advertise their products and boost their sales in a cost-effective way. Guerrilla marketing was ideal for small businesses as they were now able to compete with the corporations spending enormous amounts of money to lure the customers.

Today, more and more corporations irrespective of their size and budgets are undertaking guerrilla campaigns.

Due to globalization and cut-throat competition, the firms have to cut the clutter by being different. The firms have to maximize customer satisfaction by keeping prices low. Financial crisis faced by the firms forces them to cut their advertising budgets. Also, firms have to increase their customer base by maximizing interest in their products and services. As the nature of guerrilla marketing concept is changing from competitor- oriented to customer- oriented [11], even the big firms are integrating their traditional marketing campaigns with guerrilla marketing campaigns.

## 5. NEED FOR GUERRILLA MARKETING

The popularity of Guerrilla marketing campaigns have increased lately because of many reasons.

Firstly, consumers are exposed to thousands of advertisements in a day ranging from billboards or logos on the buildings and public transport like metros and buses, from TV commercials to various promotional campaigns and from boring radio-ads to stark print ads. Customers are being exposed to thousands of advertisements in a day and this overexposure affects their purchase decisions. Customers try to avoid being exposed to and influenced by the advertisements and as a result the enormous amounts spent on the marketing campaigns get wasted if it does not boost the sales or help in building an effective customer relationship.

Also, by reaching the customers repeatedly with the same type of marketing campaigns causes a wear out effect. Customers start ignoring them and the classical type of marketing campaigns lose their power to attract the customers. Thus, the unconventional marketing plays an important role here.

Secondly, Guerrilla marketing is used to punch through the noise and be out of line. It helps the firms to stand out in the crowd by marketing their products and targeting customers unconventionally.

Thirdly, today, all firms are trying to win the competition to grab customer's attention and are aggressively marketing their products. Also, they either have limited funds or are always trying to reduce their costs. Guerrilla marketing helps the firms to cajole the customers with low-budget innovative techniques.

Fourthly, Guerrilla marketing uses a combination of different, surprising and innovative tactics to interact or amuse the prospective buyer. This helps in building customer relationship and increasing the local customer base.

## 6. CHARACTERISTICS OF A GUERRILLA MARKETING CAMPAIGN

### 6.1. Unexpected

Guerrilla marketing campaign is basically unexpected by the customers and has a surprise element in it. It involves putting unusual objects at unusual places or unusual time in order to

attract the customer's attention and make them retain the product or the brand.

### 6.2. Cost effective

Guerrilla campaign usually involves low cost advertising tactics as compared to traditional marketing campaigns. It creates an immediate impact on the customers and converts it into sales.

### 6.3. Creative

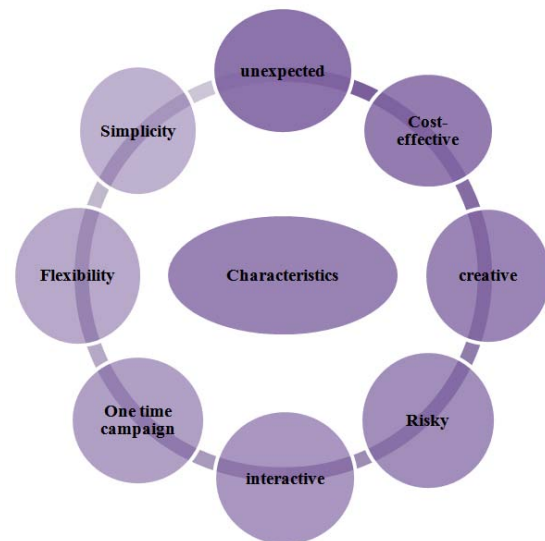
Creativity and innovation are the main pillars of guerrilla marketing. Guerrilla campaign can be successful only when it is creative enough to draw the customers' attention because of the creative idea, innovative design or imagination.

### 6.4. Risky

As guerrilla marketing campaign involves reaching customers unconventionally, it requires some degree of risk to be taken by the marketer. It is possible that the campaign may backfire if the customers don't like it or it involves some ethical issues. The marketer must consider perceived risks and rewards before undertaking the campaign.

### 6.5. Interactive

Successful guerrilla campaign involves an interactive element in order to engage the



**Fig. 1: Prospective customers. Better engagement with customers helps in building brand recognition and brand loyalty.**

### 6.6. One time campaign

Guerrilla marketing campaign can be launched only for a limited period of time. As surprise element is the heart of such campaigns, using the same concept again in the same target market is not possible. It can become boring and repetitive.

### 6.7. Simplicity

Guerrilla marketing should be simple to understand. Complex messages that are difficult to understand by the customers will fail.

### 6.8. Flexibility

Guerrilla campaigns should be flexible enough to adapt to any changes in the business environment.

## 7. TRADITIONAL MARKETING AND GUERRILLA MARKETING

Traditional Marketing and Guerrilla marketing are undertaken with the same objectives by the firms such as to increase in sales, profits and market share. However, there is a difference between them. The differences lie not in the objectives but in the marketing instruments and tools that are used to achieve these goals and objectives.

The main differences are as follows:

**Table 1**

No.	Traditional Marketing	Guerrilla Marketing
1.	It believes in spending money to make money and requires huge advertising budget to boost sales.	It involves low-cost marketing tactics and is based on investing time, imagination and energy.
2.	It is intended for big business.	It acts as a tool for small businesses to compete with big firms & helps large corporations to revive customer's interest in products.
3.	It concentrates on mass marketing and uses handful of conventional marketing tools such as television and radio ads, print advertisements, direct mail and trade show advertising.	It uses broad variety of unconventional marketing methods such as viral marketing, buzz marketing, flash mobs etc
4.	The main focus is to target a large group of customers by using a monologue.	The main focus is to target individuals and small groups of customers by interacting or amusing them.
5.	It has become dull and monotonous for the customers and fails to lure them.	It targets the customers unexpectedly and leaves a lasting impression.
6.	It attempts to increase sales with marketing.	It attempts to gain consent and then uses consent to market only to interested customers and build relationships.

## 8. INTEGRATION OF GUERRILLA MARKETING AND TRADITIONAL MARKETING

The increase of corporations has made it more difficult than ever to grab attention of the target customers.. In such times

guerrilla marketing with low budget and a surprise element proves to be an efficient tool for marketing. Guerrilla marketing is an attractive strategy to trigger the surprised emotions of the target audience. Integration of guerrilla marketing with traditional marketing can increase its effectiveness as it makes strategic modifications in the classical marketing mix comprising of 4 Ps (Product, Price, and Place & Promotion). When 4 Ps of marketing mix are integrated with creativity, imaginative new advertising methods, new efficient communication technologies, the effectiveness of marketing will increase.

The concept of Guerrilla marketing lays more importance on 4<sup>th</sup> P i.e. Promotion in the classical marketing mix nearly 70% and 10% each to Product, Price and Place.[12]

**Guerrilla marketing mix** is explained with various examples:

### 1. Product Policy

Guerrilla Marketing focuses on creative packaging for the products. Packaging not only gives a character to the products but creates a brand identity. Guerrilla marketing emphasizes on breaking away from generic packaging and coming up with innovative packaging for products that not only gains customer's attention but also emphasizes on use of the products.

For example – 1. Nike shoes came in the box packages made in the form of a stadium. As you open the shoe box you see a stadium inside.

2. Kleenex facial tissues came in a box done in the form of a fruit like an orange or a watermelon. It looks so attractive and easily reminds you of the freshness of a fruit.

3. Origami tea bags have fancy figures attached to them such as a small paper boat or a bird and as one dips it, it floats in the cup.

### 2. Pricing policy

Guerrilla marketing is used to tackle the price wars with creativity and imagination which gives the businesses an edge over the competitors. Price discounts can be used as a strategy to increase the sales and market share.

For example-

1. Motorola's most affordable smart phone Moto E got cheaper in India with the sudden price cut on it as a part of promotional campaign "Moto days" on Flipkart.

2. For small businesses, non-price competition is a more effective strategy to beat competitors rather than price wars by focusing on free trial offers, free deliveries, lengthy warranties etc.

### 3. Distribution Policy

Now is not the time to blindly continue with no change in distribution policies. Internet is creating sea changes in

reaching the customers. The need of the hour is to be flexible and continuously update the distribution strategies to deliver the target market in a more creative and cost-effective way.

For example- the pop-up stores are gaining importance in retailing today as it engages the customers. It allows the brands to capture the foot traffic without committing long term funds.

Pop-up stores are used to create a buzz and increase the sales like pop-up stores of Apple, Samsung, and Reebok etc

#### 4. Promotion Policy

New communication technologies along with innovative advertising strategies are used in guerrilla marketing. Promotion policy that forms the core of guerrilla marketing is used as vehicle for redefining products in the market to revive customer's interest and beat the competitors.

Various promotional strategies are discussed below.

### 9. TYPES OF GUERRILLA MARKETING:

#### 9.1. Ambush Marketing

Ambush Marketing is a tactic to ride-off or take advantage of a major event by aligning its promotional activities around it to undermine the promotional activities of the competitors who are the legal sponsors of the events. Ambush marketing is used by the firms to give an impression of association with the event to the customers though they do not have any marketing right of the events that is sponsored by their competitors. Ambush Marketing involves undermining branding efforts of the rivals by stealing attention, increasing the clutter and confusing the customers. It also involves undermining the campaigns of competitors by directly attacking or mocking at them and feeding into competitor's campaign.

For example – Samsung ambushed launch of Apple I phone 4S in Australia by putting up Pop-up store near Apple's store in Sydney and selling its competing product Galaxy note 2 at a discount to first 10 customers in line daily.

Jet Airways came up with an ad campaign saying “We’ve changed”! To ambush the campaign, Kingfisher airlines came up with “We’ve made them change” which was further ambushed by Go Airways saying “We’ve not changed. We are still the smartest way to fly”. The hoardings were placed in the city of Mumbai in a vertical sequence.

#### 9.2. Ambient Marketing

Ambient Marketing involves all kinds of communications that uses elements of environment or any physical surface to convey messages that attract customers' attention. It involves placing the messages in the form of unusual things at unusual places in an unusual size and style. Ambient ads are placed and integrated in the normal living environment of the customers without actually pushing the products. Customers

are taken by a surprise as they do not expect such ads and therefore find them interesting and likable. Ambient Marketing can be done in clubs, airports, bus stops, petrol - pumps, metros etc.

For example- shopping bag made in the form of Lipton tea bag.

Mirrors in public restrooms are made in the form of sunglasses with a logo of the brand.

A billboard made in the form of the frying pan by Prestige Company attached to the ground with the handle of the frying pan.

#### 9.3. Viral Marketing/Buzz Marketing

With nearly 1 billion active users on Facebook as well as Twitter the relevance of viral marketing has increased in today's fast paced digital world. It is a marketing technique to induce the users on the social networking sites/blogs to pass on the messages, videos/ads to other users and sites which they find interesting and worth sharing. This helps the firms to reach more customers, increase their message's visibility and effect and create a strong brand image. Marketers are required to create creative messages/content that has a high probability to be presented and shared by many people on the social networking sites.

For example- “Har ek friend Zaroori hota hai” campaign by Airtel.

Coca cola's theme song “umeedo wali dhoop, sunshine wali asha”.

Buzz created for new I-phones or new restaurants like the launch of Starbucks or Burger King in India.

#### 9.4. Stealth or Undercover Marketing

Stealth Marketing involves techniques to introduce products to the target customers that do not seem like advertising. The main purpose is to create an interest or excitement about the product by giving the customers a unique or a memorable experience in such a way that they create a buzz about the products which finally leads to sales. It involves marketing to people without clearly presenting the brand name and without explicitly letting the customers know about the marketing push.

The famous example of stealth marketing is when Sony Ericsson used 60 actors in 10 cities to act as tourists and asked the local people to click their picture with their mobile phones. The actors enthusiastically talked about the features of their new mobile phones as tourists. This was an undercover marketing strategy adopted by Sony Ericsson to promote their product T68i and was very successful.

#### 9.5. Astroturfing

Astroturfing in simple words mean creating an artificial buzz for the various products and services. It is a practice of

masking the identity of the sponsors/companies and makes it appear that the buzz about the products is originated by general public. An individual operates as many persons to give an impression that the product is being liked and supported by a huge client base. Astroturfing is definitely cost effective compared to mass media, however it is risky and also deals with ethical issues.

For example – Many times the blogs favor a particular product or a company giving an impression that it is a superior product being liked by many people but such blogs are financed or operated by the company itself.

**9.6. Experiential Marketing**

Experiential Marketing refers to the marketing that connects the people to products by experience. It involves making the customers experience and use the product before they actually buy. This is used in order to make the customers break their regular buying patterns and try new products.

For example – stalls outside big grocery stores giving free cups of soups or coffee of a particular brand in order to make customers taste it and then buy it.

**10. GUERRILLA MARKETING FOR SOCIAL ISSUES**

We all must have seen the statutory warnings on the packet of cigarettes or come across various cringeworthy messages on social issues. Do you actually get affected by them? The answer for most of us will be a NO. It is because audiences today have learnt the art of completely ignoring them.



Fig. 2

The need of the hour is to do something unconventional to raise awareness and influence individual's behaviour for greater social good. Guerrilla tactics being innovative and grabbing individual's attention in an unexpected way can prove to be effective for various social issues. Guerrilla tactics

have been used by various organizations around the world to create awareness for a social cause or for charitable purposes.

Some of the guerrilla marketing ideas for various social causes used around the world are listed below:[13]

Akanksha Foundation for Child labor.

“With each sip, you’ve helped spread child labor.” The message on the sticker at the bottom of the glass in which tea is served by children at stalls.

Advertising Agency: AMO Communications Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai, India (figure2)



Fig. 3

Raipur Foot for disabled children

Jaipurfoot is a specially designed artificial limb/ prosthetic for helping disabled people regain their independence, at almost no charge.(Credit: Ogilvy & Mather Mumbai) (Fig. 3)



Fig. 4

### Feeding the homeless in Melbourne, Australia

Dustbin shown as a plate for the homeless with fork and knife on the sides with a message “for the homeless, every day is a struggle. Donate today and help us feed the homeless.” Advertising Agency: Clemenger BBDO, Melbourne, Australia (figure4)



Fig. 5

### Clogged straws by Ministry of health, Portugal

Clogged straws with a message “High blood cholesterol will do the same to your arteries. Watch what you eat.”

(Advertising Agency: Fischer Portugal, Lisbon, Portugal) (figure5)



Fig. 6

### Abused handles in Indonesia

Social advertisement against woman abuse in Indonesia.

(Advertising Agency: JWT, Indonesia, Jakarta) (Figure6)

## 11. SOME TIPS FOR UNDERTAKING AN EFFECTIVE GUERRILLA MARKETING CAMPAIGN ARE AS FOLLOWS

- Define your target market correctly.
- Conduct reliable market research
- Set realistic goals and objectives
- Understand current and potential opportunities
- Set a budget

- Brainstorm to generate creative and innovative ideas
- Know no boundaries
- Plan your course of action
- Be legal and show integrity
- Think small and big alike
- Focus on building relationships
- Be willing to take risk
- Execute your ideas
- Analyze your results carefully

## 12. CONCLUSIONS

Guerrilla marketing is form of marketing which requires creativity, imagination and innovation rather than big budgets. By smacking the customers in their face with creative and surprising advertisements who are inundated with boring, repetitive and copy-laden advertisements, guerrilla tactics grab attention of the customers. However, guerrilla marketing does not completely replace the traditional marketing mix, rather in guerrilla marketing campaigns, the classical marketing mix is given a new form with creativity being the heart and soul of it.

Corporation whether big or not, whether popular and famous or not are using this new concept to achieve a competitive edge. Guerrilla tactics are used by the firms in order to make the noise, grab attention and cut the clutter.

Also, various non-profit organizations are also using this concept to create awareness and grab attention of people at large for various social causes who actually have learnt to completely ignore such social messages. Under guerrilla campaigns, when people are taken by surprise and then given a social message, it is expected to leave a lasting impression on their minds.

Guerrilla marketing is a dynamic concept which is being used by corporations in such fiercely-competitive world having endless opportunities.

At last, it can be concluded by saying that marketing has a beginning and middle but not an ending.[14]

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