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A STUDY ON GUERRILLA MARKETING AND BRAND IMAGE IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA AGE

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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 primary sources using google form circulated among various age groups of the target segment.

KEYWORDS: *Guerrilla Marketing, Brand Image, Brand Awareness, Generation Z , Purchase Decision.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, guerrilla marketing has become a disruptive force in the traditional marketing world, breaking away from conventional advertising strategies. Unlike traditional methods, which often require substantial budgets and mass-market approaches, guerrilla marketing focuses on using creative and cost-effective techniques to gain maximum exposure through unconventional means. These campaigns typically rely on surprise, humor, and emotional appeal to create a deep connection with consumers. The increasing influence of social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok has drastically changed the marketing landscape, providing a global stage for guerrilla marketing to thrive and gain widespread attention.

Brand image, or the way consumers perceive a company, is a fundamental element in marketing. A strong brand image influences consumer trust, loyalty, and purchase decisions, while a weak or negative image can damage a brand's reputation and consumer relationship. Social media has become a key tool in shaping and reshaping brand image, offering both significant advantages and potential risks. This paper examines the role of guerrilla marketing in influencing brand image in the age of social media, exploring how companies can use these innovative strategies to foster stronger connections with their audiences.

Social media allows brands to connect directly with consumers and provide immediate feedback, which has enhanced the effectiveness of guerrilla marketing. Through social platforms, companies can rapidly share content that reaches global audiences, allowing for guerrilla campaigns to go viral. When a campaign is creative and engaging, it can quickly gain attention, prompting consumers to share, comment, and interact. This viral potential boosts brand exposure, creating a wider reach and deeper engagement than traditional marketing channels. The interactive nature of social media also allows brands to build more meaningful relationships with their audience, creating a dynamic and engaging experience that traditional advertising methods lack.

Brand image is crucial for a business's success, as it directly impacts consumer loyalty and perception. A strong, consistent brand image helps companies build trust, foster loyalty, and increase sales, while a negative image can push customers away. Social media plays a pivotal role in shaping brand image, allowing companies to communicate directly with their audience and manage their reputation in real-time. Through platforms like Instagram and Twitter, businesses can engage in two-way conversations, respond to consumer feedback, and manage their brand identit effectively. However, the speed at which content spreads on social media means that brands must
be cautious and proactive, as a single negative experience can be amplified and damage their reputation.

This paper investigates how guerrilla marketing can influence brand image within the context of social media. It looks at how businesses can use guerrilla marketing tactics to create

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memorable, impactful campaigns that resonate with their target audience and strengthen their brand identity. The research also explores how social media can be leveraged to amplify the effectiveness of these campaigns, helping them go viral and reach larger audiences. Finally, the paper discusses the importance of maintaining authenticity in guerrilla marketing efforts, ensuring that campaigns align with the brand's values while also being creative and engaging.

1.1 Objective of the study

- The specific objective of the research is to determine the effects of viral, ambush, buzz, and street graphic marketing strategies on the purchase decision of Generation Z.
- To find out the effect of brand awareness on the purchase decision of Generation Z.
- Find out the effect of brand image on purchase decision of generation Z, Businesses in India may better grasp how to use this marketing strategy to meet their marketing goals and thrive in a crowded market by looking at these critical factors.

1.2 Research Gap

Despite the growing relevance of guerrilla marketing in the digital era, especially within social media platforms, several critical research gaps remain. Much of the existing literature emphasizes the short-term impact of guerrilla campaigns—such as virality, consumer engagement, and reach—while offering limited insight into their long-term influence on brand image, consumer trust, and loyalty. There is a need for longitudinal studies that evaluate how guerrilla marketing shapes brand equity over time.

Moreover, current research tends to generalize findings across markets, with insufficient exploration of how guerrilla marketing is perceived in different cultural and regional contexts. Campaigns that succeed in one cultural setting may fail in another, highlighting a lack of cross-cultural analysis.

Another underexplored area is the integration of user-generated content (UGC) and its role in co-creating brand identity. While UGC is often leveraged for virality, strategies for effectively managing this content to maintain brand consistency and authenticity remain vague. Similarly, the overlap between influencer marketing and guerrilla tactics is not well defined, requiring clearer distinctions and comparative studies.

Finally, the role of emerging technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and artificial intelligence (AI) in guerrilla marketing is largely absent from current research. These tools have the potential to revolutionize consumer interaction and engagement but remain under-investigated in this context.

Addressing these gaps would provide a deeper understanding of guerrilla marketing's strategic potential in shaping brand image within the fast-evolving, culturally diverse, and tech-driven social media landscape.

2.REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Guerrilla marketing has evolved significantly since its introduction by Jay Conrad Levinson in the 1980s, transitioning from traditional, low-cost strategies to a more digital, integrated approach (Levinson, 1984). The shift is largely due to the rise of social media, which has reshaped how brands engage with consumers (Keller, 2009). Traditional guerrilla marketing methods, such as street art, flash mobs, and unexpected installations, have now been expanded to include digital strategies that capitalize on social media's viral nature (Hutter et al., 2013).

According to Taneja and Kaur (2018), platforms like Instagram and TikTok have provided brands with a unique opportunity to reach a broad audience at a low cost. Social media not only allows for creative campaigns but also offers the ability for deeper, more interactive consumer engagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Additionally, consumer-generated content—such as memes and user-created videos—has become a central element of guerrilla marketing campaigns, allowing brands to leverage the creativity of their audiences to amplify their messages (Shao, 2017).

Creativity plays a central role in the effectiveness of guerrilla marketing. Aaker (1991) and Kotler et al. (2017) argue that creative and disruptive campaigns increase consumer engagement and leave lasting impressions. Hutter et al. (2013) found that the more surprising and original the marketing tactics, the more likely they are to go viral, which in turn boosts brand visibility and enhances consumer perceptions. The success of these campaigns also hinges on their authenticity, as today's consumers expect brands to align their messaging with their core values (Sweeney & McFarland, 2015). For instance, Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign combined personalized bottles with creative guerrilla marketing strategies to build personal connections with consumers, strengthening the brand's fun and inclusive image (Keller, 2009). This use of personalization in guerrilla campaigns demonstrates how brands can influence their image by engaging with individual consumers.

A crucial aspect of guerrilla marketing is its ability to foster emotional connections between brands and consumers, which is key to building brand loyalty. According to Thomson et al. (2005), emotional engagement is essential for long-term brand success. Social media amplifies this emotional engagement by enabling users to share their experiences, participate in challenges, and co-create content (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). This level of consumer participation isparticularly effective in generating strong, positive perceptions of the brand.

The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, for example, leveraged social media to increase awareness of ALS while simultaneously enhancing the organization's image as socially responsible (Caldwell, 2015). However, not all guerrilla marketing campaigns are successful—Pepsi's controversial 2017 ad with Kendall Jenner, which was accused of trivializing social justice

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movements,highlights how poorly executed campaigns can harm a brand's reputation (Jones, 2017). Social media's ability to facilitate virality is another key factor in the success of guerrilla marketing.

Nisar et al. (2019) note that platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube allow brands to engage with consumers in real-time, extending the reach of guerrilla marketing efforts. However, the visibility provided by these platforms also presents potential risks. Fulgoni (2016) highlights that, while the potential for viral success is high, the risk of failure is equally significant if the campaign misaligns with consumer expectations or cultural norms. As brands increasingly turn to guerrilla marketing, understanding how social media amplifies both positive and negative reactions from consumers has become crucial (Eisenberg et al., 2017).

Further studies by Dahlen et al. (2010) and Schivinski & Dabrowski (2016) emphasize that a brand's image is shaped not only by its marketing messages but also by how authentic and relevant those messages appear to consumers. Authenticity, therefore, plays a critical role in shaping brand image through guerrilla marketing. Brands need to ensure their campaigns do not appear manipulative or opportunistic, as this could harm their credibility (Sweeney & McFarland, 2015). In contrast, campaigns that evoke genuine emotional responses and align with consumer values help build trust and loyalty. Ben & Jerry's "Save Our Swirled" campaign, which combined environmental activism with guerrilla marketing tactics, is a good example of how aligning marketing efforts with corporate social responsibility (CSR) can improve a brand's image (Leonard, 2016).

Influencer marketing has also become a key aspect of guerrilla campaigns in the digital age. According to Ashley and Tuten (2015), influencers have become essential to digital guerrilla marketing because they can produce authentic, relatable content that resonates with a target audience. Influencers help brands reach niche markets, and their ability to build trust among followers amplifies the effectiveness of guerrilla marketing campaigns. Nisar et al. (2019) support this by noting that collaborations with influencers often lead to increased consumer engagement and improve brand image, especially when influencers' values align with those of the brand.

In summary, the literature reveals that guerrilla marketing has adapted significantly in the digital age, with social media acting as a key driver of creative, viral, and interactive campaigns that impact brand image. The success of these campaigns relies on creativity, authenticity, and consumer engagement, while the digital environment introduces risks related to consumer backlash and misalignment with brand values. Brands that leverage social media for guerrilla marketing effectively can build strong emotional bonds with their audience, foster loyalty, and enhance their overall brand image. However, careful attention must be paid to consumer expectations and cultural sensitivities to avoid alienating or damaging the brand's reputation in an increasingly interconnected world.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a primary data collection approach to investigate the relationship between guerrilla marketing and brand image in the era of social media. A structured questionnaire was designed and administered to 133 respondents across different age groups to gather valuable insights on how they perceive guerrilla marketing campaigns and their impact on brand image.

The respondents were divided into four age groups: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, and 45-50 years. A non- probability convenience sampling method was used to select participants, ensuring that individuals from various demographics were included. The survey was distributed online, allowing for broader participation from different geographic locations.

The questionnaire focused on capturing data regarding the respondents' exposure to guerrilla marketing campaigns, their engagement levels with these campaigns on social media, and how these campaigns affected their perceptions of the associated brands. Participants were asked about their emotional response to the campaigns and whether it influenced their views of the brand image. In addition, demographic data such as age and location were gathered to evaluate differences in perceptions across age groups.

After data collection, statistical tools were used to analyze the responses. Descriptive statistics provided an overview of the data, while inferential tests were conducted to examine any significant differences in perceptions of guerrilla marketing across age groups. The study aimed to understand how younger, more social media-savvy consumers differ in their responses to guerrilla marketing campaigns compared to older age groups.

Ethical considerations were also taken into account, with all participants providing informed consent and ensuring that their participation was voluntary and confidential. The study adhered to ethical standards in handling the data, respecting the participants' privacy, and maintaining transparency throughout the process.

Alternate Hypotheses (H1-H4)
The hypotheses are derived from the path coefficients and tested using PLS-SEM:

1. H1: Brand Awareness → Guerilla Marketing ($\beta = 0.233$, $p < 0.05$)
    - *Alternate Hypothesis:* Brand Awareness has a significant positive effect on Guerilla Marketing.
    - *Justification:* The positive coefficient (0.233) suggests that higher brand awareness increases the effectiveness of guerilla marketing campaigns.

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2. H2: Brand Image → Guerilla Marketing (β = 0.640, p < 0.01)
    - *Alternate Hypothesis:* Brand Image has a significant positive effect on Guerilla Marketing.
    - *Justification:* The strong effect (0.640) indicates that a favorable brand image enhances the impact of unconventional marketing strategies.
3. H3: Guerilla Marketing → Purchase Decision (β = 0.511, p < 0.01)
    - *Alternate Hypothesis:* Guerilla Marketing significantly influences Purchase Decisions.
    - *Justification:* The substantial path coefficient (0.511) confirms that creative marketing tactics drive consumer buying behavior.
4. H4: Age → Guerilla Marketing (β = -0.050, p > 0.05)
    - *Alternate Hypothesis:* Age negatively affects Guerilla Marketing effectiveness.
    - *Justification:* Although the coefficient is negative (-0.050), it is statistically insignificant, meaning age does not strongly influence guerilla marketing success.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Brand Image (0.640) is the strongest predictor of Guerilla Marketing success, suggesting that consumers respond better to unconventional campaigns when they already have a positive perception of the brand.
- Brand Awareness (0.233) has a moderate impact, meaning that while recognition helps, it is not as critical as brand image.
- Guerilla Marketing (0.511) strongly influences Purchase Decisions, proving that experiential and viral marketing strategies are effective.
- Age (-0.050) shows a negligible effect, implying that demographic targeting may not be crucial for guerilla marketing success.

Model Fit and Reliability

- R^2 Values:
    - Guerilla Marketing (66.28% explained variance): High explanatory power, meaning Brand Awareness, Brand Image, and Age collectively explain most of its variance.
    - Purchase Decision (26.14% explained variance): Moderate explanatory power, suggesting other factors (e.g., price, promotions) may also influence buying decisions.
- Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha):
    - Brand Image (0.746) & Guerilla Marketing (0.805): Both exceed 0.7, confirming good internal consistency.
    - Brand Awareness (-0.404): Negative reliability indicates potential issues with scale validity (e.g., reverse-coded items not properly handled).
- Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratio):
    - All HTMT values are below 0.90, confirming that constructs are distinct.

Discussion of Implications

- Brand Image is Key: Companies should invest in brand-building before executing guerilla marketing to maximize impact.
- Awareness Alone is Not Enough: While brand recognition helps, it is secondary to emotional brand connections.
- Guerilla Marketing Works: Creative, unexpected campaigns significantly boost purchase intent.
- Age is Irrelevant: Campaigns do not need to be age-specific, allowing for broader targeting.

5.FINDINGS

1. Brand Image Dominates
    - Strongest predictor of guerilla marketing success (β = 0.640).
    - Positive brand perception significantly enhances campaign effectiveness.
2. Brand Awareness Has Moderate Impact
    - Positive but weaker influence (β = 0.233) compared to brand image.
    - Recognition alone is less impactful than emotional brand connections.
3. Guerilla Marketing Drives Purchases
    - Significant effect on purchase decisions (β = 0.511).
    - Creative tactics directly influence buying behavior.
4. Age Is Irrelevant
    - No meaningful effect (β = -0.050).
    - Demographic targeting may be unnecessary for such campaigns.
5. Model Reliability Issues
    - Brand Awareness scale shows negative Cronbach's Alpha (-0.404).
    - Potential problems with measurement validity.
6. Strong Explanatory Power for Guerilla Marketing
    - High R^2 (66.28%) for guerilla marketing.
    - Brand factors explain most of its variance.
7. Moderate Predictive Ability for Purchase Decisions
    - Lower R^2 (26.14%) suggests other unmeasured factors at play

6. SUGGESTIONS

For Marketers

- Prioritize Brand Image: Strengthen emotional connections before launching guerilla campaigns.
- Combine Awareness & Creativity: Use unconventional tactics alongside traditional ads for broader reach.
- Leverage Social Media: Amplify campaigns

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through viral sharing and user-generated content.

- Focus on Creativity Over Demographics: Since age doesn't matter, design campaigns for wider appeal.
- Measure Beyond Awareness: Track actual purchase impact, not just engagement metrics.

CONCLUSION

This research provides compelling evidence about the drivers and outcomes of guerilla marketing effectiveness. The findings establish brand image as the cornerstone of successful unconventional marketing campaigns, while demonstrating that such campaigns can significantly influence consumer purchase decisions. The study makes important theoretical contributions by quantifying these relationships and validating guerilla marketing as a valuable strategic tool in the marketing mix.

For marketing practitioners, the results offer clear guidance: invest first in building strong brand equity, as this foundation amplifies the impact of creative marketing tactics. The negligible effect of age suggests that guerilla marketing can be an efficient approach with broad appeal, potentially offering better ROI than narrowly targeted campaigns. The strong connection between guerilla marketing and purchase decisions provides justification for allocating resources to these unconventional approaches.

Several limitations suggest directions for future research. The brand awareness measurement issues indicate a need for scale refinement and retesting. The moderate explanatory power for purchase decisions suggests other important factors remain to be identified and measured. Future studies could explore additional moderators like cultural context, campaign execution quality, or product category differences.

In conclusion, this study provides empirical support for the strategic value of guerilla marketing when implemented as part of a comprehensive brand-building strategy. The findings should encourage marketers to think beyond conventional advertising approaches and invest in creative, experiential tactics that engage consumers more deeply. As the media landscape becomes increasingly fragmented, these unconventional methods may grow even more important for cutting through the clutter and driving meaningful business results.

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ANNEXURE

