

# Guerrilla Marketing for Indian Startups – A Conceptual Framework

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## ABSTRACT

Guerrilla Marketing, in spite of its modest beginnings in the early 1960s, is today extensively used not just by small and medium enterprises, but also by big corporations. Guerrilla Marketing, with its unique characteristic of surprise, diffusion and low cost has come to stay because of these advantages over traditional marketing. Over the years, numerous methods of Guerrilla Marketing have emerged. The most popular of them are Ambient marketing, Sensation marketing, Viral marketing, Buzz marketing and Ambush marketing. Despite its numerous advantages, Guerrilla Marketing suffers from some negatives, which have to be accounted before any Guerrilla Marketing campaign is conducted. The present paper discusses the aforementioned aspects of Guerrilla Marketing for Indian Startups.

**KEYWORDS:** Guerrilla Marketing, Ambient marketing, Viral Marketing, Ambush Marketing, Startups, Low Cost Effect, Word of Mouth

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## INTRODUCTION

Marketing has changed a lot since mid-1980's. Guerrilla Marketing is rapidly becoming mainstream marketing. Many people in different nation have achieved so much success with Guerrilla Marketing while investing less money in the process, that traditional marketing has devolved to old-fashioned marketing. From the outset, Guerrilla Marketing responded to a burning need for marketing savvy. It was created for people interested in growing their businesses rather than learning about marketing.

Guerrilla Marketing is an advertising approach that focuses on economical and exceptional marketing tactics that give in utmost results. This is one of the significant strategies applied by companies these days which reflects an increasing trend of interactive, innovative ideas and creativeness, where imagination and ingenuity strike out big budgets.

## Literature review

The Guerrilla campaign has great effects on brand image, brand attitude and purchase intension. Guerrilla Marketing campaign is more credible and more creative than the traditional marketing campaign and perceived more amazing, comical and interest creating. A credible campaign contains a positive effect on brand attitude, as well as brand image and a campaign which creates word-of mouth has a

positive effect on purchase intension and brand loyalty. If the campaign perceived as both creative campaign and credible campaign, it will make a positive effect on brand image, brand attitude and as well as buying intension. Ahmad Nawaz examined that Guerrilla advertising has a great impact on consumer buying behavior and it is suitable for all companies.

Guerrilla Advertising is a popular marketing technique which is used in product marketing and that makes the use of unusual and unconventional ways of providing the product to the marketplace. The other growing technique used in Guerrilla Advertising is Stealth Marketing that includes a number of techniques such as celebrity marketing. Usually Celebrity Marketing is used by the Market leaders.

Bwisa conducted a research in Machakos Country Kenya in which he considers that there is a relationship exists between Guerrilla Marketing and business growth. For the success and growth of business shops most of the proprietors used Word of Mouth Marketing. Word of Mouth is one of the most effective marketing technique which plays a vital role to easily deliver the message and grab the attention of customers towards any product or services. To develop and retain a strong relationship with customers, Marketers used WOM strategy.

Experiential Marketing develop a connection in such a way that the customer responds to a result on the support of both rational and emotional feedback. Mostly Opinion leaders used Experiential marketing strategy to enhance the business growth. Internet is also the most powerful tool which is used by lot of the companies to obtain the relevant information and ignorance of this tool may be the reason for pitfall of organizations.

### Definitions

Guerrilla Marketing is an advertisement strategy in which a company uses surprise and/or unconventional interactions in order to promote a product or service. It is a type of publicity.

Guerrilla Marketing is a special type of marketing strategy which is nowadays designed for marketing mix model and mainly used in 'P' (promotion) element. Levinson (2006) says that when one company uses this form of marketing, he is actually trying to weaken his rivalries using unconventional methods and stay profitable in the market even with the very limited resources.

According to Levinson, Guerrilla Marketing is: "A body of unconventional ways of pursuing conventional goals. It is a proven method of achieving profits with minimum money." (gmarketing.com, 2009)

### What Is Guerrilla Marketing?

#### Roots of Warfare

When we hear the term "Guerrilla Marketing," it's hard not to think of guerrilla warfare -- which makes sense, since that's where this style of marketing got its name. In the warfare context, guerrilla tactics depend largely on the element of surprise. Think: "Ambushes, sabotage, raids," according to **Creative Guerrilla Marketing**.

But how does that translate into the work we do every day? In marketing, guerrilla techniques mostly play on the element of surprise. It sets out to create highly unconventional campaigns that catch people unexpectedly in the course of their day-to-day routine.

The term itself was created in the early 1980s by the late business writer Jay Conrad Levinson, who wrote several books about guerrilla tactics in a number of professional areas. Of course, at that time, marketing in general looked very different, and while Guerrilla Marketing is still used today, the ever-growing digital landscape is changing what it looks like.

### The History of Guerrilla Marketing

Advertising can be dated back to 4000 BC where the early Egyptians used papyrus to make sales messages and wall posters. What we consider traditional advertising and marketing slowly developed over the centuries but never really boomed until the early 1900s. It was at this time that the main goal of advertisements was to educate the consumer on the product or service rather than to entertain and engage them.

In 1960, campaigns focus on heavy advertising spending in different mass media channels such as radio and print. It wasn't till the late 1980s and early 1990s that cable television started seeing advertising messages. The most

memorable pioneer during this time was MTV where they focused on getting the consumer to tune in for the advertising message rather than it being the by-product of a featured show. Agencies struggled to make an impression on consumers and consumers were tired of being marketed to. It was time for a change.

In 1984, marketer Jay Conrad Levinson introduced the formal term in his book called, "Guerrilla Marketing" Levinson comes from a background as the Senior Vice-President at J. Walter Thompson and Creative Director and Board Member at Leo Burnett Advertising. In Levinson's book, he proposes unique ways of approaching and combating traditional forms of advertising. The goal of Guerrilla Marketing was to use unconventional tactics to advertise on a small budget. During this time, radio, television and print were on the rise, but consumers were growing tired. Levinson suggests that campaigns need to be shocking, unique, outrageous and clever. It needs to create buzz.

Small businesses started changing their ways of thinking and approached marketing in a brand new way. The concept of Guerrilla Marketing continues to develop and grow organically.

### Need for Guerrilla Marketing

On Levinson's official website (gmarketing.com) he writes that the need of Guerrilla Marketing can be explained by using three factors.

- People in general tend to look more towards small businesses because of the technology being more and more affordable and since people are more conscious of the market.
- In the past it has been difficult for small businesses to establish themselves and the main reason for that is that their marketing ability has been low.
- Guerrilla Marketing has been proven effective for small businesses since it is simple to understand, easy to implement and also a lot more inexpensive than traditional marketing.

### Types of Guerrilla Marketing

**Ambient marketing:** This type of advertising is often done by placing an interesting, and attention grabbing object along with its message, somewhere with high visibility. The concept is to catch the consumer off guard by getting their attention in ways they aren't used to. Magazine ads, product placement in TV and Movies, and news online, are typical forms that the consumer has grown accustomed to, and might be ignored. Whereas seeing a larger than life object or statement while on a walk to work, would definitely be more memorable and effective.

**Ambush marketing:** Ambush marketing is a marketing strategy in which an advertiser "ambushes" an event, area, or ad space to compete for exposure against other (often direct competitor) advertisers. Like this advertising billboard exchange below between luxury car brands: BMW and AUDI

**Stealth Marketing:** Stealth marketing is the practice of marketing to consumers without their awareness. Whether it's ads you see on the edges of Facebook that's hardly noticeable anymore, to product placement in a film or TV

series. Stealth marketing is everywhere, and it's almost impossible to avoid. The best practice for stealth marketing is to make it so subtle that the viewer doesn't notice that it's a marketing tactic.

**Viral/buzz Marketing:** Buzz marketing refers to marketing strategies in which the goal is to capture the attention of consumers and influencers to amplify the marketing message via word of mouth, and social media sharing. So much so, that talking about the product, brand, or service becomes newsworthy, fun, and entertaining.

**Guerrilla Projection Advertising:** This marketing technique is effectively a digital billboard that is projected at night onto the side of a building. This is often done without the permission of the governing bodies (council permits), or the permission from owner of the building. These projections are displayed on the sides of buildings in high traffic locations (people on foot and in vehicles). Guerrilla projection advertising is an effective addition to campaigns of a larger scale, like the launch of a product or service, a concert, shows, and events.

**Grassroots Marketing:** Grassroots marketing from its namesake, begins from the ground up. It involves targeting your message to a smaller group, a niche, and hoping that group spreads the message to a larger audience. It's about getting consumers on a small scale to advocate for you, and get more and more people on board. This is best for advocacies and campaigns that have something to stand for.

**Astroturfing:** This is one of the riskiest guerilla marketing techniques as it can be deceptive in nature. Astroturfing involves creating artificial hype and excitement around a certain product by getting people and influencers to positively review and react to it. Often times these influencers/endorsers are paid by the very company or brand advertising it, and these days it isn't very hard to see when public figures are being disingenuous with their sentiments. Astroturfing derives from artificial "Turf", or fake grass used in football fields or tennis courts. Hence fake endorsements, testimonials, and recommendations are all products of astroturfing. If consumers are able to see through this type of campaign, it can be detrimental to the company or brand, as word will spread and people may feel betrayed. It also keeps the company open to litigation.

**Street Marketing:** This type of guerilla marketing is based on promoting products or services in an unconventional way in public places. The main function of street marketing is that the activities are done exclusively on the streets, high density areas rife for a public display. While ambient Marketing uses other public places, such as shopping centers.

**Wild Posting:** Also sometimes referred to as flyposting, wild posting is simple and consists of placing multiple posters or flyers in multiple locations, usually using repetition and appealing visuals to catch the consumer's eye. They can be posted on any sort of structure in a high-traffic, urban area. Wild postings add character and color to the boring, often monotone urban landscape. This is a great way of drawing eyeballs to your awesome event or product in an area where there's little else vying for people's attention.

**Features of Guerrilla Marketing**

- **Pocket-Friendly Campaigns:** Guerrilla Marketing usually involves campaigns that are more economical as well as effective.
- **Targeted Reach:** Guerrilla Marketing focuses on creating campaigns which get more reach through word of mouth & publicity.
- **Minimalism:** Fewer resources, big message. That's what Guerrilla Marketing is all about.
- **Channels:** Communication of the campaign is done through word of mouth, social media, and publicity, etc. That is, business doesn't do much to communicate it. They just implement the campaign and rest of the communication is done by people who become a part of it.

**Key principles**

There are a number of key principles that characterize Guerrilla Marketing. These can be remembered by the acronym NEAPS.

- **Networks** - businesses should constantly look to make contacts and build relationships.
- **Energy** - remember that every contact and every day is an opportunity to market your company. This is called 360-degree marketing.
- **Activity** - be aware that there are always opportunities to make your product known and find ways of doing this when the opportunity arises.
- **Presence** - find ways to make your business known to the market. This could be through chat rooms, email, forums, discussion boards, radio, magazine, street posters, and graffiti and so on.
- **Smart** - make sure that you do not offend customers. (Some businesses have in fact turned this rule on its head by deliberately offending people they know are unlikely to be customers and they then use the controversy to create awareness in their target audience.)

**Guerrilla Marketing Vs. Traditional Marketing**

Traditional Marketing	Guerrilla Marketing
Primary investment is money	Primary investment is time, effort and creativity
Model for big business	Focus on small business
Success measured by sales	Success measured by profits
What can I take from the customer?	What can I give to the customer?
Mass media usage (direct mail, radio, television, newspapers)	Marketing weapons are numerous and most are free
Advertising works	Types of non-traditional marketing succeed
How much money do you have at the end?	How many relationships do you have at the end?

**Advantages of Guerrilla Marketing**

- **Flexible** – because of small scale nature can be adapted quickly, relatively easy to respond to change.
- **Low Cost** – one of the founding principles – ideal for firms who do not have massive marketing budgets.
- **Targeted** – designed to reach the target market – reduces waste and ineffectiveness

- Simple – many of the methods simple and easy to use and implement and it is ideal for the small business.

### 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

### Startups in India

**Startup India** is an initiative of the Government of India. The campaign was first announced by Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi during his 3<sup>rd</sup> Independent day speech addressed on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2015 from Red Fort, New Delhi.

The action plan of this initiative is focusing on three areas:

1. Simplification and Handholding.
2. Funding Support and Incentives.
3. Industry-Academia Partnership and Incubation.

Since then, below statistics are provided the Government of India website.

- 15,472 startups have been recognized under the Startup India programme
- 13,176 recognized startups have reportedly created 1,48,897 jobs
- 45% startups have at least one or more women directors

*"Never dream of becoming something, if you dream, dream of doing something."*

These words from Prime Minister Narendra Modi have been the foundation for India's ambitious startup campaign — Startup India, Standup India.

In the past few years, several states have taken the onus to build their own incubators, coworking hubs, etc., to boost the innovation in the state. Earlier, defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman had asked local MPs to set up coworking spaces in their constituencies.

Recently, Rajasthan launched Bhamashah Techno Hub, one of the largest incubators in the country, and Kerala launched one of the biggest coworking spaces in India. Karnataka announced a credit line of INR 2,000 Cr (\$281 Mn) for the startup ecosystem in the state, with an aim to have at least 20,000 startups by 2020.

Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat are some other states that offer end-to-end support to startups and have come up great initiatives to boost their respective ecosystems.

### Guerrilla Marketing strategies for start-ups in India

Guerrilla Marketing Services target customers through never-been-done-before marketing activities that they recognize as creative and unique in India. The marketing campaigns will help your brand to cut the noise of traditional marketing and embark itself as one of a kind. When compared to traditional marketing methods, Guerrilla Marketing is a cost-effective affair as it utilizes unconventional promotional methods to create brand awareness and engage with customers.

Strongly preferred by NGOs and start-ups thanks to the low budget requirements, guerilla marketing ideas are the **go-to choice for their low budget and their promising impact**. However, very well-known companies engage in guerilla marketing ideas as a way to show their **resourcefulness** and demonstrate their **creative, playful side**.

Getting your business off the ground is a challenge faced by all startups. The key to a successful business largely depends on the kind of talent you hire which will eventually make or break your startup. But apart from finding good talent, the challenge for most startups is how to retain them, so they continue to contribute to the company's journey. Also, it is an interesting way to challenge their customers' perception of the brand, as well as have a **lasting impact by creating a memorable campaign**.

### Guerrilla Marketing Strategies & Examples

#### Guerrilla Marketing Strategies

- **Be in your customers' shoes:** Before you plan any strategy, learn how your customers think and react to certain stimuli. A thing that is normal to you might be special for them.
- **Be Creative:** Remember, the best marketing campaign hasn't been launched yet. Make it yours. Be the 'first one who has ever done that'. This will create more brand equity.
- **Visuals:** Speak in the form of visuals. Visuals are processed 60,000 times faster than text. Shapes, colors, abstracts, added with a garnishing of very few words have a psychological impact and get a great response from the consumer. Visuals can make them feel the product.
- **Don't tell them everything:** Leave a message which makes them come back to you for more. This creates more engagement than telling them everything about yourself.
- **Be responsive:** The customers will react, they'll ask questions and will respond to you in various manners. Respond to them. Tell them about yourself and what you can do to 'help them'.
- **Stick with your brand identity:** Don't do anything just for the sake of being different. Stick to who you are and show it to the world creatively.
- **Offer Gifts:** Make quality products. Products that are desirable among the customers. Create that desire yourself. You can offer to selected customers for free.
- **Great Things in Small Budget:** Imagination and creativity should be given a priority, not the budget. Great things can be done in a small budget.
- **Trigger Engagement:** Make them talk to you, and they'll talk about you later. Social Media marketing can be used for this.

#### Mini Cooper Guerrilla Marketing Campaign

To end their 99-Euro a month campaign, Mini Cooper wanted to do something out of the box. Hence, they and their creative team came up with an idea of placing empty cardboard boxes over the leftover Christmas Garbage in the city. This campaign cost them less than €5,000 and created a buzz around the city. It was a clever idea of showing how small and affordable mini is. This was a great step towards creating a favorable brand positioning.

## 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 find 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.

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