



A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF MODERN GUERRILLA MARKETING TACTICS

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Annotation: This article explores the dynamic world of guerrilla marketing, a strategy rooted in creativity and high-impact, low-cost engagement. By analyzing the core components, benefits, and inherent risks of these unconventional tactics, the text provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how brands disrupt traditional advertising patterns. Through various types of execution—ranging from ambient to stealth marketing—and real-world examples like McDonald's and Coca-Cola, the article demonstrates how imagination and energy can outweigh massive budgets in the digital age.

Key words: Guerrilla marketing, low-cost tactics, brand awareness, unconventional techniques, word of mouth, target market, high profits, experiential marketing, ambush marketing, buzz marketing, product placement

Introduction

Guerrilla marketing is a modern strategy using unconventional, low-cost tactics to build brand awareness. Unlike traditional advertising, it relies on creativity and surprise to engage audiences. Coined by Jay Conrad Levinson in 1984, the term refers to "renegade" methods that capture attention through wit and spectacle. For these campaigns to succeed, imagination and energy are more important than a large budget.

What is guerilla marketing?

Guerrilla marketing is a relatively new marketing strategy that relies on unconventional, often low-cost tactics to create awareness of and goodwill toward a brand, product, service, or even a company. Guerrilla Marketing is also different from the conventional techniques of advertising by using creativity, surprise, and engagement to make people talk of the brand or the product in question. For guerrilla campaigns to be successful, companies generally do not need to spend large amounts of money, but they need to have imagination, energy and time. The term "guerrilla marketing" itself comes from Jay Conrad Levinson, who coined



the term in his 1984 book *Guerrilla Advertising*. Though “guerrilla” has military connotations (the word means “little war”), guerrilla promotion strategies often combine elements of wit, humor, and spectacle to capture people’s attention and engage them in the marketing act. Guerrilla marketing is memorable. And, like the renegade militias it was presumably named for, unexpected.

Guerrilla marketing components

To be effective, a guerrilla marketing campaign must:

- Zero in on your target market - Don’t try and serve everyone. Aiming at a segment of the market is much more effective because it is easier to reach, which will cost you less, and because you can speak directly to their particular needs and wants. So instead of trying to sell to athletes, focus instead on marathon runners or the equestrian community.
- Emphasize benefits - Most companies focus on a product’s or service’s features, whereas the benefits are why people really buy. So instead of talking about how soft a shoe’s leather is, talk about how it reduces blisters. Or instead of how light a car is, how about touting the amount of money drivers will save on gas as a result.
- Give customers what they want - How is your product or service better than what is already on the market? Does it serve an unmet need? What does it do, exactly? Being clear about what your offering does helps potential customers understand why they should buy it.
- Generate high profits - Guerrilla marketers monitor profits more than sales or revenue. The goal is to land a customer for life who will buy regularly and be willing to spend increasing amounts with you.

Effective marketing tools

Some of the lower-cost, high impact tools guerrilla marketers use include:

- Door hangers – for door-to-door services, hang ads from front doorknobs
- Remnant ad space – buy leftover print ad space at a fraction of what other companies spend
- Postcards – well-designed postcards can attract new customers for very low cost
- Contests – freebies and contests entice prospects to hand over their contact information
- Trade shows – rather than spending thousands to exhibit, sign up to attend a show and market while you’re there
- Publicity – provide reporters and writers with information they can use and earn free media coverage



- Bill inserts - piggyback on mailers other companies send out by providing preprinted messages
- Testimonials – ask satisfied customers to talk about why they love doing business with you, then use that in all your marketing materials
- Special (free) events – invite prospects in to check out your offerings
- Partnering with a nonprofit organization – aligning your business with a local charity can endear people to you and allow you to support a deserving nonprofit

4 Benefits of Guerrilla Marketing

There are several benefits to guerrilla marketing. Among them are:

Building connections: Creative guerrilla marketing requires more than just the company. Contacts with social media platforms are necessary for online efforts, while forging a connection with city officials, retailers, and organizations are effective ways to launch a campaign in a public space. These relationships can be helpful for future advertising campaigns.

Emotional impact: Guerrilla marketing campaigns emotionally connect with consumers—they laugh, get surprised, and think about the subject of the campaign. Emotions are a strong motivator for purchasing decisions and generate more word of mouth than brands that do not connect with consumers' emotions.

Going viral: The best guerrilla campaigns can go viral if they capture the attention and imagination of consumers in the right way. Viral marketing can reach more people and potentially increase brand awareness more effectively than traditional campaigns.

Low cost: Guerrilla campaigns are a creative, low-cost alternative to traditional marketing efforts. The uniqueness of the strategy does all the work: It connects the target audience with the brand name, and the consumer carries forward the message of the product or idea through word-of-mouth or social media.

3 Possible Risks Associated With Guerrilla Marketing

There are a few risks associated with guerrilla marketing, including:

1. **Misunderstandings:** The message in a guerrilla marketing campaign must be clearly defined, or consumers will misunderstand it, which can create conflict. Examples of misunderstood guerrilla marketing campaigns include a 2007 incident in which a broadcasting corporation placed battery-powered LED placards that depicted a character from a new animated series throughout Boston. The placards lit up at night and revealed the character making an obscene gesture. Residents believed the character resembled elements of an explosive device, which required police intervention. The broadcasting



company paid \$2 million in fines.

2. **Unpredictable results:** Guerrilla marketing produces immediate results from a single experience, but the total impact of the campaign on sales can take longer than traditional marketing. Also, viral videos can create exceptional word-of-mouth buzz, but the company has no say in whether their campaign will go viral or not.

3. **Unpredictability:** Guerrilla marketing is as susceptible to outside forces as traditional marketing. However, guerrilla campaigns can suffer from other issues: Bad weather or emergency situations can upend an event, as can problems with a venue or location. Even the timing of specific experiences must be on point, or it will disrupt the campaign.

5 Types of Guerrilla Marketing

There are many different types of guerrilla marketing, such as:

1. **Ambient marketing:** Ambient marketing places advertisements or ideas in unusual locations where consumers do not expect to see such images. Ambient marketing plays heavily on the element of surprise by interrupting what people know about an object or environment. The Copenhagen Zoo used ambient marketing to promote their wildlife exhibits; they placed large, high-definition images on public transportation to depict a snake squeezing a bus.

2. **Ambush marketing:** Ambush marketing ties advertising for a product or idea into another unrelated advertising campaign without paying for or participating in the second campaign. Ambush marketing has its pros and cons: While it is an effective way to increase brand awareness, especially for a start-up, critics regard it as dishonest, and it can negatively impact both brands.

3. **Buzz marketing:** Buzz marketing, or astroturfing, relies on consumers to increase brand awareness about a product through word of mouth. Brands often tie buzz marketing to promotions or stunts, encouraging consumers to share their thoughts on the product with the people around them or through social media. Social media influencers who share their thoughts on a product are another form of buzz marketing.

4. **Experiential marketing:** Also known as engagement marketing, experiential marketing creates a real-life experience that allows the consumer to engage with a product directly. Examples of experiential marketing include promotions at trade shows, test drives for automobiles, in-store events at retail locations, and even free samples of food or other products.

5. **Stealth marketing:** As its name suggests, stealth marketing involves advertising a product without drawing direct attention to it. It is a popular yet



controversial type of marketing that draws praise for its cleverness and criticism for its deceptive qualities. Product placement—the insertion of an identifiable brand into a form of media like a movie or television show—is the best-known example of stealth marketing.

Real examples of guerilla marketing



McDonald's fries crosswalk



Coca-Cola ChooseHappiness vending machine



KFC x Crocs Classic Clogs



Conclusion

Guerrilla marketing is a powerful way for brands to create emotional connections through high-impact experiences. While risks like misunderstandings or unpredictable results exist, the low cost and viral potential make it highly effective. By focusing on customer benefits and unique ideas, companies can bypass traditional barriers and ensure their message is truly memorable.

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