

CREATIVE GUERRILLA MARKETING IN FASHION: FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

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ABSTRACT

Guerilla marketing is a technique that used by firms to increase firms' productivity in order to achieve firms' value and mission. Guerilla marketing techniques have been used by a number of brands, both large and small, in different situations. It is a common reason to use guerrilla marketing techniques is to find *a new way* to communicate with consumers. Guerrilla marketing is one of the forms of *creative marketing* and draws its strength from creativity and the power of imagination. Fashion brands have a long history of leveraging the various festivals and events. The aim of this qualitative study is to examine the communication of fashion brands with potential customers in festivals and events via creative guerrilla marketing applications. Besides, it is aimed to investigate the relationship and sharing of the attendees with the broad social media circles related to events and brands.

KEYWORDS: Creativity, guerilla marketing, festivals and events, buzz, creative marketing

INTRODUCTION

In the scientific era, no one can be left without experiencing the influence of marketing communication has on our lives (Shakeel & Khan, 2011) Companies have to be effective in each activity what they realize, especially in marketing. Marketing activities have become fundamental how it is possible to success in market and create competitive advantage (Zich & Veselá, 2013). Guerilla marketing is one of the growing marketing techniques which are based on creativity.

THE CONCEPT OF GUERRILLA MARKETING

Due to the rapid technological development and a globally competitive business environment, *creative marketing methods* become increasingly important for a unique value proposition (Rücker, 2017). Gaining competitive edge in terms of marketing is one of the utmost objectives, which companies are focusing on, as a result to change psychological and social perception of the society. Reaching the customers and prospects in a right way with a definitive roadmap is a succession key in this regard (Shakeel & Khan, 2011).

The guerrilla marketing concept, which was created by Levinson (1984), implies an unconventional way of performing promotional activities on a very low budget. In recent years, many companies, looking for ways of getting out of clutter of traditional marketing implementations, tend to apply guerrilla marketing which is a different way of marketing communication. Not only the effect of guerrilla marketing strategies is important, but also the direction and the intensity of the effects are also crucial (Ay et al., 2010).

Guerrilla marketing is a technique that used by firms to increase firms' productivity in order to achieve firms' value and mission. The crowded competitive business environment is a main influence that had cause failures to most of the firms that are not standing out enough or not popularly known by potential customers. Consumers ignore and felt boring with the traditional media such as television, radio and print ads that contain message of their firms' product (Wang et al., 2002). The latest marketing strategy introduced was guerrilla marketing and it can attract consumers' attention with the creativity of advertising and divert their direction of observation on the target of product. Guerrilla marketing was designed for the small firms, it should be based on human psychology, profits, cooperate business with other firms to increase competitive advantages instead of struggles against the competitors (Chen, 2011). There are two reasons to use guerrilla marketing, which are *to create buzz* and *build relationships among consumers* (Fong & Yazdanifard, 2014). *Word of Mouth* (VoM) stands for when a friend tells a friend that tells a friend about the new product that he had bought last weekend (Vranica, 2005). According to Fernando (2004), marketers are aiming for VoM that is planned and executed by people in *order to spread the "Buzz"*.

Guerrilla marketing techniques have been used by a number of brands, both large and small, in different situations. It is a common reason to use guerrilla marketing techniques is to find a new way to communicate with consumers (Fong & Yazdanifard, 2014). For example, "in 2004, Nike sought to communicate with consumers through instant messaging. Despite the success stories and the many reasons to use guerrilla marketing, if directed at the wrong audience or not executed properly, it can actually hurt a firm brand" (Hallisy, 2006). Guerrilla marketing has proven to be a valuable communication and outreach tool (Hatch, 2005).

Some of the people found out that one of the advantages of guerrilla marketing are unexpected; it describes when the consumers get shocking on the advertising media which most of them applies guerrilla marketing on it (Omar et al., 2009). Other than that, consumers were unintentionally shows their emotions such as shocking, excited and amazed when they observe or realize the advertising media. Furthermore, the consumer is interacting with the message of the product from advertising media and it keeps an impressive image in consumer's mind (Fong & Yazdanifard, 2014). Guerrilla

advertising, which is one of the guerrilla marketing tools, usually attracts the attention of consumers but sometimes irritates and annoys the consumers and even breaks the law (Ay et al., 2010).

CREATIVITY IN GUERRILLA MARKETING

Creative marketing can be defined as an alternative way of marketing, which is based on the application of creative viewpoints, which enables a combination of marketing and creativity (Fillis & Rentschler, 2006). Thereby, marketing creativity is necessary to implement creative marketing strategies (Slater et al., 2010). Creative thinking can be defined as the procedure of gathering information and absent features in an alternative way, while phrasing hypotheses and conducting tests and evaluations of those hypothesis (Watson, 2007).

One of the forms of marketing that is based on marketing creativity is guerrilla marketing. “Guerrilla marketing is a form of marketing that utilizes unconventional methods in a cost-effective way. The main purpose is to promote products or services in the most efficient way while remaining low costs” (Levinson, 2007). Guerrilla marketing introduces a change in the goal of reaching a preferably high audience towards a marketing that enables ideal positioning and impact (Levinson & Godin, 1994). Guerrilla marketing utilizes unconventional methods in order to achieve conventional goals, such as high profit (Levinson, 2007). Graffiti or street art, sticker bombing, flash mobs etc. are used, often in a localized fashion or large network of individual cells, to convey or promote a product or an idea. “The basic tactics of guerilla marketing are to substitute innovation and creativity for the staid and status quo methods of advertising” (Yüksekbilgili, 2014).

Guerrilla marketing draws its strength from creativity and the power of imagination. For that reason, it is often *a hybrid of marketing strategies* utilizing a number of practices which differ from traditional advertising, and by drawing upon *innovative materials and methods* it makes it possible to obtain maximum levels of turnover for the lowest cost. Guerrilla marketing is a powerful means of rapidly boosting a firm’s competitive edge, particularly for small and middle scale enterprises in today’s fiercely competitive markets (Bigat, 2012).

Guerilla marketing is one of the growing marketing techniques which are used in advertising industry (Shakeel & Khan, 2011). Guerrilla Marketing to be a well-known marketing approach that applies more alternative methods changing the ways in which conventional marketing media such as advertising, direct marketing, PR and others alike executed (Levinson, 1998).

Regarding the critical evaluation of the benefit of creative thinking for guerrilla marketing it is recognizable that the measurement of creative thinking itself is not obvious (Hocevar, 1981). Therefore, its impact on marketing creativity in guerrilla marketing proves to be quite difficult. According to research, the area of creative thinking lacks accuracy due to the imprecise definition of

creativity (Finke et al., 1992). Despite this critique of creative thinking as a concept, the success of guerrilla marketing campaigns can be linked to the creativity that is involved (Levinson, 1993). However, it can be stated that exaggerated application of creative thinking might result in marketing campaigns that cause ethical issues (Ay et al., 2010).

THE POTENTIAL OF FASHION BRAND PRESENCE AT FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Festival and event attendees noticed an uptick in brand presence. Event sponsorships, branded fashionable experiences and the usage of guerrilla marketing tactics have appeared to be everywhere. “Fashion brands have a long history of leveraging the party scene around the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival into brand-building *buzz*” (Tschorn, 2017). With the 2015 festival circuit now in full swing, Russell Research conducted a survey among a sample of 578 18-39 year olds and focused on the nearly one-third of adults between the ages of 18 and 39 (31%) who have attended at least one cultural event or festival in the past three years. This was accomplished by measuring past three-year attendance of 25 events that spanned across three major categories (Russell Research, 2015):

Arts Festivals: Influential events such as Sundance Film Festival, Art Basel, South by Southwest, and Comic-Con International.

Sports: Major events such as the Super Bowl, Kentucky Derby, and X Games.

Music Festivals: Popular U.S. music festivals including Coachella, Lollapalooza, Jazz Fest, and Austin City Limits.

Festival and cultural event goers are so important for fashion brands. First able, they are *early adopters*. According to Russel Research (2015), more than one-quarter of recent event/festival attendees (27%) are usually one of the first to know about and purchase new products — nearly double the percentage of non-attendees (14%) who consider themselves early adopters. This is a natural fit for fashion brands launching a new fashionable product or service. Secondly, the attendees have *large social circles and followings*. They are more involved in social media to broadcast their experiences. According to Russel Research (2015), festival and event attendees are significantly more likely to be on Instagram (61% vs. 44% of non-attendees) and Twitter (61% vs. 51%), have significantly larger followings on both sites, and on top of it — more Facebook followers and friends:

- **Twitter** Followers: 230 among attendees vs. 122 for non-attendees
- **Instagram** Followers: 268 among attendees vs. 169 for non-attendees
- **Facebook** Friends: 397 among attendees vs. 293 for non-attendees

Further, event attendees are more than twice as likely to have substantial follower counts — 12% have 500+ followers on Twitter (vs. 5% of non-attendees) and 17% have 500+ followers on Instagram (vs. 7% of non-attendees). In other words, we can say that they have a large, engaged audience. Thirdly, attendees are willing to talk about what they see, hear and feel at events and festivals. According to Russel Research (2015), the results are staggeringly attractive for brands:

- 66% have posted a picture or update from an event
- 43% have posted *a picture or update about a brand* at an event
- 55% have *purchased a product or service that was featured at the event or by an event sponsor*

CONCLUSION

As a result, if consumer-facing brands can be able to find *smart and creative ways* (positive event experience) to be a part of the *guerilla marketing*, it becomes an opportunity to make a long lasting impression, among both attendees (potential consumers) and their extensive social media circles via *“buzz marketing”*.

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