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The Use of Guerilla Marketing In SMEs

Zeki Yuksekbilgili¹

Guerrilla marketing is defined as an advertising strategy, in which low-cost unconventional means are used, employs various techniques which keep costs at a minimum, and is often adopted by small companies. In this research, 100 SME's that are working on different sectors in Istanbul have been reviewed to understand if these companies are aware of this marketing strategy and if they have ever used these tactics in their marketing. Although in former studies guerilla marketing is said to be adopted by small companies, this research shows that most of the Turkish SME's had never used or willing to use guerilla marketing in their past or future marketing plans.

Keywords: guerilla marketing, turkish SME guerilla marketers, SME

Introduction

In today's highly fragmented media landscape, generating positive word of mouth (WOM) among consumers has become a very important tool for marketers (Bowman and Narayandas, 2001; Godes and Mayzlin, 2004; Liu, 2006) and this is especially so in digital media (Huang and Chen, 2006). Traditional marketing methods simply do not reach their target audiences with the same effectiveness as they did just a decade ago. Instead, WOM Has become an increasingly useful channel to share information in our society and should continue to grow in importance (Keller And Berry, 2003). Thus, there has been a recent surge of interest in how marketers can take advantage of new marketing techniques.

Guerrilla marketing, which consists of strategies that can be applied by businesses easily and with little cost, is an important marketing tool that companies should learn and make use of in order to be successful in such a competitive environment.(Ay, Aytekin, and Nardali, 2010). In Wikipedia, guerrilla marketing is defined as an advertising strategy, in

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which low-cost unconventional means (graffiti or street art, sticker bombing, flash mobs) are used, often in a localized fashion or large network of individual cells, to convey or promote a product or an idea. The term guerrilla marketing is easily traced to guerrilla warfare, which utilizes atypical tactics to achieve a goal in a competitive and unforgiving environment (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla_marketing). The basic tactics of guerilla marketing are to substitute innovation and creativity for the staid and status quo methods of advertising. The guerrilla marketing concept, which was created by Levinson (1984), implies an unconventional way of performing promotional activities on a very low budget. Since 1984, Levinson's ideas have been reworked to illustrate how those in a variety of occupations can translate the principles of low budget, aggressive marketing to aid in selling their products (Levinson, Frishman, & Larsen, 2001).

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). Guerrilla tactics are rational, and it is able to transform its disadvantages into advantages. Jay Conrad Levinson defines guerrilla marketing in the following terms: "It is for those entrepreneurs whose budgets are low but their imaginations are great..." (<http://blog.reklam.com.tr/genel/gerilla-reklam-ve-pazarlama/386/#ixzz18hTyIzOk>). The aim of guerrilla marketing is to maximize public interest in a firm's goods and services while also minimizing the costs of advertising. Just like guerrilla warfare, this form of marketing strives to focus attention in a particular direction. The means to achieving this in advertising are "different, surprising, original and entertaining," implemented with a small budget. Initially, guerrilla marketing was primarily adopted by small companies to allow them to compete with larger firms that have larger budgets. As Kotler notes, "Guerrilla warfare is normally practised by smaller companies against larger companies" (Kotler, 2007). However, changing economic conditions have caused even larger companies to seek out means to achieve maximum results with smaller budgets in their marketing and advertising activities, and guerrilla marketing techniques are quite successful in this regard (Bigat, 2012).

Problem

As expressed earlier, guerrilla marketing is defined as a marketing idea practiced by smaller companies (Kotler, 2007, Levinson 1984). This research was conducted to find out if the SME's in Turkey are using this marketing idea.

Method

100 SME's that are working on different sectors have been chosen as the target of this research. On the recognition of SME's, the following definition of the European Commission was used;

- micro-entities are companies with up to 10 employees
- Small companies employ up to 50 workers
- Medium-sized enterprises have up to 250 employees (Concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, 2003).

Table-1 shows the list of SME's diversified according to the sectors.

Table 1 - List of SME'S per Sectors

Sector	n	Sector	n
Agriculture	1	Energy	1
Accounting	5	Financial Services	2
Advertising	3	Food & Beverage	13
Apparel & Accessories	16	Health Care	2
Automotive	5	Legal	1
Call Centers	3	Publishing	2
Cargo Handling	3	Soap & Detergent	3
Chemical	1	Software	4
Computer	6	Sports	9
Consumer Products	6	Technology	1
Cosmetics	2	Telecommunications	2
Electronics	5	Transportation	4
Total			100

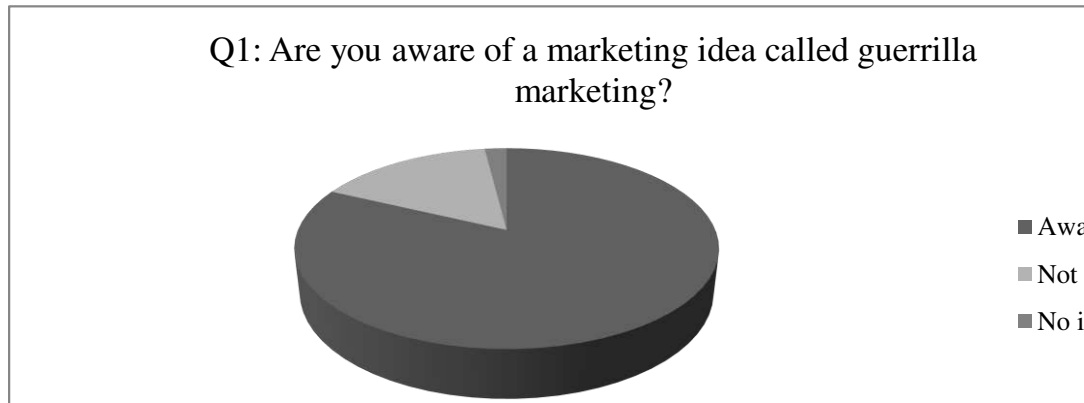
Then, the following 2 questions were asked;

Q1: Are you aware of a marketing idea called guerrilla marketing?

Q2: Have you ever used or willing to use guerilla marketing in their past or future marketing plans?

The research showed (as shown in Figure-1) that 82% of the SME's are aware of guerilla marketing. 16% of the SME's are not aware and 2% has no idea.

Figure 1 - The Results of Q1



Although 82% of the SME's are aware of guerilla marketing, only 13 SME's (16% of the SME's aware) stated that they have ever used or willing to use guerilla marketing in their past or future marketing plans. When detailed, it is found that the SME's operating in consumer markets are the users. Table-2 shows the list of SME's using or willing to use guerilla marketing diversified according to the sectors.

Table 2 - List of SME's Using Guerilla Marketing per Sectors

Sector	n
Advertising	3
Consumer Products	5
Food, Beverage & Tobacco	1
Soap & Detergent	2
Software	2
Total	13

Conclusions and Recommendations

Restrictions of this research lie in the scope of the literature retrieved (limited to publications that are available in English and Turkish) and the implementation of the survey. Only 100 SME's all from Istanbul were examined for the result. The authors' suggestion for further research studies is to execute the survey for more companies, not limited with Istanbul. Although the research covers 24 different sectors, expanding the research to a bigger sector pool would implement better results.

Traditional means of promotion such as printed media (newspapers and magazines) as well as radio, TV, billboards, mailed flyers are generally expensive. As a response to this situation, the concept of guerrilla advertising campaign attempts to capture the interest and attention of prospective customers and hold their attention via unusual methods and unexpected means. Jay Conrad Levinson notes, “Guerrilla marketing is the harmony of wisdom rather than budgets” (Lucas and Dorrian, 2007). Although looking from this perspective, the guerilla marketing campaigns fit for small companies, this research shows that the majority of Turkish SME’s have never used or willing to use guerilla marketing in their past or future marketing plans.

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