A Review of Guerrilla Marketing & Its Weapons

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ABSTRACT

Today consumers were trying to block the promotional messages as they are surrounded with tremendous amounts of advertisements and get annoyed, thus, it has become very crucial for companies to differentiate their marketing. One way of doing this is to use guerrilla marketing, which is very innovation, unusual and eye catching and attracts consumers easily. Guerrilla marketing was based on guerrilla warfare techniques used in military. This is a low cost strategy and hence very useful and effective for small scale enterprises, so that they remain competitive with respect to big companies. It is an unconventional marketing approach with the objective of maximum result from minimum resource. This paper will throw light on the basic principles of Guerrilla marketing and to examine the various tools and tactics used in Guerrilla marketing. This paper will also provide a theoretical framework about effects of Guerrilla marketing on consumers. This paper may be useful in increasing companies’ understanding of the concept of guerrilla marketing and how this can be used in a successful way.

KEY WORDS- Guerrilla Marketing, Ambient Marketing, Viral Marketing, Ambush Marketing, Word of Mouth (WoM), Buzz Marketing, Unconventional Marketing,

INTRODUCTION

Today consumer’s were heavily bombarded with promotional messages and it is impossible to pay attention to all, which started annoying them hence they are avoiding ads by using technology and mental blocking. Ignorance of these ads by consumers will lead to waste of money which was invested by companies. That is why, in present Scenario, Guerrilla marketing is getting lot of importance because of its innovative and low budget approach. The term “Guerilla” (battle)roots back to the war of independence in Spain and Portugal, the revolution in Cuba, and the Vietnamese War. Here “Guerilla” stood for an attack strategy based on the surprise effect and acts of sabotage, which was used by small groups that stood against a massive military force. In the 1960’s US firms brought the “Guerilla” tactics to Marketing, when they needed new ways to face and remove competitors. Then they merely attacked weak points of competitors by implementing preliminary injunctions for their campaigns for instance. In 1983, Jay Conrad Levinson made the term “Guerilla Marketing” known as a philosophy for small and start-up companies to successfully market their business with a small amount of money. Later on, big companies started using the marketing concept but with huge budgets, resulting in massive eye-catching advertising campaigns. The success of this marketing approach was based on non-traditional marketing channels, targeting consumers at unusual places, consumer’s proximity, insistency, and patience. Due to drastic technological development and massive changes in the advertising market, Guerilla Marketing is widely accepted and commonly used approach of promoting the goods and services has now a days. Over the years, numerous weapons of Guerilla marketing have emerged. Some of the most popular of them are Ambient marketing, Sensation marketing, Viral marketing, Buzz marketing and Ambush marketing, Stealth marketing, Wild posting, Astroturfing,
Tissue packing. Though Guerrilla marketing has numerous advantages, it is suffering from negatives aspects and ethical issues which have to be considered before commencement of such campaigns. The present paper focuses on the origin of Guerrilla Marketing and various aspects relating to it.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the concept and various weapons used in Guerilla marketing.
- To analyze the various merits and ethical issues involved in Guerilla marketing.
- To study the effects created by Guerrilla marketing tools on consumers.
- To know the perception of consumers towards Guerrilla marketing approach.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A sample size of 100 respondents was selected randomly to get the primary data and various ads of companies using guerrilla marketing tools were showed to them. A structured questionnaire is prepared which was divided into three parts. The first two parts refers to Guerrilla marketing campaign of two different brands. Within the three parts mainly closed questions have to be answered. The questions should clarify if the respondents like the idea and if they have actually seen or heard about the campaign. It is also essential to find out that they have understood the message. The third and last part gives the respondent the possibility to evaluate their own perception regarding the Guerrilla campaign which was shown to them of advertising in general and which aspects are important for their purchase decisions. A specification about gender and age concluded the questionnaire.

HISTORY

The History of guerilla 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 focused on heavy advertising spending in different mass media channels such as radio and print. Agencies struggled to make an impression on consumers and consumers were tired of being marketed too. In 1984, marketer Jay Conrad Levinson introduced the formal term in his book called, “Guerilla Marketing. In his book, he proposes unique ways of approaching and combating traditional forms of advertising. The goal of Guerilla 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. Larger companies have been using unconventional marketing to compliment their advertising campaigns. Guerilla marketing is an advertising strategy, in which low cost unconventional means (sticker bombing, flash mobs) are utilized in a large network of individual cells, to convey or promote a product or an idea. Guerrilla marketing is achieving conventional goals, such as profits and joy, with unconventional methods, such as investing energy instead of money (Kaden, 2007). Prévot (2006) defined guerrilla marketing as means to gain maximum exposure through minimal cost to the company. Most importantly, as the father of guerrilla marketing, Jay Levinson defined it as unconventional marketing intended to get maximum results from minimal resources (Levinson, 1999). Guerrilla marketing is more about matching marketers’ creativity than matching marketing budgets.

According to Levinson, Guerrilla marketing is designed to obtain instant results with limited resources using tactics that rely on creativity, good relationship, and willingness to try different approaches. According to Levinson, some of the principles upon which the concept of Guerilla marketing is based include the following:
This approach is specifically geared for the small businesses to enable them obtain publicity more easily than large companies.

Guerilla marketing is primarily based on human psychology and not on experience, judgment, and guesswork.

Money is not the primary investment in Guerilla marketing; the basic requirements are time, energy, and imagination.

In Guerilla marketing, sales are not the primary statistic to measure a business; amount of profit is the primary statistic.

Guerilla marketing is not to sell diverse products and services; a marketer must create a standard of excellence with an acute focus.

Guerilla marketing is less about getting new customers and more about getting more referrals, more transactions with existing customers, and larger transactions.

Competition is not the key in Guerilla marketing; instead it suggests cooperating with other businesses and grab benefit.

In Guerilla marketing, a combination of marketing methods should be used for a campaign.

In Guerilla marketing, current technology is used as a tool to empower a business.

GUERRILLA MARKETING VS TRADITIONAL MARKETING

Compared to traditional marketing, guerrilla marketing has different focuses in terms of marketing theory. Firstly, guerrilla marketing believes that marketing plan should be part of business plan. Guerrilla marketing planning focuses on the growth of the business, highlighting the business’ competition advantages. Furthermore, the goal of guerrilla marketing plan is making profits by making the product or service interesting. Guerrilla marketing uses profits as the only yardstick for measuring its performance; it based on psychology-laws of human behavior rather than marketers’ own guesswork and judgment (Levinson, 1999). Traditional marketing heavily focus in explaining product functions, whereas guerrilla marketing presents marketing campaign as an exploration journey of product followed by the rules of customer behaviour. It brings in imagination, energy into the product with a consumer point of view.

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

AMBIENT MARKETING

The Ambient marketing refers to non-traditional out of home advertising where advertisements were posted on unusual places like manhole covers, toilet doors, pizza cartons instead of using large scale billboards. Luxton and Drummond (2000) define Ambient Marketing as “placement of advertising in unusual and unexpected places often with unconventional methods and being first or only ad execution to do so”. Ambient Marketing is getting more popularity among marketers who were struggling to catch consumer’s attention consumers were getting so exposed to advertising on a daily basis so that
one got used to ignore the traditionally placed advertisements (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004). Furthermore, the lifestyle of the today's consumer increased the time spent outdoors, thus also favored the growth of methods of out-of-home advertising. “Newness, creativity, novelty and timing are key themes in Ambient-advertising.”(Luxton and Drummond, 2000). Razzaq (2009) mention that because of the unconventional design of ambient advertising that mainly thrives to attract attention and build on the brand-awareness, this strategy may not be the best way to expand a brand but maybe more effective in creating local and temporal social-reactions and involve the consumers within the brand. The authors also add that because of the strategy target on behavioral reactions, having ambient advertising in compound spaces would be probably best, in comparison with open spaces. That may be one important criterion that excludes Ambient Advertising from Out-door Advertising, but still include it as an efficient out-of-home marketing strategy.

Overall, “ambient marketing is an instrument that explicitly attempt to surprise people by placing advertisements in unsuspected places and represents the guerrilla variant of traditional outdoor advertising” (Hutter and Hoffmann, 2011).

Now a day’s newer ambient media’s have come up, such as messages on large-format screens in subways or handles of supermarket trolleys. There are no limits to their formats. The important aspect is to seek out the target group at their preferred location in an entertaining way. Ambient Marketing tries to approach the customer individually through the place of contact.

**GUERRILLA SENSATION**

Guerrilla Sensation is very similar to Ambient Marketing. As specified above, Ambient Marketing positions advertising at unusual places. Whereas in Guerrilla sensation the main focus is not necessarily on the idea, but on the advertising space itself. In general Guerrilla Sensation works with the same principle, but it is only used on a very limited number of events and activities. The number of prospects that are exposed to the advertisement is therefore relatively small.

**AMBUSH MARKETING**

Due to the increasing importance and investments in sponsoring, the practice of ambush marketing has enlarged during the last decades. Sandler and Shani (1998) describe ambush marketing as “the efforts by non-sponsoring organisations in a planned effort (campaign) to associate them indirectly with an event in order to gain at least some of the recognition and benefits that are associated with being an official sponsor”. McKelvey (1994) described it as "a company's intentional effort to weaken or ambush its competitor's official sponsorship”. O’Sullivan and Murphy (1998) define ambush marketing as “an attempt by a company to associate its own brand with the sponsored activity without securing formal rights, and this frequency results in weakening of the impact of an official sponsor's activity”. These definitions imply that ambush marketing is well planned and premeditated. Ambush marketing has been reviewed as not only those activities that are aimed distinctively at undermining a competitor’s official sponsorship of an event but also those activities that seek to associate a non-sponsor with the sporting event itself (McKelvey & Grady 2008).

According to Crompton (2004) ambushing has two complementary goals. The first is to abate the public’s perceptions of a competitor’s official association with an event, so official sponsors derive less benefit from that association than might have been anticipated. The second goal is to associate obliquely with the sports event in order to gain some of the recognition and benefits that are associated with being an official sponsor. Rather the main intent is ‘to create miscomprehension in the consumer’s mind about who the sponsor is and therefore gain the benefits associated with being a sponsor or weaken the impact of a main competitor being the exclusive sponsor of an event (Sandler & Shani 1989).
ASTROTURFING

Astroturfing is the practice of masking the sponsors of a message or organization (e.g. political, advertising, religious or public relations) to make it appear as though it originates from and is supported by grassroots participant(s). It is a practice intended to give the statements or organizations more credibility by withholding information about the source's financial connection. The term astroturfing is a derivation of AstroTurf, a brand of synthetic carpeting designed to look like natural grass, a play on the word "grassroots." The implication behind the use of the term is that there are no "true" or "natural" grassroots, but rather "fake" or "artificial" support, though some astroturfing operatives defend the practice. (Cory Doctorow 2011)

On the Internet, astroturfers use software to mask their identity. Sometimes one individual operates over many personas to give the impression of widespread support for their client's agenda (Peter Ludlow 2013). Some studies suggest astroturfing can alter public viewpoints and create enough doubt to inhibit action. Astroturfing is the use of fake grassroots efforts that primarily focus on influencing public opinion and are typically funded by corporations, and governmental entities, to form opinions (Cho, 2011). The term "astroturfing" was first coined in 1985 by then-US Senator Lloyd Bentsen (D-Texas) when he said, "a fellow from Texas can tell the difference between grass roots and AstroTurf... this is generated mail" (Rosemarie, 2011).

BUZZ MARKETING

Buzz marketing is the implementation of a planned action to advance the cause of mouth. We retain the definition of Morrissey (2007): "The buzz marketing is like a virus, it is ideally spread with a predefined target which will relay the message to the people who love surrounding the same products and services that carry the message." Paul Marsden (2006) defines buzz marketing as: "The promotion of a company or its products and services through initiatives conceived and designed to get people and the media talking positively about that company, product or service".

According to Billon and Tardieu (2002), buzz marketing is based on word of mouth creating a buzz around a product, service or event. It allows rapid diffusion and mass information that will subsequently relayed by consumers. Buzz marketing is considered as a vector of initial communication, interactive, attracting the attention of the target and fully involving potential consumers becoming actors themselves of the brand.

Preece (2002), mentioned two main advantages for brands and companies that implement’s.
  - It can generate a large number of contacts on the first day of implementation of the buzz.
  - Contacts are easy because they are given without hesitation by the individual who becomes an actor buzz and decides in his soul and conscience of the transmission of this message to recipients who have substantially the same interests as him.

EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

Marketing techniques such as special events, product promotions, field marketing, customer service and public relations evolved in new marketing development – experiential marketing. Experiential marketing is connecting consumers’ emotions, logic and aspirations with the brand by providing opportunity to experience the product. The goal is to influence on customers’ emotional rather than rational behavior, to make them feel comfortable and confident with the product while trying the product firsthand and understanding its benefits and feeling desire to purchase it.
Experiential marketing activities include events, PR stunts, one-to-one marketing, sampling, Point of sale, gifts, giveaways, interactive activities, contests and others. The idea is to make consumers interested through entertainment, inform about the product and let them try it. Experiential marketing works very well in product launch stage when people don’t know the product; or for products that need to be experienced for understanding its benefits, when it’s hard to understand its benefits without trying it. Experiential marketing relies on word of mouth as giving people positive experience with the product makes buzz and demand among consumers.

**WILD POSTING**

Wild posting advertisements are exposed to people as they walk the streets and have roots from traditional advertising such as billboards, city lights and other outdoor activities. Wild posting ads are usually placed building walls, construction site barricades and other available public urban spaces for advertising. Construction site barricades are the most popular location. Wild Postings consist of street posters, sidewalk ads, magnetic wild posters, transport door hangers, and other non-traditional media.

Very often wild posting campaigns are informing people of upcoming entertainment events, new movie releases, new CDs, concerts, festivals etc. Some of them are placed illegally, but mostly wild posting is using rented ad spaces. Wild posting is also cheap and doesn’t require much capital investments and has high exposure. However locations for wild posting change often due to temporary nature of construction projects and duration is usually one to two weeks. Wild postings show much better result in large urban areas with high pedestrian traffic.

Wild posting alone might not be very effective as the ad size is small and legal spaces for placement are limited. Spots for wild posting are not demographic specific and consumers cannot read the message from distance. That’s why wild postings are used as additional element in marketing campaigns.

**TISSUE PACKING**

Another new media which marketers are using now is other products or objects. Promotional message is placed on such product and distributed to customers. The idea is similar to distributing flyers or even sending promotional emails; however placing advertisement on a product which customers will use in everyday life gives higher exposure and response rate. Tissue-pack marketing has big advantage over flyers distribution and other traditional techniques. People often don’t even take flyers or if they take, they throw away it without reading. The same with promotional emails, very often people deleted emails without even opening them. But pocket tissues are taken by people as they give value to customers, people will use tissues in everyday life. While tissue is serving to consumers, the advertisement placed on it is exposed many times. However packages of pocket tissue will cost more for company than flyers distribution or sending emails. Not only higher response rate helps to tissue-pack advertising, but targeting on selected segmentation. Depending on advertised product, tissue-pack marketers divide consumers into groups by gender, age, etc. and distribute tissues within specified group.

**STEALTH MARKETING**

Stealth Marketing is also known as undercover marketing, as the advertising may appear to consumers as some other form of communication. Stealth marketing is a highly developed technique of cheating that often escapes the notice of tens of millions of online users. It is named after famous fighter planes that can avoid radar detection—the Stealth fighter. Stealth marketing strategies are developed to efficiently break through the consumers advertising shield. The intention of stealth marketing is to reach out with marketing product messages. The goal is to plant the marketing message without
consumers realizing that the messages are company sponsored, and thereby generate positive attitudes toward the product. (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004) With the knowledge that consumers are skeptical towards marketing messages, stealth marketing techniques are an effort from marketers to disguise these messages (Rotfeld, 2008). The concept with stealth marketing as a strategy is to sell products by deceiving consumers’ minds and avoid their advertising shield (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004).

**VIRAL MARKETING**

With people increasingly using the Internet and mobile devices more than trusting and paying attention to traditional advertising, advertisers and marketers adopt more innovative tactics to target their audiences, and viral marketing is one of them (Stephansen, 2009).

Viral marketing has been produced within the context of the Internet’s participatory culture, where consumers share knowledge about a product and/or service and its firm, voicing their opinions and experience across multiple platforms of the Internet (Shirky, 2008; Shukla, 2010). People are motivated to transmit messages and share views through viral marketing due to their altruism and sense of obligation toward society. People share their purchase experience with others and show their views about a product and/or service, in order to help others’ purchase attitudes and decisions on a company’s product and/or service (Allsop et al., 2007). Viral marketing also demonstrates the advertising competence of traditionally well-established word-of-mouth marketing (Woerndl et al., 2008), which is a powerful force in offering information about new products (Thorne, 2008) and affecting a consumer’s purchase attitudes and behaviors toward a product and/or service. Through viral marketing, marketers expand brand awareness, position brands, shape purchase attitudes and decisions toward their products and/or services with rapid multiplication and less investment (Dobele et al., 2005). Significantly, through consumers' online opinions and insights, organizations can further target consumers' needs with appropriate innovation, increasing consumers' satisfaction and growing a business considerably.

**EFFECTS OF GUERRILLA MARKETING**

There are both positive and negative effects of guerrilla marketing, which are important to have in mind when considering using this marketing technique.

**Positive effects**

The effect of guerrilla marketing is divided into three effects; these are the surprise effect, diffusion effect and low cost effect. These effects lead to the guerrilla effect. Figure below shows how unconventional advertising campaigns create guerrilla effect. A guerrilla effect is when unconventional advertising creates a high level of attention at a relatively low cost. Low cost does not necessarily mean that the advertisement has to be cheap. The advertisement can cost a lot of money, but at the same time capture the interests of thousands of people. In the end, when the cost is divided between all these people, the cost per person that was reached is low (Hutter & Hoffmann, 2011).

![Guerrilla Effect Diagram](Based on: Hutter & Hoffmann, The basic guerrilla effect. p. 4, 2011)
The three main effects of guerrilla marketing are presented above are:

**Surprise effect**: To get the surprise effect, companies use ambient or sensation marketing. These kinds of guerrilla marketing instruments are placed in unusual locations and they are a type of classical outdoor marketing, for example, fly posting stickers and graffiti proofs. Ambient marketing is seen as a very fast growing market sector and due to the low cost, a company can reach a wide target group.

**Diffusion effect**: The second instrument is the diffusion effect, which is a way to increase the number of individuals exposed to the advertising without increasing the costs of campaigns. Guerrilla marketing triggers surprise, which means, if a recipient is very surprised, he or she is very happy to tell friends and family about the experience. This starts the diffusion effect, or in other words WoM. The instruments that try to stimulate the diffusion effect are viral marketing, buzz marketing and guerrilla PR (Hutter & Hoffmann, 2011).

**Low cost effect**: The last instrument is the low cost effect. The instrument that is keeping the marketing budget on a low level is ambush marketing. Ambush marketing is when a company or a brand is visible at events, for example, sporting events, but does not pay for it.

**Negative effects**

In some cases the marketers do not consider the negative side effects that can occur while using guerrilla marketing and this may lead to ethical problems. Using guerrilla marketing draws a lot of attention, and it is often created to affect the emotions of the consumers. Therefore, emotions in guerrilla marketing campaigns are important. The marketers have three purposes to arouse emotions, according to Ay, Aytekin and Nardali (2010)

1. The first purpose is that using emotions is an important benefit derived from a product or brand. The second purpose is that the emotions may help to communicate the benefits of a product or a brand. And the third purpose is that emotions can directly affect attitudes.

There are different factors that can create irritation, which in turn can lead to negative attitudes towards the brand, as well as ethical problems. The negative effect, which can arise, is irritation caused by fear appeal; this can lead to unwanted reactions from consumers. Some guerrilla marketing which uses fear appeal in campaigns can make the consumers feel angry, disturbed, fearful or sad. This kind of marketing campaigns can create emotions that are worse than dislike towards the brand. Besides the irritation that can occur, there is some danger in using guerrilla marketing. An example is when campaign ads were placed in the middle of the road. This distracted the drivers, and could cause traffic accidents (Ay et al. 2010). This part of the paper described the negative effects of guerrilla marketing, and it is very important for the marketers to plan the campaign carefully to prevent any negative effects. Next part describes what to have in mind when designing the marketing message. Moreover, a presentation of the message design determinants, studied in this thesis, will be provided.

**ETHICAL ISSUES INVOLVED IN GUERILLA MARKETING**

- Proper and relevant content should be used while popularizing the product through guerrilla marketing in case immoral images like of warfare, etc., are utilized the whole message might get distorted.
- False and misleading advertisements, which may lead to wrong conclusions, should be avoided.
- Direct comparison with the competitor and outright claims regarding superiority of the product should also be avoided.
- Negative emotions like fear and anger to promote the sales of the product amongst people should be avoided.
- Marketers select places where people do not expect to see an ad, such places like inside wash rooms, under the bridges, hangings from the ceiling, paints on the public wall or stunts at public places. Many of such incidents may cause distraction and lead to accidents.
- Advertisements should be such that they can be viewed both by adults as well as children. Advertisements which may pollute the young minds should not be promoted.
FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

After critical evaluation of questionnaire, we found out that:

- Majority of respondents (31%) rated the Guerrilla ads as fair where as 17% like them very much and 23% like them.
- Majority of respondents (93%) were aware of the brands about which the questions were asked in the questionnaire.
- Even though most respondents tended to like the advertising that were shown and knew which brands were presented, many would not tell their family or friends about the exceptional advertisements.
- Most of them (47%) were sure to tell at least somebody about the Guerrilla marketing activities. In fact 25% were sure that they would not spread the word about the unusual advertising. Only some of them - in total 28% - did not decide whether or not to tell other people.
- With every example the respondents were asked to think about the possibility to buy the product for the first time. About 21% of all respondents never bought the products before and did not choose the option to buy it in the future.
- The survey revealed that consumers believe that they are influenced by advertising. 66% answered that they are probably influenced by it. 22% are sure that advertising is an integral part of their purchase decision process. Only 12% believe that they are not affected at all.

CONCLUSION

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, due to presence of a few distinguished characteristics like element of surprise, diffusion and low cost has come up as modernized low cost strategy in comparison to traditional marketing techniques. 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. The present paper has thrown light upon the principles and practices to be kept in mind while going guerilla. As well as the various merits of this sort of marketing has been discussed. In comparison to other promotional techniques like advertisements, sale promotions, personal selling, etc., guerrilla marketing has gained a wide acceptance whether we talk of big business houses, small scale concerns or mid scale organizations. In this paper we have also discussed the effects of Guerrilla campaign over consumers and various ethical issues related to it. After conducting survey we have also gain knowledge about the perception of consumer towards such unconventional marketing approach.

REFERENCES


