

# Guerrilla Marketing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Systematic Analysis of the Discipline Through a Literature Review, a Taxonomy, and Identification of the Most Relevant Variables

Carmen Zarco<sup>1\*</sup> and Doaa Herzallah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Marketing and Market Research Department. Faculty of Economics and Business Administration. University of Granada. Campus Universitario La Cartuja, s/n E-18071 Granada. Spain.

<sup>2</sup>Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. Barcelona, Spain.

## \*Corresponding author:

Carmen Zarco, Marketing and Market Research Department. Faculty of Economics and Business Administration. University of Granada. Campus Universitario La Cartuja, s/n E-18071 Granada. Spain.

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## Abstract

*In recent years, given the enormous competition for new products and services, many companies have begun to behave more creatively in an aim to be the best in the market. "Guerrilla marketing" refers to an advertising technique that uses unconventional and cost-effective approaches, employing a variety of strategies that reduce costs. Since the emergence of this concept in the second half of the last century, substantial research has looked into its application and usefulness. This study presents a systematic survey of the field of marketing and advertising: by analyzing the main scientific publications on guerrilla marketing through content analysis in the Web of Science, Scopus, and EBSCO databases. One hundred and sixty-four articles were analyzed in depth and divided into two separate lists: one with publications corresponding to Hutter and Hoffmann's first classification, and another corresponding to the new variables that emerged from the in-depth study that was carried out. As a consequence, a new taxonomy is proposed for the field, based on the identification of some novel variables characterizing the different existing approaches.*

**Keywords:** Guerrilla Marketing, Viral Marketing, Ambient Marketing, Stealth Marketing, Street Marketing, Ambush Marketing, Bibliometric Analysis, Taxonomy.

## Introduction

Traditional marketing strategies are becoming less and less effective for two main reasons: firstly, consumers are becoming saturated with information, exposed to some 3,000 advertising messages per day; and secondly, the tedious similarity of advertisements decreases the probability that an advertisement will bear an impact on viewers [1]. For these reasons many authors highlight the need to develop "attention marketing", which tries to surprise consumers in order to capture their attention [2,3,14].

Guerrilla marketing is the brainchild of marketing expert Jay C. Levinson (1984), describing unusual marketing campaigns that promise great effect with limited investment [4]. The term guerrilla derives from the special type of warfare, in which atypical tactics are used to achieve objectives inside the enemy. Konrad Zerr (2003) was one of the first to approach the term guerrilla marketing from a scientific perspective in German-speaking countries [5]. He defines guerrilla marketing as a global marketing mixed strategy, under which a basic market-cultivating marketing-policy attitude consciously seeks out new, unconventional, even frowned-upon ways of applying instruments off the usual routes.

According to Hutter and Hoffmann, guerrilla marketing comprises "several communication policy instruments designed to create a surprise effect for as many people as possible at comparatively low costs, in order to achieve a very high guerrilla effect (ratio of advertising benefits and advertising costs) [3]." Gokerik et al. (2018) maintains that guerrilla marketing is surprising, ideally spectacular, rebellious and contagious, which makes it highly demanded by marketing managers of large companies [6]. Guerrilla marketing aspires to reach the widest possible audience, be it in concerts, public parks, sporting events, festivals, beaches or shopping centers [7]. A key element of guerrilla marketing is choosing the perfect time and place to run a campaign in order to avoid potential legal problems. Guerrilla marketing can therefore involve indoor or outdoor events, an ambush event or experiential one, hopefully getting the public to interact with a specific brand.

The general aim of this work is to appraise the situation of guerrilla marketing through a review and detailed analysis of the main output in first two decades of the 21st century, covering the most representative viewpoints of the field of marketing. To achieve this goal, this manuscript is organized into three main sections.

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The first focuses on describing guerrilla marketing and its main precursors since its origin in 1960. Next, we offer a survey of the literature, in turn divided into the five main subsections defined by Hutter and Hoffmann: Viral Marketing, Ambient Marketing, Stealth Marketing, Street Marketing and Ambush Marketing [3]. These are the groups that have yielded more content throughout the twenty years analyzed. The third section presents an analysis of the main variables that stand out throughout the review. Although some are not included in the main classification of the types of guerrilla marketing, they may have considerable relevance in terms of the scientific production in recent years, and are therefore sound candidates for an updated taxonomy of the field. These variables are: surprise, emotional excitement, humor, informative content/ clarity, brand awareness, creativity/credibility and word of mouth (WOM). Finally, a brief section on conclusions and limitations is given, indicating some lines for future work.

### **Conceptual Motivations Historical Developments**

The concept of guerrilla marketing was enunciated by Jay Conrad Levinson in the 1980s [4,8,9]. To establish the framework, it is important to reflect the history of marketing from the beginning: as early as 4000 BC, the Egyptians were printing sales letters on papyrus. What we know today as guerrilla marketing is, however, a relatively new concept that stems from 20th century marketing literature [10].

“Guerrilla art” is an aggressive art form that implies filling the spaces of a public area with various types of graffiti. First seen in New York and Los Angeles, the street art impulse is now a worldwide phenomenon spurred heavily by hip-hop and punk subcultures in the 1980s [11]. In the late 1980s, advertising agencies started to hire guerrilla artists to develop products and advertising strategies. The demand for these creative and inspired artists grew, as they knew how to capture the attention of the pedestrian public and how to connect emotionally with customers. In short, street art played an important role in the rise of guerrilla marketing.

Internet technology in the mid-1990s provided an extra opportunity for guerrilla marketing to gain a competitive foothold. The Internet took guerrilla marketing to new, unexpected heights and facilitated two-way communication. When social networks appeared in the late 1990s as a by-product of the Internet revolution (especially since the launch of SixDegrees.com as the first social network), emerging sites like Facebook or YouTube were perceived as new venues for guerrilla research, utilizing artistic talent as a marketing tool. Meanwhile, the early 2000s saw a very important shift in terms of “who was using guerrilla marketing”; such strategies were no longer just a resort for small companies having scarce resources, and large firms with huge budgets and market shares began to rely on its unprecedented effectiveness [10].

### **Guerrilla Marketing: Concept**

The term “guerrilla marketing” is derived from a combat-related base term, “guerrilla” —a group of unconventional military tactics

that rely on surprise attacks. Guerrilla marketing also resembles marketing warfare [12]. According to Patalas (2006) and Baltes and Leibing (2008), guerrilla marketing comprises unusual approaches to gain influence with a limited budget as compared to “traditional” marketing campaigns [13]. This innovative method holds opportunities for information services [14,15-17]. Levinson et al. (2010) underline the prospect of achieving usual objectives, e.g. satisfaction or profit, with unusual techniques, such as investing greater energy and creativity instead of just money [18]. Hence, the concept was soon adopted by small businesses working with small budgets; yet over the years, good yields made it popular among large global brands with high profits [19]. Among others, Nike, Audi and IKEA have applied this concept in every phase of their marketing strategies [8]. Guerrilla marketing applies surprising product placements and memorable events, plus eye-catching street graphics, to effectively grab customers' attention [2,20].

The attitude of customers towards advertisements in traditional channels —billboards, newspapers — has suffered from excessive exposure [21,22]. The growing fatigue towards marketing communication, leading many customers to routinely avoid it (e.g., skipping YouTube ads), has forced companies to adopt new methods and strategies [23]. Creative and innovative habits are needed to reach potential customers, engage with them and connect them to their messages, for example, through advertising stunts and innovative product development [24]. Guerrilla marketing currently stands as a novel means of cluster breaking and message transmission.

Internet and social media make guerrilla marketing initiatives more noticeable. Although effective campaigns can go viral and reach hundreds of millions of viewers through these new media, there is again an element of risk for brands, whose campaign message may be misinterpreted by customers. When a campaign is not well designed or directed at the wrong viewers, it can prove detrimental for the brand image [25].

### **Goals of Guerrilla Marketing**

According to Ay and Unal (2002), the main objective of guerrilla marketing is to increase communication through popular, empirical, acrobatic, drawing and ambient marketing, giving rise to positive feelings among customers that will have an impact on sales [26]. Unlike word-of-mouth marketing or viral marketing, the potential of street marketing is not yet fully defined, and its benefits and advantages have hardly been quantified [27]. Some authors purport that it produces real impacts at a lower cost than those associated with conventional marketing campaigns [28].

Guerrilla art aims to create awareness of individuals on broad issues without extra financial investment, while guerilla marketing entails advertising and promoting individual products or services with the intention to increase sales and business income. Guerrilla marketing efforts aspire to a common good through creativity displayed in public arenas, prepared almost as a hobby, without

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generating expenses to anyone. But when such efforts are used to generate guerrilla advertisement by companies, they are paid accordingly. In sum, while guerrilla marketing aims at profit, guerrilla art is goal-inspired [10,29]. Many guerrilla artists who once strove to change society have since been hired by companies and are well paid as key parts of the assembly line of production and profit [30,31].

The Internet and social media have facilitated two-way communication and marketing workshops to maximize attention. Customer response to guerrilla marketing activities can thereby be appraised and improved. Social media platforms such as YouTube enable companies to upload innovative and creative promotional videos evaluated in terms of the 'likes, comments, shares and subscribers', whether for small and medium-sized companies, or big brands such as Coca-Cola and McDonalds [10]. Because the aim is for guerrilla marketing to generate a lasting impression on the individuals exposed to it, eventually a brand image takes shape, ultimately leading to better and faster diffusion through word of mouth. This makes it likewise very useful for non-profit initiatives, e.g. to spread awareness about issues such as AIDS, tobacco use, or social injustice [10]. As long as creativity and innovation continue to attract attention, guerrilla marketing will serve to make businesses, or awareness, grow.

### Representative Examples

Ries and Trout (1986) highlight Red Bull as one example of guerrilla marketing [12]. This Austrian soft drink brand, produced near Salzburg, had an innovative advertisement campaign and was quickly recognized as a source of energy and refreshment, through the sponsorship of major sporting events. It now prevails in this sector on an international level, even organizing sporting events such as air races or extreme windsurfing. Also noteworthy is the ongoing battle for market leadership between Pepsi and Coca Cola, often involving guerrilla marketing to generate consumer impact. Multiple examples can be found in the auto industry, cigarette brands, or cultural events.

The German company Henkel, which produces SIL stain remover, took advantage of the 2006 the World Cup, held in Germany. Henkel supported the Brazilian national football team in a very creative way: Brazilian samba dancers wearing Bra-SIL clothing and images walked around Berlin and Munich on the day the respective football teams played their matches. Henkel assumed that a team drawing public attention to Germany's most famous dye would be happy to get ample promotion in return [32].

As pointed out by Dholakia and Dholakia (2004), the fact that mobile phones have grown predominant for browsing or business transactions has helped guerrilla marketing to get closer to customers [33]. IDEA Cellular Ltd., a leading mobile phone operator in India, teamed up with two major coffee chains (Barista

and Café Coffee Day) to raise awareness of the importance of using less paper in order to save trees. They offered menus and promotion details on shoppers' mobile phone screens under the label of "green guerrilla marketing" [10].

Some original businesses, seeing the allure of guerrilla marketing, adopted it to improve brand building [10]. The Nespresso advertisement on billboards is an example of traditional marketing, while the Nespresso advertisement at a bus stop applies guerrilla marketing communication. To evaluate the impact of each approach, the Nespresso ads were used simultaneously, as an A/B test. The result was that the guerrilla marketing ad generated a higher impact than the billboard ad [34].

### Methodology

Data compilation began with a search for articles containing (in the title, abstract, or authors' keywords) the term "guerrilla marketing", as we observed in the main publications that it is the most widely used term for this strategy, and as recommended by Hutter and Hoffmann (2011) [3]. The search was conducted in the Web of Science (WOS), Scopus and EBSCO databases [35]. To ensure the quality of the survey, we restricted our analysis to academic journals that had a peer-review process and were written in English [36].

To graphically represent the evolution of the concept of guerrilla marketing and develop an up-to-date situation map, we set as the time limit since the year 2000. This allowed us to follow the scientific production of guerrilla marketing in the 21st century. However, some articles from before 2000 were consulted to help contextualize the characteristics of the types of guerrilla marketing analyzed. As for the search criteria, the date of publication was limited to January 1, 2000, giving 263 articles (134 from WOS, 45 from SCOPUS, and 84 from EBSCO) that were reviewed by an international and specialized team of five experts, following the recommendations of Graneheim and Lundman (2004) [37].

Among all the retrieved documents we excluded book chapters, book reviews, conference proceedings, editorial notes, and doctoral dissertations [38,39]. The final list thus includes 164 articles published in academic journals between 2000 and 2021. A deeper analysis of their content led us to conclude that 80 articles focus on the 5 groups resulting from the first field segmentation developed by Hutter & Hoffmann (2011), whereas 86 articles deal with new topics not originally characterized [3]. Analysis of the latter papers allowed us to derive new variables of interest that characterize recent developments in the field. The attention of researchers in this field is on the rise, as evidenced by a remarkable increase in academic output (see Figs. I and II), which can be interpreted as interest in the development of this subject as well as in its foundations [40].

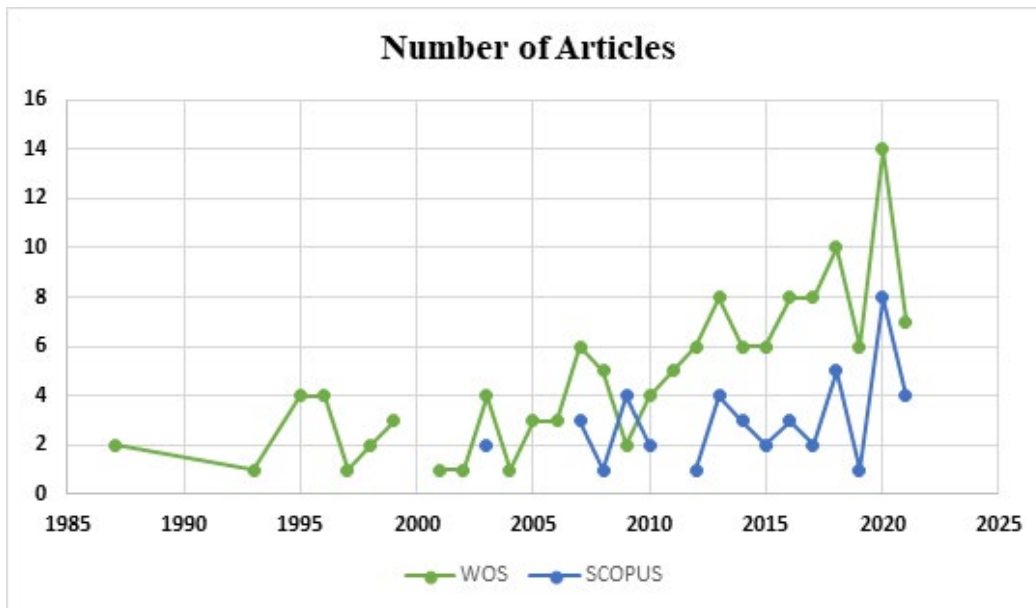


Figure I: Time evolution of the scientific production on guerrilla marketing in WOS and SCOPUS

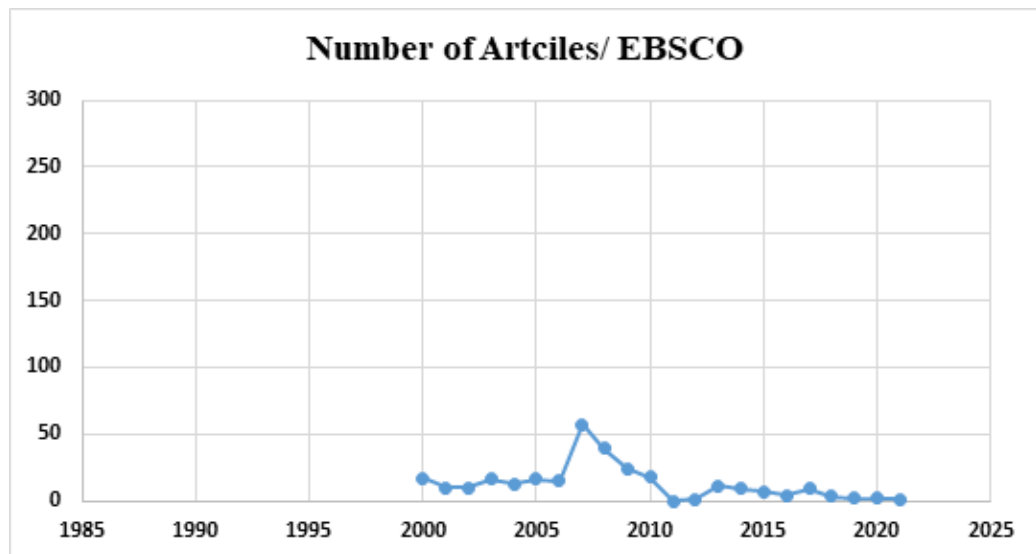


Figure I: Time evolution of the scientific production on guerrilla marketing in EBSCO

As seen in Table 1, the first 80 articles considered were classified according to the typology proposed by Hutter and Hoffmann [3]. Approximately half of these articles fall into the street marketing and ambush marketing groups, while the least addressed categories within guerrilla marketing would be ambient marketing and stealth marketing.

**Table 1: Assignments of the first 80 papers to the guerrilla marketing categories by Hutter and Hofmann (2011)**

Types of Marketing Guerilla	Authors/Articles	Total
Viral Marketing	Hoyer and Brown (1990); Domingos (2005); Lindgreen and Vanhamme, (2005); Kraus et al., (2010); Hutter and Hoffmann (2011); Sajoy, (2013); Fong and Yazdanifard (2014); Kadyan and Aswal (2014); Sharma and Sharma (2015); Katke (2016); Gupta and Singh (2017); Ahmed et al. (2020); Khosravi and Ranjbar (2020); Soommro et al. (2021); Farooqui, (2021).	15
Ambient Marketing	Holt (2002); Hutter and Hoffmann (2011); Hutter and Hoffmann (2014); Sajoy, (2013); Sharma and Sharma (2015); Farooqui, R. (2021); Shelton and Warner (2016); Semenescu and Martinsson, (2012); Turk et al. (2016);	9
Stealth Marketing	Kaikati and Kaikati (2004); Rotfeld (2008); Swanepoel et al. (2009); Roy and Chattopadhyay (2010); Sharma and Sharma (2015); Walia and Singla (2017); Farooqui, R. (2021).	7
Street Marketing	Levinson (1984); Donthu et al. (1993); Bhargava and Donthu (1999); Shankar and Horton (1999); Donthu et al. (2003); Moor (2003); Veloutsou and O'Donnell (2005); Taylor et al. (2006); Krautsack (2007); Levinson (2007); Gambetti (2010); Hutter and Hoffmann (2011); Wilson and Till (2011); Roux et al. (2013); Grant (2014); Saucet and Cova (2015); Dinh and Mai (2015); Iqbal and Lohdi (2015); Rauwers and van Noort, (2016); Ahmed et al. (2020); Roux and Saucet (2020); Farooqui, R. (2021).	22
Ambush Marketing	Sandler and Shani (1989,1993); IOC (1993); Meenaghan (1994); Payne (1998); Meenaghan (1998); Shani and Sandler (1998); Lyberger and McCarthy (2001); Crow and Hoek (2003); Crompton (2004); Hartland and Skinner (2005); Séguin et al. (2005); Bhattacharjee and Rao (2006); McKelvey and Grady (2008); Séguin and O'Reilly (2008); Ellis et al. (2011); Gombeski et al. (2011); Chadwick and Burton's (2011); Ujwala (2012); Hartland and Williams-Burnett (2012); Sajoy, (2013); Dickson et al., (2015); Sharma and Sharma (2015); Nufer (2016); Khosravi and Ranjbar (2020); Soomro et al. (2021); Farooqui, R. (2021).	27

Table II shows the distribution of the articles according to the different variables of interest extracted from the articles analyzed, which could constitute new categories or at least qualify the previous categories. A total of 84 articles were considered, although some pertain to more than one category simultaneously given the characteristics of the research carried out.

**Table 2: Assignments of the 84 papers to the new variables of interest on guerrilla marketing**

Variables of Marketing Guerilla	Authors/Articles	Total
Surprise Effect	Itti and Baldi (2008); Ay et al. (2010); Dinh and Mai (2015); Katke (2016); Yildiz (2017); Spahic and Parilti (2019); Nagar, (2015); Nunthiphatprueksa, (2017); Nufer (2013); Druing and Fahrenholz, (2008); Halkias and Kokkinaki (2014).	10
Emotional Arousal	Isen and Shalker, (1982); Muehling and Laczniak (1988); Niazi et al. (2012); Tam and Khuong (2015); Dinh and Mai (2015); Heath, (2007); Sorensen, (2008).	7
Humor	West et al. (2008); Chan (2011); Eisend (2011); Eisend et al. (2014); Dinh and Mai (2015); Nunthiphatprueksa (2017); Pieters et al. (2002).	7
Information's Content/ Clarity	Hafer et al. (1996); Dinh and Mai (2015); Dinh et al. (2015); Nunthiphatprueksa, (2017); Wiryawan and Wardana (2020); Tam and Khuong (2015); Tam and Khuong (2016).	7
Guerrilla Mobile	Ujwala (2012); Katke (2016); Spahic and Parilti (2019); Smith et al. (2011); Grewal et al. (2016)	3
Brand Awareness	Rossister and Percy (1987); Chen and Chang (2008); Chi et al. (2009), Prevot (2009); Wang and Yang (2010); Ling et al. (2010); Jalilvand et al. (2011); Mokhtari (2011); Shah et al. (2012); Malik et al. (2013); Navrátilová and Miličkovský (2015); Kotler and Keller (2016); Ahmed et al. (2017); Yildiz (2017); Fattal (2018); Ahmed et al. (2020); Noorlitaria et al. (2020).	17





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The information provided by the VOS Viewer map clearly shows other variables of importance that serve to characterize the guerrilla marketing field, not considered in the original classification of Hutter and Hoffmann. This suggests that their classification might be insufficient or even obsolete given the vast scientific production matching other terms and keywords in recent few years. Therefore, we decided to perform a more exhaustive manual text mining of all the articles considered, taking into account the keywords identified by VOS Viewer, in order to propose an updated taxonomy of the guerrilla marketing field.

As shown in Fig. III, the different groups created by keywords, and identified by colors, form what is known as communities. We chose to focus on the nodes closest to the key term ("guerrilla marketing") and focus our attention on the ones having a relevant connection not only with the main term, but also with each other. This yielded as the most representative variables: surprise effect, emotional arousal, humor, informative content/clarity, brand awareness, creativity/credibility, and WOM.

### Classic Types of Guerilla Marketing

#### *Viral Marketing*

In 1996 Douglas Rushkoff published "Media Virus", a work in which he describes how information can spread through networks, "infecting" them with an "ideological code" camouflaged behind an entertaining appearance [46]. Accordingly, such viruses transfer underlying elements of popular mass culture that overlap the real nature and intention of contents.

It is more difficult to pin down the origins of "viral marketing". In 1996, an article entitled *The Virus of Marketing* was published by Jeffrey Rayport, who drew an analogy between the behavior of a virus (biological or computer virus) and a new approach to marketing based on six rules:

- Stealth is the essence of market entry;
- What's up-front is free: payment comes later;
- Let the behaviors of the target community carry the message;
- Look like a host, not a virus;
- Exploit the strength of weak ties;
- Invest to reach the tipping point.

Kaplan and Haenlin (2011) report on a lack of consensus regarding the definition and scope of viral marketing [47]. Other authors refer to it as "word-of-mouth", buzz marketing, stealth marketing, and word-of-mouth marketing [48-51]. Actually, as we shall see later on, in the framework of variables of interest, these concepts differ substantially.

In the broader context of guerrilla marketing, viral marketing attempts to produce a conversation about a specific brand or product [52]. Kadyan and Aswal (2014) hold that it involves numerous marketing activities and campaigns that elicit an exceptional response from customers, so amazing that it goes viral quickly, like a wildfire [53]. Viral marketing is all about attracting a vast amount or array of viewers; it "digs" a place in the

customer's consciousness by making a campaign that fascinates social network participants [54]. As Ahmed et al. (2020) confirm, the advent of interactive digital media—social networks, mobile marketing, email marketing and other types of interactive digital media channels—has made it easy to scatter marketing messages to widespread audiences [55].

Hoyer and Brown (1990), Hutter and Hoffmann (2011), and Gupta and Singh (2017) focus more on a type of viral marketing known as buzz marketing, which generates diffusion influence [3,10,56]. The targeted recipients are influenced by a compelling message (or buzz agents) that bears an impact on the emotions of customers, who then share their opinions with others [57]. Social media marketing would be a type of viral or buzz marketing, making popular messages, posts, images or videos go viral and attract the attention of the general public [55].

#### Ambient Marketing

In 1996, the British agency Concord Advertising, whose clients were pushing hard for new solutions for communication campaigns, established the (then innovative) concept of "ambient" for outdoor advertising. Hutter and Hoffmann (2011) describe ambient marketing as a tool meant to surprise people by putting advertisements in unexpected places, following the fundamental notions of guerrilla combat strategies [3, 58, 59].

Both street and ambient marketing seek to generate experiences in the urban environment, an interactive link where brands build their values based on direct relationship values, i.e. dialogue and personalization of the message.

Initially, ambient marketing was a low-cost method yet cost-effective strategy entailing large doses of creativity. Successful ambient marketing depends on key, attractive geographical locations and can be seen as the guerrilla form of traditional outdoor advertising, for instance along main roadways [3]. Nowadays, surprises, creativity, appeal and imagination are the most important ingredients of ambient advertising.

#### Stealth Marketing

Roy and Chattopadhyay (2010) have focused on stealth marketing as an alternative strategy under guerilla marketing methods, in which businessmen contract celebrities for their advertisements—hence, also known celebrity marketing [60,61]. Kaikati and Kaikati (2004) refer to stealth marketing as masked/undercover marketing, and assign it to a subcategory of covert marketing [50]. In turn, Skiba et al. (2019) underline that there is no agreement on the definition of stealth/covert marketing [62].

Kaikati and Kaikati (2004) and Rotfeld (2008) moreover propose that a stealth marketing campaign can cut through the clutter of traditional advertising [50, 63]. One example of stealth marketing would be covert product display in famous television movies or shows in which artists visibly consume a brand-name product and thereby subconsciously peak awareness for that brand [52].

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## Street Marketing

According to Saucet and Cova (2015), the origin of street guerrilla marketing can be traced to flyers or messages about rare goods [27]. Modern street guerrilla marketers may design surprising street events that exploit places or performances to generate exclusive entertainment (Grant, 2014) or rely on new technologies, for example mobile phone applications, to generate digital projections [65]. Street guerrilla marketing uses features, objects and brand ambassadors in the urban environment in an advanced way to incite client engagement [66]. The classification and estimation of modern street guerrilla marketing are not precisely reflected in the advertising literature yet.

Recently, however, Moor (2003), Krautsack (2007), Levinson (2007), Dinh and Mai (2015), and Ahmed et al. (2020) have depicted street graphics as a contemporary form of graffiti [9,55,67-69]. Painting attractive or amusing messages on walls is known to seize the attention of customers. Levinson (1984) goes as far back as 4000 B.C. to link street graphic approaches to Egyptian traders, who marketed their products with colorful and attractive murals [4]. Today, 3D images or spray painting stand as fairly innovative trends to be seen on bridges, transport modes, skyscrapers, or other prominent urban elements. In 1968, street graphics in France played an important role during student protests, as they did in Iran in 1970, "verbalizing" complaints about repressive leaders [70].

In Pakistan, Coca-Cola was the first to introduce street graphics: through wall paintings and painted coolers in public places. The courier company TCS managed to paint a huge water tank with its theme color and brand name in front of Karachi's Quaid-e-Azam airport [71-73]. As affirmed by Iqbal and Lohdi (2015), the trend of using street graphics has become very popular, and big brands effectively use this sort of guerrilla advertising at pedestrian crossings or overpasses, choosing clever themes to make themselves known to potential consumers [70].

Authors Roux et al. (2013) hold that street guerrilla marketing is essentially a modern out of home (OOH) medium [74]. Promoters, objects, sponsors, in a town environment, seduce in an attractive, creative and innovative way, securing client engagement through novelty, surprise and bemusement [58]. Street marketing and OOH advertising both confirm outdoor locations and movement as elements of communication on the street [27]. It is therefore useful to analyze the features of OOH advertising to gain a better understanding of street guerrilla marketing. In addition, there are similarities between contemporary street guerrilla marketing and conventional OOH advertising platforms, particularly in terms of creative flexibility, visual influence, mobile audience exposure, geographic scope of target markets, and the role of support media (rather than lead media) in campaigns [75-79]. Still, modern street guerrilla marketing can be distinguished from traditional OOH advertising, with its emphasis on affordability and diffusion through word-of-mouth (WOM) [80].

Furthermore, Hutter and Hoffman (2011) state that Street guerrilla marketing is an interactive communication method that classically begins with exposure on the streets from where customers feast the advertising message to peers, though OOH advertising hardly outcomes in the diffusion of the message [3]. Additionally, examining the possible tools, communication influence and results are important to understanding the assessment of street guerrilla marketing operations. In understanding these, it is likely to discover possible evaluation procedures that can be connected to street guerrilla marketing experiences [3,58,81].

## Ambush Marketing

According to Meenaghan (1994), the concept of Ambush Marketing, first appearing in the early 1990s, surrounds a widespread practice in the field of sponsorship, namely, associating a brand with an event or property without having paid for the right to be a sponsor [82]. The company thus saves significant costs and tries to passing them on to the official sponsor. Ambush marketing is most often applied in sporting events and has been a topic of study in recent years [52, 84]. Authors Chadwick and Burton (2011) describe ambush marketing as an organization's attempts to exploit attention, friendliness, awareness, etc., created through some connotation with a property or event, despite the fact that the organization has no direct or official connection to that property or event [85]. Payne (1998) addresses the ethical matters underlying ambush marketing [86].

Definitions may interfere with understanding and measuring the impact of customer attitudes. While Crow and Hoek (2003) confirm that ambush marketing can be a legitimate competitive response, for Ujwala (2012) ambush marketing merely allows promotion without the payment of sponsorship and other costs [87,88]. It may, however, take on dissimilar forms [52]. According to Chadwick and Burton (2011), ambush marketing can be direct, indirect or accidental [85]. And it is most likely to appear in one form or another at a major event of any company or mega-sport. Today, "ambushes" tend to be daring and border on il/legality, although there are ways to stay within the law. Governments, sponsors, and event owners spend large resources on ambush marketing prevention [89-94].

Ambush marketing within the sports industry has developed a strategy that diverts from the purchase of official sponsorship rights [95]. Sport "holders" are rightly concerned that ambush marketing reduces the value of their belongings, and can induce disorder at sporting events, harming the industry on the whole [96,97]. To this regard, Meenaghan (1998) states that major events offer a diversity of advertising opportunities, providing a perfect venue for ambush marketing [98]. Crompton (2004) classifies seven likely ambush opportunities comprising: accidental ambush, sponsorship by entities other than the organizing body, thematic advertising and indirect illusion, buying advertising time in and around broadcasts of the event, creating a counter-attraction, sponsoring the broadcast of an event, buying advertising space in venues close to the event



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[99]. In the context of the Olympic Games, it is not uncommon for all these ambush methods to be used together to generate the desired impact.

Previous studies on ambush marketing, such as those by Sandler and Shani (1989, 1993) or Shani and Sandler (1998), report that companies active in ambush marketing tend to perform better than companies who claim they do not engage in it [100, 101, 102]. More recent studies, such as that of Crompton (2004), having analyzed the effectiveness of recall studies, suggest that a brand is more likely to be remembered with ambush marketing than with basic sponsorship [99]. Further studies, including those of Lyberger and McCarthy (2001) and Séguin et al. (2005), attest to a high level of user misunderstanding regarding sponsorship [95, 103]. Interestingly, Shani and Sandler (1998) claim that the customer does not care about ambush marketing and that Olympic planners are largely responsible for the lack of customer awareness and attention towards sponsors [102].

### **Variables of Interest in Guerrilla Marketing Surprise Effect**

The surprise effect in guerrilla marketing communication is the most significant element. Attracting customers' attention and surprise through exciting advertising is the goal of the company's funneled work and effort [3]. Along the lines of Derbaix and Pham (1991), surprise can be the antidote to an overexposure to information and advertising [104]. Luxton and Drummond (2000) specify that customers are surprised when a) the location of advertising is unknown or unexpected (location); b) it involves unusual systems (creativity); and/or c) it is the first and only advertising action developed (temporal) [105].

Surprise would thus be a contextual consequence of the deviation of awareness and expectation. Considering the theory of schema congruence, the differences between schemas and stimuli suggest that in conjunction with surprise, rare stimuli are managed more intensely than common ones. When advertising is understood and perceived in an unexpected manner, a favorable attitude towards the brand will be formed, resulting in the development of a purchase intention [106, 107].

Some may surprise customers by sending shocking messages, humor, or counter-logic [29,108]. Other studies —Dinh and Mai's (2015), Yildiz's (2017) — argue that surprise has an effect on message credibility, as well as having positive effects on purchase intent [9,109]. The unexpectedness produced by guerrilla ads may evoke an "aha" or "wow" [110]. This type of reaction to ambient marketing lies at the core of the guerrilla marketing philosophy [111]. According to Halkias and Kokkinaki (2014), surprise elicits more elaborate information processing when there is some inconsistency between an advertisement and the related expectations. Nagar (2015) furthermore states that when a message is read inversely from what is expected, more positive attitudes towards the brand can be harvested, resulting in greater buying intentions [106]. The theoretical background of the essence

of surprise has been scarcely addressed to date, though humor is surely one important ingredient [34,112].

### **Emotional Arousal**

Emotional arousal is employed to ultimately direct favorable customer behavior [113]. It comes in the immediate aftermath of viewers' exposure to advertising [114]. When embodied in a message, it may prove more influential than the content itself, creating an optimistic attitude toward a given brand, hence a favorable effect on purchase intention [8,115,116].

Mandler (1995) holds that innovation entails emotional consequences that make it possible to estimate whether an advertisement will be rejected or accepted by customers [117]. Two dimensions, arousal and valence, are highlighted by Feldman (1995), the former referring to concrete norms, the latter to an almost bodily arousal [118]. Indeed, research has shown that optimistic moods have a very positive relationship with satisfactory evaluations of stimuli [113]. Yet studies tend to overlook the exact feelings (valence-focus) and appraise the other measure (arousal-focus). One exception would be the study by Sorensen (2008), using the PAD model (the arousal dimension) of Mehrabien and Russell (1974) [119,120]. Accompanied by the other two emotional variables explained above (mood and surprise), the emotion arousal variable is proposed to capture a general picture of customers' moods and their attitudes towards guerrilla ads [9].

### **Humor**

This is upheld by Nunthiphatprueksa (2017) as a most noteworthy variable of study [107]. Experts believe that the effect of humor enhances buyer attention, proving to be a powerful tool in advertising planning [121]. Notwithstanding, humor in advertising must be used with care. It should appear in initial stages of advertising, being used less for established products [122]. Repetition of a humorous advertisement can produce adverse effects. One of the key elements of humor is creativity; together they lead to promising attitudes towards a brand and increase purchase intention [123,124].

Furthermore, companies and marketers must capture the attention of their customers before requiring product knowledge on their part [125]. In this sense, Sternthal and Craig (1973) underline the relevance of humor as a set of stimulus properties that can be controlled by means of humor devices [121]. According to Eisend et al. (2014), humorous ads inspire a more optimistic attitude that foments purchase intention [126]. Clearly, humor —as an element of creativity— bears an influence on consumer behavior [9].

### **Information Content/ Clarity**

Wiryawan and Wardana (2020) argue that clarity of message is the main drive behind guerrilla marketing [127]. According to the concept of clarity is related to the degree to which viewers understand the message put forth in advertisements [9]. They may be fun, novel or relevant, but if a message lacks clarity, the advertisement may very well prove counterproductive.

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The research by Dinh et al. (2015) explores this concept of clarity; when advertisements are novel, because creativity is well founded, it may be that people do not understand the messages delivered [9]. A study conducted by Tam and Khuong (2015) about Message Clarity in a guerrilla marketing context signaled a positive and significant effect on purchase intensity among the Y generation (born between 1980 and 2000) [8]. Another study just a year later concludes that message clarity does not affect diffusion or have as much relevance in the case of Generation Z (those born after 2001) [129]. This gap deserves further analysis in the future.

Measuring message clarity must take into account an individual's ability to understand, and as pointed out by Hafer et al. (1996), interpreting a composite message calls for some cognitive effort [130]. In short, for customers to envisage and desire a brand or product through advertisements, they must understand the message.

### Guerrilla Mobile

For some time, guerrilla marketers have tested means of effective communication involving technology. In fact, guerrilla marketing encouraged participatory customer connection in the context of viral and guerrilla mobile marketing [108]. For instance, proximity marketing using Bluetooth technology can instantly engage users in a campaign. Such campaigns nowadays can be more effective and user-friendly than billboards or other large-scale advertising tools, while at the same time producing the element of surprise because of an unfamiliar communication.

Short message services (SMS) and multimedia messaging services (MMS) can be used for sending discounts and coupons by companies, driving Internet marketing as a tool to increase customer confidence by offering something for free [88]. In addition, the use of cell phones allows the marketer a wide range of possibilities for customer relationship management and marketing campaigns. SMS or MMS can be sent, for example, to the cell phone at the moment a website visitor fills in interaction information on a service provider's web page. Companies get valuable information about the customer that can be converted into a message offering some discount on the service once requested in a certain store. The solution is simple, cheap and technically not very demanding. Still, this type of campaign does not necessarily meet all the shared standards of guerrilla marketing campaigns, as the element of surprise may be missing [108].

One of the greatest worldwide markets is that of mobile phones, relying on wireless internet connection or Wi-Fi [131]. They permit vendors or businesses to adopt another network of advertising. Knowing the identity and inclinations of phone owners, companies can choose an optimal time to reach out through advertisement. By using innovative technology, marketing campaigns have quickly gone mobile. Messages applicable to online guerrilla marketing are: coupons and discounts, proximity marketing by Bluetooth, and creative and surprising photos using SMS and MMS [34, 108]. These strategies are well suited to small and medium-sized

companies having limited budgets for marketing actions, allowing them to compete with larger businesses. That is, they mean smart thinking for small and medium businesses [88].

### Brand Awareness

Brand Awareness, connected to memory, refers to the customer's capacity to recognize a given brand under diverse conditions, and implies a tendency to buy that product or service [132]. If there is no brand awareness, there will be no transaction [133]. Navrátilová and Milichovský (2015) state that the key purpose of Guerilla Marketing campaigns is to raise client awareness and interest in the brand and product [134].

Brand awareness includes two sub-factors: brand recall and brand recognition. Although it is a challenging task, especially for start-ups, micro and small businesses, even large-scale companies find it difficult to retain their brand in the attention of customers. Yet brand awareness intensifies the effectiveness and competition of numerous marketing activities and campaigns by increasing the likelihood that customers will make purchase decisions and buy again [55-135].

Numerous studies indicate the effects of guerrilla marketing on brand awareness and consumers' purchase intention: Chen and Chang (2008), Chi et al. (2009), Ling et al. (2010), Wang and Yang (2010), Jalilvand et al. (2011), Mokhtari (2011), Yaseen et al. (2011), Shah et al. (2012), Mahesh and Amulya (2013), Malik et al. (2013), Adeleye and Fagboun (2014), Roozy et al. (2014), Naeini et al. (2015), Petahiang (2015), Ahmed et al. (2017), Yildiz (2017), Ahmed et al. (2020), Noorlitaria et al. (2020), Selan et al. (2021), among others. Virtually all of these research studies conclude that a guerrilla marketing strategy positively influences brand awareness and customer purchase [55,71,109, 128,136-149]. If advertising is credible, innovative, surprising and creative, it positively affects brand awareness.

### Creativity/ Credibility

There are different types of credibility, including medium credibility (Zhang et al., 2014), advertising credibility and advertisement content credibility (or message credibility), and source credibility [9,150]. According to MacKenzie and Lutz (1989), advertisement content credibility is the extent to which the customer accepts claims made about the brand as honest, realistic and believable, so that one must discern between what is promised and what is delivered [151,152]. Credibility has a positive influence on customer attitudes towards advertising and raises purchase [153]. Unclear or incomprehensible information will be perceived as unbelievable and have a negative effect on customer behaviour [154]. Therefore, no matter how original, creative and attractive Guerilla Marketing ads may be, or how shocking or surprising they are, their impact depends on a rational quantity of message credibility [9].

The use of appropriate media helps to enhance the credibility of the advertisement and, in turn, positively influences the attitude

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towards the advertisement and the brand [155]. Consequently, credibility is envisioned in Dinh and Mai's (2015) research model as an intermediary between guerrilla marketing characteristics and WOM behavior, to confirm the hypothesis that when guerrilla elements are effective, they will send the information to others [9].

Jackson and Messick (1967) affirm that novelty is a mutual form of creativity as well as the first standard for determining whether a product is creative and attractive [156]. It calls for deviation from the norm, plus intelligent and innovative individuality [157]. As a component of creativity, innovation positively influences advertising effectiveness and, if meaningful, positively influences customer attitude and behavior. The ingredient of research innovation is therefore essential [9].

Relevance is likewise crucial. It may be understood as the suitability of an innovative advertisement, through which its creativity is estimated (Ang and Low, 2000). According to Heckler and Childers (1992), relevance marks the similarity of how the information in an advertisement contributes to or reduces the advertising message. An ad must demonstrate something meaningful about the product for its novelty to generate creativity [158]. When creativity is constructed, its influence on purchase behavior is predictable [159]. Moreover, experts and researchers agree that creativity is a powerful tool to solve the problem of advertising saturation [160].

Information credibility is therefore tied to the honesty of the message and is a key element in the Information Acceptability Model (IACM) [6, 161-166]. Individuals are inclined to consider beneficial information when they observe that it is reliable information, a relationship also confirmed by the IACM (Erkan and Evans, 2016) [167, 168]. Previous research has explored the importance of information credibility; Awad and Ragowsky (2008) found it to be the key cause in customers' decision-making method, while Wathen and Burkell (2002) reflect that information credibility is the influence that originates from persuasion [168,170].

### **WOM/E-WOM**

There are important differences between viral marketing and word-of-mouth marketing. According to Helm, word-of-mouth (WOM) is an old concept within marketing and merchandising and refers to a form of interpersonal communication between consumers regarding their personal experiences with a company or a product [171]. It is a complex phenomenon, and in general, is not something that can be directly controlled. Ferguson (2008) carries out an analysis of the results obtained from applying both viral and word-of-mouth marketing strategies, clearly identifying each of them separately [172].

Arndt (1967) specified that WOM is person-to-person communication in which the person obtaining information about a product, brand or service from a communicator considers the information as non-commercial [173]. WOM is a vital part of a

marketing procedure —customers are very likely to follow the advice of others when they decide to buy a product [174]. WOM has been shown to be more effective in influencing customer behavior than traditional advertising networks and for remembering and retaining customers over time [175, 176]. Nonetheless, Villanueva et al. (2008) state that existing traditional marketing approaches often ignore WOM communication between customers [177]. Further communication methods, such as buzz marketing or viral marketing, rely on the power of WOM, as well as guerrilla marketing [171, 178].

In addition, WOM is widely recognized as critical for building communication and marketing approaches. The advent of the Internet and the spread of social media have added a new electronic projection to traditional WOM, hence E-WOM [52,179]. According to Holland (2016), there have been some changes in traditional marketing methods and brand strategies, most notably influencers who select electronic means to communicate [180]. As pointed out by Al Mana and Mirza (2013), E-WOM takes in online feedback, opinions, comments, reviews, online ratings and knowledge sharing on the Internet [181]. Companies that spent a lot of money on traditional advertising campaigns now use social media to get WOM endorsement [182]. According to Torlak et al. (2014), E-WOM helps users to be more productive, effective, credible and efficient by sharing information themselves [183].

Because guerrilla marketing emphasizes the ease of attracting the attention of recipients to the message, it inspires them to take WOM action [184]. A promotional approach that adopts unusual locations with a concentrated WOM campaign is more likely to disseminate products in the market [2]. There are two types: inbound WOM is the pre-purchase WOM obtained from third parties, while outbound WOM is the post-purchase WOM offered to third parties [185]. These two types of WOM will depend on customers' willingness to achieve their goal, which in turn depends on the connection (bond) that customers maintain; the bond is strong in personal relationships with family, relatives and friends, and a weak bond refers to one-person bases, e.g., newspapers, magazines, outsiders [186,187].

An interesting study was developed by Kamau and Bwisa (2013) in Kenya involving word of mouth, the authors confirming that WOM had a strong influence for attracting and retaining customers [188]. In addition, this marketing technique helps to build a stronger relationship among customers. Walia and Singla (2017) found that guerrilla marketing has several subclasses and categories, such as viral marketing, buzz marketing, and WOM, and that the latter has a significant impact on consumers, making it a powerful marketing tool [61].

### **Conclusions**

Research related to guerrilla marketing has undergone tremendous growth in the last few years. Our review of academic contributions on this topic over the course of this century indicates a spike in the number of articles published since 2000. Academic interest

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has been accompanied by a corresponding commercial increase in attention paid by large companies such as Netflix, HBO, or McDonalds, to name a few, to reach their target audience. Therefore, the increasingly accumulated knowledge about guerrilla marketing offers the opportunity to consider, analyze and evaluate existing publications.

The main purpose of this survey was to examine the research on guerrilla marketing in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature on the field. By conducting a very careful and comprehensive content analysis, the relevant literature published between 2000 and 2021 is reviewed, and its analysis allows for the following conclusions.

Firstly, the review of scientific production usually provides an introduction to the existing literature on guerrilla marketing that can be quite attractive to researchers, particularly those working in the field of marketing, providing a good resource for research aims. Secondly, we found throughout the analysis that there is no standardization of the term “guerrilla marketing”. Numerous first-level articles use the term in different ways, not under a fixed pattern, simply applied as the authors think it fits. This finding, which could be seen as a handicap, has helped us realize that scientific information systems clearly identify the term and permitted us to retrieve the articles indistinctly.

As a result of the visualization carried out with the VOS Viewer tool, we were able to discover new variables considered in the most recent publications, which allowed us to further analyze the articles so as to make this review more complete and exhaustive. It is precisely in the content analysis that the nine variables identified and later analyzed were revealed as the ones most present in the articles considered. Only one of them, WOM, matched one of the five categories previously established by Hutter and Hoffmann, viral marketing. This clearly reflects the evolution of the field in the past decade, since these two authors introduced their taxonomy in 2011. Even in the specific case of WOM, we considered it as a different variable to account for the more electronic and updated nature of the scientific publications analyzed.

Based on the bibliographical review carried out, new research topics can be proposed that could provide interesting results given the growing interest in the topic analyzed. One line might be the analysis of competition within different markets such as audiovisual, digital platforms, and large fast-food brands. Another line that could give results of interest would be an in-depth analysis of consumer behavior using techniques such as sentiment analysis (Liu, 2020). Finally, we are already working on the bibliometric analysis of this subject, taking as a starting point the time of the first publication to the present day.

We consider that, like most studies, this research has certain limitations. Although we see that the approach itself is well suited to this study, it does not impose sufficient restrictions in terms of time or subject matter. Hence, the first limitation we encounter

lies in the methodological approach to content analysis, inevitably affected by a certain degree of subjectivity on the part of the author [189]. Secondly, the search was conducted using the most generic term possible, which can provide a very broad overview of the entire scientific production in the field. For example, it does not focus on any specific subfields of guerrilla marketing such as viral marketing or street marketing, which may signal an opportunity for other researchers to conduct an in-depth review of these more specific sub-fields. Thirdly, while literature reviews usually include research from high-impact scientific journals, they do not usually account for work published in book chapters or conference proceedings, which may lead to a certain bias in the research [39,190].

Although our research has these limitations, we also propose some directions that can serve to gain a better understanding of this topic, always present in the marketing discipline but sometimes hard to approach.

Finally, our reflections on the future of guerrilla marketing, conveyed throughout this work, coincide in that it has become a key element both from an academic point of view—yielding thorough and in-depth research—as well as in the marketing strategies of large and small companies that have recently discovered its potential. Understanding how much progress has been made in this area is undoubtedly a key element for continuing to innovate in the world of marketing.

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