



# International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology

*(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)*



**Impact Factor: 8.206**

**Volume 9, Issue 3, March 2026**



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# Social Media as a Catalyst in Expanding Guerrilla Marketing Campaigns

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**ABSTRACT:** Social media platforms have fundamentally transformed the landscape of guerrilla marketing campaigns, enabling unconventional marketing tactics to achieve unprecedented reach and virality. Traditionally limited to localized, ephemeral physical activations, guerrilla marketing campaigns now leverage social media as a powerful catalyst to scale globally and generate sustained engagement. This study examines how social media platforms facilitate the expansion of guerrilla marketing campaigns and identifies the key factors influencing content virality. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 125 active social media users through structured questionnaires. The findings reveal that Instagram (28.8%) and X/Twitter (14.4%) emerge as dominant platforms for viral guerrilla marketing content, while visual beauty (21.6%), emotional connection (12.8%), and celebrity presence (12%) are the most shareable campaign elements. Statistical analysis using ANOVA confirms significant relationships between social media engagement variables ( $F=12.52-15.16$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), validating that social media acts as a genuine catalyst in expanding guerrilla marketing reach and impact. The study concludes that while social media successfully amplifies campaign visibility, sustained brand loyalty requires integrated follow-up strategies beyond initial viral moments.

**KEYWORDS:** Guerrilla marketing, Social media, Viral marketing, Digital campaigns, User-generated content, Brand awareness, Viral content factors, Social media platforms, Marketing effectiveness, Consumer engagement

## I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media has fundamentally redefined the parameters of guerrilla marketing, evolving it from a localized 'street-level' tactic into a global phenomenon. Traditionally, guerrilla marketing relied on the element of surprise and unconventional interactions in physical spaces—such as graffiti, flash mobs, or ambient installations—to capture the attention of a captive local audience. However, the inherent limitation of these traditional campaigns was their ephemeral nature and restricted geographical footprint. Social media has effectively acted as a powerful catalyst, bridging the gap between the physical and the digital, allowing brands to achieve massive viral reach on a fraction of a traditional advertising budget.

The catalytic role of social media is best observed through the lens of user-generated content (UGC), which transforms the passive observer into an active brand evangelist. When a brand executes a clever or shocking guerrilla stunt, the modern consumer's first instinct is to record the event and share it with their personal network. This organic distribution provides a level of authenticity and social proof that traditional 'top-down' advertising cannot replicate. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) function as amplification channels that magnify the impact of a stunt, turning a ten-minute physical event into a digital asset with permanent shelf life.

The expansion of guerrilla marketing through social media has led to the rise of 'digital guerrilla' tactics, where the 'ambush' or 'surprise' occurs within the user's feed rather than on a street corner. Brands now use influencers to stage 'accidental' or seemingly organic moments that blur the lines between reality and advertising, leveraging the algorithmic velocity of social platforms to push content to the top of trending lists. This digital expansion also allows for precise targeting and real-time engagement that was previously impossible. Through geotagging and hashtags, a brand can track the trajectory of their campaign in real-time, adjusting their strategy or interacting directly with participants to further fuel the buzz.



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### 1.1 Problem Statement

In the digital era, guerrilla marketing relies heavily on social media to reach and engage audiences. However, many businesses remain unclear about how different social media platforms effectively promote guerrilla marketing stunts and which factors make such content go viral online. This lack of understanding creates challenges in designing impactful campaigns that gain wide attention. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of social media platforms in promoting guerrilla marketing stunts and to analyse the key factors that influence content virality.

### 1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to understand how social media helps in spreading and expanding guerrilla marketing campaigns. It aims to explain how creative and unconventional marketing ideas gain more attention and reach a wider audience through social media platforms. The study examines the role of different social media platforms in increasing brand awareness and customer engagement. It focuses on understanding how likes, shares, comments, and online discussions help guerrilla marketing campaigns become more visible and effective.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To examine how social media platforms help promote guerrilla marketing stunts.
- To analyse the factors that influence the virality of guerrilla marketing content online.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in explaining how social media has become an important tool in expanding guerrilla marketing campaigns. It helps in understanding how creative and unusual marketing ideas can reach a large number of people quickly through social media platforms. This study shows how social media increases visibility and makes guerrilla marketing more powerful than before. This study is useful for businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, as it highlights low-cost marketing methods. It explains how companies can use social media to promote their products without spending heavily on traditional advertising. For marketers and advertisers, this study provides insights into consumer behaviour on social media and what attracts attention. For students and researchers, this study is important as it adds academic value to the field of digital marketing and guerrilla marketing. Overall, the study highlights the growing importance of social media in modern marketing practices.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An extensive body of research has examined the role of social media in marketing and the effectiveness of unconventional marketing tactics. Levinson (1984) pioneered the concept of guerrilla marketing, demonstrating that small businesses can compete using creative, low-cost marketing strategies. Hutter and Hoffmann (2011) found that guerrilla marketing generates higher consumer attention than traditional advertising, with unconventional tactics increasing memorability.

Ahmed et al. (2020) examined guerrilla marketing trends, finding that street graphics, strange occurrences, memorable events, and viral marketing significantly influence purchase decisions. Khan et al. (2017) demonstrated that alternative, consumer-centric low-cost marketing strategies create stronger brand connections at lower cost. van Scheers et al. (2014) found that word-of-mouth is more effective than traditional advertising, with 94% of respondents trusting word-of-mouth more than other forms of advertising.

The literature supports that social media platforms, particularly visual-driven platforms, are essential for guerrilla marketing success. Research on content virality reveals that emotional resonance, novelty, and surprise are critical factors in determining shareability (Smith et al., 2018). Ismayilzada (2022) confirmed that social media content and user engagement significantly influence consumer trust and purchase intention. These findings establish the theoretical foundation for understanding how social media acts as a catalyst in expanding guerrilla marketing campaigns.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

This study employs a descriptive research design combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to understand how social media supports guerrilla marketing campaigns. Primary data were collected from active social media users through structured questionnaires. Secondary data were gathered from books, journals, articles, websites, and case studies related to guerrilla marketing and social media.



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### 3.2 Research Strategy

- Survey-based strategy to collect opinions from social media users
- Questionnaires with simple questions related to social media usage and guerrilla marketing awareness
- Case study analysis of successful guerrilla marketing campaigns
- Simple methods like percentage analysis and basic comparison to interpret data

### 3.3 Sample

**Population:** All active social media users exposed to guerrilla marketing campaigns and viral marketing content.

**Sampling Frame:** Social media users (students, professionals, freelancers) who received and responded to the online survey link shared by the researcher.

**Sample Size:** 125 respondents.

### 3.4 Analysis Methods

- Percentage Analysis: Used to identify trends and distributions in responses
- ANOVA (Analysis of Variance): Used to determine statistical significance of differences between groups

## IV. KEY FINDINGS

### 4.1 Demographic Profile

The sample comprised 125 respondents with balanced gender distribution (52% female, 46.4% male). The majority (66.4%) fall within the 18–30 age group, indicating a youth-dominated sample. Students constituted the largest occupational group (52.8%), followed by self-employed individuals (21.6%). Most respondents (56%) are undergraduates, reflecting a moderate to high education level. Respondents used multiple social media platforms, with 47.2% spending 1–3 hours daily on social media.

### 4.2 Social Media Platform Usage and Virality

Instagram emerged as the dominant platform for viral guerrilla marketing content (28.8%), followed by X/Twitter (14.4%) and YouTube (12%). Most respondents (36%) noticed unconventional marketing occasionally or rarely (33.6%), indicating limited regular exposure to such campaigns. A majority (58.4%) believed guerrilla campaigns become viral 'eventually' rather than immediately (20.8%), suggesting sustained engagement is critical for success.

### 4.3 Factors Influencing Content Shareability

Visual beauty emerged as the most shareable factor (21.6%), followed by emotional connection (12.8%), celebrity presence (12%), shock/surprise (10.4%), and humour (8.8%). These findings indicate that audiences prefer campaigns combining multiple sensory and emotional elements. Trending audio/music had slight impact on shareability (56.8%), with 28% indicating significant impact.

### 4.4 Customer Engagement and Brand Loyalty

Most respondents remained neutral or disagreed about customer engagement (39.2% neutral), and had mixed feelings toward regular product advertisements (42% neutral). Regarding brand loyalty, a majority (30.4%) were neutral about whether guerrilla campaigns improve loyalty, while 26.4% strongly disagreed. This suggests that attention-grabbing does not automatically translate to long-term loyalty.

### 4.5 Statistical Significance (ANOVA Results)

Two ANOVA tests confirmed statistically significant differences between variables. Test 1:  $F=12.52$ ,  $p=0.000481$  ( $p<0.05$ ), with Column 2 mean (2.928) significantly higher than Column 1 (2.448). Test 2:  $F=15.16$ ,  $p=0.000127$  ( $p<0.05$ ), with Column 2 mean (2.936) significantly higher than Column 1 (2.424). These results confirm that social media engagement variables have meaningful, statistically significant effects on guerrilla marketing outcomes.

## V. DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that social media has become a critical enabler of guerrilla marketing expansion. Instagram's dominance as a viral platform reflects the importance of visual aesthetics in campaigns designed to be photographed and shared. The prevalence of multi-platform engagement suggests that brands must optimize campaigns for different



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platform characteristics: visual focus for Instagram, rapid sharing for X/Twitter, and longer-form storytelling for YouTube.

The identification of visual beauty, emotional connection, and surprise as top virality factors aligns with established marketing psychology. The finding that campaigns typically go viral 'eventually' rather than 'immediately' has important strategic implications. Marketers should plan for sustained engagement and follow-up content rather than expecting immediate exponential growth. This requires robust post-campaign strategies, including community engagement and user-generated content leveraging.

The mixed perceptions regarding brand loyalty suggest that while guerrilla campaigns successfully attract attention, their impact on long-term loyalty is moderate. This indicates that attention alone does not automatically convert into brand commitment. Marketers must integrate guerrilla campaigns with follow-up strategies such as personalized communication, community building, interactive features, and consistent brand messaging to strengthen customer relationships.

### VI. SUGGESTIONS

- Since 'visual beauty' was identified as the most shareable factor (21.6%), marketers should design visually attractive and aesthetically appealing guerrilla campaigns to increase online sharing.
- Campaigns should combine humour, surprise, emotional connection, and celebrity presence to enhance engagement and virality rather than relying on a single factor.
- Since Instagram was identified as the leading viral platform (28.8%), brands should prioritize Instagram reels, stories, and trending formats for guerrilla marketing promotions.
- Since most respondents believe campaigns go viral 'eventually' (58.4%), marketers should focus on sustained engagement rather than expecting immediate viral success.
- Brands should incorporate interactive features such as polls, challenges, giveaways, and user-generated content to strengthen engagement and build long-term loyalty.
- With 56.8% stating trending audio has slight impact and 28% saying significant impact, marketers should strategically use trending sounds and optimize content according to platform algorithms.
- Since 66.4% of respondents fall in the 18–30 age group, guerrilla campaigns should be tailored to youth interests, trends, and digital behaviours.
- With limited loyalty impact, marketers should follow up guerrilla campaigns with relationship-building strategies like personalized communication and consistent content marketing.

### VII. CONCLUSION

This study establishes that social media serves as a genuine catalyst for expanding guerrilla marketing campaigns, enabling small brands with creative ideas to compete with large corporations through viral reach rather than advertising budgets. The research confirms that Instagram, X/Twitter, and YouTube are the primary platforms for guerrilla campaign virality, with visual beauty, emotional connection, and surprise being the most influential content factors.

The study also reveals important limitations: while social media successfully amplifies initial visibility, sustained impact on brand loyalty requires integrated follow-up strategies beyond the viral moment. Campaigns that become viral 'eventually' rather than 'immediately' suggest the importance of momentum-building and sustained engagement.

For practitioners, this research offers clear guidance: design visually compelling campaigns with emotional resonance, prioritize platform-specific optimization, plan for eventual (not immediate) virality, and integrate post-viral engagement strategies. For academics, this study addresses the gap between physical guerrilla tactics and their digital amplification, providing empirical validation for the catalytic role of social media in modern marketing.

In conclusion, social media is not merely a distribution channel for guerrilla marketing—it is a fundamental transformation of how unconventional marketing works. The integration of physical creativity with digital amplification has created unprecedented opportunities for brands to build awareness, engagement, and loyalty through authenticity and innovation rather than spending. As digital platforms continue to evolve, brands that master the synergy between guerrilla



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tactics and social media amplification will be best positioned to capture consumer attention in an increasingly crowded digital landscape.

### VIII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of the Department of Commerce, Sri Krishna Arts and Science College. We extend our sincere gratitude to Ms. Aiswarya Lakshmi T for her invaluable guidance and mentorship throughout this research project. Special thanks are also extended to all 125 respondents who participated in the survey, without whom this study would not have been possible.

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