



“The impact of surprise guerilla marketing on customer behavior”

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THE IMPACT OF SURPRISE GUERRILLA MARKETING ON CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the impact of guerilla marketing (i.e., guerilla ambient marketing and guerilla sensation marketing) on customer behavior (i.e., customer purchase intention and customer brand attitude). The survey was held in May 2023; the questionnaire was distributed to a convenience sample of 450 customers of three malls in Jeddah city in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The analysis was conducted by IBM SPSS and AMOS using 344 retrieved responses. Exploring research factors, confirming goodness-of-fit, and testing the hypothesized effects, the results indicated that both dimensions of guerrilla marketing had significant effects on both dimensions of customer behavior. However, the effect of ambient marketing on customer purchase intention was greater than its effect on customer brand attitude. Conversely, the effect of sensation marketing on customer brand attitude was greater than its effect on customer purchase intention. The paper concludes that ambient marketing has more power to boost customer purchase intention in comparison with sensation marketing, which is suitable for elevating customer brand attitude. For that, enterprises are required to try nonconventional marketing practices such as guerilla marketing in order to change customer behaviors. Further studies should use other dimensions of guerilla marketing and target more customers from different locations.

Keywords

ambient marketing, sensation marketing, purchase intention, brand attitude, Saudi Arabia

JEL Classification

M30, M31, M37

INTRODUCTION

Guerilla marketing was adopted in the 1960s by organizations in different markets, such as the US market, in order to cope with competitors. Jay Conrad Levinson coined the term "Guerilla marketing" in 1983 and defined it as a marketing strategy adopted by small and start-up companies to market their products using a small amount of money (Behal & Sareen, 2014). It is an advertising strategy designed firstly to be adopted by small firms (Yüksekbilgili, 2014; Milak & Dobrinić, 2017). In fact, a key reason behind the introduction of guerilla marketing was companies' inability to reach the Y generation through conventional marketing strategies like direct marketing or public relations (Shakeel & Khan, 2011). For Stoenescu (2018), guerilla marketing is a starting point for the era of unconventional marketing communication. Following Hutter and Hoffmann (2011), Wendland (2016) divided guerilla marketing based on its effect into three categories: surprise effect, diffusion effect, and low-cost effect. Examples of surprise effect marketing strategies include ambient marketing and sensation marketing. Viral marketing represents an example of diffusion effect marketing. Finally, ambush marketing is an example of low-cost effect marketing strategy. Marketing literature included studies on guerilla marketing and studies on customer behavior. Nevertheless, few studies were conducted to investigate the impact of surprise-based marketing practices, like ambient marketing and sensation marketing, on customer behavior as measured by purchase intention and brand attitude.



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Conflict of interest statement:

Author(s) reported no conflict of interest

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing literature includes studies on guerilla marketing (Al-Attari, 2021; Diaa, 2017; Behal & Sareen, 2014; Yüksekbilgili, 2014) and studies on customer behavior (Lin et al., 2012; Hsu et al., 2012). Yüksekbilgili (2014) investigated the adoption of guerilla marketing by small and medium enterprises. Shakeel and Khan (2011) identified the impact of guerilla marketing on customer perception. Fong and Yazdanifard (2014) reviewed the latest marketing techniques that affect online customer behavior. Diaa (2017) examined the impact of guerrilla marketing on purchase intention. Sharma (2011) introduced marketing practices that affect customer purchase behavior.

Levinson (1984) defined guerilla marketing as using unusual marketing activities to publicize products considering the low budget invested by the company and its focus on novelty. Yüksekbilgili (2014) described guerilla marketing as an advertising strategy small companies employ to market their products with a low budget. Balážiová and Spálová (2020) noted that its concept depends on the military strategy of guerilla attacks to overcome the competition. Thus, guerrilla marketing comprises sponsorship programs, public relations programs, alternative media, and trade shows (Behal & Sareen, 2014). In general, definitions of guerilla marketing underlined specific characteristics such as nontraditional and unusual communication techniques in marketing products using limited resources (Diaa, 2017). Based on these definitions, guerilla marketing has several features distinguishing it from other strategies. For example, flexibility, simplicity, surprise effect, low cost, innovative communication techniques, and power of imagination are features of guerilla marketing (Behal & Sareen, 2014; Yüksekbilgili, 2014; Damar-Ladkoo, 2016; Susilo, 2020).

An extensive review of the literature showed numerous guerilla marketing dimensions. They can be categorized into three types: infection guerilla marketing, surprise guerilla marketing, and ambush marketing. The first comprises two subcategories (viral marketing and mobile marketing), while the second consists of ambient marketing and sensation marketing (Nufer, 2013). Viral marketing describes spreading a marketing message by recommend-

ing products to others (Nufer, 2013). According to Kamau and Bwisa (2013), viral marketing is related to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and can be adopted to spread marketing messages among many potential customers. Therefore, viral marketing is known as eWOM marketing, which is a direct marketing technique based on passing information from one customer to another using Internet-based applications such as e-mails or social media like Facebook (Fong & Yazdanifard, 2014). Mobile marketing refers to spreading marketing messages using smartphones (Nufer, 2013). Nowadays, an innovative application of guerilla marketing can be seen in using cell phones to ensure customer engagement and provide customers with experiential marketing activities (Behal & Sareen, 2014).

On the other hand, ambient marketing is related to marketing activities conducted in the direct living environment, like postcards. Sensation marketing is a one-time marketing activity with a surprise shown in some places, like high-traffic streets (Nufer, 2013). Šula and Banyár (2015) indicated that ambient marketing is an outdoor advertising in which customer attention is caught outside his home environment. This can be achieved through surprise impact to trigger individuals' attention or unconventional implementation through elements like unusual sizes, visuals, or colors in unexpected locations (Chuchu et al., 2018). Hutter and Hoffmann (2011) added that both ambient and sensation marketing offer a surprise effect in which customer attention is directed toward the marketing message due to the unusual activity. However, sensation marketing is different because it represents one-time activities like flash mobs in public locations. Diaa (2017) examined the effect of guerilla marketing on customer purchase intention, assessing guerilla marketing by five dimensions: clarity of marketing messages, emotional arousal, surprise, creativity, and humor advertisements.

Customer behavior has been defined as a construct of decisions customers make prior to or after some activities like purchasing, consuming, and deposing goods and services. It can be measured using activities such as searching for information, evaluating alternatives, purchasing, as well as post-purchase evaluations (Lin et al., 2012). It can be studied using the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) paradigm in which stimulus refers to objects and situations, organism describes persons, and response signifies

behavior (Belk, 1975). Service quality is an example of customer stimulus, an individual's perception of a website's playfulness is an example of organism, and response refers to an individual's behavior like satisfaction and purchase intention (Hsu et al., 2012).

The term had been conceptualized in terms of customers' mental, emotional, and physical activities. It can be measured using customer purchase intention and brand attitude (Chuchu et al., 2018; Ozer et al., 2020). Lin et al. (2011), Wang et al. (2017), Lorenz et al. (2015), Giantari et al. (2013), and El Khoury et al. (2023) related customer behavior to his purchase intention. Faircloth et al. (2001), Foroudi (2019), Percy and Rossiter (1992), and Kim and Lee (2020) associated customer behavior with customer brand attitude. For the current study, customer behavior was measured using customer purchase intention and customer brand attitude. Customer purchase intention refers to customer preference to purchase a product (Younus et al., 2015) and can be used to measure the actual purchase behavior: the higher the purchase intention, the higher the desire to buy a product (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013). Customer brand attitude, which is the second dimension of customer behavior in this study, had been described as a customer appreciation of a specific brand (Mitchell & Olson, 1988 cited in Dolbec & Chebat, 2013). For Sallam and Wahid (2012), customer attitude toward a brand refers to preferences in response to advertising stimulus, affecting purchase intention. Therefore, building relationships between brands and customers is a key success factor (Rodrigues et al., 2023).

The relationship between guerilla marketing and customer behavior can be investigated by exploring the impact of guerilla sensation marketing and guerilla ambient marketing on customer purchase intention and brand attitude. Using sample of customers selected from fashion store, Chuchu et al. (2018) explored the impact of ambient marketing on customer behavior as measured by purchase intention and brand attitude. They found that ambient marketing had a significant impact on both customer purchase intention and brand attitude. Walia and Singla (2017) tested the impact of guerilla marketing methods on the behavior of smartphone customers using data collected from 214 customers, either through interviews or observations. The study measured customer behavior by customer

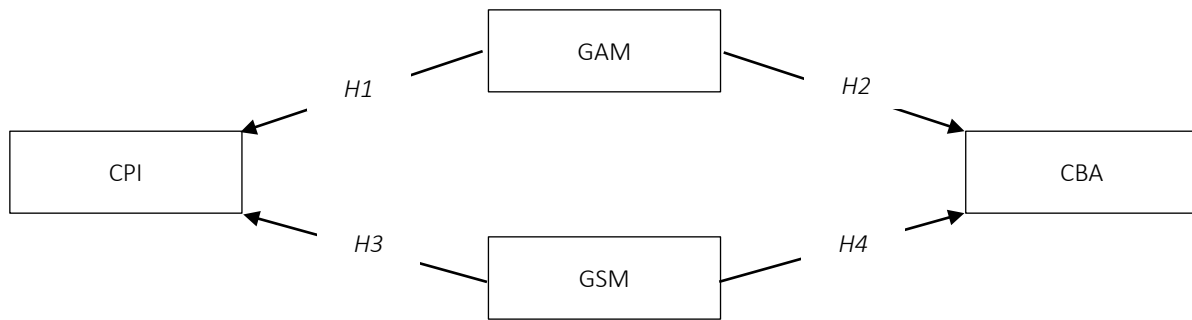
loyalty, customer purchase intention, and purchase frequency. They found that guerilla marketing had a significant effect on customer purchase intention; their results confirmed that guerilla marketing is one effective tool that can be used to promote smartphones. Investigating perceptions of younger and older customers in Croatia, Milak and Dobrinić (2017) discovered no statistically significant differences between younger and older customers in relation to their perceptions of guerilla marketing.

Analyzing 400 responses collected from the members of sports clubs in Egypt, Diaa (2017) underlined a positive relationship between guerilla marketing and customer purchase intention. Specifically, the study indicated that the dimensions of guerilla marketing (creativity, clarity, surprise, humor, and emotional arousal) had significant effects on customer purchase intention. Similarly, the positive impact of guerilla marketing strategies on customer purchase behavior was widely observed (R. Sharma & S. K. Sharma, 2015; Satour, 2016; Farooqui, 2021). Spahic and Parilti (2019) asserted the impact of guerrilla marketing on customer attitudes using data from 406 participants in one university in Turkey.

Therefore, a gap in marketing literature requires empirical results and implications to direct customer behavior to the objects that the organization strives to market. Additionally, the importance of this study is that seeks to compare the effects of ambient marketing and sensation marketing on purchase intention and brand attitude.

Based on these studies, the following hypotheses were suggested to investigate the impact of guerilla marketing on customer behavior (Figure 1):

- H1: *Guerilla ambient marketing has a statistically significant effect on customer purchase intention.*
- H2: *Guerilla ambient marketing has a statistically significant effect on customer brand attitude.*
- H3: *Guerilla sensation marketing has a statistically significant effect on customer purchase intention.*
- H4: *Guerilla sensation marketing has a statistically significant effect on customer brand attitude.*



Note: GAM = guerilla ambient marketing; CPI = customer purchase intention; CBA = customer brand attitude; GSM = guerrilla sensation marketing.

Figure 1. Conceptual model

2. METHODOLOGY

A convenience sample composed of 450 customers was asked to fill in a questionnaire in order to collect the required data. Similarly, Diao (2017) used a convenience sampling technique to gather data from participants on guerilla marketing and customer purchase intention. Customers were selected from three malls in the Jeddah City, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which are Mall of Arabia, Alyasmin Mall, and Red Sea Mall. The questionnaires were distributed equally, where 150 were administered to customers in each mall. The number of returned questionnaires was 370, from which 26 questionnaires were excluded due to empty responses. Therefore, 344 questionnaires were returned valid. Data were collected in May 2023.

Table 1 shows scales used to measure research variables. Two dimensions were used to measure guerilla

marketing: guerilla ambient marketing and guerilla sensation marketing. Eight items were used to measure guerilla marketing. Four items were used to measure ambient marketing and four items were used for sensation marketing. On the other hand, six items were used to evaluate two dimensions of customer behavior: customer purchase intention and brand attitude (Tam & Khuong, 2015; Wendland, 2016; Park et al., 2015; Spahic & Parilti, 2019).

Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach’s alpha coefficient (α) are indices used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire, while factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) are two indices used to measure validity. CR, factor loadings, alpha coefficients, and AVE were extracted from the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) conducted by the statistical package SPSS. Cut-off values of alpha coefficients and CR indicated that the values of these indices should be greater than 0.7 (Pontes et al.,

Table 1. Questionnaire items

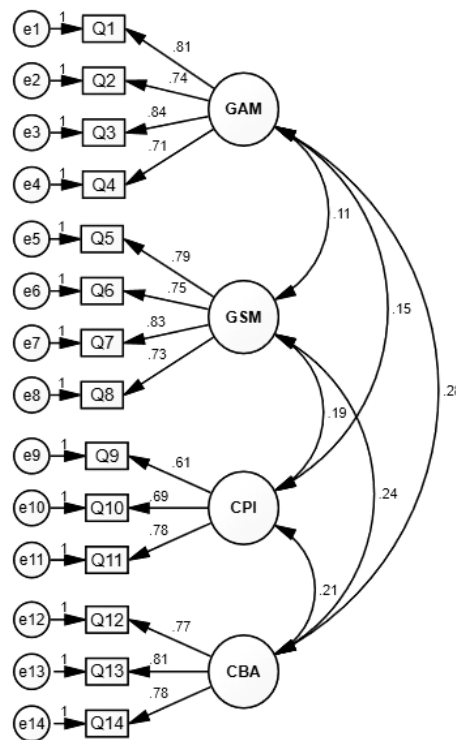
| Variables | Dimensions | Number | Items | References |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------|--|---|
| Guerilla marketing | Ambient marketing | 1 | I see that the ads have deep meaning | Q1-3: Tam and Khuong (2015, p. 194); Q4: Wendland (2016) |
| | | 2 | These ads make me think | |
| | | 3 | These ads have new ideas | |
| | | 4 | Unconventional methods of advertising increase my purchase intention | |
| | Sensation marketing | 5 | The ads are surprising | Q5: Tam and Khuong (2015, p. 194); Q6: Wendland (2016); Q7-8: Spahic and Parilti (2019) |
| | | 6 | Out-of-home advertising events modify my attitude toward a brand | |
| | | 7 | The ads are memorable | |
| | | 8 | The ads impressed me | |
| Customer behavior | Purchase intention | 9 | I will recommend this brand to my friends | Q1: Tam and Khuong (2015, p. 194); Q2-6: Park et al. (2015, p. 98); Nasermoadei et al. (2013) |
| | | 10 | In the future, I intend to buy the brand | |
| | | 11 | I will readily purchase the brand | |
| | Brand attitude | 12 | I like this brand | |
| | | 13 | I am in favor of this brand | |
| | | 14 | I am satisfied with this brand | |

2016), and values of factor loadings and AVE should be greater than 0.5 (Sihombing, 2016). The results of EFA shown in Table 2 illustrate that all factor loadings were greater than 0.50, and AVE values were greater than 0.50. Moreover, CR and alpha coefficients were higher than 0.7. These results show that the questionnaire used to collect data from sample members was reliable and valid because all tests utilized to test reliability and validity resulted in acceptable values. This indicates that the items of the current questionnaire are consistent in measuring the same latent variables (Koufteros, 1999).

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis results

| Variables | Items | FLs | AVE | CA | Alpha |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Ambient marketing | Q1 | 0.885 | 0.648 | 0.879 | 0.845 |
| | Q2 | 0.880 | | | |
| | Q3 | 0.715 | | | |
| | Q4 | 0.722 | | | |
| Sensation marketing | Q5 | 0.816 | 0.667 | 0.889 | 0.793 |
| | Q6 | 0.801 | | | |
| | Q7 | 0.838 | | | |
| | Q8 | 0.811 | | | |
| Purchase intention | Q9 | 0.674 | 0.517 | 0.762 | 0.748 |
| | Q10 | 0.750 | | | |
| | Q11 | 0.731 | | | |
| | Q12 | 0.883 | | | |
| Brand attitude | Q13 | 0.941 | 0.830 | 0.936 | 0.897 |
| | Q14 | 0.909 | | | |

Analysis of goodness-of-fit indices was conducted using IBM AMOS v. 22 based on the results of EFA following Marsh et al. (1988). The target measurement model encompassed 14 indicators distributed on four latent variables. The normed chi-square (χ^2/df), goodness of fit index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were four fit indices used to test the measurement fit. Due to Chi-square sensitivity to sample size, other indices such as CFI and RMSEA measures were suggested (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). In terms of thresholds, χ^2/df should be less than three to be acceptable, GFI and CFI should be no less than 0.9 as well as RMSEA should be less than 0.08 (Shukla & Purani, 2012; Pontes et al., 2016). On the one hand, all standardized factor loadings of the indicators met the required cut-off criterion, which stated that standardized factor loadings should be greater than 0.5. On the other hand, the results of goodness-of-fit indices, as depicted in Table 3, showed that the measurement model had acceptable values. These results indicated that the current model fits the empirical data (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003).



Note: GAM = guerilla ambient marketing; CPI = customer purchase intention; CBA = customer brand attitude; GSM = guerrilla sensation marketing.

Figure 2. Measurement model

Table 3. Goodness-of-fit indices

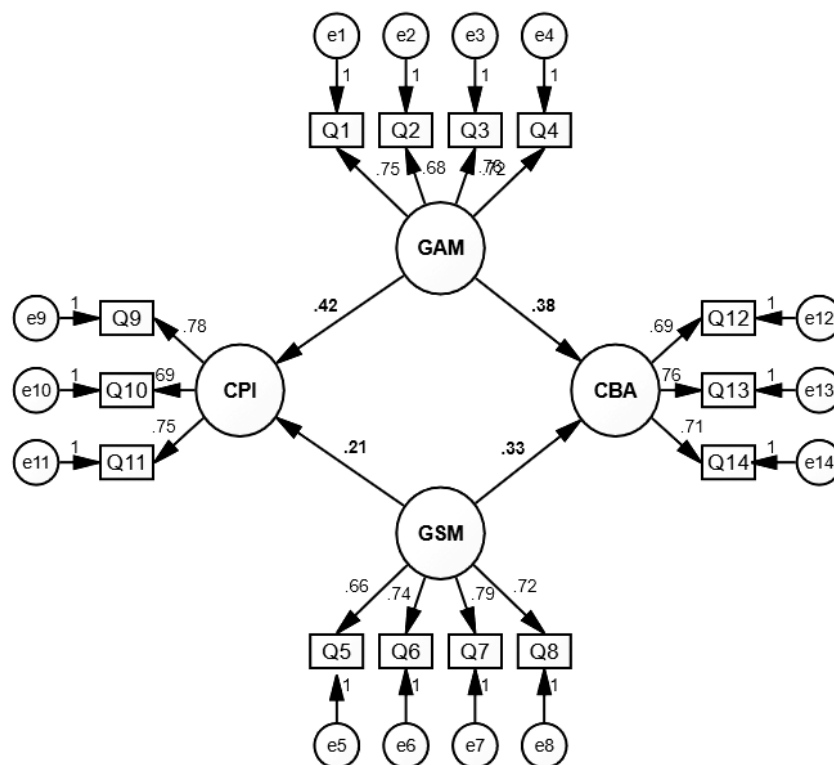
| Indics | Test values | Cut-off values | References | Results |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|--|----------|
| χ^2/df | 2.39 | Less than 3 | | Accepted |
| GFI | 0.913 | Higher than 0.90 | Hu and Bentler (1999); Schermelleh-Engel et al. (2003); Shukla and Purani (2012); Pontes et al. (2016) | Accepted |
| CFI | 0.944 | Higher than 0.90 | | Accepted |
| RMSEA | 0.048 | Less than 0.08 (0.06) | | Accepted |

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 2 shows a measurement model, and Figure 3 shows a structural model. Table 4 displays significant effects of guerilla ambient marketing on customer purchase intention and customer brand attitude as well as significant effects of guerilla sensation marketing on customer purchase intention and customer brand attitude. However, the results demonstrate that the effect of guerilla ambient marketing on customer purchase intention ($\beta_{\text{standardized}} = 0.42$) is higher than its effect on customer brand attitude ($\beta_{\text{standardized}} = 0.38$). Furthermore, the results show that the effect of guerilla sensation marketing on customer purchase intention ($\beta_{\text{standardized}} = 0.21$) is less than its effect on customer brand attitude ($\beta_{\text{standardized}} = 0.33$).

Table 4 shows that all research hypotheses were supported, which means that guerrilla marketing measured by ambient marketing and sensation marketing had a significant effect on customer behavior as evaluated based on customer purchase intention and customer brand attitude.

These results were mirrored by previous studies conducted using the same constructs. Chuchu et al. (2018) and Ozer et al. (2020) found statistically significant effects of ambient marketing on customer purchase intention as well as customer brand attitude. Concurrently, Walia and Singla (2017) and Hussein and Al-Qaysi (2023) stressed that guerilla marketing had a significant impact on customer behavior. Diao (2017) also confirmed the positive impact of guerilla



Note: GAM = guerilla ambient marketing; CPI = customer purchase intention; CBA = customer brand attitude; GSM = guerilla sensation marketing.

Figure 3. Structural model

Table 4. Results of hypotheses testing

| H | Independent variable | → | Dependent variable | B _{standardized} | B _{unstandardized} | P |
|----|----------------------|---|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| H1 | GAM | → | CPI | 0.42 | 0.78 | 0.000 |
| H2 | GAM | → | CBA | 0.38 | 0.62 | 0.001 |
| H3 | GSM | → | CPI | 0.21 | 0.34 | 0.003 |
| H4 | GSM | → | CBA | 0.33 | 0.59 | 0.000 |

Note: GAM = guerilla ambient marketing; CPI = customer purchase intention; CBA = customer brand attitude; GSM = guerrilla sensation marketing.

marketing on customer purchase intention. Similar results were found by Spahic and Parilti (2019), Satour (2016), Farooqui (2021), and R. Sharma and S. K. Sharma (2015). These studies, in fact, verified the results of the current study.

The positive correlation between ambient marketing and customer purchase intention and brand attitude can be explained by the ability of brands to arouse consumers to behave in a specific and more effective way. Ambient marketing changes environmental factors that consumers interact with in an unexpected and creative way, rendering the elements meaningful and impactful in advertising (Ozer et al., 2020). Guerilla ambient marketing's effectiveness in influencing the purchase intentions is linked to the relevance of the advertisement. Relevance relates to how the campaign or ad relates to the consumer (Tam & Khuong, 2015), and is among the most influential factors in determining the consumer's love to buying a product, with other studies finding that it contributes to as much as 33.6% effect on purchase intention. The two forms of relevance are ad relevance (whether customers believe the ad is meaningful) and brand relevance (whether product is relevant or familiar with customers' choices) (Smith et al., 2007). Relatedly, guerilla ambient marketing affects consumer attitudes by triggering emotional arousal to the advertisement (Yidiz, 2017). Other mediating factors on the impact between ambient marketing and consumer purchase in-

tion identified in previous studies are aesthetics, novelty, clarity, humor, and surprise.

Compared to sensation marketing, ambient marketing combines and leverages these factors to boost customer purchase intention in a more powerful way. However, sensation marketing is more impactful in influencing brand attitudes due to its ability to trigger the consumers' desires and perceptions about a brand by appealing to the five senses, with each sense being used to relate to consumers on a deeper emotional level. It triggers, soothes, and enhances a strong emotional attachment to a brand, resulting in memorable and distinctive brand experiences that leave emotional imprints on the memories of customers (Shahid et al., 2022). Such emotional attachment positively influences consumers' brand loyalty and positive attitudes.

Two major limitations of this study are related to its conceptual model in which guerilla marketing was measured by two dimensions (ambient and sensation marketing) and customer behavior was measured by customer purchase intention and brand attitude. Secondly, this study is limited to its sample, which consisted of customers of brands advertised in local malls. Therefore, one cannot generalize the obtained results. Further studies should use other dimensions of guerilla marketing and target more customers from different locations. These limitations represent starting points for future studies.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the impact of guerilla marketing on customer behavior. Particularly, it investigated the impacts of two dimensions of guerilla marketing, which are ambient marketing and sensation marketing, on two dimensions of customer behavior, which are customer purchase intention and customer brand attitude. Specifically, the study tested four hypotheses related to the impact of ambient marketing on customer purchase intention (H1), the impact of ambient marketing on customer brand

attitude (H2), the impact of sensation marketing on customer purchase intention (H3), and the impact of sensation marketing on customer brand attitude (H4). All these hypotheses were accepted. An important note is that the increase in customer purchase intention due to ambient marketing is greater than the increase in customer brand attitude due to the same independent variable, while the increase in customer purchase intention due to sensation marketing is less than the increase in customer brand attitude due to this variable. Therefore, the study concluded that guerrilla marketing induces customer behavior. Accurately, guerrilla ambient marketing is crucial for customer purchase intention first, then for customer brand attitude in comparison with sensation marketing, which is more critical for customer brand attitude than customer purchase intention.

These results resulted in several managerial implications. First, enterprises are required to try non-conventional marketing practices such as guerilla marketing in order to change customer behaviors. Examples of these practices include ambient marketing, in which outdoor activities are directed to customers using unusual themes of marketing like different colors, sizes, or locations. Categorically, these activities have effects on customer repurchase intention. This indicates that enterprises could use ambient marketing activities in order to activate customer purchase intention. On the other side, enterprises should employ other marketing activities to encourage customers' positive attitudes toward their brands. For example, these enterprises could use flash mobs in specific locations to introduce their brands.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Layla Alsheikh.
 Data curation: Layla Alsheikh.
 Formal analysis: Layla Alsheikh.
 Funding acquisition: Layla Alsheikh.
 Investigation: Layla Alsheikh.
 Methodology: Layla Alsheikh.
 Project administration: Layla Alsheikh.
 Resources: Layla Alsheikh.
 Software: Layla Alsheikh.
 Supervision: Layla Alsheikh.
 Validation: Layla Alsheikh.
 Visualization: Layla Alsheikh.
 Writing – original draft: Layla Alsheikh.
 Writing – review & editing: Layla Alsheikh.

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