

Viral VS Guerrilla Marketing, which one is better?

Talking about marketing communication, there is no limit to it. The one rule that everybody knows about good marketing is “be different” so you can grab audiences’ attention better. There are ways to get the message across but we cannot deny that the channels brands use the most (not necessarily the most effective) are TV with share of voice at 62% as of YTD Aug 2014 and all other mass mediums at around 35%. Fact is that, you may reach the audience you want, but also those other people who aren’t even related to your products while having to pay more. Thanks to creativity and technologies, we have other options which are less expensive and might even be more effective and efficient. These options require creativities, differentiation, they are unconventional, aim to create word-of-mouth, and allow target audience to be more involved physically, emotionally, or even both! These alternatives are Guerilla marketing and Viral marketing.

First marketing approach that aims to capture attention of target audience is Guerrilla marketing. This came before all the online and social media which we are all familiar with even exist. It’s one of those Below-The-Line activities that marketers use to create buzz and talk among target audience. In the beginning, this method was used by small/medium size businesses because it requires lower advertising expenses before adopted by big conglomerate/Multinational companies later on. Imagine you walking on the street and see something random and seem out of place, that is guerrilla marketing. These activities usually range from flash mob, graffiti, and more. One of the most recent campaigns that was considered a successful guerrilla activity in Thailand in terms of talk and share rate at more than 3 million views on YouTube, was by Rexona Men, “Don’t stop even if others do” or in Thai “อย่าหยุด แม้คนอื่นหยุด”, led by Andy Lewis walking on a slack line at the height of 55 stories.

Another approach is Viral marketing, which is like a dream for marketers and believed by those to create most engagement between the brands and audience online. The success rate of this digital marketing tool can be proven by share and talk rate, which is similar to the concept of creating word of mouth back when digital wasn’t so big in marketing world. Instead of paying a hundred million Baht on buying airtime on TV, viral marketing aims to use the audience as speakers for free (if the idea is really great) or maybe at some cost of promotion through social networks. The keys to this are to be different yet have a deep level of audience insight, including knowing their interests, lifestyles, together with emotional approach. The viral campaigns that usually get to the audience need emotions, make them cry or laugh etc. Not only commercial brands love this but also non-profit organizations do as well. It has been proven that viral campaign can also create pressure to those who have the power or authority to make some change. A good (and favorite) example should be “Invisible Children” campaign, ran to go against abduction of children in Uganda led by Joseph Kony. This VDO has almost hundred million views on YouTube and has been shared worldwide and at the same time, its popularity had caught The President of United States’ attention and drove him into responding to the campaign and support by sending in military troop to go against children abduction.

These 2 tools might have their own charms and benefits to the brands but have also been combined to maximize the strength of communication and reach. Online guerrilla marketing should represent the beauty of both by creating buzz on-ground to capture attention from audience in the area live, while letting people talk about it more on social media and make it viral. However, these are the best in terms of generating awareness and engagement but not yet being famous for creating sales, unless they are tagged along with some sales promotion.

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