The Efficacy of Guerrilla Advertising Campaigns on Public Health Issues

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Abstract

While commercial businesses utilize guerrilla advertising regularly nowadays, the practice has crossed over into non-commercial territory: the public health industry. The purpose of this study is to assess the perceived efficacy of guerrilla advertising tactics, specifically as applied to public health issues. Based on fear appeal, sensory involvement, and environmental circumstances, three important components for measuring the efficacy of advertisements, the author created a measurement instrument called the Resonance and Impact Analysis (RIA) Scale that was used to measure three guerrilla-style public health advertisements. The study found that advertisements that incorporated a clear fear appeal and an enclosed environment garnered higher scores on the RIA Scale than those in a more traditional presentation, resulting in a presumed higher impact, resonance, and efficacy with the public.

I. Introduction

In 2007, the advertising agency Taxi Canada came up with an outdoor media strategy to advertise McCain Smooth-eez, a pre-made, frozen fruit drink. Taxi Canada created a life-size blender inside revolving glass doors and allowed customers to see all of the ingredients that make up McCain Smooth-eez as they walked through it. This is a perfect example of guerrilla advertising. By placing this unconventional and creative advertisement in an unexpected location and allowing the public to interact with it, McCain Smooth-eez made good use of guerrilla advertising to increase public awareness, stimulate positive brand image, and drive product purchase. These are advertising techniques that were examined in this article.

II. Background

Guerrilla Advertising Background

As a non-traditional form of advertising, guerrilla advertising is a creative, low-cost technique with the possibility of maximum impact on the public. Finding its roots in “guerrilla warfare” tactics that rely on raids and ambush attacks, guerrilla advertising gained momentum after Levinson (1984) outlined a list of tactics on innovative advertising that involves a “small budget, big results” strategy (Hutter and Hoffmann 2). Whereas

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traditional advertising comprises above-the-line media channels such as television, newspapers, radio, and outdoor posters, guerrilla advertising exists in less traditional channels such as elevators, taxis, the human body, bathroom stalls, etc. (Jurca 4). Taking advantage of public locations, community interactions, and collaborative involvement, guerrilla advertising incorporates unique methods and deliverables to create a truly intriguing advertising experience. These techniques find success with consumers because the consumers are surprised by the unconventional guerrilla action (surprise effect), which leads them to voluntarily diffuse the message because of their unique experience (diffusion effect). Companies and organizations benefit because of these reactions and the flexibility of the unconventional advertising (low-cost effect) (Hutter and Hoffmann 5).

Hutter and Hoffmann explain that guerrilla advertising is an umbrella phrase that includes multiple techniques such as ambush, ambient, sensation, buzz and viral advertising (3). For the purpose of this paper, the author used the phrase “guerrilla advertising” exclusively to include all of these techniques.

**Public Health and Social Marketing Background**

Public health, as defined by the Association of Schools of Public Health, is “the science and art of protecting and improving the health of communities through education, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and research for disease and injury prevention” (What is Public Health?). Public health interventions have many purposes, ranging from preventing sexually transmitted diseases, to promoting seat belt use, to providing information and access to birth control (What is Public Health?). Because public health is an industry that is not for profit, but rather behavior based, it relies heavily on “social marketing” for message diffusion. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (US-DHHS), other governmental agencies, and non-profit organizations have all taken part in social marketing to “design and implement programs to promote socially beneficial behavior change” (Grier and Bryant 319).

While there is some debate on the “direct translation of mainstream marketing principles into a social context,” there exists an opportunity for less traditional forms of promotion, such as guerrilla advertising, within the social marketing mix. While the aim of guerrilla advertising is typically high returns and profitability for a product, service or brand, its principles and techniques have begun to be used to fulfill the need for stimulating and reactionary public health advertising that truly resonates with the public. The specific public health concepts and their guerrilla advertising techniques examined by this research, include the prevention of drunk driving, the encouragement of sunscreen use to prevent skin cancer, and the discouragement of smoking.

**III. Literature Review**

A significant amount of research has been done on guerrilla advertising for consumer marketing. So far, the literature has focused on why guerrilla advertising has been adopted, what kind of emotional appeals were aroused by different ads, and ethical and legal issues this type of advertising involves. Although the concept of guerrilla advertising can be applied to other fields, very little literature exists on the application and effectiveness of guerrilla advertising in non-commercial venues, more specifically, public health matters and initiatives. This research tried to fill this gap by establishing a scale of measurement. This scale, which consists of three subscales on emotional appeals, sensory involvement and environmental circumstances, was created to assess the effectiveness and impact of guerrilla advertising of public health issues.

**Globalization**

The conception of guerrilla advertising can be described as an environmental necessity. With a rising uncertainty brought about by globalization in the marketplace and transformations in the media, companies and businesses have found it more and more expedient to stay ahead of the evolving climate and advertise in more unique and unexpected ways. Ay, Aytekin and Nardali (2010) assert that because of economic insecurity, companies have been forced to reconsider their promotional and advertising budgets while trying to maintain and exceed their brand reach, impact, and profitability, resulting in a surge in guerrilla advertising. Bigat (2012) explains that guerrilla advertising offers companies the opportunity to deliver low-cost and innovative advertising strategies in order to gain a powerful competitive edge and react to the changing environ-
ment. It is easy to argue that the use of more unique, interactive, and unexpected advertising techniques in an environment of static traditional marketing allows consumers to cut through the clutter, process the message more deeply, and raise the level of interest in a product or brand, as suggested by Razzaq, Ozanne and Fortin (2009). Guerrilla advertising—originally a technique employed by smaller businesses due to the low-costs and the possibility of high returns—has readily been adopted by large corporations as well, creating an even more competitive environment to capture the audience’s attention and influence behavior. While traditional advertising has only a handful of methods from which to choose, guerrilla advertising has a full arsenal of tactics that can reach very specifically targeted audiences, making it a powerful marketing tool, according to Bigat (2012).

**Emotional Appeals**

Relying heavily on consumer research and insights, guerrilla advertising typically utilizes emotional appeals to reach its audience as intentionally and appropriately as possible. According to Brown (2009), feelings and emotions always dominate cognition, and this approach has been readily adopted by the advertising industry, resulting in much more emotionally appealing and stimulating advertisements. Lukic (2009) asserts that the three main emotional appeals used within advertising and marketing are fear, guilt, and positive appeals, each of which can be utilized in different circumstances for different purposes. Fear and guilt, for example, might be used to promote either abiding by safety regulations or participating in charity work, according to Lukic (2009). Brown (2009), on the other hand, shows the success that positive appeals had in Dove’s Campaign for True Beauty because it evoked a sense of confidence and optimism from the women it was targeting, and in turn generated more positive feelings toward the brand and its products. The literature has shown some discrepancies about which type of emotional appeal is the strongest because it is highly dependent on the nature of the intended response. Increased product purchasing and positive brand image call for a more positive appeal strategy, whereas a negative-active behavioral change (such as quitting smoking) usually utilizes the fear or guilt appeal according to Brown (2009). While each appeal can find success in different circumstances, Belič and Jönsson (2012) conclude that it is vital to match the particular appeal with the product type or intended response.

**Implications**

The literature addresses the ethical, societal and legal implications as well. When using fear appeal, it is possible that the experience may be so disturbing that the viewer is left feeling somewhat upset, stressed or anxious (Ay, Ayteki and Nardali 283). It is especially crucial to note that some fear appeal advertisements that target an adult audience may be unintentionally seen by children, resulting in a traumatic experience for the child. Thus, ethical considerations should be taken into account when the fear appeal is employed in advertising. The guilt appeal requires ethical considerations as well, when the guilt or shame ostracizes an individual from the community. For instance, if an advertisement uses a guilt appeal to promote charity work by insinuating the lack of social acceptance and respect for people from their peers if they do not participate, one may consider this an unethical practice because it damages their self confidence and sense of belonging in their community (Lukic 2009). Many legal implications arise from guerrilla marketing due to its non-traditional nature. Guerrilla advertising typically appears in unique locations such as bus stops, sidewalks, near billboards, etc. These tactics are not always done with explicit permission and can lead to fines for illegally defacing the location or property. Bigat (2012) contends that the fines incurred are typically less than what a company might have spent on any other form of traditional advertising such as a billboard, and is therefore a risk the advertiser is willing to take.

**Social Marketing**

While little research explicitly explores tactical guerrilla advertising for public health and social causes, some scholars have studied general social marketing for various social causes, such as in relation to government agencies, non-profit organizations, and public health initiatives. Social marketing, according to Andreasen, is “the adaptation of commercial marketing technologies to programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of the society of which they are a part” (p. 110). Grier and Bryant (2005) explain how public health officials can incorporate social marketing to “facilitate acceptance, rejection, modification, abandonment or maintenance of particular behaviors by target audiences.” This can be applied to various health-centric initiatives that discourage smoking or drunk-driving and encourage suicide prevention or flu shots. Grier and Bryant (2005) go on to discuss that in order to be successful, social marketers consider the
psychographics and behaviors of the audience to provide a benefit through the advertisement that they truly value.

**Further Research Opportunities**

Much literature discusses guerrilla advertising in commercial and profit-based terms, but there is room to explore how it is being used in conjunction with the intrinsic values of social marketing. Competition in the public health arena is not with another company or business vying for a share of the marketplace, but rather with bad behavioral options to dissuade: driving drunk instead of taking a cab home, not exercising instead of exercising for better health, or not putting on sun screen instead of putting it on to avoid skin cancer. It is here that guerrilla advertising is being employed as a part of a social marketing scheme to influence behaviors and offer the true value of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

**Research Question and Hypothesis**

The research question for this study was how much emotional appeals, sensory involvement and environmental circumstances contribute to the resonance and effectiveness of guerrilla-style advertisements for public health issues and initiatives.

It has one hypothesis: Higher levels of fear appeals, sensory involvement, and confining environmental circumstances would lead to the increased impact, resonance and efficacy of guerrilla advertisements for public health issues and initiatives.

**IV. Methods**

This study analyzed the content of three advertisements that belong to public health guerrilla advertising. The author created a scale called the Resonance and Impact Analysis Scale (RIA Scale), which has three subscales that measure the impact of sensory involvement, emotional appeals, and environmental circumstances each on advertisements.

**Subscale of Fear Appeal**

According to various research studies, emotions play a large part in the effectiveness of advertising. According to Brown, fear appeal can be particularly effective to change consumer behavior (5). While a fear appeal can face ethical implications for consumer products due to negative reactions and brand perception, its employment with public health initiatives is well founded.

Lukic describes fear appeal as “threatening the audience with harmful outcomes from initiating or continuing an unhealthy practice,” which is especially relevant in encouraging public health initiatives. (28). In the commercial arena, the fear of not having the coolest car is marginal. In the public health arena, on the other hand, the fear of developing lung cancer from smoking cigarettes is much more dire and life threatening. This rational and impending fear of lung cancer, for example, is the kind that can be capitalized on in advertising for the good of the society and individuals.

Ay, Ayteki, and Nardali (2010) assert that the emotional response following a fear appeal is anxiety or stress. By providing relief to this fear, whether through implying a solution or debriefing the audience after the experience, this stress or anxiety is relieved. It is when these emotions go unalleviated that an advertisement may be considered unethical or irresponsible, according to Ay, Ayteki, and Nardali (2010). Based on Rogers’ Protection Motivation Theory, Boer and Seydel describe a linear relationship between fear-appeal communications and behavioral responses in their study (96). The fear is aroused, the severity of its consequences is appraised, and then the efficacy of the proposed solution is considered to be either adopted or dismissed. Boer and Seydel go on to explain that the higher the fear level and perceived consequences are, the higher the likelihood that the audience would adopt the proposed solutions.

Based on the above model, the fear appeal scale was created with three questions: whether an ad arouses a fear appeal, whether the consequences of the fear or behavior are extreme after a fear is aroused; and whether the proposed solution can be easily and immediately adopted. The word “extreme” in the second question means that the consequences are life threatening, socially ostracizing, illegal, or highly unethical. A
positive response to each question garners one point, so the fear appeal score on this scale can range from 0 to 3.

**Subscale of Sensory Involvement**

In educational settings, teachers and professors often encourage learning through multiple senses. For example, during a lecture, students would be encouraged to listen to the teachings, view the board for visual examples, and take notes on a sheet of paper. In mainstream thinking, involving the haptic (feeling), auditory and visual senses to digest information better improves memory and learning. This idea is supported by Shams and Seitz’ assertion that multisensory training protocols produce greater and more efficient learning (2008).

It is valid to assume, then, that this multisensory theory is applicable to disseminating information through advertising. In an international quantitative and qualitative study, Millward Brown and its associates explored the brand sensory experience and found that 99% of current brand communications focus only on auditory and visual stimuli, whereas, 75% of human emotions are noted to be generated through smell (Lindstrom 85). This shows that current traditional advertising does not resonate as fully with its audience as it could, and that guerrilla advertising fills a hole for that multi-sensory experience. Lindstrom states, “The general rule of thumb is that the more senses a brand appeals to, the stronger the message will be perceived” (86). Using the examples of the signature Rolls Royce smell and the distinct crunch sound of Kellogg’s Rice Crispies, Lindstrom emphasizes the role that senses play in a consumer’s increased perception and improved experience of a brand (85).

Based on the studies above, a sensory scale was created measuring whether an advertisement appeals to visual (sight), auditory (sound), haptic (feel), gustatory (taste), or olfactory (smell) senses. If each of these senses is vital to an advertisement’s function and message, the advertisement scores one point each, except for the olfactory one. Given that 75% of emotions are generated through the olfactory sense, or smell, it is assigned two points instead. If any of these senses is used purely circumstantially or environmentally, not adding any function or message to the advertisement, the advertisement receives no point value for that sense.

**Subscale of Environmental Circumstances**

The last scale is created to analyze how much impact the environment has on an guerrilla advertisement. Razzaq, Ozanne and Fortin considered that since the purpose of guerrilla advertising is to attract attention and surprise the public, the environmental circumstances in which the advertisement is seen plays a large role in behavioral responses (2). More specifically, their study involves the different responses in a “captive” environment, such as a bathroom, public transit stations, etc., and an “open” environment, such as outdoors, shopping malls, etc. The results from their experiment on the campus of a large university in New Zealand supports the hypothesis that a captive environment is a more effective and behavior evoking method of promotional or advertisement material distribution (6).

On the environment scale, an advertisement garners one point if it is located and interacted with in a captive environment. If the advertisement exists in a captive environment and exists dependently and purposefully because of that environment, it receives one point. For example, an advertisement in a subway station will receive one point because the individual who sees it is captive in that environment until his or her purpose in that environment is fulfilled (ie: until the train arrives and then actually boarding it). If an advertisement exists in an open environment and holds no dependency on the existence of that environment, it will receive no point in this category. For example, a guerrilla advertisement on the side of a bus would receive no point because individuals who see it are not bound by that environment in any functional way, unlike those in the subway station.

**Advertisements analyzed**

Due to their unique channels and creative tactics, the following three advertisements were selected as a sample of non-traditional and guerrilla advertising of health and safety concerns that the public is generally in agreement about.

“**The Smoker’s Lung**”: In a guerrilla advertisement for the AOK, Germany’s largest health insurance company, a set of hollow glass lungs is placed in front of and inside public buildings such as the AOK
headquarters, hospitals, swimming pools and restaurants in Southern Germany. It is filled with cigarette stubs and has an ashtray on the top portion, along with a website where people can find out more information about quitting smoking. The website is called “I will become a non-smoker.” (Refer to Advertisement 1 in the Appendix.)

“Cut Out”: SunSmart Cancer Council of Western Australia employed a guerrilla advertisement in 2011 on the side of a bus stop. The ad depicts a person’s back with a large cut out in it that looks surgical and is actually a 30+ SPF sunscreen dispenser. The headline reads, “Cutting your sun exposure is easier than cutting out a skin cancer.” The body copy reads, “Free 30+ sunscreen. There is nothing healthy about a tan. Protect yourself 5 ways from skin cancer.” There are five small icons below the text that give examples of ways to cut sun exposure. (Refer to Advertisement 2 in the Appendix.)

“Crash”: In a guerrilla advertisement for Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), an elevator is used to discourage drunk driving. When looking into the open elevator from outside, one can see the letters “MADD” and a slashed circle symbol with a martini glass and a car key in it on the far wall of the elevator. Once inside the elevator, the viewer sees the fronts of two cars on opposing elevator doors that collide when the doors shut. The headline on the inside of the elevator doors when shut reads, “Don’t drink and drive.” (Refer to Advertisement 3 in the Appendix.)

Discouraging smoking, encouraging sunscreen use, and preventing drunk driving are all initiatives that find agreeable resonance with society and individuals. While public health concerns and advertisements about other matters such as flu shots, birth control, or breastfeeding exist as well, these matters are more subjective and are met with differing or dissenting opinions, making them less viable options to explore objectively with the RIA Scale. These three specific public health issues were also chosen because they fit into the fear appeal landscape, whereas flu shots or breastfeeding do not find strong resonance there.

V. Findings and Analysis

Using the nine items in the RIA Scale, the author tallied the points each of the three advertisements garnered, as shown in Table 1. The total score measures the advertisement’s perceived efficacy.

Table 1: RIA Scale advertisement analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions in three subscales</th>
<th>Advertisements</th>
<th>“The Smoker’s Lung”</th>
<th>“Cut Out”</th>
<th>“Crash”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear Appeal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear is aroused</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequence is “extreme”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed solution is easily and immediately adoptable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual (sight)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory (sound)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haptic (feel)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gustatory (taste)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Olfactory (smell)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Circumstances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Captive” Environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Points Received</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Each question garners one point while the question on Olfactory does two points. The maximum score for the RIA scale is 10 points.
Coding Analysis

“The Smoker’s Lung” garnered the highest score of eight points. This advertisement aroused fear because of the vivid imagery between smoking and the effects on the lungs. The consequences are assumed to be lung cancer and poor health if smoking continues, which can be life-threatening. Two proposed solutions are readily available: an individual can put out his or her cigarette in the ashtray and/or visit the website to learn more about stopping smoking. The advertisement is obviously visual but lacks an auditory component. This advertisement targets smokers, so their interactions with the advertisement most likely include physical smoking of a cigarette, which incorporates the haptic sense (physically having to feel the cigarette while stubbing it out), the gustatory sense (the taste of a cigarette) and especially the olfactory sense (the distinct smell of the cigarette). Lastly, it is not in a captive environment, but rather in an open one on the side of a building. These are all reasons that it garnered eight points on the RIA Scale.

“Cut Out” aroused fear with the headline that mentions skin cancer and the strong visual of a surgical incision on the body. If an individual does not cut sun exposure, the implied consequence is skin cancer, and the proposed solution is using sunscreen that is free and readily available. This advertising is visual, but also haptic (the feel of putting sunscreen on the skin) and olfactory (the distinct smell of sunscreen). Lastly, it is not in a captive environment, but rather in an open one on the side of a bus stop. This advertisement scored seven points on the RIA Scale.

“Crash” arouses fear because of the imagery of the car crash physically happening as the elevator doors shut. A head-on collision simulated by the elevator would lead to an arrest for a DUI, personal injuries, or even death. The advertisement is visual, auditory and haptic because an individual would see the advertisement while pushing the elevator button to close the doors and hear the closing sound as it happens. Lastly, the advertisement exists in an elevator an individual rides in, which is a captive environment. This advertisement scored six points on the RIA Scale.

Discussion

Departing from the exploration of brand image, favorable opinions, and likelihood to purchase that is common with commercial advertising, the RIA scale focuses on assessing the perceived impact and resonance of the public health advertisement based upon fear appeal, sensory involvement, and environmental circumstances.

The three selected public health guerrilla advertisements showed a difference in their RIA scores, which is explained here. “The Smoker’s Lung,” while seemingly ordinary at first glance, is extremely powerful. While unappealing or dull to non-smokers, it specifically targets smokers in a multi-sensory way that involves four out of the five senses, making it the most stimulating of the three ads chosen. On the other hand, “Cut Out” incorporates three senses (olfactory included) in its use of the sunscreen dispenser. It is important to recognize that this advertisement that could have been just a normal print advertisement on the side of the bus stop instead effectively used the sensory involvement to create an interactive and more memorable experience. While “Crash” incorporates three senses into the advertisement, its lack of the olfactory sense (smell) leads to fewer points on the RIA scale. The more senses involved in the advertising experience, the more interactive it is presumed to be, which in turn leads to a more memorable and resonating experience. This assertion can be tested with advertisements in other areas than public health.

The fear appeal aspect of the RIA scale is specific to the public health industry because it incorporates very real, impending, and extreme fears and consequences. “The Smoker’s Lung” has a clear fear appeal because the advertisement vividly shows what smoking will bring to the smoker: carcinogens that fill a glass lung and accompanying health problems. It proposes an easy and immediate solution of stubbing out the cigarette in the provided ashtray and/or visiting the website. This advertisement is a great example of a comprehensive fear appeal. Similarly, “Cut Out” uses stark language and imagery about the possibility of skin cancer to arouse fear and provides an immediate solution of using the sunscreen offered. “Crash” utilizes fear appeal, but less comprehensively because while the fear is aroused and its level is extreme, the solution requires a delayed reaction that is needed later when the viewer is faced with the decision of whether or not to drink and drive. Fear appeals can be polarizing, alarming or even ostracizing, so they must be used appropriately and responsibly. In the public health area, the fear appeal is most successful when the advertisement is comprehensive, arouses an extreme fear, and seeks to alleviate fear immediately, which in turn can influence the viewer’s mindset and future behavior. This is why “The Smoker’s Lung” and “Cut Out” are considered
more impactful and resonating than “Crash.”

Both “The Smoker’s Lung” and “Cut Out” exist in an open environment, which weakens their environmental circumstances. “Crash,” on the other hand, makes good use of a captive environment in the execution of the advertisement as well as its location. People riding in the elevator is vital to the existence and presentation of the advertisement. For a bigger impact of “The Smoker’s Lung,” for example, it could be placed in a captive environment, such as a smoker’s room at the airport. The environmental circumstances in which the public interacts with advertisements are extremely important in determining their resonance with viewers.

“The Smoker’s Lung” has the highest score, 8 out of a possible 10 points, on the RIA Scale, which implies that it is the most interactive and resonating advertisement studied. “Cut Out” received the median score of 7 points, while “Crash” received the lowest score of six points. It is assumed that a higher number of points received correlates positively to implied efficacy, resonance, and impact.

VI. Conclusions

Driven solely to encourage the well-being of a society or individual, the public health industry is beginning to use guerrilla advertising, which can be extremely effective and without the same monetary risks that other profit-driven industries face. Public health initiatives do not rely as heavily on profits or sales or even brand perception as commercial counterparts, but rather they rely on the resonance of messages, which are vital in disseminating public health information, encouraging participation in initiatives, and discouraging dangerous behavior, whether positive, negative, or neutral.

For this study, the RIA scale was developed to provide a starting point for assessing the efficacy of guerrilla advertising in public health. Based on other important research on the resonance of a message, the author developed three subscales (fear appeal, sensory involvement, and environmental circumstances) in the RIA scale. Since this RIA scale fills the void that exists in evaluating the application of a non-traditional advertising strategy in non-commercial industries, it is the author’s hope that this scale could be tested, evaluated, criticized and improved upon to further this field of study.

Limitations and implications for future research

This study has a few limitations. The selected advertisements were analyzed as static images out of context. Advertisements in the real environments might have brought different emotional experience to their viewers. The RIA Scale is still a crude measurement in assessing the efficacy of guerrilla advertising for public health issues, so it could have been more meaningful if the scale’s validity and reliability had been tested.

Further studies can be done with different kinds of guerrilla advertisements. The chosen advertisements involve clear public health issues that have distinct values and consequences. For example, smoking can cause lung cancer, sun exposure can cause skin cancer, and drunk driving can cause collisions. Advertisements on issues that are not as clear and are more divisive in their benefits and consequences, like breast-feeding, vaccinations or nutrition, could lead to different kinds of results. These issues may not trigger the same behavioral change through fear appeal that an anti drunk-driving initiative would arouse. Another study can be done to compare people’s intended behavior or their opinions before and after being exposed to the advertisement. Additionally, an advertisement like “The Smoker’s Lung” can recommend that viewers visit a website and sign a pledge to stop smoking, which can generate a quantifiable measurement of the advertisement’s resonance and impact and the future behaviors of its audience.

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Bibliography


Appendix

Advertisement 1: “The Smoker’s Lung”

Body Copy above glass lung: Website URL for The AOK (Germany’s largest health insurance company)

Advertisement 2: “Cut Out”

Headline: “Cutting your sun exposure is easier than cutting out a skin cancer”
Body Copy: “Free 30+ sunscreen. There is nothing healthy about a tan. Protect yourself 5 ways from skin cancer.”
Advertisement 3: “Crash”

MADD: Mothers Against Drunk Driving
Headline: Don’t Drink and Drive