

# Conventional Marketing: The Unconventional Way-Reconceptualising Guerrilla Use of Traditional Media



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## Abstract

Sustainable entrepreneurship has become a critical concern for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in Asian and emerging-market contexts where firms operate under severe resource constraints and institutional complexity. Conventional marketing approaches are often financially prohibitive for such firms, limiting their ability to achieve visibility, growth, and long-term sustainability. Against this backdrop, this study reconceptualises guerrilla marketing as a sustainable entrepreneurial strategy rather than a set of unconventional promotional tactics. Adopting a conceptual research design, the study synthesises practitioner insights, contemporary academic literature, and illustrative cases to develop a sustainability-oriented guerrilla entrepreneurship framework. The results identify three interrelated dimensions-economic, social, and ethical sustainability-embedded within guerrilla marketing practices. The framework further demonstrates how conventional media channels, including print, direct mail, and outdoor advertising, can be transformed through guerrilla principles to generate engagement, brand differentiation, and entrepreneurial resilience without disproportionate resource expenditure. By advancing propositional linkages between guerrilla strategies and sustainable SME outcomes, the study contributes to entrepreneurship and sustainability literature by integrating marketing innovation with ethical and inclusive growth. The findings are particularly relevant for Asian SMEs seeking cost-efficient, context-sensitive, and responsible pathways to sustainable competitiveness. The study offers theoretical insights and practical implications for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and scholars concerned with innovation-driven sustainability in resource-constrained environments.

**Keywords:** Sustainable entrepreneurship, Guerrilla marketing, SMEs, Innovation, Asia, Ethical marketing

## 1. Introduction

The concept of sustainability has become the major issue of concern among entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), especially in the emerging and developing economies. As the modern literature points out, sustainable entrepreneurship is ceasing to be a niche phenomenon and, on the contrary, an essential channel of coping with economic resilience, social inclusion, and environmental responsibility at the same time (Abbas and Bulut, 2024). The existence of systematic and bibliometric evidence also indicates that sustainability-oriented entrepreneurial activity is also increasingly influencing the innovation paths and development outcomes in the emerging nations, where institutional support frameworks are usually partial or uneven (Dote-Pardo et al., 2025). In this regard, SMEs are critical to the promotion of the objectives of sustainable development amidst massive resource and capability limitations (Kaur et al., 2025).

Although they are very crucial, Asian entrepreneurs and SMEs have continuously encountered challenges in their adoption of traditional marketing strategies. The resource-constrained firms are blocked by high

monetary expenses, media overload, and inadequate availability of advanced marketing infrastructure that diminishes the viability of conventional advertising models. The studies on sustainable entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility suggest that the companies operating within such settings need to place their trust in innovative and

value-driven strategies that can incorporate social and ethical concerns in the main business operations instead of marginal communication efforts (Rosario and Figueiredo, 2024). Besides, literature on sustainable entrepreneurial intention highlights that market actors in emerging markets need context-related solutions, which can align the market engagement with the sustainability goals (Valencia-Arias et al., 2024).

It is against this background that guerrilla marketing has become more relevant as an entrepreneurial mode of communication that focuses on creativity, surprise and unorthodox utilization of available resources. Empirical studies conducted recently have shown that guerrilla marketing can create significant brand associations among various generational groups of consumers through the application of

novelty and emotional appeal instead of financial acuity (Faridniya et al., 2025). Also, the combination of the guerrilla method with digital and social media networks contribute even more to their success, allowing SMEs to reach a greater number and interact with the audience at a lower cost (Gündüzyeli, 2025). These attributes make guerrilla marketing a low resource and innovation-based approach that is highly applicable to the context of entrepreneurial firms.

Guerrilla marketing also has significant social and ethical aspects besides economic issues. The studies show that innovative and unusual marketing strategies may produce a positive impact on the marketing innovation perceptions and brand-trust when carried out in a way that is open and responsible (Akbiyık, 2025). The importance of ethical leadership in SMEs has been demonstrated to be significant in ensuring that social and environmental responsibility is incorporated in organisational practices, which strengthens the validity of the entrepreneurial communication strategies (Rimbock, 2024). This is an ethical aspect that is more relevant to Asian markets where consumer responses are mainly determined by cultural norms, trust, and relational interactions.

Asia is a highly important setting when it comes to the study of the interplay between entrepreneurship, sustainability, and innovative marketing. This is typified by institutional voids, market heterogeneity and varied socio-cultural forces that demand adaptive and locally specific entrepreneurial approaches. The existing body of evidence all over the world shows that sustainable entrepreneurship can produce both economic and social value, especially in those settings, where formal market-supporting institutions have not been developed (Ebabu et al., 2025). Simultaneously, the accelerating digitalisation and the growing importance of social media have changed the ways in which firms interact with consumers and provided both opportunities and challenges to the integration of online and offline marketing (Sudirjo et al., 2023).

To address these dynamics, the study places guerrilla marketing as a viable entrepreneurial approach that can support the demands of the Asian SMEs. Reconceptualising guerrilla marketing as not a tactical promotion but as an innovation-focused, socially inclusive, and ethically responsible entrepreneurial ability. Particularly, it promotes the knowledge about the opportunities that SMEs can utilize creativity and resource efficiency to attain sustainable growth in complex and limited market conditions.

## 2. Methodology

This paper uses a conceptual research design since the research aims at formulating a theory as opposed to testing an empirical hypothesis. Conceptual research is especially appropriate in areas where the

current literature is disjointed, narrowly operationalised or have been poorly integrated and where new demands are made to redefine old concepts in more holistic and broad theoretical terms. In the areas of entrepreneurship and sustainability, this type of approach allows the progressive combination of different bodies of knowledge to come up with new knowledge, demarcate conceptual frontiers, and build a framework jointly. The three dimensions make guerrilla marketing an entrepreneurial practice that is sustainable as opposed to a cheap promotional option.

Conceptual inquiry is particularly useful in cases where a phenomenon has been the subject of practice but under-theorised or inconsistently theorised in scholarly literature. Guerrilla marketing, in this respect, is a significant, but incompletely assimilated phenomenon that has been studied in the context of a tactic or promotional approach, more than as a strategic process to achieve sustainable entrepreneurial development. The current research thus uses a conceptual approach to rebranding guerrilla marketing into the overlapping areas of entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainability.

### 2.1 Conceptual Research Design

The main aim of this study is to redefine guerrilla marketing as sustainable entrepreneurship approach, which can be applied to small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) in resource limited Asian environment. The study does not focus on gathering primary empirical data, but instead on synthesizing, reinterpreting, and developing concepts, which agrees with the known methodological advice on conceptual research in management and marketing scholarship.

Conceptual studies are especially appropriate for addressing “how” and “why” questions, particularly when empirical findings exist but remain weakly connected to broader theoretical constructs such as sustainability, ethics, and inclusive growth. In this regard, the paper aims at explaining how guerrilla marketing concepts, including resource creativity, surprise, cost-effectiveness, and unorthodox resource usage, can be used as agents of sustainable entrepreneurship. The study can help lead the field of guerrilla marketing by moving the analytical emphasis on individual marketing strategies to the concept of strategic and value-oriented entrepreneurial performance.

### 2.2 Review of Practitioner and Academic Literature (2020–2025)

The research is based on two supplementary sources of knowledge. Originally, practitioner-focused literature, mostly the original and extended writings of Levinson and others, is studied to retrieve the original conceptualisation of guerrilla marketing as a strategic mindset based on creativity, resources

effectiveness, and the innovative utilisation of the available media. These publications are critical in understanding how guerrilla marketing came into being as a reaction to the issues affecting the small and resource-deprived companies.

Second, academic literature published within 2020-2025 is peer-reviewed so that the theoretical relevance and current grounding in context are ensured. Keywords that were used to search the major academic databases in a structured search included *guerrilla marketing, sustainable entrepreneurship, SME innovation, ethical marketing, and resource-constrained firms*. The review was aimed at determining the prevalent themes, conceptual developments, and outstanding tensions in the literature.

The review of the latest academic works demonstrated two gaps. To begin with, guerrilla marketing has hardly been explicitly combined with the sustainability-based entrepreneurship, even though it is evidently closer to cost efficiency, resource optimization, and ethical communication. Second, Asian and emerging-market situations are still underrepresented in the conceptual discussion, despite having good soils of entrepreneurial innovation in the face of constraints. The combination of practitioner experiences with the current scholarly studies allowed identifying the following conceptual misalignments that directly influenced the creation of the suggested framework.

### 2.3 Selection and Use of Illustrative Cases

To facilitate the improvement of conceptual clarity and practical relevance, the study uses illustrative cases that are based on Asian and emerging-market situations, as well as the selection of globally recognised campaigns that have direct and definite relevance to SMEs and entrepreneurial firms. Such instances are not accepted as empirical information in the positivist or statistical meaning; they are used as illustrative examples of the theory that shows how the traditional media may be changed based on the guerrilla principles.

Case selection was guided by three criteria: (1) relevance to resource-constrained or entrepreneurial contexts, (2) evidence of creative, low-cost, and unconventional media use, and (3) potential implications for sustainable, ethical, and inclusive growth. The illustrative cases enable the connection of abstract concepts and real world practice to support the applicability of the framework to Asian entrepreneurial settings by connecting theory and pragmatic use.

### 2.4 Analytical Lens

The combination of the theoretical lens comprises sustainable entrepreneurship, innovation under resource constraints, and ethical and inclusive growth, which guides the analysis. Sustainable entrepreneurship focuses on the economic viability,

social inclusion and ethical responsibility in the decision-making of an entrepreneur. Resource-constrained innovation is a growing body of innovation research that uses the concepts of frugal innovation and entrepreneurial bricolage to understand how companies can generate value with minimal resources. Responsible communication practices, non-intrusive marketing strategy, and accessibility to SMEs and underserved participants of the market are emphasised in ethical and inclusive growth. These lenses combined make it possible to conduct a systematic assessment of the correspondence between guerrilla marketing principles and sustainability goals and entrepreneurial realities in the Asian contexts.

### 3. Results

The findings of this theoretical research are published in the format of theoretical and framework-based deliverables relying on the systematic synthesis of practitioner knowledge, modern academic resources, and examples. Instead of stating statistical or empirical results, the results explain a conceptual framework, the main dimensions of sustainability that are at the centre of it, and build propositional connections, which apply to sustainable entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development, especially in the Asian and emerging-market settings.

#### 3.1 Development of a Sustainability-Oriented Guerrilla Entrepreneurship Framework

The main outcome of the research is that it has created a sustainability-oriented guerrilla entrepreneurship model that redefines guerrilla marketing as a sustainable entrepreneurship way of strategic mechanism. The framework does not treat guerrilla marketing as a set of discontinuous or unconventional promotional practices, but rather as an entrepreneurial attitude and tactical ability that allows companies, in particular, SMEs, to be innovative, competitive and viable in situations of resource limitation.

The framework shows that guerrilla principles of creativity, surprise, cost efficiency, and unusual application of the existing resources when they are applied to the conventional media channels produce results that can be brought into the essence of the main goals of sustainable entrepreneurship. These results are increased engagement, greater brand awareness, and presence in the market without high cost of finance and environmental impact. This reshaped conceptualization is a very important bridging concept between marketing innovation and sustainability-based entrepreneurship, especially in Asian markets where businesspeople are often constrained by limited financial resources, institutional complications, and infrastructural development.

### 3.2 Key Dimensions of Sustainability in Guerrilla Entrepreneurship

The reviewed literature and illustrative cases have been analyzed, which has demonstrated three dimensions of sustainability that are interrelated to a guerrilla entrepreneurial strategy: economic, social,

and ethical sustainability. Figure 1 shows the way a traditional print advertisement can be redesigned using guerrilla creativity and at the same time communicated economic efficacy, social relevance and ethical value (Design Taxi, 2010).



**Figure 1. Guerrilla use of conventional print media demonstrating economic, social, and ethical sustainability through creative scale and contextual integration (Floslek Sunscreen Campaign).**

The economic sustainability is brought out in terms of cost efficiency and resource optimisation. Guerrilla tactics allow the SMEs to gain a market visibility, consumer involvement, and brand differentiation without having to resort to capital intensive advertising schemes that are commonly used by big businesses. It can also be achieved through creative reuse of existing media channels, negotiating placements, and prioritizing the design of the message as opposed to spending, allowing entrepreneurial companies to maintain a marketing presence over time as well as remain financially viable. This aids in perpetual entrepreneurial activities and it minimises exposure to market shocks.

The guerrilla approaches are inclusive and accessible, which reflects social sustainability. Guerrilla marketing reduces the entry barrier of SMEs and smaller entrepreneurial ventures, allowing them to compete in competitive markets which would otherwise have been closed to them because of the high cost of communication. Moreover, the use of context-sensitive messaging and localised media improves cultural relevance and resonance to the how these aspects apply to SMEs.

community, especially in heterogeneous Asian communities. These practices enhance the relationship between the entrepreneurs and the consumers and create trust, legitimacy and social embeddedness.

One of the ways in which this is ethical sustainability is the focus on non-intrusive, value-based communication. Guerrilla tactics put more emphasis on authenticity, relevance, and engagement rather than forceful repetition or persuasive power. This strategy makes consumers less resistant and advertisers less fatigued and encourages responsible and respectful communication with the audiences. Consequently, guerrilla marketing brings the practices of entrepreneurial communications into line with the concepts of ethical business practices, transparency, and long-term relationship development. Collectively, the three dimensions make guerrilla marketing a sustainability-oriented entrepreneurial activity as opposed to a cheap promotional alternative. Table 1 outlines the economic, social and ethical sustainability aspects that are inculcated in guerrilla entrepreneurial strategies and

**Table 1. Sustainability dimensions embedded in guerrilla entrepreneurship and their relevance for SME growth**

Sustainability Dimension	Core Principle	Guerrilla	Entrepreneurial Value Created	SME Relevance
Economic Sustainability	Cost efficiency, resource reuse		Financial viability, resilience	Enables low-budget market participation
Social Sustainability	Contextual relevance, inclusivity		Trust, community engagement	Lowers entry barriers for SMEs
Ethical Sustainability	Non-intrusive communication		Brand legitimacy, credibility	Builds long-term relationships

### 3.3 Mapping Conventional Media to Sustainable Entrepreneurial Outcomes



Another outcome of the research is the conceptual mapping of the traditional media channels such as television, radio, print, outdoor advertising and direct mail to sustainable entrepreneurial results when infused by the guerrilla principles. Figure 2 shows that traditional print media can be redesigned as interactive guerrilla design to facilitate the message clarity, interest, and recall (Campaign Asia, 2011).



**Figure 2. Guerrilla transformation of conventional print media through interactive design and message continuity: DHL "Turning Page" advertisement**

The analysis shows that traditional media are not necessarily unsustainable, exclusionary, or inappropriate to the needs of SMEs, their sustainability potential rests in the strategic

deployment of the media. Table 2 traces the traditional media to guerrilla design components and the entrepreneurial results that they produce.

**Table 2. Transformation of conventional media into guerrilla tools and associated entrepreneurial outcomes**

Conventional Media Type	Guerrilla Design Element	Key Outcome	Illustrative Figure
Print (Magazine)	Interactive continuity	Engagement, memorability	Figure 2 (DHL)
Print (Product Ad)	Tactile minimalism	Product recall	Figure 3 (Apple)
Direct Mail	Personalised disruption	Word-of-mouth, engagement	Figure 4 (KitKat)

When used in creative and entrepreneurial ways, traditional media can create a greater level of consumer attention, engagement, memorability and diffusion of the word without a corresponding rise in financial expenditure. Figure 3 shows how

traditional print advertising can be made to become guerilla-designed to bring about tactile experience and high levels of product recall without having to use a lot of copy or media repetition (Advertising Age, 2006).



**Figure 3. Guerrilla use of conventional print media to communicate product attributes through tactile interaction and perceptual minimalism: Apple MacBook Pro "Ultra-Thin" advertisement**

In the case of SMEs, this change will allow taking advantage of credibility and coverage that are related to mass media and be cost-disciplined and responsible. Figure 4 shows how guerrilla creativity

can be applied to revamp direct mail and turn the usual delivery notices into meaningful and value-based brand experiences (The Drum, 2012).



**Figure 4. Guerrilla transformation of direct mail into an interactive and memorable consumer touchpoint: Nestlé KitKat Chunky “We’re Sorry We Couldn’t Deliver” campaign**

The model thus questions the dichotomous approach of conceptualising traditional and non-traditional media and suggests instead a spectrum of entrepreneurial creativity and sustainability, with

traditional media being reused to achieve sustainable entrepreneurial goals. Table 3 demonstrates the way the results of guerrilla marketing can be converted into sustainable entrepreneurial benefits.

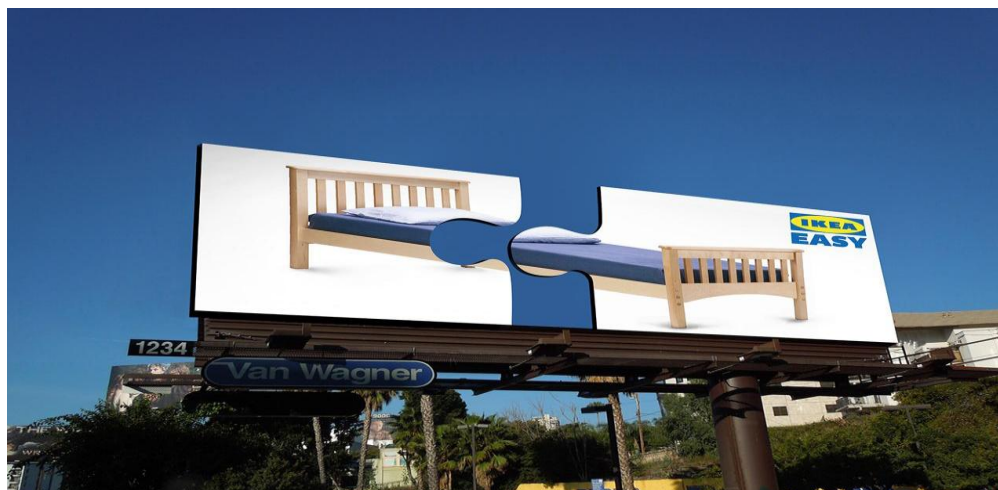
**Table 3. Entrepreneurial outcomes of guerrilla marketing strategies across sustainability dimensions**

Guerrilla Strategy Outcome	Entrepreneurial Impact	Sustainability Dimension
Consumer engagement	Market traction	Social
Brand differentiation	Competitive advantage	Economic
Memorability	Repeat patronage	Economic & Social
Word-of-mouth	Organic growth	Ethical & Social
Trust and legitimacy	Long-term survival	Ethical

### 3.4 Propositional Linkages: Guerrilla Strategies and SME Outcomes

In accordance with the synthesis of concepts, the paper develops a series of theoretical propositions that can be used to relate guerrilla entrepreneurial practices with sustainable SME performance. First, guerrilla principles applied to traditional media are suggested to improve the resiliency of SMEs because it allows them to enter and remain active in the market even when financial and resource resources are limited. This strength is most applicable in unstable and competitive Asian markets.

Second, the guerrilla approach is suggested to enhance the potential of entrepreneurial growth through the establishment of consumer interaction, brand differentiation, and trust-based relationships. By being creative and ethical in communication, SMEs can develop a good brand identity that will facilitate repeat business and sustainable competitiveness. Figure 5 has demonstrated that the use of guerrilla creativity in outdoor advertising can help to boost brand differentiation and consumer interaction, which supports the outcomes of entrepreneurial growth.



**Figure 5. Guerrilla billboard execution demonstrating brand differentiation and consumer engagement through modular, puzzle-based visual design: IKEA “Puzzle” outdoor campaign**

Third, it is suggested that the consistency between guerrilla marketing and ethical and inclusive practice is a factor that leads to brand legitimacy in the long run, particularly in the culturally diverse and institutionally nuanced Asian setting. Taken together, these propositions imply that guerrilla marketing serves as a competitive entrepreneurial strength that can sustain performance and value generation, and not just immediate promotion.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings of the current research contribute to the entrepreneurship theory in that guerrilla marketing is viewed as a strategic entrepreneurial strength and not a collection of isolated promotional strategies. Innovation and differentiation have become the focus of entrepreneurial marketing research in the growing awareness that these two strategies are the major means by which new and resource-limited firms gain competitive advantage, especially in new markets (Bucci et al., 2023). This view is supported by the sustainability-focused guerrilla entrepreneurship model that was constructed during the research since it shows that creativity, surprise, and unconventional use of resources can lead to long-term entrepreneurial performance instead of temporary attention.

Considering the sustainability view, the results can be compared to previous evidence that environmental and social responsibility-based marketing strategies positively affect the market and environmental performances. The empirical studies in the consumer goods industry prove that the green marketing initiatives should positively impact the firm-level performance in the case when the sustainability is considered as the core strategy and is not viewed as the symbolic communication (Ali et al., 2024). On the same note, incorporation of digital technologies into green marketing and governance systems has also been demonstrated to enhance long-term competitiveness and accountability

(Akshita et al., 2024). These findings can be used to justify the thesis of the current study that guerrilla marketing is a tool of economic, social and ethical sustainability because it helps to reduce the wastage of resources and maximize the interaction.

The behavioural and performance implications of guerrilla strategies are also brought out in the discussion. Empirical evidence demonstrates that guerrilla marketing is associated with the positive effects on brand awareness and purchase intentions to a considerable extent which supports the idea that guerrilla marketing is an effective communication strategy that is aimed at growth (Badreldin et al., 2024). Simultaneously, the studies of innovation diffusion have shown that strategic disruption (perceived scarcity or unusual presentation) may speed up the consumer adoption and interaction (Pathak and Balakrishnan, 2025). The guerrilla executions are a clear manifestation of these mechanisms as they use surprise and creativity to focus attention and the word-of-mouth.

The sustainability of guerrilla marketing practices is still pegged on ethical considerations. Previous criticism of guerrilla and ambush marketing expressed the issues of deception and fairness to the consumers (Dašić et al., 2018). Nevertheless, recent findings indicate that the marketing communication that is ethically framed, especially when it is consistent with the corporate social responsibility values, can have a positive impact on the consumption decisions and the long-term trust (Fatemi and Dube, 2021). The current results indicate that guerrilla marketing when used in a responsible and transparent manner can enhance brand legitimacy as opposed to compromising it.

Guerrilla marketing is especially relevant in the context of Asian and emerging markets where institutional constraints and cultural heterogeneity influence the behavioural of entrepreneurs. The studies of the social entrepreneurship orientation prove that social performance mediates the

correlation between entrepreneurial intention and business success in emerging markets (Zafar et al., 2022). Moreover, the research on the young customers in the developing markets also emphasizes the importance of technological and relational drivers of sustainable consumption behavioural (Khan et al., 2023). The results support the significance of context-sensitive marketing strategies rooted in culture an aspect where guerrilla marketing has clear benefits.

In terms of methodological and theoretical perspective, this research addresses the calls of more rigorous conceptual integration of scholarship in marketing. It has been found that conceptual research is imperative to address the disjointed literatures and the theory building (Jaakkola, 2020). The latest conversations related to the marketing research programs also highlight the necessity to relate the use of theory, creativity, and strategic results in a consistent and logical way (Madhavaram, 2024). The current research is a synthesis of sustainability, entrepreneurship, and guerrilla marketing, which makes it a part of this agenda and correlated with the general trends in marketing theory.

The growing influence of analytics and digital ecosystem also creates a future-oriented background of the guerrilla strategies. The strategic marketing analytics have been found to be of importance to resilience and performance in the presence of uncertainty (Mishra and Kautish, 2025), whereas research on digital and social media marketing emphasizes the changing nature of engagement and communication channels (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Even though guerrilla marketing is commonly linked to the offline creativity, the logic behind it can be used in hybrid and data-driven decision-making. Furthermore, the new fields of explainable artificial intelligence use can introduce new possibilities of balancing creativity and transparency and accountability in organisational systems (Nuseir et al., 2024).

Lastly, extensive literature reviews on guerrilla marketing research note the necessity to better define taxonomies and identify variables to power the field (Zarco & Herzallah, 2023). This need is directly addressed in the present study because it provides a sustainability-oriented framework that combines the outcomes of entrepreneurship, ethical aspects, and contextuality. By so doing, it makes a step forward in terms of core themes by showing how innovative, socially responsible, and context-sensitive marketing tactics can help sustain entrepreneurship, especially in Asian and emerging-market settings.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper contributes to the knowledge about sustainable entrepreneurship by rebranding guerrilla marketing as a strategic entrepreneurial

resource, and not a set of cheap promotion methods. The study provides a conceptual synthesis of the literature and the examples of guerrilla marketing to show that this marketing philosophy has the following aspects of sustainability, which are especially common to SMEs in Asian and emerging-market environments: economic efficiency, social inclusiveness, and ethical responsibility. The sustainability-focused guerrilla entrepreneurship model that was coined in this paper demonstrates how the traditional media can be reused creatively to attain involvement, brand distinction, and resiliency without necessarily incurring significant financial and environmental expenses. The analysis shows that guerrilla marketing promotes the sustainability of SMEs through reducing barriers to entry, creating trust-based relationships, and empowering the SME to remain in the market despite limited resources. The study incorporates innovation, ethics, and contextual sensitivity and therefore, it contributes to the entrepreneurship theory and is very much in line with the goals of sustainable development. To practitioners, the framework can provide practical information regarding how creativity and strategic thinking can replace budget intensity whereas to policymakers it highlights the need to encourage innovation-based, inclusive entrepreneurial behaviour. Being a conceptual study, this research is limited about lack of empirical testing. Future studies can confirm the suggested framework in other Asian economies empirically, study the application of the proposed framework to specific sectors, and investigate how guerrilla strategies can be combined with digital analytics and new technologies. Generally, the research confirms the guerrilla marketing as a sustainable channel of attaining sustainable entrepreneurial development within complex and restrictive market conditions.

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