

Original Research Article

The Effectiveness of Guerrilla Marketing Strategies in Enhancing the Competitive Position of Local Travel Agencies: An Analytical Study of the Tourism Sector in the City of Samarra

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Abstract: This study aims to identify the impact of guerrilla marketing dimensions on enhancing the competitive position of local travel and tourism companies in the city of Samarra. To achieve this objective, seven main dimensions of guerrilla marketing were identified: ambient marketing, ambush marketing, stealth marketing, sensory marketing, viral/buzz marketing, graffiti advertising, and word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing, which represent the independent variables. The competitive position represents the dependent variable of the study. The researchers adopted the descriptive-analytical approach and designed a special questionnaire to measure the research variables after presenting it to a group of professors and experts to ensure its validity and reliability. The value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient reached (0.879), indicating a high level of internal consistency. A total of (50) questionnaires were distributed to employees of travel and tourism agencies operating in the city of Samarra, all of which were retrieved and found valid for statistical analysis. Using (SPSS Ver. 26), both descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted, including correlation and simple and multiple linear regression analyses. The results revealed a significant and positive correlation and impact between the dimensions of guerrilla marketing and the competitive position, indicating that adopting these strategies contributes to enhancing the agencies' ability to compete in the local tourism market. The study concluded with several recommendations, most notably the need to encourage travel and tourism agencies to use creative, low-cost marketing methods, adopt guerrilla marketing strategies that suit the characteristics of the local market, and promote a culture of marketing innovation among management and employees due to its direct impact on improving the agency's competitive position.

Keywords: Guerrilla Marketing, Competitive Position, Travel and Tourism Companies.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world is witnessing a rapid evolution in marketing methods and strategies as a result of successive technological changes and the intensifying competition among companies across various sectors particularly in the tourism and travel sector, which is among the most sensitive industries to innovation in customer communication. In light of this reality, traditional marketing methods are no longer capable of attracting customer attention or influencing their purchasing decisions as they once did. This has driven institutions to seek new and more effective approaches to deliver their marketing messages at minimal cost.

Among the most prominent of these modern approaches is the concept of Guerrilla Marketing, a creative and unconventional method that seeks to achieve maximum impact through low-cost tools that rely on elements of surprise, creativity, and innovation in the marketing message. These strategies have proven effective in enhancing customer awareness of brands, creating positive engagement and marketing buzz around products or services, thereby contributing

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to building a strong competitive position in the market. Within this context, the present study aims to shed light on the impact of the dimensions of guerrilla marketing in enhancing the competitive position of local travel and tourism companies in the city of Samarra. Through an empirical investigation, the study seeks to determine which dimensions have the most significant effect on improving marketing performance and strengthening competitive capability. It also endeavors to provide an analytical and practical vision that enables travel agencies to use guerrilla marketing tools more effectively, helping them face increasing competition and attract both local and international customers through innovative methods that align with the characteristics of the Iraqi tourism market.

SECTION ONE: STUDY METHODOLOGY

First: Research Problem

The tourism and travel sector in Iraq in general, and in the city of Samarra in particular, is witnessing increasing competition amid digital developments and shifts in customer behavior. This has compelled local travel companies to search for innovative and unconventional marketing approaches capable of attracting customers and strengthening their position in the market. Despite the growing importance of guerrilla (or “Gorilla”) marketing strategies as an effective and innovative means aimed at achieving maximum impact with minimal cost, the adoption of these strategies remains limited among many local tourism companies, which still rely primarily on traditional marketing methods. Accordingly, the research problem is represented by the following main question:

To what extent are guerrilla marketing strategies effective in enhancing the competitive position of local travel companies in the city of Samarra?

From this main question, several sub-questions emerge, including:

- a. To what extent do local travel companies adopt guerrilla marketing strategies?
- b. What is the nature of the relationship between the dimensions of guerrilla marketing and the competitive position of those agencies?

Second: Research Significance

The significance of this study arises from both theoretical and practical considerations, as follows:

- **Theoretical Aspect:** This study contributes to enriching the Arabic literature in the field of guerrilla marketing and linking it to the concept of competitive position, particularly in the tourism services sector a field that has not yet received sufficient attention in the local research environment.
- **Practical Aspect:** The study highlights the role of guerrilla marketing strategies as a practical approach to increasing the attractiveness of travel companies and enhancing their competitive capability in the local tourism market. It may also assist decision-makers in these companies in adopting creative, effective, and low-cost marketing methods.

Third: Research Objectives

The study aims to diagnose and analyze the relationship and impact between the dimensions of guerrilla marketing and the competitive position of travel companies in the city of Samarra. From this main objective, several sub-objectives are derived:

- a. To analyze the theoretical concepts related to guerrilla marketing and competitive position and to review the most prominent dimensions of each.
- b. To test the relationship between the dimensions of guerrilla marketing (ambient marketing, ambush marketing, stealth marketing, sensory marketing, viral/buzz marketing, graffiti advertising, and word-of-mouth marketing) and the competitive position of companies.
- c. To measure the extent to which adopting guerrilla marketing strategies influences the enhancement of the competitive position of local travel companies.
- d. To provide practical recommendations for travel companies on how to employ guerrilla marketing to improve their competitive position in the tourism market.

Fourth: The Hypothetical Framework of the Study

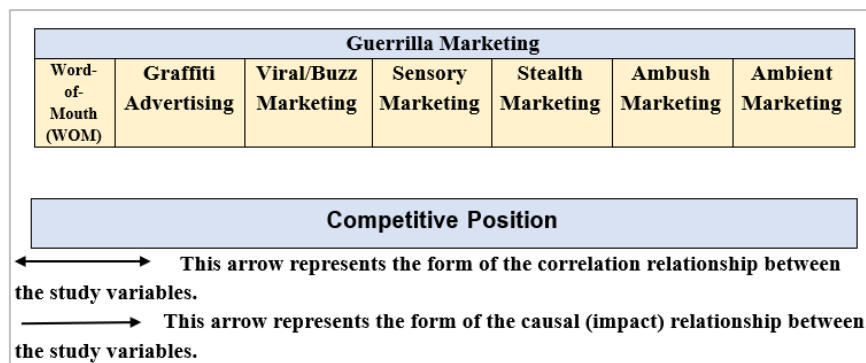


Figure 1: The Hypothetical Framework of the Study

Source: Prepared by the researchers.

The hypothetical framework illustrates the conceptual relationship between the two main variables of the study:

- **Independent Variable:** Dimensions of Guerrilla Marketing (ambient, ambush, stealth, viral, sensory, graffiti, and word-of-mouth).
- **Dependent Variable:** Competitive Position.

Fifth: Research Hypotheses

The study is based on two main hypotheses and several sub-hypotheses, as follows:

Main Hypothesis 1:

There is a statistically significant correlation between the dimensions of guerrilla marketing and the competitive position of local travel companies in the city of Samarra.

The following sub-hypotheses emerge from this main hypothesis:

1. There is a significant correlation between ambient marketing and the competitive position.
2. There is a significant correlation between ambush marketing and the competitive position.
3. There is a significant correlation between stealth marketing and the competitive position.
4. There is a significant correlation between viral marketing and the competitive position.
5. There is a significant correlation between sensory marketing and the competitive position.
6. There is a significant correlation between graffiti advertising and the competitive position.
7. There is a significant correlation between word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing and the competitive position.

Main Hypothesis 2:

Guerrilla marketing strategies have a statistically significant impact on the competitive position of local travel companies.

The following sub-hypotheses emerge from this main hypothesis:

1. Ambient marketing has a significant impact on the competitive position.
2. Ambush marketing has a significant impact on the competitive position.
3. Stealth marketing has a significant impact on the competitive position.
4. Viral marketing has a significant impact on the competitive position.
5. Sensory marketing has a significant impact on the competitive position.
6. Graffiti advertising has a significant impact on the competitive position.
7. Word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing has a significant impact on the competitive position.

Sixth: Data Collection Method

The researchers relied on two integrated approaches to achieve the objectives of the study and collect the necessary data, namely:

1. **Descriptive Approach:** This approach was used to describe and analyze the theoretical framework through reviewing books, scientific research, journals, university theses, and articles published in electronic databases related to the topics of guerrilla marketing and competitive position.
2. **Analytical Field Approach:** The researchers used a questionnaire as the main tool for collecting primary data from the study sample (local travel companies). The questionnaire was designed according to the five-point Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions regarding the study variables and dimensions.

• **Validity and Reliability Tests:** The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which reached a value of (0.879), exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold of (0.60). This indicates a high level of reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire items.

Seventh: Statistical Analysis Methods

The statistical program (SPSS Ver. 26) was used to analyze the data and test the research hypotheses through the following methods:

1. **Descriptive Analysis:**
 - **Mean and Standard Deviation:** Used to describe and analyze the responses of the sample.
 - **Percentages and Frequencies:** Used to present the demographic characteristics of the sample.
2. **Relationship and Impact Tests:**
 - **Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient:** To measure the strength of the relationship between variables.
 - **Simple and Multiple Linear Regression:** To measure the effect of the dimensions of guerrilla marketing on the competitive position.
 - **F-test and T-test:** To verify the significance of the impact models.
 - **Coefficient of Determination (R²):** To explain the proportion of variance in the competitive position accounted for by guerrilla marketing.
 - **Cronbach's Alpha Test:** To estimate the reliability of the research instrument.

Eighth: Research Boundaries

1. **Human Boundaries:** The study sample consisted of managers and employees of local travel and tourism companies in the city of Samarra.
2. **Spatial Boundaries:** The study was limited to travel companies operating within the geographical scope of the city of Samarra only.

Section Two: Theoretical Framework of the Career Path

First: The Concept of Guerrilla Marketing

Customer attitudes have changed due to the repetitive advertisements broadcasted through popular channels such as billboards, newspapers, and posters. Market leaders are now seeking new and more engaging ways to reach customers, as traditional practices have become outdated. Customers' minds are not always clear, and companies are constantly searching for ways to attract them to purchase their products. Some traditional marketing methods can even cause customer dissatisfaction. Therefore, market leaders use guerrilla marketing to segment audiences and deliver their messages. Guerrilla marketing involves campaigns through which consumers build meaningful social connections using numerous low-budget advertisements. The brand image explicitly incorporates various features and attributes of the company's products and services (Sohail *et al.*, 2022: 33). The term "Guerrilla Marketing" initially depicted a social phenomenon that employs an uncompromising managerial approach to enforce convictions and reasoning. The primary advantage of this type of marketing lies in its unpredictable tactics - marketers know precisely where and when to strike. The term began to emerge as a proactive concept when advanced American specialists recognized that markets were becoming increasingly intertwined and sought a new method to manage advertising. Since consumers are surrounded by various promotional stimuli and are aware of numerous advertising messages, they tend to resist them. Therefore, marketers continuously seek innovative approaches to bypass consumer resistance to traditional promotional messages. Presenting similar messages repeatedly only makes customers more aware of them and soon leads them to ignore them (Ouf, 2023: 64).

In 1984, Jay Conrad Levinson introduced a completely new and innovative concept to the marketing world called Guerrilla Marketing in his book titled "*Guerrilla Marketing*." Guerrilla marketing is an unconventional way of promoting a product or service; an appropriate example is the promotion of the movie *Kabali* by producer Kalaipuli S. Thanu through an advertisement printed on an Air India aircraft. Although the concept was proposed over thirty years ago, it has only become a powerful weapon in the marketing arsenal in recent years (Shelly *et al.*, 2022: 2944).

This concept emerged as a result of the shift from traditional marketing techniques to non-traditional marketing methods. Presenting this concept represents a modern approach to showcasing products through the use of unusual means to introduce an item to the market. The idea itself originated from guerrilla warfare tactics, where an armed group resorts to unconventional techniques in combat, even to the extent of violating conventional rules of engagement (Dimobi & Anyasor, 2022: 4).

Furthermore, guerrilla marketing resulted from the transformation of traditional print, radio, and television marketing into digital and electronic media, with the aim of creating *buzz* around a product or brand. This strategy increases the likelihood that a customer will purchase the product or service or discuss it with other potential buyers. Guerrilla

marketing can be highly cost-effective for small businesses, especially if they succeed in creating a viral marketing phenomenon (Xavier & Jayan, 2021: 140).

The Internet has elevated guerrilla marketing to new and unexpected horizons and facilitated two-way communication. When social networks emerged in the late 1990s as a byproduct of the Internet revolution—particularly with the launch of *SixDegrees.com* as the first social network—newly established platforms such as *Facebook* and *YouTube* were viewed as promising spaces for guerrilla marketing research, utilizing artistic creativity and talent as marketing tools. Meanwhile, the early 2000s witnessed a significant transformation regarding *who was using guerrilla marketing*; such strategies were no longer merely the resort of small companies with limited resources. Large corporations with substantial budgets and market shares began to rely on its unprecedented effectiveness (Zarco & Herzallah, 2023: 2).

Several definitions of guerrilla marketing have emerged, among which the definition by Manyal & Mittal (2020: 3) is one of the most notable. They defined it as “*an unconventional, low-cost method of attracting customers through gifts and surprises, and one of the company’s sales promotion techniques.*”

The following table presents some of the definitions that reflect the views of researchers and academics regarding the concept of guerrilla marketing:

Table 1: Definition of Guerrilla Marketing

No.	Researchers’ Names	Definition
1	(Roxas <i>et al.</i> , 2020: 51)	It is an attempt to attract a larger number of audiences through surprising and influential methods and the impact of low-cost dissemination. The research clarifies how these various techniques produce results (ambient marketing, viral marketing, buzz, ambush marketing).
2	(Selan <i>et al.</i> , 2021: 386)	It is a means of gaining maximum exposure with the lowest possible cost that the company can bear. The goal is to surprise the consumer and create feelings of excitement, admiration, and motivation.
3	(Xavier & Jayan, 2021: 140)	It is a promotional technique based on the use of surprise to attract customers through unconventional communication methods to promote the product.
4	(Azhar, 2022: 3220)	Guerrilla marketing is a marketing strategy used across a wide range of the marketing mix. It complements many promotional activities, as it requires innovative and effective techniques that emphasize creativity and low cost. The core of guerrilla marketing lies in achieving victory through innovation and imagination, not by increasing marketing expenditures.
5	(Dubauskas & Isoraite, 2022: 629)	Guerrilla marketing activities are creative practices aimed at achieving maximum impact with minimal investment.

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the above-mentioned sources

Second: Dimensions of Guerrilla Marketing

(Xavier & Jayan, 2021: 142)

The following dimensions represent the most commonly used and widely recognized types and forms of guerrilla marketing as identified by researchers and academics:

1. **Ambient Marketing:** This form of guerrilla marketing integrates advertising into the natural environment, attracting attention in unexpected places. It involves placing advertisements on unusual objects or in locations where people would not normally expect to see them. As an out-of-home advertising strategy, it is considered the guerrilla version of traditional outdoor advertising. The idea is based on the notion that “the world is a stage for advertising,” where creativity, novelty, and relevant themes are the main pillars. The physical environment thus becomes the primary medium through which messages are transmitted to individuals. Advantages of this type include visibility, repetition, imagination, the element of surprise, and high recall effectiveness. However, it also has drawbacks such as difficulty in estimating the target audience, message limitations, and narrow coverage. Examples of ambient marketing include writings or projections on park benches and walls, and advertisements placed in sports events or transportation hubs, among others (Eke *et al.*, 2022: 11).
2. **Ambush Marketing:** This is a planned marketing effort by an organization to indirectly associate itself with an event in order to gain recognition and benefits linked to being an official sponsor. Ambushers typically act as though they are official sponsors of an event to reap the same benefits that official sponsors receive. Ambush marketing has long been viewed as a low-cost, tactical, and parasitic marketing type aimed at undermining and reducing the value and message of official sponsorships (Atuo, 2022: 127).
3. **Stealth Marketing:** Stealth marketing has gained significant attention as an unconventional marketing strategy in the literature over the past few decades. Stealth campaigns help marketers bypass the clutter of traditional advertising. It is also referred to as covert, masked, or undercover marketing, although there is still no consensus

on a definitive term or definition. An example of stealth marketing is hidden product placement in popular television shows or movies, where a brand name appears in the background or actors explicitly use a branded product to raise brand awareness subconsciously. Studies have shown that customers become skeptical when they recognize promotional content that subtly conveys sales messages. Research also indicates that the use of stealth marketing significantly reduces brand trust and commitment. Moreover, once customers realize they have been targeted by a hidden marketing message, their likelihood of purchasing decreases, their trust declines, and their long-term relationship with the brand or company weakens (Soomro, 2021: 920).

4. **Viral/Buzz Marketing:** Viral or buzz marketing refers to marketing strategies designed to capture the attention of consumers and influencers to amplify the marketing message through word-of-mouth and social media sharing, to the extent that discussions about a product, brand, or service become newsworthy, entertaining, and engaging (Xavier & Jayan, 2021: 142).
5. **Sensory Marketing:** Essentially, sensory marketing is quite similar to ambient marketing. The main difference lies in the uniqueness and non-replicability of sensory campaigns. The goal is to surprise and fascinate the audience, creating an “Aha” or “Wow” effect. The terms *guerrilla sensation* and *ambient stunt* refer to extraordinary, attention-grabbing acts. A guerrilla sensation implies a dynamic action in which people actively participate.
An example of this is live streaming on social media platforms such as *Instagram* or *Facebook*. During these broadcasts, followers are notified without prior notice that the company or public page is going live at that moment. In such formats, for example, a brand representative might be available to answer users’ questions in real time. Only users who tune in during this limited period have the opportunity to engage with the event. The *ambient stunt* involves a fixed but spectacular installation presented in an unconventional way. Such media-effective activities are carried out in strategically interesting and high-traffic locations to attract significant public attention (Nufer, 2021: 42).
6. **Graffiti Advertising:** Graffiti advertising has gradually become a popular trend among brands as it merges the world of street art with advertising. It has paved the way for brands to visualize eye-catching artwork while simultaneously communicating their brand messages and offerings (Rafael U. *et al.*, 2023: 525).
7. **Word-of-Mouth (WOM):** Word-of-mouth (WOM) is considered one of the most powerful promotional tools. It refers to non-commercial interpersonal communication between speakers and audiences who exchange information about a brand, product, company, or service. WOM provides customers with a reason to share a product or service and facilitates conversations about it. It represents both a science and an art of building excellent, mutually beneficial connections between customers themselves and between customers and producers. Customers with strong opinions about a service tend to speak louder about their experiences than average customers, while dissatisfied customers often express themselves more vocally than satisfied ones (Hasibuan *et al.*, 2022: 20).

Third: The Concept of Competitive Position

Companies within target markets differ in terms of objectives and resources; some possess extensive financial and organizational capabilities, while others suffer from limited funding and capacities. They also vary in their competitive position — some are leading and stable firms, while others are emerging or specialized. Typically, traditional companies seeking to maintain their market share control about 20% of the market, whereas specialized companies capture around 10% by targeting narrow customer segments. It is important to emphasize that these classifications are related to specific industrial sub-sectors, not to companies as a whole; for example, large corporations such as General Electric, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, or Procter & Gamble (P&G) may be leaders in certain areas while remaining competitors or niche players in others (Kotler *et al.*, 2017: 588; Kotler *et al.*, 2018: 554). The competitive position is a concept that can be used to illustrate various areas of activity for both an individual organization and a group of organizations. This concept can be applied not only to the company as a whole but also to its individual products (Chmielewski, 2024: 66). Understanding a company’s competitive position enables it to develop tactical plans to maintain, improve, or even withdraw from its current market position (Esteve-Pérez & Gutiérrez-Romero, 2022: 2).

In addition to a company’s market position, its market success constitutes an essential dimension of its competitive advantage. However, the factors determining a company’s market success cannot be considered identical to its overall success factors. Thus, a company’s “overall” success should not be equated with its market success. The firm’s market success including its market offering (i.e., products and services) is influenced by customer preferences and expectations, which are directly linked to individual purchasing decisions regarding products and services (Matwiejczuk, 2019: 14). The competitive position of an organization is defined as the organization’s standing relative to its competitors within the same market or industry. Understanding this aspect allows organizations to develop tactical plans to maintain, enhance, or exit their current positions in the market (Esteve-Pérez & Gutiérrez-Romero, 2022: 2). The competitive position of any entity is also defined by its ability to maintain and increase market share, achieve high profitability, and enhance the company’s value relative to competitors in the marketplace (Chmielewski, 2024: 66).

The competitive position of a company can be understood from several perspectives (Matwiejczuk, 2019: 13):

- As an indicator of the company's competitive potential, which is perceived in advance and represents an important part of the company's strengths, considered as key success factors.
- As a measure of the competitive advantage achieved by the company, that is, as a result of the competition that occurs due to the implementation of a specific competitive strategy.
- As a source, indicator, and measure of the company's competitiveness, representing the outcome of the interrelationships between the company's competitive potential, competition processes, and their results.
- The concept of a company's competitive position should primarily be understood as the final outcome (result) of the competitive advantage possessed by the company.

However, merely possessing resources is not a sufficient condition for obtaining the desired competitive advantage or achieving the intended market position. It is also essential for the company to develop the appropriate capabilities, particularly its dynamic capabilities (Matwiejczuk, 2019: 14).

Section Three: The Practical Aspect of the Study

First: Description of the Study Population and Respondents

1. **Description of the Study Population:** Local travel and tourism companies in the city of Samarra are among the most prominent service institutions contributing to the support and revitalization of Iraq's tourism sector. They serve as the essential link between the tourist and the destination, playing a vital role in organizing domestic and international trips and providing integrated tourism services such as flight bookings, hotel reservations, transportation, and insurance, in addition to offering tourism consultations to both local and foreign visitors.

In recent years, travel companies in Samarra have witnessed substantial developments in their operations due to technological transformations and the changing behavior of tourists. The reliance on digital marketing and guerrilla marketing strategies has become an effective means of enhancing their competitiveness in an increasingly competitive market. The selection of travel and tourism companies in the city of Samarra as the field for empirical application is based on several key considerations, including:

- Their representation of a vital service sector that is witnessing growing competition in light of the openness of the tourism market.
 - The presence of significant opportunities to apply creative and low-cost marketing methods, such as guerrilla marketing.
 - The availability of a suitable operational environment for studying the relationship between non-traditional marketing strategies and the enhancement of the competitive position of small and medium-sized organizations.
2. **Description of the Study Sample:** The study sample consists of employees working in local travel and tourism companies in the city of Samarra. This includes managers, marketing officers, sales staff, public relations personnel, and customer service employees. The sample was selected through a purposive sampling method to include the most active companies in the local market that apply or practice some form of creative or digital marketing. The total sample size amounted to 50 employees, representing various administrative and professional levels within these agencies. Neutrality and confidentiality were emphasized during the data collection process to ensure the credibility of responses and the objectivity of subsequent statistical analysis.

Second: Description and Diagnosis of the Study Variables:

To describe and analyze the orientations of the study population toward the variables and dimensions of the study, means and standard deviations were calculated for each variable. These statistical procedures were carried out using the SPSS Ver. 26 software.

Table 2: Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations for the Guerrilla Marketing Variable

Dimension	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ambient Marketing			
X1	Our company uses unexpected locations to advertise its tourism services.	3.24	0.80
X2	Advertisements are creatively designed to convey the message in an unconventional way.	3.29	0.87
X3	Advertising campaigns attract tourists' attention during tourism events.	3.31	0.82
X4	Our marketing campaigns enhance brand awareness of the company.	3.35	0.78
X5	Innovative outdoor advertising is an effective means of attracting tourists.	3.22	0.77
	General Mean for Ambient Marketing	3.28	0.81

Ambush Marketing			
X6	The company exploits tourism events or festivals without being an official sponsor.	3.11	0.76
X7	The company associates its brand with major events indirectly.	3.22	0.82
X8	The company uses sponsorship opportunities to compete indirectly.	3.25	0.79
X9	The company gains publicity through indirect participation in tourism events.	3.21	0.77
X10	Ambush marketing contributes to increasing brand awareness among tourists.	3.15	0.80
General Mean for Ambush Marketing		3.19	0.79
Stealth Marketing			
X11	The company promotes its services indirectly through subtle storytelling.	3.10	0.77
X12	Famous personalities are used to display services discreetly.	3.31	0.75
X13	The company promotes content through non-traditional advertising.	3.20	0.78
X14	Advertising messages are embedded within films or entertainment content.	3.35	0.76
X15	The marketing approach helps build awareness of company services.	3.24	0.81
General Mean for Stealth Marketing		3.24	0.81
Sensory Marketing			
X16	The company relies on creativity and sensory appeal in advertising.	3.35	0.76
X17	The company enhances its image through visually attractive campaigns.	3.38	0.75
X18	Marketing campaigns use sounds, lights, and colors to stimulate emotions.	3.31	0.79
X19	Marketing events create memorable sensory experiences for tourists.	3.21	0.81
General Mean for Sensory Marketing		3.31	0.78
Viral / Buzz Marketing			
X21	The company relies on social media to spread marketing content quickly.	3.16	0.77
X22	Campaigns encourage users to share and engage with content.	3.37	0.85
X23	Marketing messages are designed to spark curiosity and sharing among users.	3.35	0.81
X24	Some campaigns include viral plans to expand reach (viral spread).	3.18	0.89
X25	Viral marketing helps enhance the company's digital identity.	3.26	0.80
General Mean for Viral / Buzz Marketing		3.26	0.80
Graffiti Advertising			
X26	The company uses street art elements in designing advertisements.	3.12	0.77
X27	Graffiti-based ads help deliver creative marketing messages.	3.21	0.78
X28	The company utilizes public walls for artistic promotional visuals.	3.05	0.79
X29	Graffiti advertising contributes to promoting tourism identity.	3.15	0.73
X30	The graffiti style strengthens the brand's uniqueness through artistic creativity.	3.17	0.76
General Mean for Graffiti Advertising		3.16	0.76
Word of Mouth (WOM)			
X31	The company encourages customers to share their travel experiences.	3.34	0.78
X32	Positive customer reviews serve as a key marketing tool.	3.28	0.83
X33	The company motivates customers to recommend its services.	3.36	0.79
X34	WOM marketing increases customer trust and loyalty.	3.25	0.81
General Mean for Word of Mouth (WOM)		3.31	0.79
Overall Mean for Guerrilla Marketing Variable		3.24	0.79

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the results of the (SPSS) program

The results of **Table (2)** indicate that the overall mean of the respondents' answers regarding the guerrilla marketing variable reached (3.24), which is higher than the hypothetical mean value of (3). This reflects a moderately positive tendency toward agreement among employees of travel and tourism companies in the city of Samarra regarding their agencies' adoption of guerrilla marketing practices. The standard deviation value of (0.79) shows a relative degree of homogeneity in the respondents' opinions, meaning that most of them generally agree on the importance of applying this type of marketing within their work environment.

Through analyzing the sub-dimensions, it was found that the Word of Mouth (WOM) dimension achieved the highest mean value of (3.29), indicating that travel companies largely rely on customer satisfaction and personal recommendations as an effective means to attract new customers. This finding reflects the strength of social relationships

and personal trust in enhancing the company's reputation and promoting its services. It also suggests that the positive customer experience often represents the most influential promotional tool that can be relied upon in this service-oriented sector.

In contrast, the Graffiti Advertising dimension recorded the lowest mean value of (3.16), suggesting that this type of marketing is used to a limited extent among the surveyed companies. This may be attributed to regulatory or cultural constraints that restrict the implementation of wall-based or street art advertising in the local environment, or perhaps to a lack of confidence among companies in the effectiveness of this approach in attracting tourists compared to digital or word-of-mouth methods.

As for the Viral/Buzz Marketing dimension, it recorded a mean of (3.26), indicating that travel companies have already started using social media platforms to disseminate their marketing content and achieve wide exposure for their promotional messages. This aligns with the growing focus on digital content and interactive online engagement. However, the variation in responses suggests that the extent of application of this marketing type still differs among companies depending on their technical capabilities and marketing expertise. The results also revealed that both Sensory Marketing and Stealth Marketing achieved similar mean values of (3.24) each, indicating a moderate level of interest among companies in adopting strategies based on sensory appeal or indirect promotional techniques. Some companies seek to create distinctive sensory experiences through visuals and interactive displays, while others use non-traditional methods such as influencers or narrative content. However, the actual implementation of these approaches remains relatively limited.

The Ambush Marketing dimension recorded a mean of (3.19), suggesting that this type of marketing is not widely practiced among the surveyed companies. This may be due to their limited participation in major events or their inability to associate their brand with public tourism occasions without being official sponsors. Meanwhile, the Ambient Marketing dimension achieved a mean of (3.28), reflecting a positive tendency among some companies to use innovative advertising in non-traditional locations to attract audience attention in creative and novel ways.

Overall, these findings indicate that travel and tourism companies in Samarra adopt various forms of guerrilla marketing to varying degrees. They show a clear inclination toward low-cost methods that align with the nature of the tourism service sector one that depends heavily on trust and personal experience—such as Word of Mouth and Viral Marketing, rather than visual or artistic techniques like Graffiti Advertising. It can thus be concluded that guerrilla marketing among the surveyed companies is practiced in a gradual and balanced manner, where experience, relationships, and reputation constitute the core elements of their marketing strategies. Meanwhile, creative and unconventional techniques are still in an experimental and developmental stage, not yet reaching a level of wide-scale or professional implementation.

Table (3) below presents the means and standard deviations of the respondents' attitudes toward the competitive position variable.

Table 3: Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations for the Competitive Position Variable

Variable	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
X1	The company enjoys a strong reputation in the travel and tourism market.	3.33	0.81
X2	The company excels in providing services that outperform its competitors.	3.23	0.78
X3	The company continuously works on developing its services to face competition.	3.21	0.75
X4	The company is keen to offer competitive prices to customers.	3.30	0.82
X5	The company seeks to build long-term relationships with its customers.	3.24	0.77
X6	The company seeks to attract new customers to strengthen its market position.	3.31	0.85
X7	The company relies on service quality to achieve competitive excellence.	3.13	0.77
X8	The company is constantly updating its services to meet market needs.	3.20	0.82
X9	The company has a high capability to face competitive challenges.	3.25	0.79
X10	The company possesses flexibility and readiness to adapt to competition.	3.22	0.74
General Mean		3.24	0.79

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the results of the (SPSS) program

The results of Table (3) indicate that the overall mean of the competitive position variable reached (3.24), which is higher than the hypothetical mean value of (3). This reflects a moderately positive trend toward the perception that travel and tourism companies possess a relatively good competitive position in the local market. The overall standard deviation

(0.79) suggests a relative degree of homogeneity in the respondents' views on this variable, meaning that most company employees share similar evaluations regarding the level of competitiveness their institutions enjoy.

By analyzing the individual items comprising the variable, it was found that the highest mean value was recorded for item (1), which states that *"The company enjoys a strong reputation in the travel and tourism market"*, with a mean of (3.33) and a standard deviation of (0.81). This indicates that a good reputation is one of the most prominent elements of competitive strength for the surveyed companies, and that these firms have succeeded in establishing a respected market position through their positive record in service provision. It also highlights the importance of reputation as a trust-building factor and a key motivator for customer choice in a market characterized by multiple alternatives.

Furthermore, item (6), which states that *"The company maintains good relationships with its regular customers"*, also recorded a high result (3.31), confirming that long-term customer relationships represent a fundamental pillar of competitive positioning. Such relationships contribute to strengthening customer loyalty and reducing the likelihood of customers switching to competing firms.

As for item (4), *"The company is keen to offer competitive prices to customers"*, it achieved a mean of (3.30), indicating that pricing strategy serves as an essential tool in enhancing competitive capability, especially in a tourism market that is highly price-sensitive.

On the other hand, item (7), *"The company seeks to attract new customers in innovative ways"*, recorded the lowest mean value of (3.13). This suggests that marketing efforts aimed at reaching new customer segments are still relatively limited, possibly due to insufficient investment in innovative promotional campaigns or excessive reliance on existing loyal customers as the primary source of revenue.

The statements (3, 5, 8, 9, and 10) recorded mean values ranging between (3.20 – 3.25), indicating that the companies exert moderate efforts in developing their services, updating their marketing strategies, and keeping up with market developments. However, these efforts may still fall short of the dynamic level of competitiveness required in an ever-changing tourism environment.

In general, the results show that travel and tourism companies in the city of Samarra enjoy a relatively stable competitive position that relies primarily on a good reputation, strong customer relationships, and high service quality. Nevertheless, there is a need to enhance marketing innovation and develop new customer acquisition tools to cope with the increasing market competition.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the competitive position of the surveyed companies depends more on trust, customer experience, and personalized service rather than on modern promotional strategies or market expansion. This highlights the importance of adopting guerrilla marketing methods as a supportive tool to improve their competitive standing and strengthen their presence in the local tourism market.

A. Testing the Correlation Relationships Between the Study Variables at the Overall Level: Table (4) shows a significant positive correlation between the combined dimensions of guerrilla marketing and the competitive position, where the correlation coefficient reached (0.733) at a significance level of (0.01). This result indicates a strong relationship between the two variables.

Table 4: The Correlation Relationship Between the Combined Dimensions of Guerrilla Marketing and the Competitive Position

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Correlation Coefficient
Guerrilla Marketing	Competitive Position	0.733 (P ≤ 0.01)

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the results of the (SPSS) program, $N = 50$

Note: $P \leq 0.01$

B. Testing the Correlation Relationships Between the Study Variables at the Partial Level: The following points present the correlation results and explain the relationships between the dimensions of the guerrilla marketing variable (ambient marketing, ambush marketing, stealth marketing, sensory marketing, viral/buzz marketing, graffiti advertising, and word-of-mouth marketing) and the competitive position of the study sample, each examined separately:

1. **The Relationship Between Ambient Marketing and Competitive Position:** The correlation coefficient between the ambient marketing dimension and the competitive position variable was (0.565), indicating a significant and positive correlation at the (0.01) significance level. This result suggests that companies' use of unconventional spaces and locations to promote their services contributes to strengthening their competitive position in the market

by attracting audience attention and increasing brand awareness. Accordingly, the first sub-hypothesis derived from the first main hypothesis is accepted.

2. **The Relationship Between Ambush Marketing and Competitive Position:** The results show that the correlation coefficient between the ambush marketing dimension and the competitive position variable was (0.508), representing a positive and significant correlation at the (0.01) level. This means that companies' exploitation of public tourism events without official sponsorship helps enhance their visibility and improve their competitive position. Therefore, the second sub-hypothesis derived from the first main hypothesis is accepted.
3. **The Relationship Between Stealth Marketing and Competitive Position:** The correlation coefficient between the stealth marketing dimension and the competitive position variable was (0.490), indicating a positive and significant correlation at the (0.01) level. This implies that companies' promotion of their services through indirect approaches, such as storytelling or entertainment-based content, enhances customers' perception of service quality and strengthens their market position. Consequently, the third sub-hypothesis derived from the first main hypothesis is accepted.
4. **The Relationship Between Sensory Marketing and Competitive Position:** The results showed that the correlation coefficient between the sensory marketing dimension and the competitive position was (0.630), which is the highest value among all dimensions, indicating a strong and positive correlation at the (0.01) significance level. This finding demonstrates that relying on sensory appeal elements (such as sound, imagery, and direct experience) effectively contributes to building a distinctive brand identity and enhances the company's competitive strength. Accordingly, the fourth sub-hypothesis derived from the first main hypothesis is accepted.
5. **The Relationship Between Viral/Buzz Marketing and Competitive Position:** The results revealed that the correlation coefficient between the viral/buzz marketing dimension and the competitive position reached (0.522), indicating a positive and significant relationship at the (0.01) level. This result can be interpreted to mean that the spread of promotional content through social media platforms and the increased interaction it generates contribute to improving brand awareness and strengthening the company's competitive position. Therefore, the fifth sub-hypothesis derived from the first main hypothesis is accepted.
6. **The Relationship Between Graffiti Advertising and Competitive Position:** The correlation coefficient between the graffiti advertising dimension and the competitive position was (0.480), showing a positive and significant correlation at the (0.01) level. This indicates that companies that employ street art elements and creative outdoor advertisements in public spaces achieve a stronger presence and greater differentiation from competitors. Consequently, the sixth sub-hypothesis derived from the first main hypothesis is accepted.
7. **The Relationship Between Word of Mouth (WOM) Marketing and Competitive Position:** The results showed that the correlation coefficient between the Word of Mouth (WOM) dimension and the competitive position was (0.566), reflecting a strong and positive significant relationship at the (0.01) level. This confirms that recommendations from satisfied customers effectively enhance the company's competitive standing and help expand its customer base. Accordingly, the seventh sub-hypothesis derived from the first main hypothesis is accepted.

Table 5: The Correlation Relationship Between the Guerrilla Marketing Variable Dimensions and the Competitive Position at the Partial Level

Independent Variable (Guerrilla Marketing)	Ambient Marketing	Ambush Marketing	Stealth Marketing	Sensory Marketing	Viral / Buzz Marketing	Graffiti Advertising	Word of Mouth (WOM)
Dependent Variable (Competitive Position)	0.565**	0.508**	0.490**	0.630**	0.522**	0.480**	0.566**

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the results of the (SPSS) program. Note: ** $P \leq 0.01$, $N = 50$

C. Presentation and Analysis of the Effect Relationship at the Overall Level:

Table (6) shows that there is a significant effect of the dimensions of guerrilla marketing on the competitive position at the overall level. The calculated F-value was (90.585), which is greater than its tabulated value of (4.03) at the (0.05) significance level with (1, 48) degrees of freedom. The coefficient of determination (R^2) reached (0.671), indicating that 67.1% of the explained variations in the competitive position are attributed to the dimensions of guerrilla marketing, while the remaining percentage is due to random factors or variables not included in the regression model.

This finding is further supported by the calculated T-value, which amounted to (9.663)—a statistically significant value exceeding its tabulated value of (1.68) at the (0.05) level of significance. In addition, the significance value (Sig = 0.000) is less than (0.05), confirming the strong significant effect of guerrilla marketing dimensions on the competitive position.

Based on these results, the second main hypothesis of the study is accepted, confirming the existence of a significant effect of the independent variable (guerrilla marketing dimensions) on the dependent variable (competitive position). This implies that the adoption of guerrilla marketing strategies in their various forms by travel and tourism companies contributes substantially to strengthening their competitive standing in the market.

Table 6: Results of the Effect of Guerrilla Marketing Dimensions on the Competitive Position at the Overall Level

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R ²	F (Calculated)	F (Tabulated)	T (Calculated)	T (Tabulated)	Sig. Value
Guerrilla Marketing	Competitive Position	0.671	90.585	4.03	9.663	1.68	0.000

Df (1,48) N = 50 P ≤ 0.05

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the results of the (SPSS) program

Presentation and Analysis of the Effect Relationship at the Partial Level:

To verify or reject the sub-hypotheses derived from the second main hypothesis, the following results were obtained:

1. **The Effect of Ambient Marketing on the Competitive Position:** As shown in Table (7), there is a significant effect of the ambient marketing dimension on the competitive position. The calculated F-value was (13.764), which is greater than the tabulated value (4.03) at (1,48) degrees of freedom. The coefficient of determination (R²) was (0.511), indicating that 51.1% of the explained variance in the competitive position is attributed to the ambient marketing dimension, while the remaining percentage is due to random or uncontrolled variables not included in the regression model.

This result is further supported by the calculated T-value (6.451), which is higher than its tabulated value (1.68) at the (0.05) significance level. The significance value (Sig = 0.000) is less than (0.05), confirming the statistical significance of the effect. Accordingly, the first sub-hypothesis derived from the second main hypothesis is accepted, indicating that the use of creative, non-traditional advertising spaces positively affects the company's competitive standing.

2. **The Effect of Ambush Marketing on the Competitive Position:** Table (7) also shows a significant effect of the ambush marketing dimension on the competitive position. The calculated F-value was (16.433), exceeding the tabulated value (4.03) at (1,48) degrees of freedom. The R² value was (0.532), which means that 53.2% of the variance in the competitive position can be explained by the ambush marketing dimension.

Supporting this finding, the calculated (4.421 T-value) was higher than the tabulated value (1.68) at the (0.05) significance level, and the significance value (Sig = 0.000) is less than (0.05), confirming the statistical significance of the effect. Therefore, the second sub-hypothesis derived from the second main hypothesis is accepted, indicating that ambush marketing positively and significantly influences the competitive position of travel and tourism companies.

The analysis results revealed a significant effect of the stealth marketing dimension on the competitive position, where the calculated F-value was (15.232), exceeding the tabulated value (4.03) at (1,48) degrees of freedom. The coefficient of determination (R²) reached (0.589), indicating that 58.9% of the variation in the competitive position is attributed to the influence of the stealth marketing dimension.

Furthermore, the calculated T-value (7.411) was greater than the tabulated value (1.68) at the (0.05) significance level, and the significance value (0.000) was less than (0.05), confirming the statistical significance of the effect. Accordingly, the third sub-hypothesis derived from the second main hypothesis is accepted, suggesting that employing indirect or subtle promotional approaches—such as narrative or entertainment-based marketing—significantly strengthens the company's competitive position.

3. **The Effect of Sensory Marketing on the Competitive Position:** The results presented in Table (7) indicate a significant effect of the sensory marketing dimension on the competitive position. The calculated F-value was (21.733), which is higher than the tabulated value (4.03) at (1,48) degrees of freedom. The R² value (0.609) means that 60.9% of the variation in the competitive position is explained by sensory marketing, while the remainder is due to factors not included in the regression model.

This is supported by the calculated T-value (6.233), which exceeds the tabulated value (1.68) at the (0.05) significance level. The significance level (0.000) is less than (0.05), confirming the significance of the effect. Therefore, the fourth sub-hypothesis derived from the second main hypothesis is accepted, indicating that sensory marketing—through visual, auditory, and experiential stimuli plays an essential role in reinforcing the company's competitive strength.

4. **The Effect of Viral Marketing on the Competitive Position:** The analysis also demonstrates a significant effect of the viral marketing dimension on the competitive position. The calculated F-value was (31.566), greater than the tabulated value (4.03) at (1,48) degrees of freedom. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was (0.547), indicating that 54.7% of the changes in the competitive position are due to viral marketing practices.

Moreover, the calculated T-value (4.434) exceeded the tabulated value (1.68), with a significance value (0.000) less than (0.05), confirming the statistical significance of the effect. Accordingly, the fifth sub-hypothesis derived from the second main hypothesis is accepted, confirming that the spread of promotional content across social media platforms and its interactive engagement effectively enhance the company's visibility and competitive standing.

5. **The Effect of Graffiti Advertising on the Competitive Position:** As shown in Table (7), there is a significant effect of the graffiti advertising dimension on the competitive position. The calculated F-value (19.126) is greater than the tabulated value (4.03) at (1,48) degrees of freedom, while the coefficient of determination (R^2) was (0.516), meaning that 51.6% of the variation in the competitive position is explained by the impact of graffiti advertising.

The calculated T-value (6.966) exceeded the tabulated value (1.68), with a significance value (Sig = 0.000) lower than (0.05), confirming that the effect is statistically significant. Therefore, the sixth sub-hypothesis derived from the second main hypothesis is accepted, indicating that companies using street art and creative wall advertising achieve stronger brand visibility and competitive differentiation in the market.

6. **The Effect of Word of Mouth (WOM) Marketing on the Competitive Position:** The results of Table (7) indicate a significant effect of the Word of Mouth (WOM) marketing dimension on the competitive position. The calculated F-value (23.566) exceeded the tabulated value (4.03) at (1,48) degrees of freedom, and the R^2 value (0.622) shows that 62.2% of the explained variance in the competitive position is attributed to word-of-mouth marketing.

This is supported by the calculated T-value (6.245), which is higher than the tabulated value (1.68), and a significance value (Sig = 0.000) that is less than (0.05), confirming a strong and significant effect. Based on these findings, the seventh sub-hypothesis derived from the second main hypothesis is accepted, confirming that customer recommendations and personal referrals play a critical role in strengthening the company's competitive standing and expanding its client base.

In summary, the regression analysis results indicate that all dimensions of guerrilla marketing exert a significant and positive influence on the competitive position of travel and tourism companies. This means that the adoption of diverse guerrilla marketing strategies contributes effectively to enhancing companies' competitiveness, improving their market positioning, and increasing their ability to attract and retain customers in a highly competitive tourism environment.

Table 7: Results of the Effect of Guerrilla Marketing Dimensions on the Competitive Position at the Partial Level

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	T (Calculated)	T (Tabulated)	R^2	F (Calculated)	F (Tabulated)	Sig. Value
Ambient Marketing	Competitive Position	6.451	1.68	0.511	13.764	4.03	0.000
Ambush Marketing	Competitive Position	4.421	1.68	0.532	16.433	4.03	0.000
Stealth Marketing	Competitive Position	7.411	1.68	0.589	15.232	4.03	0.000
Sensory Marketing	Competitive Position	6.233	1.68	0.609	21.733	4.03	0.000
Viral/Buzz Marketing	Competitive Position	4.434	1.68	0.547	31.566	4.03	0.000
Graffiti Advertising	Competitive Position	6.966	1.68	0.516	19.126	4.03	0.000
Word of Mouth (WOM)	Competitive Position	6.245	1.68	0.622	23.566	4.03	0.000

Df (1,48) N = 50 P ≤ 0.05

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the results of the (SPSS) program.

SECTION FOUR: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

First: Conclusions

In light of the findings from the fieldwork and statistical analysis, several key conclusions have been reached as follows:

1. The results indicated that the majority of respondents agree that local travel and tourism agencies in the city of Samarra adopt non-traditional marketing strategies as part of their promotional activities. This confirms that managements are aware of the importance of guerrilla marketing as a tool to enhance their competitive position in the local market.
2. The descriptive analysis revealed that all dimensions of guerrilla marketing (ambient, ambush, stealth, sensory, viral/buzz, graffiti advertising, and word-of-mouth) achieved mean scores higher than the hypothetical mean, indicating that the agencies are genuinely interested in applying these approaches to varying degrees.
3. The statistical results demonstrated a significant and positive correlation between all guerrilla marketing dimensions and the competitive position. This suggests that increased adoption of guerrilla marketing strategies leads to an improvement in the agency's competitive standing within the tourism market environment.
4. The regression analysis confirmed that guerrilla marketing dimensions exert a significant direct impact on the competitive position. These dimensions explained a substantial proportion of the variance in the competitive position variable, implying that using guerrilla marketing techniques effectively contributes to building a sustainable competitive advantage for the agencies.
5. The analysis showed that word-of-mouth marketing and viral marketing were the most influential dimensions in strengthening the competitive position, as they rely on customer interaction and positive reputation diffusion, while graffiti advertising ranked last in terms of influence due to environmental and regulatory factors that limit its application.
6. The findings affirm that the success of travel and tourism agencies in enhancing their competitive position depends largely on their ability to innovate and excel in leveraging their marketing resources through creative, cost-effective, and unconventional methods.

Second: Recommendations

In light of the above conclusions, a set of practical recommendations can be proposed to strengthen the applied framework of the study, as follows:

1. Encourage travel and tourism agencies to adopt guerrilla marketing strategies more extensively by supporting marketing creativity and providing a flexible regulatory environment that allows experimentation and innovation in promotional campaigns.
2. Focus on word-of-mouth and viral marketing strategies, as they are the most influential in building a good reputation and strengthening customer trust, by motivating satisfied clients to recommend the agency's services to others.
3. Utilize social media and digital platforms as effective channels for disseminating creative marketing content, which contributes to increasing audience engagement and enhancing awareness of the agency's brand.
4. Develop the skills of employees in the field of tourism marketing by organizing workshops and training programs on guerrilla and creative marketing methods to ensure greater competence and efficiency in implementation.
5. Coordinate with governmental and municipal authorities to regulate the use of field-based techniques, such as graffiti advertising or innovative outdoor campaigns, while ensuring compliance with local laws and public regulations.
6. Strengthen cooperation among travel agencies in joint marketing initiatives for local tourist destinations, thereby generating a stronger promotional impact and fostering a more sustainable competitive advantage for the entire sector.
7. Conduct broader future studies covering other provinces or different customer segments to compare the effectiveness of guerrilla marketing in diverse environments and evaluate the sustainability of its impact on the competitive position.

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