

# Ambush Marketing: A Review and Examples

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**Abstract:** The paper deals in obliterating the obstacles that stand in the way of one's understanding about what ambush marketing is and entails a brief of some paragons regarding the same. It would do well for those in the marketing business to comprehend what undergoes the phenomenon of ambush marketing and how it can ethically be used, although it's use at all is debatable in some cases which will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs of the concerned paper. A company that doesn't have as much revenue to spend on marketing as its competitors do, can implement such a tactic to escalate its sales. Also, the phenomenon has been used by several big brands even though they have no shortage of resources to market themselves proving that the strategy is of value and the knowledge of which can prove to be helpful for those dealing in the business world.

**Keywords:** ambush marketing, marketing strategy, debatable marketing strategy, examples of ambush marketing.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Ambush Marketing can be termed as a marketing strategy that astonishes the competitor by ambushing an occurrence such as an advertisement, news or some event that has already taken place and makes use of the competitor's resources to amplify the impact of publicity for the brand.

Ambush marketing can also be defined as a planned effort by an organization to associate itself indirectly with an event in order to gain at least some of the recognition and benefits that are associated with being an official sponsor. Shani and Sandler (1998), Gulaty (2018).

According to the The Hindu Business Line "Ambush marketing is a means of getting the maximum bang for the buck while stealing some of a rival's thunder."

The dawn of ambush marketing was when news and advertisement industries grew and firms started to compete amongst themselves to sponsor events in order to market themselves.

Although earlier regarded as an unethical practice, now ambush marketing has made its way as a legit strategy used by firms in order to compete with other organizations. The first recorded use of large-scale ambush marketing was witnessed when Kodak couldn't sponsor 1984 Olympic Games and the right was given to Fuji instead, then Kodak became the sponsor of the ABC's broadcasts of those Games and this also made Kodak the official film of these games.

Over the years this strategy has been used by big as well as small brands and it can be inferred from those instances that it has sufficiently given way to publicity, whether good or bad, depends upon the use of strategy and its execution. A number of times, brands using this strategy were sued by the competitors and reparation came in hanging a large sum on the strategist's neck, while at other times it was executed so well that it wasn't against the law and yet created a huge impact on market responses. Sankalp Jain in his paper "Ambush Marketing: A Threat for Sponsors" mentions that although ambush marketing is considered a bold move yet we cannot negate the repercussion of such an instance questioning the integrity of the event that was used to carry forward such a tactic.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ambush marketing first came to light as a technique at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. The Games were deemed an enormous success, creating a surplus of some US\$ 250 million. We were the first to be entirely privately funded. Before this any number of sponsors were allowed to 'officially' tie themselves to the Olympics. In 1976, there were 628' official sponsor for ' Montreal Olympics.

In 1984 Olympics, with Fuji being the official sponsor, Kodak sponsors TV broadcasts of the games, as well as the US track team. During the Seoul 1988 games of which Kodak is official sponsor, Fuji returned the favour in kind. Nike holds press conferences with the US basketball team at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics while Reebok is the official sponsor of the games.

From this incident, the word "ambush marketing" has been introduced to the market proving its potential and subtlety in usurping the mind of the consumer and it has been described by marketers as a parasitic activity that invades legitimate sponsorship. The media then highlighted heated debates in December 2002 involving companies such as Britannia, LG, Philips India and HPCL; Indian Cricket Team players, ICC and BCCI.

As the traditional advertising media is declining and new advertising types are replacing them, Ambush Marketing is one such tactic to watch for. The research focuses on an overview of the various pros and cons of ambush marketing using a Snapdeal Strategy case. In India, there have been many ambush marketing battles between Hindustan Unilever and Procter & Gamble, Jet vs. the now deceased Kingfisher in aviation, Coke vs. Pepsi, Rinvs Tide in detergents, and Horlicks vs. Complan. But, one of the most successful of them is the classic case of Snapdeal vs Flipkart.

The research aims to check the effect of ambush marketing on consumer awareness and understanding, and how in this ultimately influences the purchasing behaviour of the consumer. The study findings will help the marketers understand the efficacy and competitiveness of marketing ambush tactics in the coming years.

Marc and Pascale (2010) studied the effects of divulging ambush marketing activities on consumers' attitudes towards the ambusher's brand. Finally, the attitude towards the brand of the ambusher was measured by the impact on brand value, perceived honesty and intention to purchase.

According to the research, when the actions of the ambusher are unmasked and disclosed, there is a negative effect on customer perceptions that can have significant repercussions for the brand's image. According to Paul and Patrick's (1998) research, it was very important to set some ethical standards so that companies can develop their strategies and plans accordingly.

Results of Lyberger & McCarthy's (2001) study showed that most people did not have negative perceptions of the companies involved in ambush marketing practices because they did not find the tactics immoral or illegal.

Even though ambush marketing in the modern marketing era has proven to be a very complex technique, it has also faced numerous criticisms. There is also confusion as to how to prepare and conduct a good marketing ambush campaign.

Sports Sponsorship is one of commercial sponsorship's most famous forms, and is a massive business opportunity. Companies have spent lavishly getting associated with sports that have been famous in their area. Consequently, ambush marketing poses the issue of what legal options are open to promoters and official sponsors of these activities to avoid ambushes. As far as the "ambush marketing" appeal is concerned, the "ambush marketing" expression is distinct from passing off. There is an element of overt or covert deception in the passing off action whereas the ambush marketing is the opportunistic commercial exploitation of an occurrence. The promoters call it the defendant's ambush marketing for endorsing his brand or company without a financial obligation like the official sponsors. Each sponsorship involves a business agreement between a company and a sportsperson to enter into a joint venture to promote their mutual interests by allowing the use of their name in commercial activities in return for a financial contribution, a sport organization or individual players.

### **III. EXAMPLES**

Ambush marketing came into limelight when a Canada based home decor company Rona made use of an Apple iPod nano advertisement to promote their leftover paint recycling strategy. The advert featured paint dripping from the iPod which got collected into buckets in a billboard placed below that of Apple's.

Perhaps, one of the most famous examples of ambush marketing would be that of Audi vs. BMW billboard war in Santa Monica in the year 2009. It was as if the billboards were conversing with each other. An Audi billboard said "Your move BMW" to which a BMW billboard replied "Checkmate." This went on forward and both the companies promoted their wins by congratulating the other, in which BMW mentioned "Congratulations to Audi for winning South African Car of the Year 2006, From the winner of World Car of the Year 2006" to which Audi replied "Congratulations BMW for winning World Car of the Year 2006, From the Winner of Six Consecutive Le Mans 24 Hour Races 2000-2006."

Other companies took advantage of both of their advertisements and probed in the ambush marketing war, Subaru on its billboard quoted featuring a blue car “Well done Audi and BMW for winning the beauty contest, From the winner of the 2006 International Engine of the Year.”

This gave way to one more advertisement featuring a yellow car with the billboard quote “Congratulations to Audi BMW and that blue car for doing so well. In whatever class it is you kids seem to be trying so hard in.”

In the end Bentley stole their thunder by featuring its Chairman in a picture with abusive sign language.

The best hike in sales after ambush marketing could be said to be that of Beats by Dr. Dre. This was during 2012 Olympics that Dre gate-crashed the event and gifted headphones to various athletes, the company even made special editions for team GB showcasing hues of the union flag on the products. After this act, the athletes posted pictures of the gifted items, they wore them and even thanked Dre on their social media platforms. The company saw a 42 percent increase in sales after the 2012 Olympics.

Heineken was official sponsor of beer at the 2011 US Open. Despite this fact, Stella chose the Bille Jean King National Tennis Center's closest station and littered the terminal with 15 different Stella ads. This made it look like Stella sponsored a tennis match. It made it look like Stella funded a tennis match. The ads had tennis themes, with slogans such as "the top-seeded Belgian," "waiting for your trophy" and "a dream match."

In the case of alcohol brands, companies can emboss soccer events by sending models in attractive dresses and appropriate color codes and logos to such events. This was the case in the 2010 World Cup, during the match between Denmark and Holland, when 36 models wore branded clothing that promoted Dutch beer Bavaria.

The first noted moment in history for ambush marketing was in Olympics and a lot many times sports events were utilized by famous brands to perform parasitic marketing, some of the examples we would try to cover here.

1984 Summer Olympics Kodak sponsored TV broadcasts of the game as well as the US track team while Fujifilm being the official sponsor.

1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona, Nike conducted press conferences with players even though Reebok was the official sponsor. The players hid Reebok logos during the ceremony.

1994 Winter Olympics, American Express took over Visa for sponsoring the games.

1996 Atlanta Olympics sprinter Linford Christie wore contact lenses embossed with the Puma AG logo in the press conference despite Reebok being the official sponsor.

1996 Cricket World Cup Pepsi ran a series of advertisements saying “Nothing official about it” when Coca Cola was the official sponsor.

1998 World Cup Nike sponsored a number of teams even though Adidas was the official sponsor.

However, it may seem simple but ambush marketing also called as parasitic marketing, can be further classified into various types depending on the way ambushing is executed.

Direct ambushing would be one in which the brand works aggressively to associate itself with an event or property, when that brand has not purchased rights as the official sponsor. In that too, there are types of direct ambush marketing, which may be broken down as predatory, coattail, likeness infringement or ambushing via trademark. Predatory direct ambushing refers to intentional false claims to be the official sponsor, whereas coattail ambushing is an attempt by a brand to directly associate itself with a property, example Nike in Summer Olympics showed advertisements of Nike shoes with the game's official mascot. Then we have direct ambush marketing using the likeness in the trademark, which would mean intentional unauthorized use of protected intellectual property.

The other kind of ambush marketing would be indirect ambush marketing which too can be further classified as association based, value based, depending upon parallel property, distraction based or insurgent ambushing, saturation ambushing.

Association based ambush marketing refers to the use of imagery or terminology to create illusions of a link between the organization and the event, while value-based ambush marketing would make use of tailor marketing techniques to appeal to the same values or themes example Pepsi involvement in 1998 World Cup. Distraction is also a way of ambush marketing, in this technique, the ambusher establishes presence at or near the event without specific reference to the event itself. Insurgent ambushing would be the use of surprise street style promotions (blitz marketing) at or near the event example French Open – Roland Garros 2008.

Ambushing can also be done using parallel property, this would mean creating or sponsoring an event of equivalent importance, example The Human Race- Nike – 24 cities across the world.

Saturation ambush marketing is one of the most used techniques, in this the brand increases its number of broadcasts and advertisements while having knowledge of an event taking place, this the brand would perform without mention of the name of the event.

Ambushing may sometimes be unintentional too, example an athlete preferring to wear a brand for a race without any formal sponsorship from the brand.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Ambush Advertising cannot be overlooked or stopped permanently because we can never stop the flow of fresh, creative and innovative ideas. Moves to control ambush marketing at events were met with mixed reception: ambush marketing regulations allow the event organizer to prevent competitors from impeding the exclusive rights of a company to serve as the sponsor of an event, thereby making their sponsorship rights more lucrative.

Since most of the ambush marketing campaigns respond directly to or otherwise use a close competitor to leverage an existing campaign, ambush campaigns can and often must be extremely creative.

One of the key benefits of ambush marketing is that it encourages brands to throw their standard advertising campaigns off-script, whether in design, sound, or material. Brands can and often do employ strategies that may be beyond the reach of the brand or advertisement standards defined by a client, giving the ambusher much more artistic freedom and flexibility.

Another benefit of ambush marketing is that, done well, it can actually help brands cultivate and exhibit new brand attributes and values that consumers may not necessarily already associate with that advertiser.

The main drawback of ambush marketing is that it has the potential to be very expensive.

Another problem with ambush marketing campaigns is that calculating the ROI of such a campaign can be very difficult, if not actually impossible.

Moreover, in addition to the potential costs involved, these campaigns often require a relatively quick response or coordinated planning (or both) if they're to work effectively or successfully leverage the target campaign to achieve its goal. To complicate matters further, the availability and price of advertising inventory can make or break an ambush marketing campaign before it even gets off the ground.

Ambush marketing isn't a viable marketing strategy for most businesses. The costs involved can be prohibitively expensive to all but the wealthiest of brands, but the underlying strategies beneath ambush marketing as a concept can be easily applied to your campaigns, from PPC campaigns on the search network to primarily visual campaigns on Facebook.

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