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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

THE EFFECT OF GUERRILLA MARKETING STRATEGIES ON COMPETITIVENESS: RESTAURANTS IN GUADALAJARA, MEXICO

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ABSTRACT

With traditional advertising methods losing effectiveness, many companies have started to implement strategies known as "guerrilla marketing." These strategies are characterized by creativity and ingenuity, and they are designed to minimize the use of financial resources. The objective of this paper is to analyze the influence of guerilla marketing strategies and their effect on business competitiveness in the food and beverage industry in Guadalajara, Mexico.

To accomplish this, a structured questionnaire was administered to the people in charge of restaurant marketing during September and October 2016. The results permit us to conclude that the "diffusion effect" is the most influential factor in developing restaurant competitiveness, followed by the "low cost effect" and the "surprise effect."

Keywords: Guerrilla Marketing, Competitiveness, Restaurants, Structural equation model

INTRODUCTION

Traditional marketing strategies are becoming less effective for two main reasons (Hutter & Hoffmann, 2014): 1) the saturation of consumer information, with consumers being exposed to

more than 3,000 advertising messages per day; and 2) the general similarity of advertisements, which significantly diminishes the likelihood that an advertisement will make an impact on or influence the viewer. For these reasons, many authors have underscored the importance of eye-catching marketing that surprises consumers in order to gain their attention (Hutter & Hoffmann, 2011; Baltes & Leibing, 2008).

Accordingly, over the last decade, there have been proposals to implement distinctive and more impactful marketing strategies, such as marketing 3.0 (Kotler et al., 2012), which targets consumers at a personal level and focuses on their aspirations and values (emotional marketing), as well as other innovative and unconventional proposals such as guerrilla marketing, which is characterized by the use of innovative advertising tools. In times of economic crisis, or when companies have low purchasing power, guerrilla (Andrade, 2009) marketing is often used due to its low cost and high impact, which help companies grow their business at a low cost.

It is likewise crucial that an organization's competitiveness be based on a sustainable competitive edge, which helps companies offer solutions to customers and increase profits (Sáez de Viteri Arranz, 2000). This method employs strategies and techniques that are not used by any present (or potential) competitors. These strategies generate value for consumers and cannot be imitated in any way.

The overall objective of this paper is to analyze the influence of guerrilla marketing strategies on developing restaurant competitiveness in the Guadalajara (Mexico) metropolitan area, specifically in the municipalities of Zapopan and Guadalajara. This sector was chosen mainly due to the increase in competition observed in this area over the last five years. For these reasons, while the annual growth rate of restaurant establishments continues to rise (according to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography, 2017), the food and beverage industry has faced several obstacles that have forced its decision makers to focus on marketing efforts based on distinctiveness and visibility, through innovative gastronomic proposals and developing management skills, new capabilities and expertise (García, 2008).

To achieve this goal, this paper is organized into six sections. In sections two and three, the concepts "guerrilla marketing" and "competitiveness" are defined, the main elements that bring these two concepts together are highlighted and the hypotheses are presented. In the fourth section, the proposed model and the methodology used in the investigation are presented to defend the obtained results presented in the fifth section. A final section is included, with conclusions, limitations and future lines of research.

GUERRILLA MARKETING

The term guerrilla marketing is considered to be related to the military term, since marketing can be creatively viewed as a battlefield or military operation, where the objective is to lure or win over the consumer (Baltes & Leibing, 2008). This term was popularized in the 80s by Levinson

(1984, 1994, 2009), who is considered the founder and forerunner in this type of strategy and marketing tactic. Subsequently, many definitions have been proposed for the concept, notably by Hutter and Hoffmann (2011): "a general term for unconventional advertising campaigns that are intended to expose a large number of recipients to your advertising message at a relatively low cost, with an element of surprise and an element of diffusion (...) guerrilla marketing campaigns are highly efficient, in terms of the relative costs and the benefits these campaigns offer." The main differences between traditional marketing and guerilla marketing are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Traditional Marketing vs. Guerrilla Marketing

Traditional marketing	Guerrilla marketing
• Requires money • Designed for large companies with big budgets • Measured by amount of sales • Based on experience and conjecture • Increases production and diversity • Grows with the number of clients • Eliminates competition • Uses individual marketing weapons • Counts its sales • "My" marketing; look at "my company" • Wrapped in mystique • Effective marketing is expensive • Oriented toward one sale at a time • Does not make use of technology • Aims messages at large groups • Unintentional • Uses marketing to make sales • Tries to catch the client	• Requires energy and imagination • Designed for small companies with big dreams • Measured by earnings • Based on psychology and human behavior • Creates excellent focus • Grows through existing clients and references • Cooperates with other companies • Marketing combinations are more effective • Counts connections • "Your" marketing; "How can we help you?" • Eliminates mystery and increases control • Good marketing is free • Follow-up oriented • Should be tech-friendly • Aims messages at individuals and small groups • Highly intentional • Uses marketing to gain the customer's approval • Tries to offer something to the client

Source: Based on Caudron (2001)

Thus, while guerrilla marketing highlights the importance of using non-traditional strategies at relatively low costs, it also considers other elements (also known as *drivers*) that influence its effectiveness, such as the surprise effect and the diffusion effect.

The surprise effect is one of the basic principles of guerrilla marketing (Hutter & Hoffmann, 2011). It consists of surprising consumers with unexpected activities and thereby capturing their attention to deliver the advertising message. Consumers thus have an experience with more value than a simple purchase (consumer feels captivated and excited when they acquire, use or even when they discard a good or service). Some of the indicators used to measure this effect are *Ambient marketing* (Breva, 2010; Arbaiza, 2011; Lindgreen & Vanhamme, 2003; Olivares, 2009); *Sensation marketing* (Gómez et al., 2014; Arboleda & Alonso, 2015); and *Experience marketing* (Del Loreto and & González, 2011; Fernández, 201; Schnarch, 2011).
Thus, the first hypothesis developed for this research is the following:

H1. The surprise effect has a positive effect on developing restaurant competitiveness.

The diffusion effect, on the other hand, comes from the nature of guerrilla R marketing. It takes advantage of the element of surprise and the emotional effects associated with guerrilla marketing, as well as its low costs, to create viral strategies, which are a combination of techniques that use various platforms to diffuse commercial information and to increase word-of-mouth marketing (Sernovitz, Godin, & Kawasaki, 2009) and referrals from opinion leaders in the product or service category (Auletta & Vallenilla, 2008). The internet, and especially social networks, have increased the ways to interact with consumers through methods such as *Viral marketing* (Palazón et al., 2014; Guzman et al., 2013; Vallenilla, 2011); *Buzz marketing* (Auletta & Vallenilla, 2008; Jiménez, 2014; José-Cabezudo et al., 2012); *Word of mouth* (Serrano-Puche, 2016; Aguilar et al., 2014; Iuliana-Raluca, 2012); and *Stealth marketing* (Kaikati & Kaikati, 2004). Thus, the second hypothesis is:

H2. A greater diffusion effect indicates a higher degree of business competitiveness.

Finally, the low-cost effect is a fundamental characteristic of guerrilla marketing. According to Hutter and Hoffmann (2011), there are two components that augment this effect: 1) the diffusion effect enables businesses to reach a broader audience at little or no cost, because the consumers themselves transmit the advertising message; and 2) guerrilla marketing campaigns are frequently implemented to take advantage of creativity, ingenuity and imagination, and thus conserve financial resources (Zyman, 2009). These methods include *Ambush marketing* (Canseco et al.,2015; Miñano & Nikobin, 2014; Alvarado et al. 2014; Ay et al., 2010; Valenzuela-Fernández et al., 2015; Wolfsteiner et al., 2015) or *Public relations* (Navarro et al., 2014; Buil & Rocafort, 2016; Gruber, 2003; García de León, 2002; Solis & Breakeneridge, 2009). Thus, the third hypothesis set forth is:

H3. The low-cost effect has a positive influence on restaurant competitiveness.

COMPETITIVENESS

The concept of competitiveness can be defined as a company's ability to provide goods and services at the time, place and form preferred by customers at costs better than or equal to those of competitors, while obtaining at least the opportunity cost of the resources used (Franco et al. 2014). In other words, being competitive means gaining an edge over your competitors, bringing added value to consumers and maintaining these factors over time. For this reason, the factors used to determine competitive advantage can be multidimensional (Saavedra et al., 2013), as there is no set definition for the factors, indicators and/or levels to be achieved by a company since these also depend on the context of the study.

Accordingly, the literature outlines four skillset areas a company can improve to build a sustainable competitive advantage (Ng & Londoño, 2012; Moreno et al., 2004, Rubio & Aragón, 2004): strategy, technology, personnel and structure.

Strategic skills are mainly based on the company's own vision, mission and goals. In other words, this skillset depends on the company's mission statement (the goals that the company would like to achieve), the company's resources (the nature of the company and what it knows how to do) and the company's capabilities (what the company is capable of being and doing). Thus, the business aspects related to this skillset area are innovation, marketing skills, financial resources and organizational culture.

Technological skills are expressed as the company's ability to design, buy, manufacture and sell. These skills are based on the amount of technological resources available to a company, the company's ability to apply these resources and the company's capacity for innovation. The traditional indicator of this skillset is the amount of technological resources readily available.
Staff skills are based on three activity groups related to the company's workforce: 1) the skills or knowledge of the company's staff—what the staff *knows how to do*; 2) trade and capabilities, what the staff *can* do; and 3) worker attitude and behavior, which refer to what the staff *wants to do.*

Finally, organizational skills refer to how businesses organize their expertise, resources and routines using an organizational business structure. The main activities associated with this skillset are task design, hierarchical power structure and the format of management and information systems. The main indicators for measuring this skillset are managerial skills and product/service quality.

PROPOSED MODEL AND METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of the overall objective and the proposed hypotheses, the model shown in figure 1 was proposed. We want to know the impact of guerrilla marketing and its three *effects* (*surprise*, *diffusion* and *low-cost*) on restaurant competitiveness, which is composed of strategic, staff and organizational skillsets. Although the literature includes a fourth dimension in the definition of *competitiveness* (technological resources), this dimension was not significant in our area of application, so it was excluded from the model.

FIGURE 1
Proposed Model
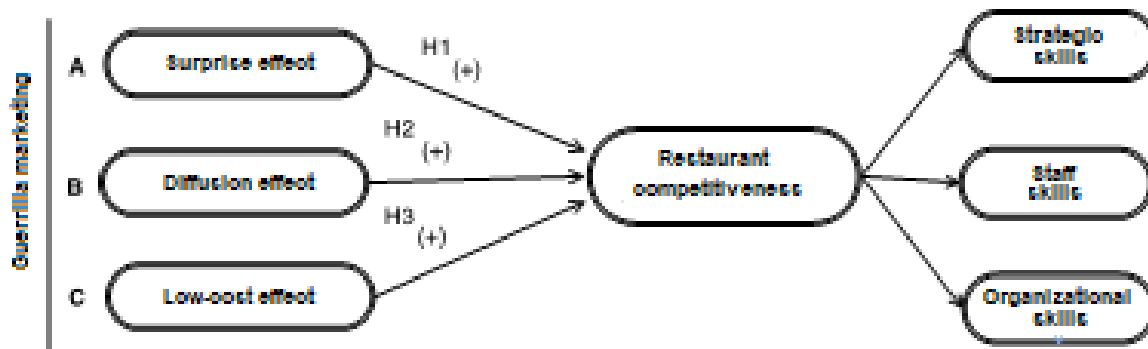
This study focuses on micro-, small- and medium-sized restaurant businesses in the Guadalajara (Mexico) metropolitan area, where a sample of 141 companies were selected.

Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire, which was administered to the restaurants' marketing decision-makers (the owner, supervisor or manager), over the months of September and October 2016. The items were ranked using a Likert scale (where 1 corresponds to "Strongly disagree" and 5 corresponds to "Strongly agree"). Table 2 shows the items used and their descriptions, as well as the bibliographic references on which the measurements were based.

TABLE 2
Description of Model Items

Construct		Item	Description	Author(s)
Surprise effect	**SE**	**SE1**	I believe my general advertising strategy is informative.	Hutter and Hoffmann, 2011
		SE2	My main objective when doing public advertising is to position my brand.	Breva, 2010
		SE3	To create an unforgettable restaurant experience, I believe it is essential to focus	Del Loreto and González,

			on the customer.	2011
Diffusion effect	**DE**	**DE1**	I see columns, articles, and comments made by the media as impersonal sources of restaurant recommendation.	Iuliana-Raluca, 2012
		DE2	I see social networks as impersonal sources of restaurant recommendation.	
		DE3	I use social networks to increase traffic for the restaurant's website.	José-Cabezudo et al., 2012
		DE4	I mainly conduct publicity campaigns in online environments.	Serrano-Puche, 2016
Low cost effect	**LCE**	**LCE**	Because of the digital revolution and the growth of social network administrators, I am interested in training team members and other employees to use social media and to use social media strategies.	Navarro et al., 2014
		LCE2	To improve the effectiveness of marketing campaigns, I use economic metrics to calculate advertising performance.	
		LCE3	To find, develop, and keep team members, I offer financial incentives and benefits for excellent talent.	
Strategic skills	**SS**	**SS1**	In comparison with restaurant industry averages, return on investment has been very good over the past year.	Pomar et al., 2014
		SS2	In comparison with restaurant industry averages, my financial performance over the past year indicates that sales have been very good.	
		SS3	To become better and more competitive, we have implemented a new product/service over the past year.	Franco et al., 2014
		SS4	To become better and more competitive, we have improved the quality of service over the last year.	
		SS5	We started creating written reports on the performance of each area/department within the company due to changes in the company's internal organization, or changes in management or managerial activities.	Alderete and Diez, 2014
Staff skills	**STS**	**STS1**	I believe in a work environment where everyone can learn, grow, and develop.	Hernández, et al., 2011

		STS 2	I create systems for feedback and communication between managers and employees.	
		STS 3	I make sure that my company complies with all labor regulations.	
		STS 4	I believe that customers recognize adequate human resource management.	Saiz Álvarez and Mendoza Macías, 2015
Organizat ional skills	**OS**	**OS1**	I consult the internet to improve my services.	De la Paz et al, 2008
		CO2	I have implemented database management software.	
		CO3	I explore and try out new ideas (ideas on how to improve the restaurant, for example)	Arias and Hernández, 2008
		CO4	I turn ideas into innovations (for example, when I have an idea to improve the restaurant, I try to implement it)	

Given the configuration of the model and the size of the sample, the method of analysis chosen is that of the structural equations through the technical Partial Least Squares (PLS), with SmartPLS® software, version 3.2.6 (Ringle et al., 2015).
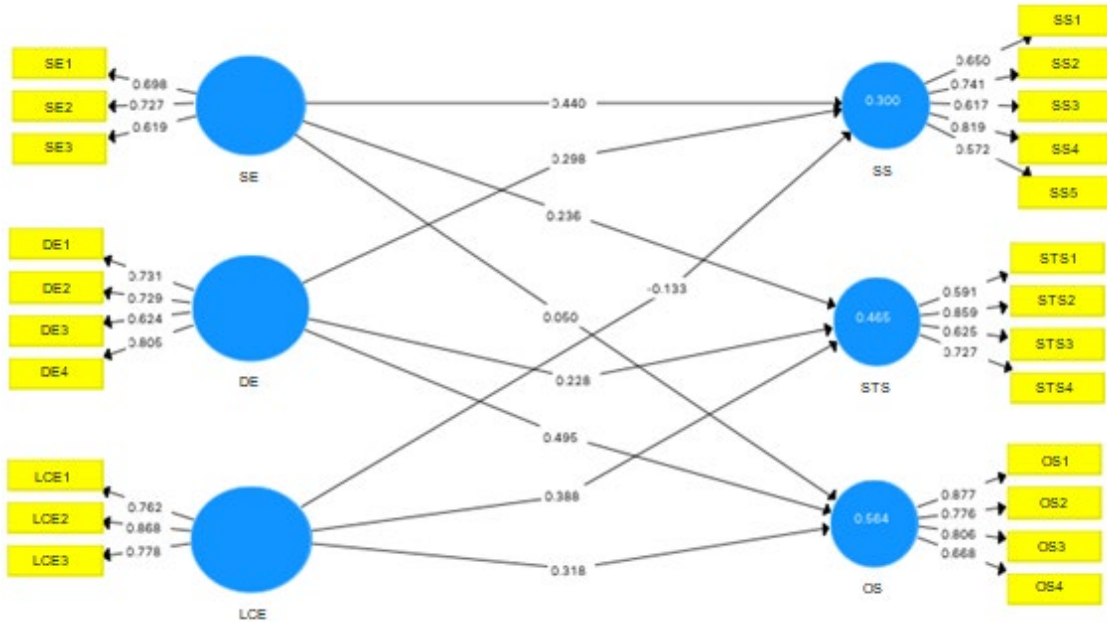
RESULTS

Two-stage approach

Because of the multidimensional nature of the concept of "Competitiveness," our model analysis was performed using a two-stage or two-step approach (Wright et al., 2012).

Following Ringle et al. (2012), in the first stage, the latent variable values (constructs or compounds) were estimated for the low-order components and, in the second stage, these values were used as indicators (manifest, observed or measured variables) in the second-order component measurement model. Thus, the higher-order component was embedded in the nomological network in such a way that other latent variables, as predecessors, were permitted to explain some of its variance (Henseler & Chin, 2010), which can result in significant relationships between trajectories.

The results of the first stage are shown in figure 2. Although items STS1, STS3, SS1, SS3, SS5, OS4, DE3, SE1 and SE3 are below 0.70, these items were conserved in the model because they maximize the effect to be measured and because their values are not below 0.40 (Hair et al., 2011).

FIGURE 2
First Stage Results (Path Coefficients)

With the obtained results, the second-stage model was calculated, using the scores of each first-order dimension instead of the original values. The results of this phase are shown in figure 3.

FIGURE 3
Second Stage Results (Path Coefficients)
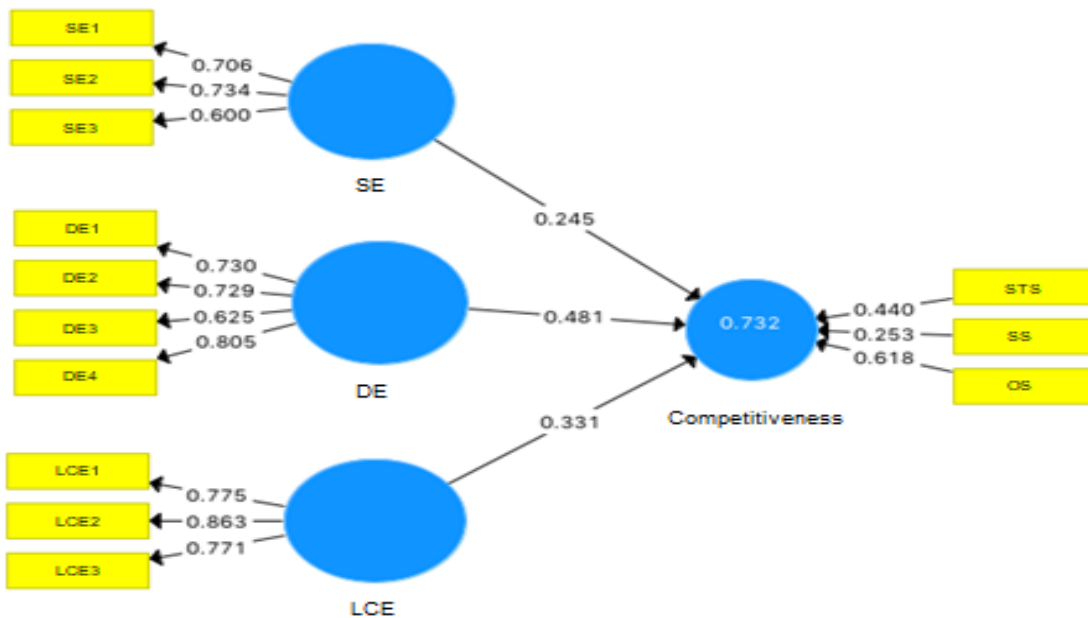
To analyze the measurement model, we assessed its reliability and validity (convergent and discriminant) of the model's constructs (Table 3).

Although items SE3, DE3 and SS are not above 0.70, they have been kept in the model, because they are not less than 0.40, according to Hair et al., (2011). As for the scale's reliability (α-Cronbach and CR), it was concluded that all items are reliable. It was also possible to confirm the constructs' validity according to the criteria of Fornell and Larcker (1981), based on the average variance extracted for each construct (AVE).

After confirming the absence of multicollinearity (Table 3, FIV<5, according to Hair et al., 2014), the bootstrapping technique was then applied (with 5,000 subsamples) to assess the accuracy of the estimates made by the structural model.

TABLE 3
Properties of Model Items

Construct	Item	Levels/ Simple correlations (λ)	α-Cronbach	CR	AVE	Collinearity statistics (VIF)
SE-Surprise Effect	SE1	0.7064				1.0757
	SE2	0.7339	0.4296	0.7222	0.4661	1.0790
	SE3	0.6005				1.0630
DE - Diffusion effect	DE1	0.7295				1.3278
	DE2	0.7294	0.7045	0.8150	0.5260	1.3063
	DE3	0.6255				1.4873
	DE4	0.8054				1.6856
LCE - Low cost effect	LCE	0.7748				1.3866
	LCE2	0.8633	0.7250	0.8455	0.6466	1.6945
	LCE3	0.7710				1.4087
Competitiveness	SS	0.4998				1.0933
	STS	0.7779	1.0000			1.2902
	OS	0.8594				1.2412

Assessment of the Structural Model

The results of the bootstrapping analysis (Table 4) show that the model has adequate predictive power (R^2) and that the exogenous constructs *Surprise Effect, Difference Effect* and *Low-Cost Effect* modestly explain *Competitiveness* (f^2).

TABLE 4
Indices for Assessing the Structural Model

Index	Value		Ideal values	Reference
R^2	0.7317		0.67 → Substantial 0.33 → Moderate 0.19 → Weak	Chin (1998)
f^2	SE -> Competitiveness: 0.1889		≥ 0.35 → Large effect	Cohen (1988)
	DE -> Competitiveness: 0.5362		0.15 ≤ 0.35 → Moderate effect	
	LCE -> Competitiveness: 0.2489		0.02 ≤ 0.15 → Small effect	

Finally, the statistical value between the constructs and the path coefficient sign (Table 5) permits us to confirm that the relationships in the structural model are significant and the proposed hypotheses are valid. It is also worth mentioning that the Diffusion Effect is the guerrilla marketing aspect that has the greatest influence on restaurant competitiveness in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area, followed by the Low-Cost Effect and, finally, the Surprise Effect.

TABLE 5
Hypotheses Testing Overview

Hypothesis	Statement	Path Coefficient (ß)	t-Student Value (p-value)	Validity
H1: SE -> Competitiveness	The surprise effect has a positive effect on developing restaurant competitiveness.	0.2453	3.4641 (0.0003)	✓
H2: DE -> Competitiveness	A greater diffusion effect indicates a higher degree of business competitiveness.	0.4807	6.0424 (0.0000)	✓
H3: LCE -> Competitiveness	The low-cost effect has a positive influence on restaurant competitiveness.	0.3308	3.9332 (0.0000)	✓

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Guerrilla marketing encompasses a set of communication strategies (especially advertising), with the goal of deeply impacting the consumer at a low cost. The main feature of guerrilla marketing is that it makes ample use of creativity and the imagination in an attempt to reduce costs. The objective of this study was to understand the impact of guerrilla marketing on restaurant competitiveness in the Guadalajara (Mexico) metropolitan area, specifically in the municipalities of Zapopan and Guadalajara. To achieve this goal, a model was proposed to correlate the effectiveness of the components of guerrilla marketing and three basic dimensions of "competitiveness" in the restaurant industry: strategic skills, staff skills and organizational skills. The data was obtained by administering a structured questionnaire to decision makers in area restaurants.

The results support the conclusion that the element of guerrilla marketing with the greatest impact on restaurant competitiveness is the Diffusion Effect. This item includes advertising methods, recommendations and—most importantly—the use of the online environment (the internet and social networks) (Martínez, Martínez, & Parra, 2015). The other elements, while statistically important, have just a moderate effect on competitiveness. For Low Cost Effect, the implementation of methods to measure efficiency, staff efficiency and internal marketing practices were significant. For Surprise Effect, the advertising activities focused on positioning the brand were most noteworthy.

The main recommendation is that restaurants in the Guadalajara metropolitan area should assess and analyze their online presence to improve competitiveness, according to the results of this study. It is advisable not only for entrepreneurs to invest in online advertising and promotion, but to design, implement and monitor these strategies properly.

Finally, it should be noted that this study has its limitations, especially regarding the study sample. The sample was confined to those responsible for marketing decisions and it excluded the opinions of two groups, which are of interest in this study's research goals: 1) the employees, through which we could obtain information about personal skillsets and the organization's internal marketing practices; and 2) consumers, through which we could obtain information about the effectiveness of guerrilla marketing methods. Thus, two studies are suggested as future lines of research: 1) an employee-based analysis of whether these items are suitable for measuring staff skills; and 2) a consumer-based analysis to determine the impact of guerrilla marketing methods.

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