

## AMBUSH MARKETING-An Insight

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### Abstract:

*The concept of Ambush Marketing is not new as far as Indian market and marketers are concerned but this is an unpopular concept among the customers. This paper aims at giving an insight on Ambush marketing, its various types, how it works as a marketing tool etc. Ambush marketing is also known as parasitic marketing. Ambush Marketing is a situation in which a company tries to advertise its products in connection with a big public event, without paying any money, and generally they are not the official sponsor. This concept includes full marketing campaigns which are designed to run during an event in order to capitalise on the fact that an event is taking place. The concept of ambush marketing has gained most of the attention mainly in sporting events which attract people both locally and internationally. In Parasitic Marketing, Companies mostly connect themselves with a particular team or athlete rather than taking on a full sponsorship package. Ambush marketing practice is ethically questionable because the companies mainly aim at using the goodwill of other companies (mostly competitors) to gain the exposure in the target market.*

### KEYWORDS:

Ambush Marketing, Parasitic Marketing, Unofficial sponsor, Repositioning, Brand Affiliation Index.

### AN INTRODUCTION

Ambush marketing, a term first coined by marketing guru Jerry Welsh. Ambush Marketing (Parasitic Marketing) broadly refers to a situation in which a company or product seeks to ride on the publicity value of a major event without having contributed to the financing of the event through sponsorship. It is typically targeted at major sporting events - like the Olympic Games or the world cups in various games - and is a strategy adopted by rivals of the official sponsors. In 1996, Coke paid a fortune for the right to call itself the official sponsor of the Cricket World Cup. Its arch rival Pepsi promptly launched a massive advertising campaign, based on the catch-line: "Nothing Official about It". The Pepsi campaign captured the public imagination - and Coke, the official sponsor, lost out.

But the concept of Ambush Marketing is not confined to the sponsorships. These days' companies are also trying to steal the creative advertisements made by their competitors and many more. They take the idea from their competitor's advertisements & after making some modifications release it in the market to grab more attention. For Example, Dairy Milk came up with an advertisement in which they released the song "Khush hai zamana aaj pehli taarik hai..." and Nestle its main competitor took no long to use ambush marketing tool and released its advertisement saying "Nestle Munch- Isey kisi bhi taarik mein kha sakte hain".

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## AMBUSH MARKETING AND ITS TYPES

Ambush Marketing as discussed earlier is not only confined to pseudo- sponsorship or creating attractive advertisements on competitor's baseline. In the words of Satbir Singh, CCO of Havas Worldwide (Dettol's creative agency), "Ambush advertising garners a huge portion of mindscape in a short time, something that helps when you're establishing a new brand and repositioning its biggest competitor to position yourself by demonstrating how you're better." Ambush marketing is about associating Company's product or service with an event, celebrity or other entity by placing its name, product or advertising near that group, without paying. On basis of this concept we can clearly define four types of Ambush Marketing-

### 1. Ambush by Association

Under this type of Ambush Marketing, Advertising is done in a way that mirrors the values or theme of an event in which people tend to directly relate to an event though Company does not take permission from the associated people or event managers for the same.

For Example, If Yonex hires Saina Nehwal and shoots a commercial in which she is playing badminton with yonex racquet and this advertisement is telecasted again and again in 2014 Lagos International Tournament then viewers will closely associate the product with the tournament and here Yonex is not paying any sponsorship fees to Badminton World Federation.

### 2. On-Site Ambush

This type of ambush marketing occurs when a business attempts to gets its name, logo or products on the grounds of an event without paying to be there.

For Example, During the Barcelona Olympics in 1992, Nike held a sponsors press conference with the US basketball team despite Reebok being the official sponsor. One of the most audacious ambush marketing feats occurred when both Michael Jordan and Charles Barkley, accepted the gold medal for basketball and covered up the Reebok logos on their kit. Both athletes were individually sponsored by Nike.

Another Example of Nike's ambush of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics demonstrated just how effective ambush marketing can be. By saving the \$50 million that an official sponsorship would have cost, Nike plastered the city in billboards, handed out "swoosh" banners to wave at the competitions and erected an enormous Nike centre overlooking the stadium. When television audiences were asked to recall the names of official sponsors, 22% cited Nike, compared to only 16% who cited the official sponsors, Reebok.

### 3. Personnel Ambush

Having a spokesperson or other individual closely associated with a business, product or service at an event without paying a sponsorship fee is another example of ambush marketing. The celebrity doesn't directly represent a company or product that competes with the event or an event sponsor. The company sending the celebrity may simply want to promote their product or service by having the public recognize the celebrity. For Example, A company purchase a front row ticket for that particular celebrity.

### 4. Timeline Ambush

If an event has a small timeline, such as the two weeks of the U.S. Open Golf Championships, an advertiser might increase its marketing during that timeline. A golf company might increase its advertising shortly before and during the tournament, hoping golf consumers connect its product with the hype created by magazine issues, TV specials and other increased promotion of the sport during that time. A beer company might increase its advertising during college basketball's March Madness or college football bowl season, using ads that show sports fans watching basketball or football games on TV, but without mentioning the NCAA playoffs or BCS bowl games.

### Working and Legality of Ambush marketing

The working of Ambush Marketing is still a debatable issue. If we talk in legal terms Ambush marketing has nothing wrong in it but when it comes to humanitarian ground Ambush Marketing is not much justifiable. The main sponsors spend their huge funds in order to gain attention of their prospect customers but any other rival takes an undue advantage and steals the show. However some thinkers in this field has an opinion that blaming competitors for ambushing is rubbish as they are rivals and they will try all

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means to super cede in market. If there is nothing wrong in legal terms then it can't be termed wrong as humanitarian grounds are not considered when it comes to business. Ambush Marketing is just a smart strategy of marketing and it can be used if it's reaping additional benefits.

Welsh, a former marketing executive at American Express, criticised the “Weak-minded view that competitors have a moral obligation to step back and allow an official sponsor to reap all the benefits from a special event”

(Meenaghan 1996 p108).

He further stated that competitors had

“Not only a right, but an obligation to shareholders to take advantage of such events” and that “all this talk about unethical ambushing is intellectual rubbish and posturing by people who are sloppy marketers”

(Meenaghan 1996 p108).

Ambush Marketing is especially evident in sporting games as it draws majority of viewers who are there to spend leisure time. There is no doubt that during matches every minute observation are done by viewers and when there is brand exposure for long it is bound to attract attention of viewers.

If we take most recent example of FIFA 2014, when measured by the Global Language Monitor's Brand Affiliation Index (BAI), the individual brands comprising the FIFA World Cup Sponsors and Partners had significantly disparate results as shown below.

<b>FIFA 2014 Ambush Marketing Rankings, June 23</b>			
<b>Brand</b>	<b>World Cup 2014 Relationship</b>	<b>BAI</b>	<b>Ambusher of ...</b>
Continental	Sponsor	538.20	
Beats	Ambusher	461.95	Sony
KFC	Ambusher	365.49	McDonald's
Bridgestone	Ambusher	356.50	Continental
Nike	Ambusher	353.61	Adidas
McDonald's	Sponsor	348.93	
Sony	Partner	342.40	
Adidas	Partner	270.98	
Coca-Cola	Partner	231.86	
P&G	Ambusher	225.58	Johnson & Johnson
VISA	Partner	154.76	
Red Bull	Ambusher	138.25	Coca-Cola
Budweiser	Sponsor	56.71	
Johnson & Johnson	Sponsor	56.17	
Heineken	Ambusher	52.43	Budweiser
Mastercard	Ambusher	46.19	Visa

Key -- Green = Partner; Blue = Sponsor

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The graph above shows that on Brand affiliation Index (BAI) out of top 5 there are four brands, Beats, KFC, Bridgestone, Nike who are ambusher. It clearly indicates that Ambush Marketing is playing a very relevant role for brands. The viewers are not aware always as to who are sponsors or partner. They believe in what they see. If exposure of KFC will be more as ambusher than McDonald's as sponsor there is no surprise if on Brand Affiliation Index (BAI) KFC leads.

**CONCLUSION**

It is clearly notable that Ambush marketing has a perfect synonym “Parasitic Marketing”. The brands these days are clearly aware about the use and effects of Ambush marketing. There is no doubt on the

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fact that the ambush marketing strategy will always be irritation for official sponsors but a proper information and smart legal contracts can eradicate the problem to some extent. The brands should by now be aware about the concept of ambush marketing and should understand that it is like any other competition for them. A clear strategy to counter effects of Ambush Marketing is the best way to go in the current scenario.

#### As Curthoys & Kendall noted:

The law as it now stands seems unable to accommodate the concerns of official corporate sponsors. There is no limit to human ingenuity. As such, ambush marketing at the margins will arguably always occur (Curthoys & Kendall 2002 para 78).

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