

SURPRISE ELEMENT

No flash in the pan

In a downturn, creative firms turn to guerrilla stunts to engage consumers

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IN WAR, the overpowered side often resorts to guerilla tactics – quick, unpredictable attacks – to maximise the impact of their offensive. This strategy is also effective in times of peace. More specifically, guerilla tactics have found favour with many creative agencies which are recommending them as an effective means to engage the public.

Last month, to launch Berocca, a fizzy vitamin drink, creative agency JWT Singapore deployed “corporate animals” to surprise pedestrians in the downtown area.

People dressed in business attire sported animal “heads” in the forms of snake, rat, vulture and fox to represent different kinds of workers in the “corporate jungle”.

The stunt was a move to illustrate Berocca’s “Stay Sharp and Alert” brand promise, which will help people deal with workplace challenges throughout the day.

The campaign, called “Office is a Jungle”, was devised by JWT Singapore’s group account director and head of activation Peter Cheung. He said of the stunt: “People were entertained and receptive. They were happy to spend time with the brand and find out about its products.”

That guerrilla stunts engage the public, pique their interest and leave an impression, have led more companies to incorporate this tactic into their promotional campaigns.

Mr Robert Doswell, managing director of Ogilvy RedCard, noted that this approach



A Berocca corporate culture in the CBD.



A “hospital” is set up at Boon Lay MRT station.

“has broadened in its appeal and usage over the years”. According to him, guerrilla stunts arouse curiosity and attract attention “especially when they are planned strategically and in coordination with the rest of the campaign”.

In May, Ogilvy RedCard staged a guerrilla stunt for IBM Singapore to showcase its new System x servers. A “businessman” walked around the CBD with servers bound to his ankle in chains. The message was that customers need not be held back by high server costs.

In the same month, creative agency A Group Of People (Agop) publicised Great Eastern Life’s Early Payout Critical Care, a new critical illness policy, by creating a hospital setting at Boon Lay MRT station.

There, “patients” lay on hospital beds, complete with drip bags, to attract the attention of passers-by and generate awareness of this policy.

General manager of Agop Serena Eng

said: “Our objective was to increase the sign up rate for the new policy during the event. We also hoped it would attract media interest. All these goals were achieved.”

In April and May, shopping mall Tampines 1 drew attention to its opening by having “human mannequins” unexpectedly come to life and dance mobs bursting into action among shoppers.

Ms Stephanie Ho, general manager of AsiaMalls Management (South East Asia) which manages Tampines 1, said the stunts were part of the “unconventional promotional tactics to communicate the mall’s ‘Spring to Life’ campaign message”. She added that they were positively received by shoppers and tenants.

Effectiveness aside, Ogilvy RedCard’s Mr Doswell said guerrilla stunts are “ideal as a cost-effective means to reach the masses at a time when budgets are under the microscope”.

Agop’s Ms Eng agreed. She said: “Guerrilla stunts are an unconventional way of reaching out to target groups by relying on creativity, impact and buzz rather than a big marketing budget. It taps on the same target audience group without paying for sponsorship or advertising costs.

“The current economic situation makes guerilla marketing the perfect ‘marketing weapon’ as it is low in cost, high in awareness and reach.”

GRAB BAG

MEDIACORP SCORES

MediaCorp’s publishing arm won a slew of awards at the Asian Multimedia Publishing Awards (Ampa), held on July 17 in Manila and at the US-based Magnum Opus Awards, held on July 3.

Ampa honours Asia’s best multimedia publishing practices, while Magnum Opus honours exceptional work in print and online media.

For Ampa, Chinese entertainment and lifestyle title, *i-weekly*, won the Excellence Award (runner-up) for the Multimedia Communication category.

Styleweddings.sg, a leading online wedding portal which complements *Style: Weddings* magazine, nabbed three Ampa Excellence wins for MediaCorp’s Interactive Media Division. *Styleweddings.sg* picked up awards in Use of Digital Technology; Multimedia Strategy and Business Model; and Multimedia Advertising Delivery categories.

MediaCorp’s Customised Publishing Division scored at the Magnum Opus Awards in the Best Public Service Series or Article category. It won a Bronze, Silver and an Honourable Mention.

GHOST VIDEO WINS

The Effies Singapore Awards 2009 held last Friday, which celebrates the best of advertising across different media, saw McCann Erickson crowned the Effies Grand Prix winner in Singapore for their Raffles Place Ghost campaign.

This was the first time a Grand Prix — awarded to a campaign which achieved impressive results with an original idea — was given out in Singapore. In total, four Golds, seven Silvers and seven Bronzes were handed out this year.

McCann, which also bagged the Gold award, created the Raffles Place Ghost viral video for recruitment firm The GMP Group. The video featured two executives encountering a ghost while working late and created a media frenzy as international and local media debated if the clip was authentic.

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