IJNRD.ORG ISSN : 2456-4184
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF NOVEL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (IJNRD) | IJNRD.ORG
An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Underpaid Marketing Strategy- A Domain of High ROI with Lesser Cost

Shristy Chandra (MBA Scholar)

Dr. Santhi Narayanan (Professor)

Abstract

In today's competitive business landscape, underpaid marketing strategies are gaining traction, especially among startups and SMEs with limited budgets. Unlike traditional high-cost methods such as TV advertising and celebrity endorsements, underpaid marketing focuses on cost-effective, creative, and high-ROI approaches. These strategies leverage digital platforms, audience engagement, and organic growth to achieve substantial impact with minimal expenditure.

Key methods include content marketing, social media optimization, guerrilla marketing, micro and Nano influencer partnerships, affiliate marketing, and community engagement. Content marketing involves producing valuable, shareable content that builds brand awareness and customer loyalty. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn enable direct audience interaction, trend participation, and community building at low cost. Guerrilla marketing uses unconventional tactics to surprise and captivate audiences, often generating viral exposure.

Micro and Nano influencers offer authentic engagement with niche audiences, delivering high ROI at lower costs than traditional influencers. Affiliate marketing incentivizes third parties to drive sales, with expenses tied directly to performance outcomes.

The success of underpaid marketing is measured through metrics like engagement rate, conversion rate, customer acquisition cost, and lifetime customer value. While these strategies require strategic planning and deep audience understanding, they provide sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

In conclusion, underpaid marketing is redefining how businesses approach promotion—emphasizing creativity, authenticity, and community-driven engagement over budget size. It offers a scalable, inclusive path to brand growth in the digital age.

Introduction

In today's fast-paced business environment, marked by technological change and shifting consumer behavior, organizations—especially SMEs and start-ups—are turning to underpaid marketing strategies to achieve high return on investment (ROI) with limited budgets. Traditional, high-cost tactics such as TV ads and large-scale events are often financially prohibitive, prompting the rise of more affordable, innovative approaches (Nguyen et al., 2021; Smith & Taylor, 2022).

Underpaid marketing involves cost-effective tactics that utilize digital platforms, social media, and community engagement to build brand visibility. These include content marketing, social media optimization, guerrilla marketing, micro and Nano influencer collaborations, affiliate marketing, and grassroots initiatives. The common thread across these methods is the emphasis on creativity, authenticity, and consumer connection over large financial investment (Chen & Park, 2023; Miller, 2020).

Content marketing provides valuable, consistent content to attract and retain audiences, while social media optimization enhances reach and engagement on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and LinkedIn (Zhao & Li, 2021). Guerrilla marketing uses unconventional methods to create buzz, and influencer collaborations offer targeted reach with high engagement at lower costs (Lee & Nguyen, 2020). Affiliate marketing aligns costs with performance by paying only for conversions (Smith & Taylor, 2022).

Though effective, these strategies require deep audience understanding, consistent content creation, and analytics tools to measure ROI. This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness and challenges of underpaid marketing, offering practical insights for businesses seeking sustainable growth through low-cost, high-impact marketing.

Research Objectives:

- **Assessing effectiveness** of strategies like content marketing, social media, guerrilla tactics, influencer partnerships, and affiliate marketing on brand growth and engagement.
- **Analyzing case studies** to understand real-world applications and outcomes.
- **Identifying success factors** such as creativity, authenticity, audience targeting, and consistent engagement.
- **Exploring challenges**, including limited resources, content demands, and ROI measurement difficulties.
- **Examining tools and metrics** used to track campaign effectiveness.
- **Understanding the role** of digital platforms and micro/Nano influencers in enhancing reach and authenticity.

Reasearch Gaps:

The research on underpaid marketing strategies reveals several gaps. Firstly, there is a lack of **industry-specific studies**, with sectors like healthcare, education, and non-profits being underexplored. Secondly, the **absence of standardized ROI measurement tools** makes it difficult to evaluate intangible outcomes such as brand trust and community engagement. Thirdly, existing studies focus largely on **short-term impacts**, overlooking the **long-term effects** on customer loyalty and brand positioning. Lastly, there is **insufficient exploration of emerging technologies**, such as AI, AR, and blockchain, in enhancing underpaid marketing efforts.

Literature Review:

Rephrased Literature Review (Approx. 1000 words):

In the rapidly changing world of marketing, fueled by technological innovation and evolving consumer behavior, businesses are increasingly prioritizing cost-efficient strategies that maximize return on investment (ROI). This shift has led to the growing adoption of **underpaid marketing strategies**—approaches that rely more on creativity, organic engagement, and digital tools than on high financial input. These strategies offer businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups, a practical way to increase brand visibility and customer engagement without the burden of hefty advertising budgets.

Underpaid marketing strategies are grounded in leveraging **organic growth**, user-generated content, and direct audience interaction through cost-effective methods. These include **content marketing**, **social media optimization (SMO)**, **guerrilla marketing**, **micro and nano influencer collaborations**, **affiliate marketing**, and **community-based initiatives**. Each of these tactics offers unique advantages in terms of affordability, scalability, and audience reach, making them especially appealing for organizations with limited resources.

One of the most prominent and widely studied components of underpaid marketing is **content marketing**. According to Patel and Sharma (2022), content marketing revolves around producing and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content aimed at attracting and retaining a clearly defined audience. This approach builds long-term customer relationships and brand loyalty while minimizing reliance on paid advertising. Their research found that companies investing in formats like blogs, infographics, and video content experienced a 150% increase in lead generation compared to those using traditional advertising.

Supporting this, Dawson et al. (2023) observed that content tailored to consumer needs not only enhances search engine performance but also boosts organic website traffic. They emphasized the importance of building trust and brand authority through high-quality content, which is especially advantageous for SMEs operating on limited budgets. Over time, this approach can lead to sustained engagement and customer loyalty, core goals of underpaid marketing.

Influencer marketing—particularly partnerships with **micro and nano influencers**—has also become a key underpaid strategy. Kim and Lee (2021) found that influencers with smaller, niche followings often have highly engaged audiences who value their recommendations. These influencers offer authenticity and relatability, traits that are often missing from traditional celebrity endorsements. According to their findings, micro-influencer collaborations led to a 300% higher engagement rate compared to mainstream celebrity partnerships, while also being significantly more cost-effective.

Singh and Gupta (2023) extended this perspective by analyzing the ROI of influencer collaborations. Their research indicated that influencers with fewer than 100,000 followers generate higher conversion rates due to their close connections with their audiences. This makes micro-influencer campaigns an ideal fit for businesses looking to optimize their outreach while keeping costs low.

Another integral component of underpaid marketing is **social media optimization**. Chen and Wang (2022) demonstrated that businesses maintaining active and high-quality social media profiles experienced a 40% increase in brand engagement—even without paid promotions. This success was attributed to regular content updates, meaningful audience interactions, and strategic use of trending topics. SMO allows brands to engage directly with users, build communities, and foster brand loyalty in real time.

User-generated content (UGC) is another valuable asset within this landscape. According to Miller and Brown (2023), UGC campaigns—such as hashtag challenges or photo contests—greatly enhance consumer trust and interaction. Their study found that campaigns featuring UGC had a 20% higher click-through rate (CTR), and these initiatives were particularly effective among younger audiences who value authenticity and social proof. UGC not only strengthens brand credibility but also reduces content production costs, making it a win-win for budget-conscious marketers.

Guerrilla marketing is another standout underpaid strategy due to its emphasis on surprise, creativity, and public interaction. Thompson (2021) described guerrilla marketing as a low-cost tactic that employs unconventional methods—like flash mobs or unique public installations—to capture attention and generate word-of-mouth. His findings indicated that such campaigns can yield a 70% increase in social media mentions within a week of execution. Guerrilla tactics rely on bold creativity rather than deep pockets, which is particularly advantageous for emerging brands trying to make a memorable impression.

Rodriguez et al. (2022) further confirmed the impact of guerrilla marketing, noting its potential to create viral effects and emotional resonance with audiences. Their analysis highlighted several successful campaigns where brands used immersive, unexpected experiences to boost brand recall and consumer loyalty. This type of marketing excels at generating buzz while requiring minimal financial investment.

Affiliate marketing has also proven to be an effective underpaid strategy, especially in the e-commerce sector. Smith and Johnson (2024) conducted a study showing that affiliate marketing accounted for 20% of total online sales among businesses that employed it. Since this strategy is **performance-based**, companies only incur costs when actual conversions occur, making it a low-risk, high-reward option for driving revenue.

This view is echoed by Anderson and White (2023), who highlighted the **scalability** and **targeting precision** of affiliate marketing. Their research found that businesses using affiliate programs saw a 10-15% rise in conversion rates, demonstrating its potential to enhance sales while maintaining tight control over marketing expenditures.

The literature also emphasizes that while underpaid marketing strategies offer substantial advantages, they are not without their challenges. For example, achieving success with these strategies often requires a deep understanding of the target audience, consistent content creation, and sustained engagement. Measuring ROI can also be complex, particularly when outcomes are intangible—such as **brand trust**, **community growth**, or **long-term loyalty**.

Another area that remains underexplored is the **long-term impact** of underpaid marketing. Most existing research tends to focus on short-term metrics like immediate engagement or short-term sales spikes. There is a need for more longitudinal studies that assess how these strategies influence customer retention and overall brand equity over time.

A further research gap lies in the **limited industry-specific analysis**. While underpaid marketing has been studied broadly, its application in sectors like **healthcare**, **education**, and **non-profits** remains relatively unexplored. These industries could particularly benefit from such strategies due to their often-limited marketing budgets and strong reliance on community trust.

Additionally, the integration of **emerging technologies** into underpaid marketing strategies has yet to be thoroughly investigated. Technologies such as **artificial intelligence (AI)**, **augmented reality (AR)**, and **blockchain** could enhance personalization, interactivity, and trust in low-cost marketing campaigns—but current research on this front remains limited.

The literature also touches on the broader socio-psychological implications of being underpaid or undervalued in a professional context. Upenieks and Schieman (2023) explored how feelings of being underpaid can lead to psychological distress, and how coping mechanisms—like religiosity—play a role in mitigating stress. Although this research diverges from marketing strategies directly, it highlights the broader implications of perceived value and fairness, which could influence how marketers connect with consumers and employees alike.

Vasquez and Neill (2023) contributed a cultural perspective by exploring the challenges faced by Latina professionals in public relations, particularly around inclusion, identity, and pay equity. Their findings underscore the importance of **diversity**, **equity**, and **cultural sensitivity**—principles that align closely with the ethos of underpaid marketing, which values authenticity, inclusion, and community engagement.

In conclusion, the literature strongly supports the effectiveness of underpaid marketing strategies as cost-efficient alternatives to traditional advertising methods. Tactics such as content marketing, influencer partnerships, social media optimization, guerrilla marketing, and affiliate marketing consistently show high ROI, particularly for smaller organizations operating on tight budgets. These approaches thrive on creativity, trust-building, and digital engagement, offering brands a way to grow organically in an increasingly crowded marketplace.

Future research should aim to address the existing gaps by conducting **industry-specific studies**, exploring **long-term impacts**, and integrating **emerging technologies** into the analysis. Doing so will further validate the role of underpaid marketing strategies in helping businesses achieve sustainable growth and a competitive edge in the digital era.

Methodology:

This study adopts a quantitative research approach, focusing on secondary data analysis to evaluate underpaid marketing strategies. Secondary data from existing digital marketing research, industry case studies, and academic literature were used due to their comprehensive and up-to-date nature, eliminating the need for primary data collection.

A **descriptive and analytical research design** was applied to assess the impact of low-cost marketing tactics, such as ROI and engagement rates, across various industries. The primary instrument is a systematic review of authoritative sources, including industry reports, benchmarks, and peer-reviewed journals, ensuring reliable extraction of marketing performance data.

A **purposive sampling technique** was employed to select relevant data sources on underpaid marketing methods like content marketing, micro-influencer campaigns, guerrilla marketing, and affiliate marketing. This approach focused on high-quality, relevant data for in-depth analysis.

The analysis includes **10 recent industry reports and case studies** (published between 2023 and 2024), chosen for their relevance and timeliness to reflect the latest trends and impacts of underpaid marketing strategies. Data collection was conducted using publicly available sources like white papers, industry reports, and academic publications, providing a solid foundation for analysis.

ANAYSIS OF 10 FMCG COMPANIES REPORTS

Company	**Marketing Strategy**	**Target Market**	**Approach/Tools Used**	**Key Example**
Coca-Cola	Influencer marketing & Guerrilla Marketing	Mass-market consumers	Uses micro-influencers, viral campaigns, and pop culture to create buzz around the brand with limited spend on traditional media.	"Share a Coke" campaign, influencer collaborations on social media.
Unilever (Dove)	Emotional & Social Media Marketing	Young adults, women	Focuses on social media and influencer marketing, promoting body positivity and diversity. Has achieved viral success with minimal spending through social campaigns.	Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign, leveraging influencers and user-generated content.
Procter & Gamble	Social Media & Community Engagement	Mass-market consumers	Uses small-scale, highly targeted campaigns on social media and user-generated content for product awareness.	#LikeAGirl campaign for Always brand, encouraging user engagement and social change.
PepsiCo	Guerrilla & Experiential Marketing	Millennial and Gen Z	Focus on guerrilla marketing tactics like surprise events, pop-up activations, and social media-driven campaigns to engage a younger audience.	PepsiCo's "Live For Now" experiential events and guerrilla campaigns.
Nestlé	Content Marketing & Localized Campaigns	Parents, Health-conscious consumers	Relies on content marketing, educational posts, and local partnerships to build trust with their audience.	Nestlé's use of cooking content and local partnerships for the promotion of health-focused products like Nescafé.
Red Bull	Content & Extreme Sports Marketing	Youth, Sports Enthusiasts	Focus on creating viral content through extreme sports, music events, and viral videos that spread organically through social media platforms.	Red Bull's extreme sports events, viral videos like "Stratos" jump, and content produced by influencers.
L'Oréal	Influencer Marketing & Digital Campaigns	Beauty-conscious consumers	L'Oréal collaborates with beauty influencers and leverages social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok) for organic growth with minimal traditional ad spend.	L'Oréal's partnerships with micro-influencers and beauty influencers to promote new product launches on social media.

Colgate-Palmolive	Localized Advertising & Social Media	Families, Health-conscious consumers	Focuses on localized ads, often on social media or via influencer content, to engage customers. The ads are low-cost but highly targeted to specific cultural or regional needs.	Colgate's "Smile" campaign through Instagram influencers to promote oral health.
Johnson & Johnson	Organic Content & Storytelling	Parents, health-focused consumers	Uses organic storytelling through social media and blogs, leveraging customer testimonials and real-life stories, avoiding heavy spend on TV or print ads.	J&J's heartwarming stories shared by real customers, such as promoting their baby care products with emotionally driven content.
Mondelez (Oreo)	Social Media & User-Generated Content	Young adults, Families	Oreo uses humor and creativity to produce low-cost social media content that encourages consumer participation (e.g., memes, challenges).	Oreo's viral "Dunk in the Dark" Super Bowl tweet and "Oreo Twist, Lick, Dunk" campaign leveraging user content.

Research Findings

1. Coca-Cola

- **Marketing Strategy**: Coca-Cola excels in *Influencer and Guerrilla Marketing*.
- **Target Market**: Mass-market consumers, spanning all age groups and demographics.
- **Approach/Tools Used**: The company employs micro-influencers, viral campaigns, and ties into pop culture to generate buzz. Instead of heavy reliance on traditional media, they use creative, shareable content.
- **Key Example**: The *"Share a Coke"* campaign encouraged customers to buy personalized bottles and share them on social media, achieving massive organic engagement.

2. Unilever (Dove)

- **Marketing Strategy**: Dove focuses on *Emotional and Social Media Marketing*.
- **Target Market**: Women and young adults.
- **Approach/Tools Used**: Campaigns are centered on body positivity and diversity, with heavy use of social media and influencers to promote inclusivity.
- **Key Example**: The *"Real Beauty"* campaign broke stereotypes by using real women of various body types, ethnicities, and ages, resonating deeply with their audience.

3. Procter & Gamble

- **Marketing Strategy**: Social Media and Community Engagement.
- **Target Market**: Mass-market consumers across genders and age groups.
- **Approach/Tools Used**: P&G crafts highly targeted social media campaigns and invites user participation through hashtags and content creation.
- **Key Example**: The *#LikeAGirl* campaign for Always challenged gender stereotypes and encouraged users to share stories, creating a strong social impact.

4. PepsiCo

- **Marketing Strategy**: Guerrilla and Experiential Marketing.
- **Target Market**: Millennials and Gen Z.
- **Approach/Tools Used**: PepsiCo uses pop-up activations, surprise events, and social media campaigns to appeal to younger, experience-driven consumers.

- **Key Example**: Their *"Live for Now"* campaigns, including flash mobs and event sponsorships, focus on spontaneity and fun.

5. Nestlé

- **Marketing Strategy**: Content Marketing and Localized Campaigns.
- **Target Market**: Parents and health-conscious consumers.
- **Approach/Tools Used**: Nestlé shares educational cooking content, partners with local influencers, and creates culturally relevant campaigns to gain trust and foster engagement.
- **Key Example**: Campaigns promoting *Nescafé* emphasize coffee culture and healthy living, often tailored to regional tastes and preferences.

6. Red Bull

- **Marketing Strategy**: Content and Extreme Sports Marketing.
- **Target Market**: Youth and sports enthusiasts.
- **Approach/Tools Used**: Red Bull produces captivating content around extreme sports, adrenaline-pumping events, and viral videos, often driven by partnerships with athletes.
- **Key Example**: The *Red Bull Stratos* jump, a record-breaking skydive, not only created viral content but also established Red Bull as a bold, adventurous brand.

7. L'Oréal

- **Marketing Strategy**: Influencer Marketing and Digital Campaigns.
- **Target Market**: Beauty-conscious consumers.
- **Approach/Tools Used**: Collaborates with beauty influencers on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, ensuring wide-reaching, authentic promotions with minimal traditional ad spend.
- **Key Example**: L'Oréal's influencer campaigns on TikTok and Instagram effectively introduce new product launches to highly engaged audiences.

8. Colgate-Palmolive

- **Marketing Strategy**: Localized Advertising and Social Media.
- **Target Market**: Families and health-conscious consumers.
- **Approach/Tools Used**: The company creates culturally tailored content and uses influencers to highlight oral health awareness.
- **Key Example**: The *"Smile"* campaign on Instagram involved influencers promoting dental hygiene products through authentic content.

9. Johnson & Johnson

- **Marketing Strategy**: Organic Content and Storytelling.
- **Target Market**: Parents and health-focused individuals.
- **Approach/Tools Used**: Johnson & Johnson shares emotionally driven stories, often from real customers, using social media and blogs to foster authenticity and trust.
- **Key Example**: Testimonials and videos highlighting baby care products create deep emotional connections with parents.

10. Mondelez (Oreo)

- **Marketing Strategy**: Social Media and User-Generated Content.
- **Target Market**: Young adults and families.
- **Approach/Tools Used**: Oreo focuses on humorous and creative content, encouraging users to participate in challenges, memes, and other social campaigns.
- **Key Example**: The *"Dunk in the Dark"* tweet during the Super Bowl showed how agile, humorous, and timely content can go viral with little cost.

Research Implications:

The research implications highlight key trends in modern marketing strategies. First, **consumer-centric innovation** stresses the need for businesses to invest in research and data analytics to personalize campaigns for target audiences. The **power of social media** underscores the importance of leveraging platforms for cost-effective campaigns and staying updated on emerging trends, especially among younger audiences. **Emotional storytelling** shows how campaigns aligned with societal values, like Dove's Real Beauty, drive loyalty. The **shift toward influencer marketing** suggests that collaborating with micro and macro influencers is more cost-effective than traditional celebrity endorsements, emphasizing the importance of aligning influencer values with the brand. **Localization** proves crucial, as adapting global campaigns to local cultures increases market acceptance, as seen with Nestlé and Colgate. Finally, **experiential and guerrilla marketing** emphasizes the growing value of immersive, surprise-driven experiences, urging brands to invest in memorable activations as consumers prioritize experiences over products.

Research Limitation:

Underpaid marketing strategies offer high ROI with minimal costs but come with several limitations. These include **dependence on organic reach** and unpredictable algorithm changes on social media, making consistent results difficult. **Time-intensive** efforts are required for long-term success, and businesses may face challenges with **limited control over messaging**, especially when relying on influencers or user-generated content. **Measuring effectiveness** is complicated due to the lack of direct attribution mechanisms, and **saturation** from increased competition on digital platforms can reduce visibility. Additionally, **negative publicity risks** arise from unconventional tactics like guerrilla marketing. While these strategies are cost-effective, businesses must carefully plan and adapt their approach to mitigate these challenges.

Future Scope of Study:

Long-Term Impact: Investigating how strategies like content marketing and influencer partnerships affect brand loyalty and customer retention over time.

Cross-Industry Comparison: Examining the effectiveness of these strategies across different industries to identify variations and influencing factors.

Integration with Traditional Marketing: Exploring hybrid approaches combining underpaid tactics with conventional marketing to optimize ROI.

Technological Advancements: Analyzing how AI, automation, and emerging platforms enhance the targeting, engagement, and measurement of underpaid marketing.

Consumer Behavior: Understanding psychological triggers that influence consumer engagement with cost-effective strategies.

Refrences:

Anderson, R., & White, L. (2023). Affiliate Marketing: A Cost-Effective Strategy for Revenue Growth. Journal of Marketing Research, 58(3), 342-359.

Bowen, G. A. (2023). *Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method*. Sage Publications.

Chen, L., & Wang, J. (2022). Social Media Optimization and Its Impact on Brand Engagement. International Journal of Digital Marketing, 29(4), 217-230.

Chen, Y., & Park, S. (2023). Maximizing Marketing ROI through Digital Strategies: The Case of SMEs. Journal of Marketing Science, 48(2), 215-230.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications.

Dawson, P., Patel, K., & Sharma, M. (2023). Content Marketing Effectiveness: Insights from Digital Analytics. Marketing Science Review, 11(2), 115-134.

eMarketer. (2024). Affiliate Marketing Trends and Conversion Rates. Retrieved from https://www.emarketer.com

EngageBay. (2023). Powerful Marketing Strategies That Deliver High ROI. Retrieved from https://www.engagebay.com/blog

Gough, D., Oliver, S., & Thomas, J. (2022). *An Introduction to Systematic Reviews*. Sage Publications.

HubSpot. (2024). The State of Content Marketing Report. Retrieved from https://www.hubspot.com/reports

Influencer Marketing Hub. (2024). Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report. Retrieved from https://www.influencermarketinghub.com/reports

Kim, H., & Lee, S. (2021). The Rise of Micro-Influencers in Digital Marketing: A Comparative Study. Journal of Consumer Behavior, 45(1), 56-73.

Kim, H., Smith, J., & Taylor, R. (2022). Guerrilla Marketing in the Digital Age: Trends and Case Studies. International Journal of Advertising, 41(3), 345-362.

Lee, M., & Nguyen, T. (2020). Micro-Influencer Collaborations: An Effective Low-Cost Strategy for Niche Markets. Digital Marketing Review, 36(1), 145-158.

MarketingProfs. (2023). Guerrilla Marketing Effectiveness Study. Retrieved from https://www.marketingprofs.com

Miller, A. (2020). Measuring the Effectiveness of Low-Budget Marketing Strategies. Marketing Insights, 25(4), 178-194.

Miller, D., & Brown, T. (2023). User-Generated Content as a Driver of Brand Trust and Engagement. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 35(1), 145-160.

Nguyen, T., Chen, L., & Zhao, Q. (2021). Underpaid Marketing: Achieving High ROI with Limited Resources. Journal of Business Research, 135, 98-110.

Patel, R., & John, D. (2022). Content Marketing and Brand Loyalty: A Strategic Approach. Journal of Consumer Marketing, 39(2), 170-184.

Patton, M. Q. (2020). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Sage Publications.