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The 9th International Conference on Marketing and Retailing**HOW FACEBOOK COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES
FACILITATE UKAY-UKAY LIVE SELLING AND BUYING**

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Abstract

Facebook, in 2016, rolled out Facebook Live which allows live broadcast. This became a powerful platform for small online sellers to broadcast and sell their products. One of the most popular trends is the live stream selling of ukay-ukay (second hand) items. One of the Philippines' profitable micro-businesses is the buying and selling of secondhand apparels and clothes which Filipinos enjoy due primarily to affordability. One of the aims of this study is to examine the communication strategies of ukay-ukay sellers and its effect on the consumption of buyers. This study utilized the Social Marketing Theory and is phenomenological in nature. The researchers conducted in-depth online interviews with ten participants (five sellers and five buyers). This study reveals that online selling communication strategies can take many forms—from verbal to non-verbal. Gimmicks are important to keep the audience and sellers entertained and to make them stay. It appears that securing a sale is less likely if the sellers are dull to watch. With the presence of joy miners (buyers who show interest but will not eventually buy), engaging in private chats in securing the sale and observing transparency and honesty are important as buyers and sellers communicate.

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1. Introduction

Social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are not just places for sharing and telling stories, they have also become areas for shopping. According to the total retail survey of Price Waterhouse Coopers (2016), also known as PWC, 16% of the online shoppers across the world said they bought products on social media. Online shopping has evolved in many ways since many people can have access to it and it can reach different people in different parts of the world.

In 2016, Facebook rolled out a new feature which is Facebook Live wherein one can broadcast live video streams through the social platform. This became a platform for small online sellers to sell products. The number of people who are engaging themselves in shopping online is increasing every day and it became more popular when COVID-19 came since they cannot go to physical shops to buy things that they need and want. Filipinos started to grasp online shopping and began to spend less time shopping in the conventional way, since the seller or the live streamer can immediately answer the audience's questions in a friendly manner. Unlike traditional e-commerce, live streaming adds more flavor and fun to the purchasing experience, as well as instant information regarding the product of the seller (Hsu & Chang, 2019).

One of the Philippine's profitable micro-businesses is buying and selling of secondhand apparels and clothes called ukay-ukay, which Filipinos enjoy because they can be sold at very affordable prices. The Philippines has a huge secondhand clothing trade, and, for more than 50 years, secondhand clothing has been part and parcel of the consumer psyche (H. Biana, 2020). With the advent of the ukay-ukay in online marketplaces, customers find it easier to buy and choose their desired clothes without tiring themselves. The emergence of Facebook Live has provided a new opportunity for online vendors to sell products and services in real time (Leeraphong & Sukrat, 2018). Associated with this ukay-ukay in Facebook online live selling are some disadvantages like communication breakdowns because of different noises that interfere and cause communication to break down.

This study is significant in attempting to know different communication strategies that the online ukay-ukay sellers use and to know the customers' views towards the effectiveness of strategies mentioned and what encouraged them to buy. Due to the fast growth in the number of people who engross themselves to the Internet, it is normal nowadays for some buyers to lay out their time in their gadgets, scrolling and surfing to the online marketplace, and will make the purchase. This study is also beneficial to online business owners, especially in the field of ukay-ukay, to do better strategies and services by providing the consumer's wants in the most effective way.

Nonetheless, few researchers have already made and provided research about the ukay-ukay's prevalence in the Philippines, as well as buying behaviors of the customer and use of Facebook live in selling different products, specifically clothes unlike other studies that have a broad scope. Therefore, there were no or limited number of studies and articles about this topic.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to study communication strategies of sellers in online ukay-ukay and their effect on the consumption of buyers. Specifically, the researchers aimed to describe the seller's communication

strategies on Facebook; analyze the effectiveness of communication strategies of the online sellers; and describe the satisfaction of online consumers based on strategies of online sellers.

2. Methods

This study utilized qualitative research design. Furthermore, using phenomenology as an approach, the researchers were able to obtain case study's descriptions and perspectives. The study was conducted within the border of Metro Manila and CALABARZON. Geographically, most e-commerce transactions occur in Metro Manila and in Region IVA. With this, potential participants were found using social media (Masigan, 2020). The respondents were interviewed via Zoom or Facebook Messenger.

For this study, individual interviews were done to meet the level of understanding of participants. The researchers individually interviewed the audience using the interview guide. A semi-structured interview was selected to be carried out in this research study. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method which is conducted fairly and with an open framework that allows focused, conversational, two-way communication. Conducting a good semi-structured interview requires thoughtful planning which includes identifying the group of sellers and consumer respondents and preparing interviews. After individual interviews, researchers observed how sellers conduct their online live selling. Researchers affirmed data obtained through interviews. Moreover, researchers also verified that mentioned strategies of sellers are similar in their live selling streams.

Transcription was done after the interview. After transcribing interviews, transcripts were reviewed several times. The process of transcribing interviews helped the researchers to gain a better understanding of the subject by listening to and reading transcribed interviews repeatedly (Conroy, 2010). After the data was transcribed, researchers started to code, analyze, and verify data collected. The data that researchers collected were analyzed, categorized, and organized into themes and subthemes that emerged through the coding process. These themes that emerged were given a code that corresponded to them. The next move was to analyze the data by searching for recurring patterns and highlighting any similarities and differences in the data.

A total of ten participants (five sellers and five buyers) were interviewed in this study. All participants signed a consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the interview while also guaranteeing their confidentiality throughout the process.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Seller's Communication Strategies on Facebook Live Selling

3.1.1. Verbal Communication Strategies mean Gimmicks and other Mechanisms of the Sellers

3.1.1.1. Gimmicks that the seller use during live

Based on data gathered, researchers found gimmicks that were usually exhausted by sellers during live selling—sellers being entertaining, games with rewards and putting their products on sale. According

to Wongkitrungrueng (2017), the dynamic and interactive aspects of live streaming such as games or activities for buyers to participate and earn gifts or rewards make the broadcast fun makes selling more engaging and entertaining. “I engage with some comments, throw some jokes, share some of my thoughts so the video won’t get boring.” – Participant S2. “There will be games during the beginning of the live...Once I got more shares, I’ll give free items.” – Participant S5

Another gimmick that sellers use during live selling is putting their products on sale or lowering the price of an item. In Ahmetoglu et al. (2014) study, they found that price has a significant effect on buyer’s purchase intentions, specifically the reference price, which has the biggest impact when customers are unable to compare with other brands. “I use 3 items for 100 pesos promo, and when they will buy fewer items than 3, the price would be a little more expensive so they won’t have a choice but 3.” – Participant S4.

Lastly, sellers also play with their words during live streaming and in calling buyers with different honorifics or endearments. According to an online article titled Essentials of Good English (n.d.), choice of words may either restrict or enhance the ability of an individual to create experiences they want. Also, being Filipino is undeniably linked to respect and there are various titles and honorifics used by Filipinos to give appropriate respect for the elderly and for people with authority (Anza, 2021). In addition, it is also utilized to indicate social standing or levels of politeness of a person but can also contribute certain qualities to the person they are referring to (H. T., Biana & Nalam, 2020). “I call my viewers varying endearments like madam or siz [sister]. Item codes will also have different fun styles.” – Participant S1.

The gimmicks used by sellers support the claim of the study of Wongkitrungrueng et al. (2020), in which they claim that many sellers develop persuasive strategies, such as giving rewards and social activities, to keep their sales and consumers by improving viewers’ experiences, making live sales more engaging, and making them stand out among competitors.

‘When Worn’ method and being detailed on presenting items during live

The results of the collected data show that sellers present their items by doing the ‘when worn’ method and detailing their item’s features or flaws. Some participants claimed that they do try-out products or when worn. When worn refers to when the buyer is asked or requested on how clothes look like when worn. This is to measure how the item looks when carried by a model or a mannequin (Losorata, 2018). Many online apparel sellers try on clothes to show how they look on a real person’s body, making it easier for customers to picture the “actual” items and decide (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). “I ask my mother to wear my products and show it on video.”- Participant S3. “When selling clothes, I use gimmicks like putting them on the mannequin, on a hanger, or on another person.” – Participant S4.

In terms of presenting the product’s flaws and the like, some sellers prefer to be detailed and honest since they do not want their buyers to feel disappointment about their products. According to Sun et al. (2019), sellers could improve their skills on guiding shoppers by ensuring that they have thorough product knowledge and proactively help them on solving problems. “Buyers are sensitive on leather items especially when there are cracks. Such flaws on products will make it harder to sell so I have to show the actual details, no matter how small.” – Participant S5. “You have to be honest since the items are second

hands, sometimes even third hands. It is better to address questions during the Facebook live right away because some buyers have high expectations.” – Participants S4.

3.1.2. Non-verbal Communication Strategies mean Seller’s Appearance and other Mechanisms

3.1.2.1. Seller’s appearance during live selling

Based on collated data, it appears that the seller’s appearance influences the product being sold. Some sellers claim that they try to look presentable in front of the camera during live selling because they believe that the way a seller presents themselves reflects their product’s quality. “Being presentable is an advantage. When buyers see that you are presentable, they feel like your products are good.” – Participant S1.

The other reason why they maintain to look presentable in front of the camera is some buyers bully other sellers because of the way they look. According to Participant S1, she noticed that if a seller’s appearance is not presentable, buyers will say that products were stolen, or products are not legitimate. This is supported by Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut’s article (2020) wherein they predict that the buyer’s perceived symbolic value based on what they observe on seller’s appearance and personality during the seller’s live selling can increase trust in the seller as well as the product. “There are other sellers that will be bullied by the customers if they don’t look that good. They even accuse the seller that their product is only stolen.” – Participant S1.

3.1.3. Seller’s video background during live selling

Another factor that sellers prepare aside from their appearance is their video background because it can also affect the buyer’s purchasing decision. According to Participant S2, he displays his products in mannequins and hangers at the back so that buyers can see what he is selling. “I hang my products behind me to serve as my video background.” – Participant S2

On the contrary, Participant S4 prefers her background plain. She said that her wall is painted white so that clothes in mannequins will be highlighted. “I had my wall painted plain white because it would make my products more noticeable.” – Participant S4.

According to Wongkitrungrueng and Assarut (2020), the seller’s characteristics expressed through verbal, appearance and posture, and background while selling must be carefully presented because it influences trust-building and engagement with the buyer.

3.1.4. Ways of sharing the live stream on Facebook

There will always be a time, however, their engagements during live selling are low. To address it, most of the participants said that they continue to sell even if the viewers are low, and they are still consistent on sharing the live. Participant S4 said that they tell their viewers to share their live so that their social networks and families, who happen to like ukay-ukay, can see their live selling. “It’s good when my viewers share the live video so that their relatives and friends can also see my product and possibly buy.” – Participant S4.

On the other hand, Participant S3 said that sharing the live to the public audience can also improve engagements during live selling. According to Wongkitrungrueng et al. (2020), there are more shares in live streaming than any other Facebook posts because sellers ask their viewers to share their live to their social networks or Facebook groups to attract potential viewers. “It is better if they will share it on the Facebook page with a public audience. It boosts my shares and engagements.” – Participant S3

3.2. The Effectiveness of Communication Strategies of the Online Sellers

3.2.1. Online Sellers on Facebook live and its Effectivity to their Selling

3.2.1.1. Technical and connectivity issues affect the effectivity of seller’s strategy

Aside from factors that make communication strategy ineffective to buyers, there were some challenges that most sellers experience in the long run while selling. Internet connection is on the top of the list. Participant S2 shared his struggle on getting through the live because of his unstable Internet connection. Its effect makes his live lose audio, video will be pitch black, or comments of buyers will not appear on his screen. According to Regan (2017), many users cannot connect to Facebook Live and those who can have trouble streaming. Thirty-seven percent of Facebook users mention that their Facebook Live stream drops in the middle of the broadcast because of connectivity problems. In the Philippines, connectivity is a major issue. The country has always lagged the rest of the world in terms of Internet speed (Rodriguez, 2020). “Sometimes I would lose my audio because of slow internet connection. My video would appear as black and some live comments won’t appear on my end,” – Participant S2.

3.2.2. Joy miners on live selling

Joy miners and online scammers are prevalent nowadays due to technology. Undeniably, cybercrimes like this can happen almost every day. In the long run, “joy reservers” and “joy-dibbers,” or people who make reservations but cancel at the last minute, have been headaches for online sellers (Domingo, 2020). According to some participants in this study, they ban joy miners or irresponsible buyers from buying from their shop. This is to avoid having problems with transactions in the future. “I usually ban joy miners even on their first attempt to be irresponsible in buying to me.” – Participant S4

3.2.3. Making the items look presentable

Some sellers still make their items pleasing to the eye so that when buyers receive items, they will be satisfied. This is also a factor in getting good feedback from buyers. Some participants revealed that they still wash and iron their products before they ship them out to buyers. “Washing the clothes before showing in live stream makes them more presentable and ready to wear. So, no matter how many clothing pieces, I wash them every day.” – Participant S4. “I would iron the clothes first so it would look better on video.” – Participant S5.

According to Venter et al. (2011), packaging is more than just a way to keep items safe and secure, it also defines the item’s quality. Likewise, it is also an effective marketing strategy for acquiring new customers and retaining existing ones (Karimi et al., 2013).

3.3. Effectivity on Ukay-Ukay Buyers

3.3.1. Buyer's preferences for buying in online live selling

Some buyers claim that they consider the price range of a product and its quality before they purchase from a live selling. One of the examples is Participant B2 who claimed that she usually really looks into the price and quality of the product during live selling. According to Castillo (2018), buyers' decision to purchase items and services is often influenced by their price and commonly, Filipino consumers prefer to purchase items that are on sale or offer discounts. "I am after the product quality and price affordability." – Participant B2. "The price in ukay-ukay is usually cheap so that's the last thing I worry, and I always weigh my decisions in buying. I think twice if I buy something and if it is worth the price." Participant B5.

3.3.2. Facebook as live selling platform

Some participants claimed that online live selling on Facebook is more convenient among other social media platforms. Participant B4 claimed that Facebook applications are accessible and user-friendly that is why he chose online shops in Facebook. "I look for shops on Facebook since it is more accessible and user friendly." – Participant B5.

3.3.3. Factors that make the buyer stay in the live stream

In relation to factors that make buyers watch and stay in live selling, three of the buyers acknowledge that seller's gimmicks make them stay and watch their live selling. Three buyers explained how the seller's game during live selling works and how the seller's viewers earned free products by joining the game. One of them also claimed that doing such gimmicks and twists during their live selling is a good thing. "Doing a freebie giveaway or adding exciting twists on their live videos is what sellers should do. Many would watch and claim items whenever they use this." – Participant B3.

Live selling usually takes time to finish, so sellers need to keep their buyers engaged and reduce their boredom by doing enjoyable and entertaining activities relating products or giving incentives such as games or flash sales (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). Two of the buyers acknowledged that it is more engaging and enticing to stay at live selling if sellers are entertaining. Participant B4 explained that since some attention span is limited, it is important for a seller to entertain viewers. "I think I stay in live streams when I am not bored. With my limited attention span, it is important that I also get entertained while watching live selling." – Participant B4.

Participant B3 listed few factors that make her stay in live selling such as live selling's schedule, seller's good set-up or background, seller is willing to do "when worn," live selling rules are easy to follow, and how attentive the seller is with buyer's inquiries. "The things that make me stay on Facebook live selling are the following: The schedule of the seller when and what time will they be starting, the type of clothing that they will be selling specifically on that day and if they have sizes available for my body frame... I also consider a good set-up is also a factor as this helps me to stay and watch the live selling until the end... She's willing to fit the clothes to show how it really looks like when fitted... How

simple her live selling rules are also, another factor to consider and most especially how attentive she is with the questions, requests, and demands of her miners/viewers. That's the only time that will make me stay and consider to finish it until the end." – Participant B3.

Similarly, live streaming can be used by online sellers to demonstrate their products in action. Sellers showing or wearing clothes, or trying them on a mannequin, can be entertaining and can reduce boredom for buyers (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020).

3.3.4. Definition of a good seller according to buyers

Buyers define that a good seller should be honest, good in communication, and patient. Majority of participants highlighted that a good seller should be honest, especially on products they are selling. Concise and honest information about items is also a factor on why buyers purchase again from a shop. Given that they are purchasing from an online shop, and they cannot see the actual state of the item, it is essential for the seller to give detailed information about the item's flaws and the like. According to Agnihotri et al. (2009), if the seller's description about the product is not congruent with the item's real state, it can have a negative effect on the buyer's perception towards the seller and their shop. Also, it can affect the buyer's satisfaction on their buying process. "Honest about the product especially if there are flaws like stain, holes, and sizing." – Participant B1.

One participant spoke about sellers that, aside from being honest, recommends and shows what body frame the product fits in. "The effort to really fit the items that she sells, recommends which body frame best fits the item and if there are any flaws on the item. She honestly shows it and tells it." – Participant B3.

3.4. The Satisfaction of the Online Consumers based on the Strategies of the Online Sellers

3.4.1. Factors that Buyers consider in Purchasing Again

3.4.1.1. Sellers being responsive satisfies buyers

Participants reveal that being responsive to their queries made them satisfied with the seller's service. When it comes to sellers communicating with their buyers, one participant expressed that she felt assured when sellers do not ignore her concerns. She described it as if she were being seen and heard. "It gives me the assurance that I am being seen or heard and that they do not ignore my concerns. They can see that they are also at fault if ever I have a concern At least things are being clarified from both ends." – Participant B3.

3.4.1.2. Good customer service

One of the factors why buyers purchase from a shop again is good service that sellers provide them. Participant B4 said that having a good customer service is an indicator that the shop is doing a good job, and this will make buyers patronize their products. "I think the good service and the quality of the product, I should say are the reasons why I will buy again because when a customer is fully satisfied, it reflects that the shop is doing a good job and it makes the buyer patronize it even more." – Participant B5.

When it comes to the shop's products, one participant said that she will buy again from the shop if the seller is concise in giving information about the product such as explaining the quality of the clothes, its fabric, and the like. "She always explains the quality of the clothing piece, what material it is, the specific kind of material and fabric, whether it is lightweight, soft, or heavy to wear. She would also suggest occasions to wear her products." – Participant B3

3.4.1.3. Convenient transaction process

Some participants talked about transactions being less hassle and giving them more options when it comes to checking out their products, specifically Shopee checkout which they described as more convenient and affordable on shipping rates. Shopee is a Singaporean e-commerce company that grew popularity also in the Philippines. "It is convenient when they also have Shopee account where I can easily check out the item." – Participant B1. "Shipping fee is cheaper in Shopee check outs." – Participant B2.

Aside from the shipping of products, other buyers claim that it is more enticing if the seller will also provide different payment methods since it is convenient for them to have different options on paying for what they purchased. "I think there are sellers who ask what mode of payment I prefer... so it really is convenient on my part if the seller asks me that because I can pay without hassle since we consensually agreed on the payment method." – Participant B5.

Based on the interview, most buyers, and even sellers, prefer the Cash-on-Delivery (COD) mode of payment. It enables customers to successfully make an order for a product on an online store without paying for it, with payment made once the product is received. This is supported by the finding of Tandon and Kiran's (2018) study in which they describe COD as a method through which a seller can reach out to buyers who do not have the financial means to make an online purchase. COD is the sole way of payment where online retailers can gain a competitive advantage because consumers in villages and small towns are adopting online shopping due to widening Internet penetration.

In that premise, the Social Marketing Theory supports findings of the researcher's study. It recognizes different barriers, such as technical and social barriers that hinder communication between the seller and the buyer during live selling. The findings of this study highlighted the four main components or 4Ps of Social Marketing Theory and these components were all utilized in ukay-ukay live selling. The researchers also replaced the 'place' in 4Ps to 'platform' due to Facebook's presence as a new platform to perform the seller's service. Moreover, the researchers' analysis on seller's communication strategies and buyer's satisfaction is supported by the Social Marketing Theory in which it argues that for sellers' strategies to work on buyers, they should promote, grab the seller's attention by doing different gimmicks, and reinforce their message.

4. Conclusion

Based on the study, the researchers found that two participant's answers are interconnected with each other. The two groups showed more similarities than differences in majority of categories. Results indicate that differences in categories were not notably different from each other.

Seller's communication strategies on Facebook live selling were divided into two groups—verbal and non-verbal. For verbal communication strategies, all buyers described that sellers should do gimmicks in presenting their items or during their live to be more entertaining. Consequently, buyers claim that sellers doing gimmicks is one of the factors that made them stay in live selling. Since a lot of live selling is now emerging, it is hard for sellers to compete and to stand out, especially if buyers find them dull to watch. For non-verbal strategies, sellers also make use of Facebook's share button, as well as making their backgrounds and their selves presentable to catch more buyers.

Results on the effectivity of communication strategies of sellers to buyers reveals that sellers also have difficulty with buyers, specifically joy miners, that is why they also expressed that buyers should also be responsible when they purchase items. In terms of using Facebook as an application for live selling, all participants agreed that the application is more convenient than any other medium. The only thing that hinders it is Internet connection which is inevitable because of connectivity problems in the country. On the other hand, buyers described a good seller as honest on the real state of their items since they do not buy from the shop if they do not meet their expectations. Price range, shop is active on giving updates, and seller being attentive are also factors why buyers purchase from a shop. If these are all evident from the live stream, they are more likely to purchase the item.

Lastly, buyers get satisfied on seller's performance during the transaction process because this is where they could get to talk privately and assess the service that sellers could provide them. The seller being responsive and providing convenience on transacting served as basis for buyers to buy again from the seller's shop.

The researchers also concluded that the 4Ps are important elements to make live selling effective since both groups of participants mentioned all elements that made buyers enticed to purchase and made sellers' engagement high. Also, majority of results of seller's strategies are significantly similar on what they do during their live selling based on researchers' observations after transcribing their interviews. Besides, understanding what communication strategies makes Filipino buyers purchase from a shop is vital nowadays, especially for marketing communication research.

Based on the concluded findings of the study, the researchers recommended that (1) sellers should inject humor or gimmicks during their live selling such as games and wearing eye-catching clothes to capture consumers while they are scrolling through their newsfeeds; (2) for sellers who have a huge number of followers, conduct a seminar for small business owners so that they can adopt different strategies to entice consumers during their live selling; (3) for small business live sellers, attend any trainings and webinars available online for free; (4) while live streaming or live selling is still a fairly new concept for both practitioners and academics, more research is needed to fully understand and make use of it. Since the current study focused on fashion products which is ukay-ukay, results may alter if other products such as bags, shoes, and the like were examined instead; (5) this study featured data collected online from buyers who purchased from Facebook Live and sellers using it for the purpose of selling, but future studies could broaden the scope of the current research to include other platforms such as Instagram, Shopee, Twitch, and the like; (6) explore other areas in the Philippines since this study is only limited to Metro Manila and Region IV-A; (7) while this study focuses just on small sellers in which all seller participants' followers do not exceed three thousand, it would be beneficial to learn more about

how sellers use live streaming at different levels—small sellers versus big firms, and how it affects firms' outcomes; and (8) in terms of using different research methods, future researchers can conduct a follow up study using a quantitative approach that will survey customers' satisfaction based on communication strategies that sellers use based on findings.

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