

Using Offensive Words as Unethical Advertising in Viral Marketing at Angkringan West Semarang

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ABSTRACT

Communication strategy is the main factor for doing marketing. Likewise, what was conducted by Angkringan West in order to increase the number of followers and customers in its culinary business, a communication strategy was chosen using offensive words which were considered controversial. The purpose of this study was to analyze the marketing communication strategy concept of the owner of Angkringan West interested in using offensive words in conducting marketing communications, to analyze the considerations and the expected impact of using offensive words as unethical advertising on Angkringan West. This research was conducted using a type of qualitative research. As for the results of the study, it was found that 1) the consideration of using offensive words was adapted to use the language of social communication, namely the Semarangan language which flows spontaneously; 2) choosing the strategy of using offensive words is not to cause discomfort, impolite or unethical in trading, but the acceptance of offensive words depends on the demographics of the audience and the willingness to join the Angkringan West community. Conclusion: offensive words are an appropriate marketing strategy to use with certain marketing targets.

INTRODUCTION

The culinary business is one of the businesses that is in great demand by the public. One of the culinary businesses that is in great demand is the angkringan business. Angkringan is very familiar to the lower middle class because it offers a variety of cheap menus. In Semarang, angkringan is spread across several locations.

The version of angkringan has undergone a shift, because in ancient times angkringan was interpreted as goods carried (*KBBI* , www.kbbi.lektur.id) . However, currently angkringan is interpreted as a simple restaurant building which a permanent or semi-permanent building depending on the market segmentation has targeted by the entrepreneur.

Angkringan that are familiar to lower middle class people are angkringan with semi-permanent buildings such as Angkringan Pak Gik, Angkringan Kemebul, Angkringan West, Angkringan Gaul Semarang, and Angkringan Kebon 88. These five angkringan have the same strategy in offering their wares, namely through social media, one of them is Instagram. Instagram is referred to as a promotional media because it makes it easy to advertise a product (Rahmawati, 2016) , and has a complete set of attractive features, is easy to promote products, is efficient in promotional costs, and public interest in using Instagram

is relatively high (Asmaradewi, 2019) . There is intense competition between angkringan, so each angkringan creates Instagram to promote its products.

Angkringan Pak Gik has 318 followers with 10 posts, Angkringan Kembang has 521 followers with 9 posts, Angkringan Gaul Semarang has 760 followers with 3 posts and Angkringan Kebon 88 has 509 followers with 10 posts and Angkringan West has 85,400 followers with 458 posts. Even though the five angkringan use social media Instagram as a promotional medium, the five angkringan get different results due to differences in followers.

The four angkringan above, namely Angkringan Pak Gik, Angkringan Kembang, Angkringan Gaul Semarang, and Angkringan Kebon 88, posted photos of examples of the merchandise sold at these angkringans, and videos of the number of consumers who visited the angkringan; Meanwhile, Angkringan West created a video post in the form of a unique communication strategy, especially in terms of using *offensive words* towards consumers and treating consumers less politely.

However, even though Angkringan West has a communication strategy that is considered rude and unethical, Angkringan West can attract consumer interest to buy the simple culinary menu offered and Angkringan West has even become a viral angkringan. The evidence that Angkringan West is a viral angkringan at the moment is 1) on the Instagram account, Angkringan West is recorded as having 85,400 followers with 458 service posts, 2) the *host of* Angkringan West, namely Fahrudin Raharso, was appointed as a peace motivator for PSIS viewers with the slogan "Show your identity, This is your cage, your self-esteem." In the post dated January 23 2023, 3) Angkringan West was visited by buyers from various parts of the region, from officials to ordinary people because they were curious about the unique communication strategy, namely using harsh words or offensive words, 4) The host of Angkringan West *opened an endorsement service* . to advertise products on social media including the Bagong gold shop, Antaseni frozen food, Turkish ice cream, cool food to Harpindo Jaya, 5) The income of the owner of Angkringan West has increased drastically since Angkringan West became famous.

Angkringan West, founded by Fahrudin Raharso, has a different marketing strategy from angkringan in general, namely by using *offensive words* or harsh words, vulgar words, swearing or taboo words when marketing on social media through posting videos. And customer service. The use of *offensive words* in marketing strategies and customer service is not in accordance with marketing strategies as formulated in marketing rules which are regulated comprehensively starting from grammar, word choice, and communication methods to the material to be communicated. Sellers must form a good image when offering goods or services, because communication is also used as a channel for information and promotions to buyers. (Morrison, 2010:16)

The use of *offensive words* is poison in communication. (Bergen, 2016) . Marketing communication is closely related to the behavior shown by sellers when dealing with consumers. This is stated by Wazin (2014: 13) that entrepreneurs must use correct ethics in doing business. Entrepreneurial economic behavior not only considers right or wrong according to economics and law but is also based on experience and ethics. The same thing was conveyed by Tandjung (2008:45) that sellers must provide good service to buyers, be willing to listen and answer all buyers' questions so as to create comfort in the buying and selling process.

The importance of the role of marketing communications is in line with research conducted by Kusniadji (2016) that marketing communications strategies are supported by various things, one of which is promotion in the form of *advertising , personal selling , sales promotion and marketing events* . In research conducted by Mardiyanto & Giarti (2019), it was proven that effective and efficient marketing strategies were carried out using brochures, banners and social media. Based on previous research, the communication strategy carried out by the seller uses appropriate, ethical methods and is based on theories

that support marketing success and is different from the offensive word strategy implemented by Angkringan West.

The use of *offensive words* is still considered a unique way of marketing because it does not comply with proper marketing rules. In the context of Angkringan West, *the offensive words* used are viralized using social media as something that attracts the interest of visitors to Angkringan West. Viral marketing is a marketing strategy that utilizes several channels, including e-mail, e-books, blogs, social networking sites and videos (Situmorang, 2010).

Viral marketing can be used as an alternative strategy in marketing, namely by utilizing social media to offer products so that it can reduce marketing costs (Suniandari, 2017). However, the existence of viral marketing using *offensive words* raises questions that are needed as material for analysis with the aim of analyzing the marketing communication strategy concept. The owner of Angkringan West is interested in using *offensive words* in conducting marketing communications, analyzing the considerations and expected impacts in using *offensive words as unethical advertising*. At Angkringan West.

In the context of marketing communications, business people need a communication strategy to be implemented. Strategy is a method used to organize actions (Cangara, 2014:64). A marketing communications strategy is needed because marketing communications is the most important aspect in determining the marketing mission. Marketing success or failure will depend on the communication method or strategy chosen. Marketing communication consists of 2 (two) elements, namely communication and marketing. Communication is the process of combining thoughts and understanding that are conveyed to other people. Marketing is a series of activities carried out by companies to transfer values to customers (Shimp, 2003:4). In connection with the importance of marketing communications, the development of marketing communications can be carried out in several steps, namely 1) identifying the audience, 2) determining communication objectives, 3) designing effective and attractive messages, 4) selecting communication channels, 5) determining the total budget promotion, 6) making decisions tailored to promotional tools, 7) measuring results, 8) managing and coordinating the integrated marketing communications process (Hermawan, 2012:63).

The existence of a marketing communication strategy using *offensive words* is interpreted as an unethical strategy because offensive words are perceived as taboo words, which are often used. Taboo words can include swear words, with sexual and scatological references and even racism and ethnicity (T Jay, 2009). One form *offensive word* is a *swear word* or curse word. Swear words are a form of expressive language which is often identified with bad language because all swear words are taboo words. Although not all taboo words are swear words (Karjalainen, 2002). Swear words have a negative meaning because they are disgusting, rude, and offensive. Swear and offensive words are carried to a certain degree and associate negative ideas with the user of those words. In British English, someone who uses swear words refers to an offender associated with the working class and perhaps by extension someone who is far from the center of societal power (Dutton, 2007). Based on the statement above, it can be concluded that the use of swear words has a negative impact on other people and people who use these words are considered to be people from the lower class, namely the working class.

There is a viral trend in marketing to achieve maximum sales targets, so Angkringan West also carries out *viral marketing*. *Viral marketing* is the internet version of using word of mouth, which is related to creating an e-mail or marketing method that is so contagious that consumers or customers are willing or willing to spread it and convey it to friends (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). The concept of how viral marketing works is like spreading a virus, namely multiplying itself. The key to *viral marketing* is to use existing social networks to generate increased *brand awareness* or to achieve other marketing goals (such as product

sales) through the self-replication of viral processes, analogous to the spread of viruses or computer viruses (Anggraini, 2015) .

Based on this description, it can be described in the following framework.

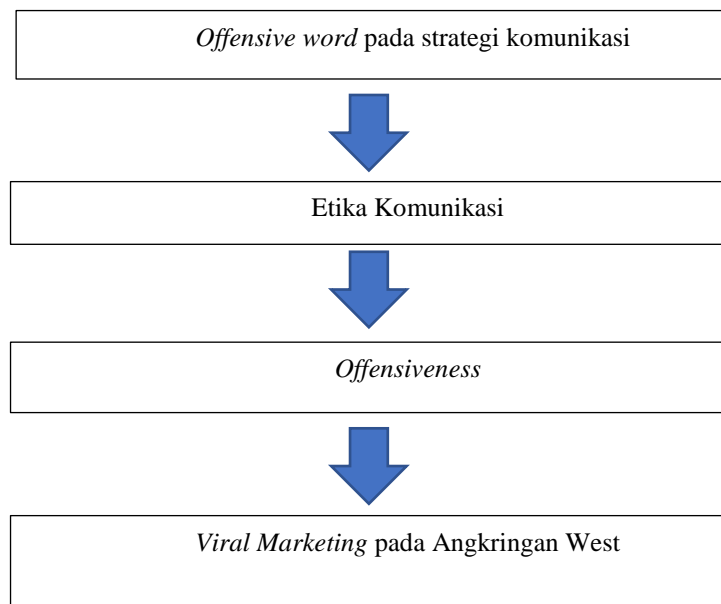


Figure 1. Framework of Thought

Based on the framework above, it can be explained that this research begins with the phenomenon of marketing communication and consumer service which has experienced a shift from the ethical elements of communication, namely in terms of the use of offensive words which should not be used by business people towards consumers. However, even though offensive words are always used, the number of *followers* and visitors who make purchases actually increases and these offensive words are considered normal and accepted by some people. On the other hand, the use of offensive words is considered unethical and disrespectful to other people, causing feelings of discomfort. The existence of this phenomenon means that research needs to be carried out using theories, namely purchasing decision theory, marketing communication strategies, communication ethics and *offensiveness* and social media.

METHOD

This research was conducted using qualitative research. This research was carried out at Angkringan West which is located on Jl. Srejeki Dalam Raya 33 Semarang. The uniqueness of Angkringan West is the marketing and service communication strategy carried out by sellers to buyers, namely in terms of the use of offensive words.

The data sources used in this research are primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources are sources obtained directly from the research location, namely interviews and field observations, and secondary data sources are data sources that are not obtained directly from the field, for example reference books, journals and documents that support research.

The data obtained was tested for validity using source triangulation, namely by checking various sources. The sources that will be tested are sources or information from interviews conducted by several respondents, namely the owner of Angkringan West, Angkringan West work partners and visitors to Angkringan West. On the other hand, researchers will also use various secondary sources containing information about the

development of Angkringan West, namely *online* data sources originating from social media, newspapers and personal documentation of the owner of Angkringan West.

In this research, the data analysis technique was carried out using the analytical descriptive method, namely the researcher describes the data collected so that research results can be obtained based on the results of the data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Marketing Communication Strategy

Angkringan West is a businessman who uses social media to introduce his business to the wider community. Angkringan West uses Instagram as a medium to promote its business which was founded in 2019. According to information provided by the owner of Angkringan West on April 3 2023, Instagram was chosen to promote the business because Instagram is one of the social media that is widely used by people, especially the younger generation. Instagram also has interesting features, starting from being able to upload messages, videos, *reels*, *live* and even being able to provide comments on uploaded videos or messages so that there is interaction with Instagram users. Instagram's ability to interact with the wider community is a very important feature for Angkringan West because with this interaction feature, it can be used to minimize issues related to the use of offensive words. This is in line with research that shows that interactivity in virtual space makes it possible to provide responses both directly and indirectly with *complaint handling strategies* (Purnamasari et al., 2019). On the other hand, using Instagram can also save promotional costs. This is in line with the research results of Asmaradewi (2019) which states that Instagram is a promotional medium because it has a complete set of interesting features.

According to information from the owner of Angkringan West, using Instagram does not mean that other applications are not good, but the owner of Angkringan West chose Instagram because his community uses social media to interact. Thus, angkringan owners are more familiar with using this social media compared to other social media. The community owned by the owner of Angkringan West is a music group in Semarang, students and young people, so by using Instagram it is hoped that it can entertain members of the community owned by the owner of the angkringan. On the other hand, the owner of Angkringan West is also targeting the market share of music lovers, students and young people who can watch his uploads on Instagram.

The choice of using Instagram by the owner of Angkringan West was the right choice because Angkringan West is able to carry out viral marketing through content created by the owner. Due to this viral marketing, Angkringan West has many *followers*. There are followers because of the uniqueness of Angkringan West which makes Instagram viewers curious about coming to Angkringan West. There are several things that according to the results of researchers' observations are considered unique, namely as follows.

1. Language use

The use of language is an important component in carrying out promotions, whether on social media or creating audio-visual advertisements. According to observations on Angkringan West's Instagram social media, angkringan owners prefer to use language that tends to be harsh or also known as offensive words. The *offensive words* commonly used by angkringan owners are vulgar, rude and swearing. Angkringan owners not only use these *offensive words* in video content that will be uploaded on Instagram social media but also in everyday life when providing service to customers. The use of this language is not meant to be insulting but is a social language that is often used as everyday language.

The use of *offensive words* to customers does not cause misunderstandings for customers, but rather attracts customers to come and buy the food products offered.

In the context of using *offensive words*, there is a shift in values regarding business communication. Customers should receive preferential treatment from sellers, one of which is in terms of the use of language because the seller's impolite behavior will cause social conflict, as expressed by Culpeper. Et al (2003). However, based on observations at Angkringan West, the angkringan owner does not use language that is smooth, polite and respectful of customers, but instead uses language that is impolite, vulgar and unethical. According to the results of an interview with the owner of Angkringan West, the choice of language flows naturally and there is no preparation, editing and phrasing either for video content or when providing customer service. The owner assumes that when a customer enters the Angkringan West area, the customer must follow the "customs" that apply to Angkringan West. In the context of language use, the owner of Angkringan West uses the same language for all visitors to Angkringan West, but for official visitors, the owner still uses more polite language.

The assumption that currently there has been a shift in communication values between traders and buyers is an inappropriate comment because the use of *offensive words* only applies to a small number of traders who want to sensationalize their business breakthroughs, such as Karen's Dinner, Angkringan West. But traders in general still use grammatical rules that are polite, ethical and full of respect for customers. Angkringan West is often seen as duplicating the style of service carried out by Karen's Dinner, but according to the owner of Angkringan West, the concept created in promotions on Instagram is not to provide customer service rudely, shouting or insulting, but rather the choice of language used by the owner is language choices among lower society, those with low educational backgrounds, art lovers, young people and students who need social languages. The choice of language made by the owner of Angkringan West is in line with the opinion of Christy (2006) and Mortimer (2007) that the acceptability of using *offensive words* depends on consumer demographics.

On the other hand, the owner of Angkringan West also always goes live and replies to all comments to minimize the emergence of negative issues regarding Angkringan West. The owner's behavior is in line with the *complaint handling strategy* that interaction by replying directly or indirectly is very useful for dealing with negative issues.

2. Consistency of speech style and behavior

Apart from using language choices that are considered controversial, the owner of Angkringan West is also unique in terms of consistency in speaking style and behavior. The owner of Angkringan West has a speaking style with a consistent accent and intonation. The owner of Angkringan West chooses to upload funny and spontaneous videos.

3. Typical use of Semarangan language

For language selection, the owner of Angkringan West consistently uses Semarangan language. Semarangan language is the native dialect of Semarang which is used as a characteristic in communicating at Angkringan West. The Semarangan language is used according to the owner's original region of origin, with a slightly high and 'gassy' intonation

4. Characteristic appearance

The appearance used by the owner of Angkringan West can also be considered consistent because every day and wherever the owner uses the same appearance. The characteristic long hair is used as a unique feature so that the owner of Angkringan West is often asked to become an endorser.

According to the results of interviews conducted by researchers with informants on April 3 2023, the owner of Angkringan West never prepared costumes

or content to be videoed, because all content was natural and spontaneous. The purpose of the owner of Angkringan West for not making preparations is as follows.

- a. The owner of Angkringan West wants to introduce everyday life to the community by showing intimacy, kinship, and simplicity. In this way, the uploaded video will arouse people's interest in coming because they want to know the real conditions at Angkringan West. This is proven by the many people who are curious and come to visit Angkringan West.
- b. The owner has no experience in creating quality content, so the owner only uses the daily experiences of the owner of Angkringan West as content.
- c. The owner does not plan the content created because the owner prefers to be spontaneous in creating content so that it looks natural.

Based on the results of the description above, it can be seen that the use of *offensive words* is adjusted to the demographics of owners and customers who frequently interact. The owner of Angkringan West uses *offensive words*, not aimed at the whole community, because Angkringan West has a target market, namely the music community that often visits Angkringan West, students and young people. So the choice of *offensive words* is in accordance with the world and relationships of Angkringan West's target market. The factual conditions that occurred at Angkringan West are not in line with the theory presented by Bergen (2016) that *offensive words* are poison in communication. According to this theory, when someone speaks using *offensive words* it will cause communication discomfort so that the people involved in the communication increase their emotions.

If viewed from an ethical perspective, *offensive words* are unethical language because the language is rude and inappropriate to convey as advertising language for a product. This is stated by Wazin (2014) that entrepreneurs must use correct ethics in doing business. Entrepreneurial economic behavior not only considers right or wrong according to economics and law but is also based on experience and ethics. But the phenomenon that occurs in language choice at Angkringan West is that entrepreneurs don't just promote using common methods, there needs to be unique innovation so that customers will be curious to interact on social media and use the products sold by the owner of Angkringan West.

There is a controversy regarding *unethical words* as *offensive words*, so the owner of Angkringan West responded by giving the opinion that the community in his angkringan does not use ethical or unethical, but rather the language is the social language used, there is no offense to someone's honor. The statement from the owner of Angkringan West is in line with Thewall (2008) that the use of *offensive words* is very contrary to the way of communication for middle and upper class society.

B. Expected Impact by Using Offensive Words

The use of *offensive words* by the owner of Angkringan West is expected to have a broad impact on society, especially society that matches the demographics expected by the owner of Angkringan West. The use of *offensive words* is still a strategy that is considered strange by society because the use of these words will not be accepted by all levels of society, only certain people.

Offensive words is considered slang, so the owner of Angkringan West continues to target the market share of young people. With a combination of *humor*, *offensive words* and using a casual everyday style, Angkringan West's content enters the marketing realm. The use of *offensive words* is considered bad by some people, however the use of *offensive words* is actually the right choice of language, as stated by Hermawan (2012) that to develop marketing communications, it is necessary to identify the target audience for the marketing. Since the owner of Angkringan West already knows the target market share for marketing, the marketing message can easily be conveyed. This is proven by the increasing number of visitors and *followers* of Angkringan West.

With the skills of the owner of Angkringan West in managing potential in the form of the ability to determine the target market, how to choose language and marketing procedures, *viral marketing emerged*. According to the results of an interview with the owner of Angkringan West, *viral marketing* is not the main goal of marketing. The initial aim of marketing through mass media was to increase the number of customers at Angkringan West, which did not sell well in 2019. The spread of Covid 19 requires the owner of Angkringan West to be more creative in creating content to attract people's attention to come to the angkringan.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research is that the use of harsh words or offensive words in Angkringan West's Instagram content is adapted to the communication language commonly used in the community. The language used is Semarangan which flows spontaneously without planning and editing processes. Offensive words are used not because of changes in ethical values in marketing communications, but because they are in accordance with the daily language of the community that frequently visits Angkringan West. Apart from that, it was found that offensive words were well received by the demographics in the community. The promotional targets for Angkringan West are young people, students and the music community who often gather there, but the use of offensive words attracts the interest of the wider public to visit the place, even though it is not the main target of Angkringan West's Instagram content.

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