

Panic Buying During Pandemic and Its Relevance of the Perception on the Efficacy of “Bear Brand” Milk

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ABSTRACT

The imperfect development and distribution of covid-19 vaccines in the world has triggered public efforts to seek information and alternative solutions to prevent or cure covid-19 infection. A rumor circulated and believed by public is the consumption of Bear Brand milk. This rumor started circulating in the community due to various statements from post covid-19 patients who have been recovered because one of them had consumed Bear Brand milk during his/her treatment. In the end, the information on the need of consuming Bear Brand milk perceived this product is needed during the covid-19 recovery period. In the second wave of covid-19 pandemic, namely with the emergence of variants of the novel covid-19 virus. One of which is delta variant which then significantly increase the number of covid-19 victims in several parts of Indonesia. This is in line with the increasing number of covid-19 victims and limited health care services as well as medical care. In the end, it leads to panic buying on various commodities which the most popular product is Bear Brand Milk. The method used in this study was qualitative case study. The data collection technique in this study included interviews and literature review of relevant journals. The findings showed that the emergence of panic buying behavior was caused by relevance between perception built by a product advertisement, consumer testimonials, media provocation as well as other relevant conditions experienced by Indonesians during the second quarter of covid-19 on the Bear Brand Milk product.

Keywords: Bear Brand Milk, panic buying, mass media.

1. INTRODUCTION

On March 2, 2020, Indonesia confirmed the first case of Covid-19 which infected two Indonesia citizens. President Jokowi reported that two Indonesian citizens had contact with Japanese citizen who came to Indonesia.

On March 31, 2020, it was confirmed 114 new corona virus cases found in Indonesia, bringing the total number of infections to 1528 people. Since then, the Covid-19 pandemic has started in Indonesia. The Covid-19 virus is a form of virus that emerged and spread rapidly before research on antivirals was discovered. In the end, Covid-19 pandemic causes social and economic disruption around the world, including Indonesia. Various efforts have been carried out by Indonesian Government to deal with Covid-19, starting from reinforcement of Restrictions on community activities to accelerating vaccines for the community. The impacts of this uncomfortable situation urge public to find a solution for those who

get exposed to Covid-19, either seek information independently or exchange information with their friends or colleagues. During the pandemic, there are most traded commodities such as medicines, food and beverage, vitamins and personal protective equipment. One of the drink products becomes a hot topic of discussion and the most searched by public is Bear Brand Milk which believed to have multifunctional and quality efficacy in the process of restoring the body after illness.

Bear Brand Milk products eventually targeted by Covid-19 sufferers, which then it has led to the episodes of panic buying within the society. News released by Kompas.co, on July 4, 2021, entitled Due to Covid-19 pandemic Indonesians are panic buying Bear Brand Milk (*Rebutan Susu Beruang, Panic Buying Corona, dan Kepanikan Warga*) shows the high demand for the product, or exceeds normal. This panic buying phenomenon cannot be separated from various causes which will be explained in this study.



Figure 1. Bear Brand product visual development

2. UNDERSTANDING THE OBJECT IN A CASE.

2.1. The Development of Bear Brand Milk Product.

Bear Brand Milk is a powdered milk product that has been known since 1898 in Switzerland under the brand name Bärenmarke. In 1906, Bear Brand milk product began to be sterilized and marketed in Southeast Asia, especially in the Philippines under the brand name Marca Oso (Bear Brand Swiss Milk). In 1930, Bear Brand milk product entered and marketed in Indonesia known as “Susu Cap Beruang” which has natural ingredients. In 1976, the product officially widely distributed in Indonesia and in 1980, the product expanded to Thailand. Furthermore, in the development of product and its brand, in 1992 Nestlé as the owner of the product modified the logo in realistic way with a bear breastfeeding her cub, altered to a simpler lined visual form (outline picture).

In 2001, it was launched Bear Brand Jr. Variant. In 2006, Bear Brand Gold variant with multi-vitamin content was introduced. In 2009, Laos has misunderstood on the use of Bear Brand Milk products and used it as breast milk substitutes for toddlers under 36 months of age. In the end, it prompted Nestlé to remove the bear cub image and altered the logo to a bear holding a glass of milk. In 2010, the Bear Brand milk variant appeared with Ginseng and Ginkgo Biloba flavors. In 2014, they increased the content of 100% daily vitamin C intake and iron content in the milk. In 2019, Bear Brand Milk again developed its contents by adding fortification elements (Zinc). In 2020, Bear Brand Fortified Powdered Milk Drink was introduced its ready-to-drink in the form of Tetra Pak Milk Packaging.

2.2. Indonesian Perceptions on Bear Brand Milk.

Since its appearance in Indonesia in the 1930s, the selling of Bear Brand Milk products has been distributed to grocery stores owned by Chinese-Indonesian and during its marketing, references regarding the health benefits and the sellers’ cure have been included. In the end, the image of a product trusted for its value was built for Bear Brand Milk in Indonesia. During the process of individual product distribution until 1976, PT Nestlé Indonesia started marketing their product simultaneously all over Indonesia and began advertising campaign for Bear Brand Milk product.

During the process of advertising campaign, one of the old advertising scripts for the Bear Brand Milk campaign has also been found. The script explained about the content of Bear Brand Milk, which was a technique to one of the advertising message strategies, namely the USP (Unique Selling Proposition) developed by advertising expert Rooser Reeves. This advertising technique emphasizes the advantages and disadvantages of competing products (Suyanto, 2004).



Figure 2. One of the findings of an old ad copy from Susu Bear Brand in Indonesia.

Narrative points that stand out in the description of the body copy of the advertisement using the old spelling Indonesian explanation are:

- "...Soesoe manis tjap Beroeang menjebakkan anak lekas besar dan koeat (The benefits of Bear Brand Milk cause children to grow big and strong)". In this description, it is clearly said that Bear Brand Milk is a product that is beneficial for the physical development in young children.
- "...Soesoe ini asalnja dari Zwitserland, soesoe negeri jang telah terkenal sebagai asal soesoe jang paling baik (Bear Brand Milk comes from Switzerland, a country that has been well-known as the origin of the best of milk." It emphasizes that a guarantee of high quality of Bear Brand Milk product.
- "Djoega bisa dapat Soesoe éntjér Bear Brand (Gesteriliseerd), jang menoeoet dokter-dokter ada baik sekali boeat orang-orang toea dan orang jang sakit (Doctors recommend Bear Brand diluted milk for seniors and sick people." In the above-statement, there is a sentence that also mentions the claims of doctors, that Bear Brand Milk is good seniors and sick people.

At that time, this ad eventually was published in different types of mass media. This narratives in the advertising eventually becomes a form of education to the public so that it becomes part of the brand knowledge in the broader communities' perspectives.

In the 80s Nestlé officially developed a complete advertising campaign for Bear Brand Milk over different types of mass media to create the concept of high-quality milk products. The advertising agency at that time created the concept of Bear Brand Milk not only as high-quality milk for toddlers, children, seniors and sick people. The advertising concept was developed into an awareness that Bear Brand Milk has become part of a healthy quality of life.

The USP values of the Bear Brand Milk advertising message are as follows:

- Headline, "Open and discover the joys of health".
- Sub Headline, "Bear Brand Milk 100% Fresh Milk".
- Body copy," Fresh milk is one of the natural good things of life. Natural and healthy like the morning sun and fresh air. Bear Brand milk is 100% fresh milk made from high-quality dairy milk. Sterilized to build complete protection for your body. Reach the pinnacle of life. Open a can of Bear Brand Milk. Discover the joys of health with the purity of Bear Brand Milk.
- Tagline, "Drink Bear Brand for Maintaining Your Health".

Through a series of collection of narratives presented in the advertisement, it has created an image that Bear Brand Milk is a high-quality milk product and is recommended for consumers.



Figure 3. Salah satu bentuk naskah iklan Susu Bear Brand yang dikampanyekan oleh Nestlé di Indonesia awal tahun 80'an

Imaginary evidence in various relevant points, namely:

- Bear Brand milk is securely packaged and sealed.
- Bear Brand milk is ready to drink pure milk derived from the best dairy cows.
- Fresh milk is very good for your health.

The imagery that has been delivered thoroughly in the advertising narratives of Bear Brand Milk eventually became a form of advertising communication for a Bear Brand Milk product campaign that started the life cycle of a milk product.

In the process of the life cycle of Bear Brand Milk products, from the beginning until now, it has created Indonesian perceptions that Bear Brand Milk has become a product choice that has been accepted in the Indonesian culture, that Bear Brand Milk is one of the references from milk products that have become the choice of Indonesian people through generations.



Figure 4. salah satu tampilan iklan Susu Bear Brand selama bulan puasa.

3. VARIOUS UNDERSTANDING OF RELEVANT THEORIES

3.1. The Efficacy of Bear Brand Milk in Relevance of The Development of Hypodermic Needle Theory to Computer Mediated Communication

Circulated news about the efficacy of Bear Brand Milk within Indonesian society during the second quarter of the covid pandemic, cannot be separated from an issue by word of mouth in a society that is widespread beyond the role of social media and online, electronic, and print mass media. Several news about the efficacy of Bear Brand Milk as an alternative drink for curing patients with the delta variant of covid 19 in Indonesia. Indonesian society perceived on Bear Brand Milk instantly appeared and became a huge demand in the healing process for patients with COVID-19 variant delta. Massive news circulating in the community through different forms of mass media since the beginning of the covid pandemic until now has continuously provided an understanding that forms a "framing" perception that Bear Brand Milk is believed to be a milk product with good nutritional content for the healing process.

Several news on social media and mass media refers to a model of thought by Melvin DeLeur & Rokeach known as stimulus-response theory and later developed by Harold Lasswell in 1920 with the term Hypodermic Needle Theory.

This model has the assumption that the components of communication (communicators, messages, media) are very powerful in influencing communication. Called hypodermic needle because in this model it is implied as if communication is injected into the communicant's soul, as drugs are stored and distributed in the body so that changes occur in the physical system as well as persuasive messages change the psychological system.

The hypodermic needle model is basically a one-step flow, namely the mass media delivered the information directly to the audience as a mass audience. This model assumes the mass media directly, quickly and has a very strong effect on the mass audience. This mass media is corresponding with the mechanistic Stimulus-Response (S-R) theory and was often used in psychological research between the 1930s and 1940s. The S-R theory explains that each stimulus will produce a response spontaneously and automatically such as a reflex. For example, if our hand is hit by a spark (S) then spontaneously, automatically and reflectively we will pull our hand (R) as a response in the form of an avoidance movement. The response in the example is highly mechanistic and automatic, without waiting for a command from the brain. The term hypodermic needle model in mass communication is defined as

a mass media that can have a strong, direct, directed and immediate effect. The immediate and instant effect is in line with the notion of Stimulus-Response which has been known since research in psychology conducted in the 1930s.

The hypodermic bullet or needle theory assumes that the media has a very strong power and the communicant is considered passive or ignorant. This theory assumes that a communicator can trigger a communication bullet that is so magical at a defenseless (passive) audience.

In general, the audience is considered just a group of people who are homogeneous and easily influenced. So, the messages delivered to them will always be received. This phenomenon gave birth to a theory of communication science known as the hypodermic needle theory.

In general, the concept of the Stimulus-Response (S-R) model which comprises unidirectional communication was originally found in 1930 and is currently developing into the concept of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) theory developed by Culnan and Markus. In CMC there is a thought process of communication flow that is created between the information provider and the party receiving communication with the support of an online-based media and in the process is not bound by time and place. Unlike the S-R theory in which the informant plays a major role in controlling a news report to the one who receives the information. CMC theory develops more than S-R, where the giver and recipient of information can interact with each other which in the end the news will develop in quality.

It should be understood that the existence of print and electronic mass media which is part of the Hypodermic Needle theory to social media is related to the theory of computer mediated communication. Both still exist and have an important connection in creating a "framing" of people's thoughts about the importance on the need of Bear Brand Milk consumption in the healing process of the delta variant of covid-19 to lead the episodes of "Panic Buying" within Indonesian society.

4. ANALYSIS

In the next step, we will look at the relevance of the various factors that led to the panic buying process of Bear Brand Milk products during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic that happened in Indonesia. During its development, a packaged milk was under the name of "Susu Bear Brand" or among the Indonesian people initially known as "Susu Cap Beruang".

After the naming, Bear Brand Milk is also fortified with various elements of the advantages of these milk products, namely:

- Instant milk is packaged in airtight and sterile cans, thus adding consumer trust that this dairy product is safe.
- Bear Brand Milk is a dairy product originating from Switzerland which known as the best milk producing country in the world.
- Bear Brand Milk products were initially claimed to be very safe for the use on infant formula (claimed through one of the classic advertising scripts for Bear Brand Milk).
- Another claim that gives confidence to the advertising script is the claim from doctors that Bear Brand Milk is very good for the seniors and sick people. Providing certainty that the milk product is a multi-efficacy dairy product.

Numerous product advantages that are conveyed to consumers are then maintained in a sustainable manner by advertising agencies with a consistent concept of pure milk quality and body health recommendations. The keywords that always shown in every print and mass media advertisement at that time were "Health" and "Purity".

Until now, the strategy for delivering advertisements from this dairy product is still consistent with emphasizing "Purity" and "Health", so that the consumers still believes that Bear Brand Milk is the best milk product. In this case this explanation is considered as the first phase (beginning) of the communication process.

Entering the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, all Indonesian people are making full efforts try to find cure for the Covid-19 virus. They are trying to consume a variety of nutritious foods and drinks to recover them from the Covid-19 virus.

Various ways are taken, one of which is the emergence of suggestions to consume Bear Brand Milk. From the information circulating within the community and through various social media and chain messages on the WhatsApp application.

There are testimonials from post-Covid-19 patients who always consume regularly while recovering from the Covid-19 virus. In the end, this news rolled like a snowball. In connection with the hypodermic needle theory stating that the mass media has full power over the information delivered to the public. Likewise, the position of social media and online communication media such as WhatsApp is a form of rejuvenation of the mass media.

The information is widespread and continuously circulated on social media and WhatsApp regarding the efficacy of Bear Brand Milk in the end it becomes a hot topic discussion that is always sought and discussed. At this understanding it has been considered beyond the stage of the second phase.

In the following developments, the needle theory developed into an understanding of CMC theory, that a delivery of information ultimately becomes a stimulus that will be responded to by the communication opponent. Social media and WhatsApp are online-based mass media and are 2-way communication, so that any information regarding the efficacy of Bear Brand Milk will always get a positive or negative response. The two-way communication response put forward in the CMC theory has been vigorously realized on the general topic of the efficacy of Bear Brand Milk.

It becomes regular topic of discussion in which will be considered as valid information for most people in Indonesia. In the end, during the second phase of the process, an abnormal increase in the search and purchase of bear milk began. One of them was validated over news from an online mass media, namely: 300 cans of Bear Brand Milk were sold in one hour at Suryamart- Sragen although the selling price surged.

In addition, several forms of provocation for online advertising promotions also encourage consumer confidence that Bear Brand Milk products are a means of healing. Some of the headlines that encourage consumers' confidence as a solution for healing the Covid-19 incubation period, are in the form of sentences, namely:

1. JADI KHASIAT SUSU INI UNTUK MEMBUNUH SI VIRUS (So the efficacy of this milk is to kill the virus) ;
2. BUAT APA AJA #BISA BANGET (do anything #really can);
3. SAKIT PUN REDA. BISA BANGET (the pain subsides, it's really good).

The various headline quotes from Bear Brand Milk online advertisements in points 1-3 give a brief emphasis to the audience that Bear Brand Milk is a dairy product that is also beneficial and appropriate for consumption for people with Covid-19. Written and visual messages that are delivered repeatedly result in these messages being embedded in a person's subconscious mind. This is part of the explanation of the basic concepts of the syringe theory. Messages that are injected into the audience's head result in someone recalling these messages when in certain situations they are stimulated by things related to the message (evoking memories of an event).



Figure 6. Bear Brand's milk ad headline that states "Efficacy" to kill the Covid-19 virus

During the Covid-19 pandemic, there were various messages in communication on social media, as well as online communication media regarding the story of Bear Brand Dairy products which resulted in an issue of public discussion. Coupled with the provocative attack on Bear Brand Milk online advertisements, it will produce a strong ingredient to push the Bear Brand Susu brand to rank first in consumers' minds (the basic concept of Al Ries & Jack Trout's thoughts on the concept of Positioning).



Figure 7. Multifunctional statement of Bear Brand's milk advertisement headline which states milk for all the needs of its consumers, including during recovery from covid-19.



Figure 5. one form of communication concept on the official site bearbrand.co.id that Bear Brand Milk is part of all life activities.

Entering the third phase of classic mass media, such as news on television and online newspapers that can be accessed anywhere and anytime, it also triggers the situation where the need for Bear Brand dairy products is increasing and needed. In the end, the news about the stock of Bear Brand Milk products and the spontaneous encouragement of the public to flock to buy Bear Milk products which eventually became known as "Panic Buying". According to experts related to the theory of Protection Motivation Theory (Johnston, Siponen, & Warketin, 2015) which states that behavioral changes originating from several fear stimuli represent fear and ultimately encourage panic buying.

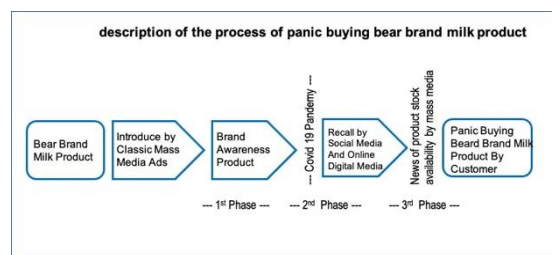


Figure 8. An overview of the theoretical model analysis of the occurrence of panic buying bear brand milk products

Another factor that also strengthens the emergence of panic buying is the emergence of the only Bear Brand Susu brand at the forefront of the audience's mind during follow-up actions/decisions to immediately purchase milk drinks for the Covid-19 incubation process. Panic buying is stimulated by elements of provocation that have been carried out and positioning the names of products or things that are most remembered.

5. CONCLUSION

In brief, panic buying is a common form of a person or public response who feel threatened with its existence caused by strong pressure of an information. Within the process, traditional mass media up to social media as well as online communication media have role on the success of delivered information which then becomes real in the public's eye.

Health issues on the consumption of Bear Brand Milk product, have become one of the relevant topics during the Covid-19 pandemic, thus public believes that Bear Brand Milk is one of the solutions for handling Covid-19.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was supported by the Chancellor of Tarumanagara University, Prof. Dr. Agustinus Purna Irawan, M. T, Bagus Muliawan, S. Kom., M. Kom, and colleagues.

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