

Public Relations Strategies for Hoax Cases of Food and Drink Products in Indonesia

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Abstract— Hoax cases and the strategy to overcome the issues conducted by food and drink companies are found through this qualitative research. The broken product packaging, Halal Certificate, contaminated product, lard and pork containing, absence of expired date and dangerous contents are the main cases. The information was spread through social media Face Book in form of video, news, the written status, discussion group on Kaskus and E-mail, also smartphone applications become the media of spreading. The receivers' responses are questioning and doubting the products, analyzing the complicated cases, believing the information, being worried and boycotting to consume the products. The last they issued to the courts. In overcoming the critical image of the company, they made efforts such as investigation, press conference, hotline service, confirming the product quality by the company, Indonesia National Agency of Drug and Food Control and Indonesia Ulema Council, personal interaction as well as court process.

Keywords— Public Relations Strategy, Social Media, Hoax, Image, Lost.

I. INTRODUCTION

No one questions the roles of technology in making every life aspect easier. Nevertheless not all people are able to follow the fast changing of it properly nor wisely. There are still many prerequisites to have the benefits of and there are many negative impacts for those who are not ready in facing it.

In communication aspect, internet technology becomes the main factor for the wild changing. According to the research company, since 2014 internet has been used by 72,700 Indonesian and 98% of them have social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram¹. As the consequence, information and news either true or fake are spread in every second almost to all who have the tools of technology without filtering any contains of the information.

Social media has the important roles in spreading information for mass society. In the beginning, the social media are created as media for the users to participate, to share and to change or to trade both information and ideas in virtual networks easily. [1] According to Andreas Kaplan and Haenlein (2010.p.59) social media enable to create and to transfer user-generated contents. There are some specific characteristics of social media. [2] Those are stated by Gamble, Teri, and Michael (2002.p.59) that the messages are delivered not only to one person but many people, without any

gatekeeper, faster than any other media and the receiver determining interaction time.

Unfortunately many delivered messages often the false one and become a hoax. A hoax is defined as something intended to deceive or defraud. The worse is hoax can be spread very quickly and widely just because the receivers redeliver to their contacts with no consideration in prior.

The hoax phenomena become seriously affecting to the economic sector when the news is about the product. The producer or company has to make some big efforts to clarify that the information people get is not true. In Indonesia some products with their brands become the victims as the subjects of the research are Aqua, Coca Cola, Mizone, Teh Botol Sosro, Indomie and Tepung Bumbu Sasa

Some of them are the drink products which are Aqua, Coca Cola, Mizone and Teh Botol Sosro; while Indomie and Tepung Bumbu Sasa are the food products. Both products become the main interests for people in Indonesia. It is not only about the healthy matter but also about the Halal one. Halal is the religion belief for Moslem that the products could be consumed according to the God's rules.

Since food and drink are very sensitive to be consumed, the companies must assure that their products fulfill consumers' demands. In the case of fake information they cannot make any delay to clarify, to admit or to deny. In this stage the roles of the public relations come first to rebrand the company images and to prevent or to minimize of being lost.

Based on the stated phenomena the research studied to answer some research questions of cases, the news spreading ways, the consumer responses or actions, and the company's strategies to overcome the cases.

II. REFERENCES

Today, social media communication dominates people's lives. They use the social network for finding information they need because the producers of it produce many things almost in whole people aspects in form of written information on Blog, images, pictures on Instagram and videos on YouTube. They also share them with the others whether they know each other before or just on line friends. This kind of communication based on internet technology. [3] Straubhaar and La Rose (2000.p.511) state that the internet has exploded out of the United States into the rest of the world. The idea of sending text, graphics, images, and even music and video via computer and telephone lines proved attractive almost everywhere. They also mention about the fear of free information in many countries that unbalanced media flows

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¹ <https://tekno.kompas.com/read/2018/03/01/10340027/riset-ungkap-pola-pemakaian-medsos-orang-indonesia>

will diminish national sovereignty. In contrast, the idea of a free flow of information reflects the basic concept of freedom of speech, whereby all people ought to be as free as possible to both send and receive information across borders (2000.p.516)

The effects of social media could be escalating the quality of society's lives; on the other hand the uncontrolled information causes the uncertainty. The free message flows are not filtered and the receivers resend all the messages even the hoax. Hoax is fake information without any certain resources and spread through internet.

Every sector could be the target of hoax not to mention business and industries. They cannot avoid when the news spreading by social media users. As the consequences they have to keep the company image well. Once the public believes the hoax information the company is risky to get lost.

Public Relations of a company have some objectives [4] Frank Jeffkins (2003.p.54) says one of the objectives is to create the general image in line with the new company's activities. In case there is some misunderstanding toward company goodwill threatening the relations between company and public, the public relations has function to improve it. While [5] L. Wilcox, Philip H. Ault, Warren K. Agee, Glen T. Cameron (2012.p.154) mention one of the aims of public relations is to manage the developing issues in the society related to the company. In line with the function, the public relations must identify and evaluate various issues affecting the company.

A public relations officer has a strategy to conduct his plan. [6] Ahmad S. Adnanputra (in Ruslan, 2014 p.134) gives the definition of public relations strategy as a chosen optional alternative to gain the public relations goals in frame of public relations plan.

III. THE METHOD AND TECHNIQUE

The research method is qualitative research method as this research tries to describe the secondary data derived from internet news from some websites informing it. The news contents become the data to be classified for answering the research questions published in range of 2006 and 2016. The blogs and websites are:

- <http://www.brilio.net>,
- <http://www.aqua.com>,
- <http://news.detik.com/berita/267683/kasus-obat-nyamuk-dalam-coca-cola-divonis-19-januari>
- <http://internasional.kontan.co.id/news/penjualan-anjlok-coca-cola-pecat-1200-karyawan>
- <https://news.detik.com/advertorial/1131849/hoax-bertebaran-tehbotol-sosro-jadi-korban-tipuan-e-mail>
- <http://tempo.co/read/news/2010/10/11/090283853/produknya-ditarik-di-taiwan-ini-jawaban-indofood>
- <http://www.hukumonline.com/berita/baca/hol10436/mediasi-kasus-coca-cola-gagal-mencapai-kata-sepakat>
- <https://www.brilio.net/news/ini-komentar-indomie-perihal-kemasan-yang-diduga-dipalsukan-mie-instan-150825k.html>
- [http://health.detik.com/read/2010/10/18/173212/1468125/763/bpom-semua-merek-mi-instan-di-indonesia-aman-](http://health.detik.com/read/2010/10/18/173212/1468125/763/bpom-semua-merek-mi-instan-di-indonesia-aman-dikonsumsi)

dikonsumsi

- <http://www.antaraneews.com/berita/168581/pt-sinar-sosro-akan-digugat-rp1-miliar>
- <http://www.antaraneews.com/berita/48102/mizone-ditarik-karena-masalah-label>
- <https://m.tempo.co/read/news/2006/12/06/05789001/mizone-sesalkan-komposisi-labelnya>
- <http://www.gomuslim.co.id/read/news/2018/01/05/6628/ini-konfirmasi-bpom-terkait-pesan-viral-produk-yang-diisukan-mengandung-babi.html>

The obtained data are reduced before being categorized to generate the terms or the concepts. Since one of the characteristics of the qualitative method is subjective this research is not to generalize. The data analysis follows Miles and Huberman technique as described by [7] Sugiyono (2006 p.277):

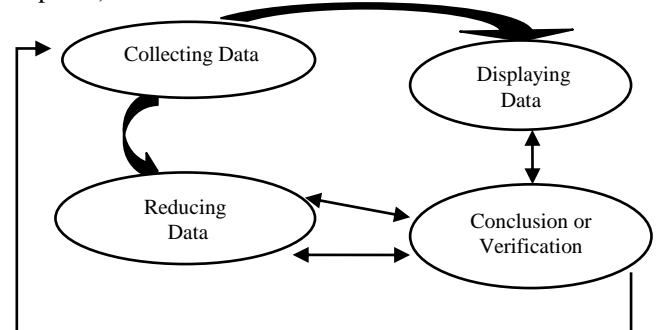


Fig.1. Interactive Model of Data Analysis

IV. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The research has found some findings. The author is narrating the product description as the subjects of the research first; then describing the answers of the research questions.

V. PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

A. Aqua

Aqua is the first mineral water product in Indonesia and is produced by the company established in 1973. The products is packaged in various plastic bottle size; 330 ml, 600 ml, 750 ml and 1,500 ml as well as the plastic cup size for 240 ml and the gallon size for 19 l. In Indonesia mineral water market, Aqua holds the first position though there are around 2,000 companies as the competitors.

B. Coca Cola

Almost all people know Coca Cola as a carbonated drink produced by The Coca Cola Company. In Indonesia there are three variants of the product which are Coca Cola, Diet Coke, Coca Cola Zero. Recently this Coke business is affected by the changing of society's drink behavior especially for the sugary drinks and as the consequence the sales get declined.

C. Mizone

It is an isotonic and nutritious drink with lychee and lime flavors and uses plastic bottle as the package. Mizone was launched in 2005. This product contains of hydromax, vitamin C and electrolyte substances. Hydromax helps carbohydrate to be energy which is useful for human body; therefore Mizone

is the energy drink.

D. Teh Botol Sosro

It is the ready bottled tea drink and has been produced since 1969. This product is the first in Indonesia and in the world. In the beginning this product used only the glass bottle; however for innovation today the product uses plastic bottle, box and pouch.

E. Indomie

One of the most popular brands of instant noodle in Indonesia is *Indomie*. For the first time it was launched in 1972. It has many flavors such as soto flavor, onion chicken, chicken curry, chicken stock and special chicken. The company keeps developing the product variants for both meat lovers and vegetarians.

F. Tepung Bumbu Sasa

It is the instant spice flour. This flour is used to mix some food and has many variants such as the original for all kind of food, the specific for fried banana, and for cooking crispy chicken.

VI. COMPANY CASES

Some news was analyzed to get the cases faced by the company. The mineral water company – *Aqua* - got the impacts of spreading fake news. *Aqua* became the trending topic due to the bottle cap was easily opened without any usual procedure for something is sealed.

Another drink company is *Coca Cola* having a case with a Japanese expatriate because he found the product he consumed containing mosquito repellent. *Teh Botol Sosro* also the drink company which was assumed selling the expired product without stating the expired date and it was claimed a dangerous substance called hydrochloric acid in it. The issue of dangerous substance was faced by *Mizone* as well. Public believed that *Mizone* was the product contained of dangerous preservatives and didn't state the main substances.

Indomie product was informed containing of E218 (*Methyl P-Hydroxybenzoate*). This is assumed dangerous to consume. The other cases of *Indomie* are the different flavor, the different spice package and product code. The most sensitive case faced by *Tepung Bumbu Sasa*. It was claimed containing *Haram* substance (pork and lard). *Haram* means it is not allowed to consume related to God's Rules in Moslem religion.

Derived from the research subjects, the author finds out that the hoax cases can be categorized into:

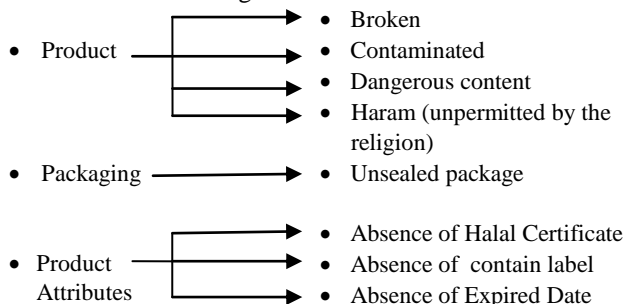


Fig. 2 Hoax Cases

VII. NEWS SPREADING

There is a video on Face Book showing the demonstration opening the *Aqua* bottle cap without revolving it. Assuming that it was not sealed properly then the product was broken.

Also on social media the information about the spice flavor contains pork and lard substances. In that case it is *Haram* to consume. The experience of buying the *Indomie* product was posted by a Face Book account user. She wrote that the product had the different flavor as the usual one.

Teh Botol Sosro hoax initially could be spread because the leak of information when an advertising group conducted the closed discussion through Mail List. The leaked information assumed that this product contained the dangerous substance.

The fake information or Hoax in this case was being spread through social media especially Face Book in form of video, news, the written status of someone's experiences, email and group discussion Kaskus and Mail list, and in the following mobile phone applications the media spreading. This can be described in this following figure:

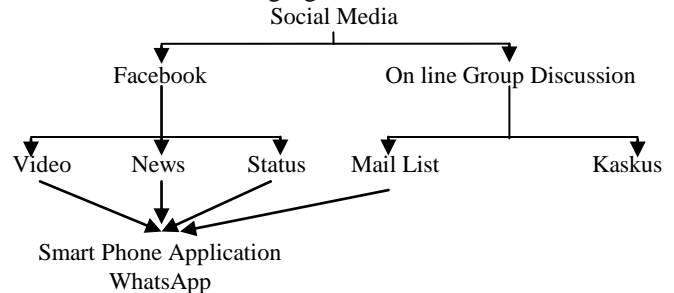


Fig. 3. Media Spreading

VIII. PEOPLE RESPONSES AND ACTIONS

The message receivers have their own responses when the messages come. For *Aqua* case, some Face Book users respond toward the news as follow:

“... today bye-bye Aqua.. go back to nature ...” said Jusri Wahyudi.

While Rivaldo Chan Yago didn't believe that *Aqua* company would make such the bottle cap that can destroy *Aqua* image; and he judged the people who believe as someone fool.

One user said:

“There was an error in one of the factories not all factories and make sure that this won't happen again.” NuuNaa Stefani Tjan confirmed.

The *Coca Cola* consumer directly reported his complaint to a police and issued the case to the court. The same action was done by a *Teh Botol* consumer – Dalas - because he became the victim of expired product. He said:

” There is no company's good will, so I continue the case to the state court and demand one billion rupiah.”

One discussion participant in *Mizone* case directly responded to the case as the real dangerous product:

“It is absolutely dangerous because there was preservative.”

The fake information about *Indomie* was discussed and shared by more than 3,130 Face book users. Some of them

were worried and believe the news. This kind of response also came from Moslem people toward *Tepung Bumbu Sasa*. This case made Moslem consumers worried because they thought they consumed the *Haram* products.

From all data, receivers' responses can be described as follow:

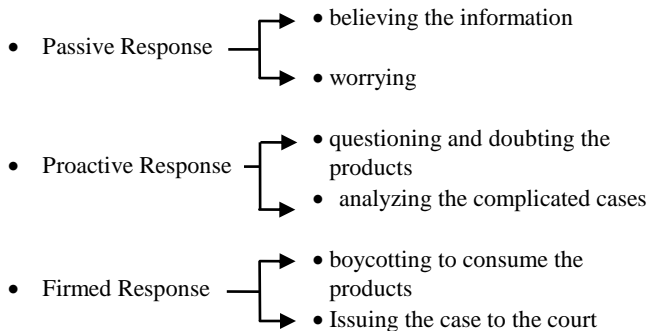


Fig. 4. Receivers' Responses

IX. THE COMPANIES' STRATEGIES

In solving the hoax problems, the companies apply some strategies. The representative of *Aqua* was not able to deliver the statement because the internal team was still investigating. He just assured that as long as there was no changing of flavor and aroma, *Aqua* was safe. However he invited those who found the broken bottle cap to contact on its hotline service to be investigated as soon as possible.

Investigation was also conducted by *Mizone* producer to find out the reason of the case. The representative explained that in one liter *Mizone* containing 100 mg potassium sorbate and 1,000 mg sodium benzoate while the standard must have 600 mg benzoate.

The case of *Teh Botol Sosro* was responded by the representative company. He visited the victim of the product directly and offering to finance his medical cost even it was rejected. Then they took the legal action. He clarified that the product was for one year effective and three month before expired date, the company withdrew the product.

The legal action also must be done by *Coca Cola* Company as the consumer issued the case to the court and still had no result. Each party has his own arguments.

For *Indomie* case, the company sent an email to one of the consumers to make a confirmation. Finally the Indonesia National Agency of Drug and Food Control (BPOM) stated that all registered brands are safe to consume.

The clarification of Indonesia *Ulema* Council (MUI) solved the case of *Tepung Bubuk Sasa* case. This institution clarified that based on the audit there was no pork contained in four products.

These findings of companies' strategies could be concluded as the following figure:

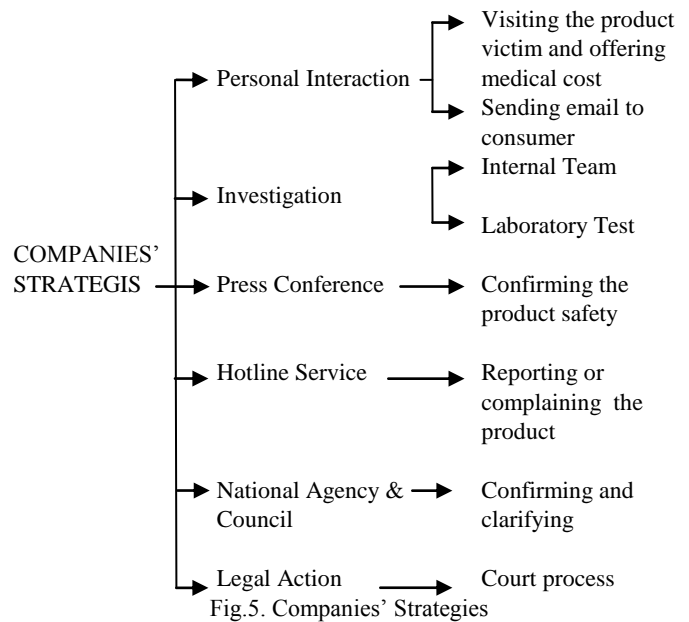


Fig.5. Companies' Strategies

The findings of the research derived from the secondary data therefore this research is a subjective research. It categorizes the obtained data to conclude the faced cases affected by the spreading of hoax information. The final findings are the strategies conducted by the company to keep or to improve the company image.

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About Author:



Social media cause uncontrollable impacts in human lives; the media literacy is a must to respond any information wisely and to become the smart social media users.