Strategic marketing or unethical promotion?  
A history of Anmum

Anmum entered the infant and young child feeding sector through its milk for pregnant women and mothers. Fonterra’s predecessor, the New Zealand Dairy Board launched Anmum 1 for pregnant women and Anmum 2 for lactating mums in the 1990s.

When these products (now rebranded as Anmum Materna and Anmum Lacta respectively) hit the market and were promoted in a big way, the need for such products, which are much more expensive than nutrient-rich local foods, was questioned by nutritionists and health workers.

Women are perfectly capable of selecting a well balanced healthy diet during pregnancy and lactation at a fraction of the cost of glamorous milks like Anmum. However, the promotion of such expensive designer products may lead women to believe erroneously that they are necessary for a safe pregnancy and successful breastfeeding. Furthermore, Anmum had portrayed itself as supporter of the breastfeeding movement and was at the forefront of ‘helping’ health facilities to celebrate breastfeeding events.

Broken trust

When some questioned whether Anmum promotion should be allowed in healthcare facilities, it was argued that these products did not come under the scope of the Code. Unlike other brands of milks for mothers which are linked to formula products through similar names and logo, the Anmum brand was not tied to a formula product at this stage. In this respect, Anmum had the upper hand. While other competitors were blocked from entering health facilities, Anmum was allowed to do so.

It was seen as the “squeaky clean” player from New Zealand which did not promote milk for babies.
From mothers to babies

Anmum became accepted in health care facilities in South East Asia to the degree that in some communities pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers are told by health workers to take Anmum milks because:

“a well balanced diet does not always guarantee an adequate intake of all nutrients”

“your baby’s healthy brain development is in your hands”

[the product is] “good brain food for the child in your tummy” or “the first gift from mum to baby”.

Anmum developed goodwill among health workers and health facilities and it was not long before Anmum Infacare infant formulas and follow on formulas were launched into the market. By the early 2000s, Anmum Infacare formula for babies had become prominent in the market place, following the ‘good’ reputation already gained.

Look What they’re Doing Now

So how does Fonterra market Anmum formula products? Due to its foothold in health facilities through its promotion of milks for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, the Anmum brand enjoys prestige and favour with many health facilities.

For example, private hospitals in Malaysia allow Anmum access to provide routine supplies of formula milks in standard retail size packs and ready-to-feed liquid formulas for distribution to mothers in maternity wards.

Gifts bearing the Anmum logo and sporting the Anmum colours such as rucksacks, tote bags, samples of milks for mothers, free regular size formula packs and ready-to-feed bottles are commonly distributed to mothers by hospital staff, thus conferring much valued medical endorsement of the brand.

Anmum also seeks direct contact with mothers through its online club and through member-get-member schemes.

All the practices described above are forbidden under the Malaysian Code.

Anmum by Fonterra – well, it’s squeaky clean no more.