Singapore's dense, close-knit networks make people more prone to believe their contacts and take up mass behaviors, like buying toilet paper for no apparent reason, just because your WhatsApp chatmates are doing so.

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For The Straits Times

Last Friday, just as supermarket shelves were being emptied of rice, instant noodles and toilet paper, our social media accounts started filling up with messages like: “Your grandparents are buying toilet paper.” The disinformation was spreading like wildfire.

What was causing this disinformation to spread so fast and far? News reports suggest that a collective-buying frenzy among some people across the island led to a wave of panic buying.

Many messages, like my grandmother's, were similar: “Don’t do this. We’re ok.” Today’s day – a day contributed to with Hungry Ghost Festival.