



Case Report

1	Case Number	0264/17
2	Advertiser	AirAsia
3	Product	Travel
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Internet
5	Date of Determination	07/06/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.5 - Language Inappropriate language

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The campaign ran from 1 – 7 May 2017. The execution with the words GTFO was part of a broader campaign that included digital (Quantcast programmatic and Pedestrian.tv); Facebook (sponsored and organic), Google Display network and radio elements. The advert featured a strong fare of \$129 to Malaysia with a visual of a monkey looking shocked at how low the fare is. In digital executions only the acronym GTFO was used as a call to action to encourage the target audience to act on the offer and take a holiday to Malaysia.

THE COMPLAINT

A sample of comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

*It is completely offensive language to use 'GTFO' which means 'Get The Fuck Out'.
I understand that under section 2.5 this is completely unacceptable language to be using in advertising.
This 'GTFO!' is also accessible to children through their marketing on facebook and their website.*

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

Below, please find AirAsia's response to the above complaint. The requested information is provided under each of the sections outlined in your letter of 25 May 2017:

A description of the Advertisement

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A copy of the script (this is mandatory if the advertisement was broadcast on radio)

Please note: the radio execution did not include the words GTFO (more details below). Nevertheless, the script has been included in Appendix 1.

Details of the CAD reference number and CAD rating (where applicable)

There was no television element to this campaign and therefore a CAD reference number is not relevant.

Details of your advertising agency and media buyer

This campaign was developed by: Publicis Mojo based in Brisbane. Their contact details are: 2/164 Grey St, South Brisbane QLD 4101, tel: (07) 3121 6666. The key contact is Mark Allen.

Media was bought by: Zenith Optimedia, also based in Brisbane also based at 2/164 Grey St, South Brisbane QLD 4101, and contactable on (07) 3121 6750. The key contact is George Vasiliou.

A digital copy of the Advertisement;

This is attached (Appendix 2)

Comments in relation to the complaint :

It is AirAsia's view that the advertising does not contravene any parts of Section 2 of the Code. The advert does not (i) discriminate against any group or individual, (ii) rely on sexual appeal, (iii) portray violence, (iv) portray nudity or sex, (v) use obscene language, (vi) contravene health and safety standards. It is also clearly distinguishable as advertising to its target audience.

The complainant specifically references section 2.5 of the code: "2.5 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall only use language which is appropriate in the circumstances (including appropriate for the relevant audience and medium). Strong or obscene language shall be avoided."

Consequently, this point is addressed specifically below. Breaking it down into its components:

o “language which is appropriate in the circumstances” (including appropriate for the relevant audience and medium):

- Appropriate to audience:*

- o this specific execution ran in digital environments only and was only targeted to people over 18 years. Please see Appendix 3*

- o additionally it is AirAsia’s view that the message was appropriate for the audience as the use of these sorts of acronyms in everyday communication is common and widely regarded as tongue in cheek millennial speak*

- appropriate to medium: the specific execution (with the acronym GTFO) ran in a digital environment only. The use of these sorts of acronyms is even more common in a digital environment.*

- o “Strong or obscene language shall be avoided”.*

AirAsia did avoid using strong and obscene language via the use of an acronym. Additionally, where there was a possibility that children could overhear and potentially ask what GTFO is, the advert was amended. This was the case for the radio execution where GTFO was changed to O-M-G! - a phrase that has been in use for a long period of time – see Appendix 4.

Finally, looking at what a broad group of consumers’ outtake from the communication was (Appendix 5): the Facebook post received positive feedback:

- o Including commentary that this was an appropriate way to approach social media*

- o Positive reaction to the offer without negative mention of the GTFO! acronym.*

It is therefore AirAsia’s view that this communication was not offensive to the target audience.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (“Board”) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement features offensive language which could be seen by children.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser’s response.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.5 of the Code. Section 2.5 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall only use language which is appropriate in the circumstances (including appropriate for the relevant audience and medium). Strong or obscene language shall be avoided”.

The Board noted that this internet advertisement promoting cheap flights to Malaysia features the acronym ‘GTFO’.

The Board noted the advertiser’s response that the use of acronyms such as GTFO are

common in the digital space and that the advertisement was targeting over 18s online but was amended to OMG for the radio versions which would be more likely to be heard by children.

The Board noted that the acronym GTFO stands for ‘Get the fuck out’ and considered that this acronym is often used to express shock or surprise at a particular situation. The Board noted that in this instance GTFO is being used in relation to low fares to fly to Malaysia.

The Board noted it had previously considered similar complaints about the use of the acronym OMFG where the Board upheld complaints for the poster version (0184/13) and dismissed complaints for the internet version (0187/13). Consistent with its dismissed determination for case 0187/13, the Board noted that the current advertisement uses an acronym in a manner consistent with its colloquial usage and is not threatening or hostile. The Board acknowledged that some members of the community would still find the acronym itself to be inappropriate but considered that in the context of an advertisement promoting cheap air travel on an airline’s Facebook and website, where the likely audience would be adults seeking to book travel, the advertisement did not use strong or obscene language and was not inappropriate in the circumstances.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.5 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.