

CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	224/08
2. Advertiser	Air Asia
3. Product	Travel
4. Type of advertisement	Outdoor
5. Nature of complaint	Language – use of language – section 2.5
6. Date of determination	Wednesday, 9 July 2008
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A red billboard with large white text: Cheap enough to say, Phuket, I'll go. There is also a large Air Asia logo. The bottom of the billboard features smaller text: Over 93 Asian destinations. Book online at airasia.com

THE COMPLAINT

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

The use of the word Phuket which is meant to be said with an "F" and is on a huge billboard for all to read. It is situated one block away from Brisbane State High School and Somerville House. The standard of language used by society today is falling badly and this sort of sign gives the message to our kids that it is okay when it is not.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following:

This headline is part of a campaign to communicate Air Asia X's low cost offering from Australia to Malaysia and onto its Asian network consisting of 102 routes and 56 destinations. This campaign includes Outdoor and Press executions and in addition to this headline, carries other headlines such as:

*"Singapore for a Song."
"More bang for your buck to Bangkok."
"China without going into the red."
"Ho Chi Minimum Fare."
"Kuching without the Ka-Ching."*

Plus a secondary message (listed below) is being circulated currently in the South East Queensland market which is of the sale style and tonality of the new creative mentioned above.

*"Pay peanuts, get Malaysia."
"Cheap as Chopsticks."
"Next to Noodles"*

Each headline in the campaign highlights a different AirAsia destination whilst reinforcing the airlines strategy of low cost, value based air-fares to each of these destinations. The tone in which these headlines are delivered is meant to be fun, irreverent and insightful in approach, plus simple, light hearted and consistent with the AirAsia brand, which is 20% owned by the Virgin Group of Companies.

In direct reference to the complainants claim regarding the wording, I refer to the Advertising Code of Ethics, Section 2, subsection 2. 5 (below). The creative in question clearly points to a well known Malaysian holiday destination and one which name appears in a great number of holiday brochures, Australian high street travel retailer front windows and most local weekend newspaper travel sections around the country, as well in most school Geography classrooms. The reference to its pronunciation is based on personal inference and not in the positioning of the creative or the message delivery.

The destination could be replaced by a number of other destinations (Bangkok, Penang, Singapore etc) and still hold the same meaning. The creative does not contribute to, or generate the use of an F word more so than seeing the destination in the window of a Flight Centre or reading about the destination over coffee on a Sunday morning. In such I believe this creative does not fall within any of the AANA Code of Ethics categories.

2.5 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall only use language which is appropriate in the circumstances and strong or obscene language shall be avoided.

THE DETERMINATION

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

The Board viewed this billboard advertisement and noted that it used the name of a real place and as such the word could not be considered to be obscene.

The Board noted that the advertiser was an airline and that Phuket was one of their destination cities.

The Board further noted that using this city's name was an old joke and one that would not be considered offensive by a reasonable adult.

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