

Other attention-grabbing adverts

● McDonald's and the PSI

The advertisement, printed in the newspapers on June 20, a day after Singapore experienced its worst day of haze, drew flak for being flippant.

It read: "Today's Peak Sauce Index is looking deliciously high", with the letters P, S and I highlighted.

The fast food giant apologised for the "inappropriate" ad, adding that it was designed and placed when haze conditions were not as severe.

● Fish & Co and the Little India riot

The advertisement (right), which was placed on the restaurant's



Facebook page a day after the riot last month, read: "Stay away from riot & eat Bombay Fish and Chips."

The post received an instant backlash and Fish & Co apologised after removing the offending ad.

Cheap or clever?

Scoot's ad alluding to Anton Casey incident raises some eyebrows

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Seats on budget carrier Scoot's flight to the Western Australian city of Perth offered on Sunday have sold out in half a day and it was supposed to expire yesterday.

And the airline may have Briton Anton Casey to thank for it.

The offer, titled Amazingly Cheap (AC) Escape to Perth, included caricatures of the former senior wealth manager, his beauty queen wife and their son.

It is a thinly veiled reference to Mr Casey, who had called people who take the MRT "poor", unleashing an Internet backlash.

After the post went viral on Jan 20, Mr Casey lost his job and left Singapore for Perth with his family on Friday.

Offering the flights at 50 per cent off, the ad was posted on Scoot's Facebook page on Sunday and removed on the same night.

REGULAR PROMOTION

A Scoot spokesman said that the Perth sale was one of their regular promotions.

"We often tie these to topical news events, including the haze of 2013, Orchard Road floods and the Australian prime ministerial debates," the spokesman said.

The ad has drawn online attention, garnering over 1,000 likes.

Although it was an ad based on controversy, it did not draw a slew of negative comments like Fish & Co's ad after the Little India riots last month. (See report above.)

The Scoot spokesman added: "Inevitably there are some who misinterpret these light-hearted pokes, but our experience is that the vast majority see the intended humour. The escape to Perth sale



THE AD: Scoot's Amazingly Cheap Escape to Perth offer. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/ SCOOT

is no different in that respect."

But some marketing experts and netizens seem to think that the ad was not in good taste. One netizen criticised the ad for "taking advantage of a man's plight and turning (it) into a marketing gimmick".

Singapore Management University's Associate Professor of Marketing (Education) Seshan Ramaswami said that using current events as a marketing tool is always a good idea, but it can be dangerous if the event is controversial.

PUBLIC RESPONSE

He said: "The Anton Casey incident obviously evoked a huge public response, hence any ad that is related to it will also attract some social media attention.

"(But) in a controversy that is evolving, it is tough to tell exactly what is going to happen next, so moving too early might result in an ad appearing heartless or exploitative because of events that happen soon after."

Managing director of Gosh! Advertising David

Zaccheus, who has more than 25 years of experience in the industry, felt that such marketing ploys will not work in the long term.

"Gimmicks are short-lived. Every business is aiming for the long haul. The value of a brand should be built on integrity and experiential," he said.

Mr Zaccheus cited brands such as Singapore Airlines and AirAsia as examples of companies who believe in building the value of their brand.

"As it is, consumers are spoilt for choice. They might not think much (about a gimmick) if it happens once or twice. But if a company uses such tactics frequently, it might hit the wrong note eventually," he said.

Nonetheless, public relations practitioner Tang Li thought that the Scoot ad was "naughty and cheeky", but "clever and edgy".

"Scoot is not trying to appeal to high-end travellers. Ironically, Anton Casey is probably the poster boy for people who want to take the cheapest form of transport," he said.