



The DOT's "Limestone" domestic tourism ad features a striking resemblance between limestone formations in Phuket, Thailand and El Nido, Palawan, but a big difference in the cost of getting to each destination.

MANILA — The Department of Tourism's (DOT) "Limestone" domestic tourism advertisement

In the ad, photographs of a limestone formation from Phuket, Thailand and El Nido in Palawan were positioned adjacent to each other, showing a striking resemblance between the two.

The ad also showed an even more striking difference in the cost of getting to each destination.

A visit to El Nido costs some P4,500, and to Phuket, P40,500.

The outdoor ad was commissioned in partnership with leading wireless services company, Smart Communications Inc. and was part of a campaign developed by DM9JaymeSyfu.

According to DM9 chair and chief creative officer Merlee Jayme, they made sure that the campaign was “hardworking, at the same time, relevant to Filipino travelers” when Smart asked them to “develop work to push domestic tourism.”

Jayme said the ad was designed to provide “a jolting reality check” to most Filipinos who fly to other countries in search of a vacation paradise, unaware that such a place exists in the Philippines.

“The ad targets Filipinos who have traveled abroad, and yet have not seen several places in their very own country,” Jayme said.

“The line ‘Just as beautiful but not as expensive’ was totally the whole insight of the campaign,” Jayme said.

The ad is installed at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport’s pre-departure area.

DM9 creative director Louie Sotto said “Limestone” was among the last ones developed in the series.

“The very first one we thought of was Mt. Mayon and Mt. Fuji juxtaposed. This really captured the idea that our attractions are at par with the most beautiful attractions in the world. At that time, back in March, the Japan quake was still fresh, so we had to shelve that ad,” he said.

Sotto said he realized the similarity of the two spots when he was in Phuket last March while a James Bond movie reminded him of El Nido.

They combined the pictures of the two spots and found that they would merge “quite seamlessly.”

Jayme said, “Showing the beauty of our country side by side with others while showing the cost of the trip was a real eye-opener to most of us.”

“It even makes one a bit guilty of not knowing about our own beautiful places and looking overseas first for such beauty,” Jayme said.

DM9 and Smart have lined up more local tourist destinations that will be treated in a similar way in their future DOT campaigns.

Smart's award-winning “Limestone” ad for DOT is just one of the telecommunication giant's ways of supporting the government's “Pilipinas, Tara Na!” domestic tourism advocacy.

Recently, Smart launched an SMS-based info service wherein DOT sends text alerts about the latest tourism news and advisories around the country to registered users.