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CASE Survey on Budget Airlines' Refund Policy for Duplicate / Double Booking

The Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) surveyed the refund policies practiced by the four major Singapore-based budget airlines: AirAsia Berhad ("AirAsia"), Jetstar Asia Airways Pte Ltd ("Jetstar"), Tiger Airways Singapore Pte Ltd ("Tigerair") and Scoot Pte Ltd ("Scoot"), and found that they have different policies on duplicate / double online booking refunds.

From 2010 to July 2013, CASE handled 239 cases (filed and assisted) involving the budget airline industry, out of which an estimated 23 cases involved duplicate or double booking of airline flights. These are situations where consumers have made duplicate or double online bookings for the same flight due to human or computer system error. For example, consumers have accidentally selected the payment tab twice during their booking or there was some technical glitch in the computer system that resulted in the double booking. In such instances, consumers could find themselves charged twice or more for the same flight.

In the event of the consumer requesting for a refund from the airlines, their response would be as follows:

Airline	Conditions to Satisfy	Outcome
AirAsia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Both bookings are for the same destination (departure and arrival station).• Both bookings are of the same passenger count.• Both bookings are of the same passenger names for all passengers (regardless of first name and last name positioning and the sorting order of the passengers).• All bookings are made for future flights.• Departure date and return flight date of the second booking must be within 24 hours of the departure date and return flight date from the first booking.• Only refund requests received via AirAsia's web portal are accepted. The form will be processed and is only applicable to AK, FD, QZ, PQ and JW flights.	<p>The consumer retains his/her original booking.</p> <p>Once refund request conditions are met, the system will refund the consumer.</p> <p>If conditions are not met, the system will automatically reject the refund request.</p> <p>If there is a re-submission for refund, it is subject to the management's discretion to refund.</p>

Jetstar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both bookings must have exactly the same passenger name/s and city pairs – even if city pairs are inversed. • Both bookings have exactly the same flights or dates. • Second booking is made within a short period of time of the original booking e.g. within 4 hours. • Both bookings must be with any of the Jetstar Carrier codes: JQ, 3K, GK or BL. 	The consumer retains his/her original booking and gets a full refund.
Tigerair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The name of the passenger must match both bookings. • The dates of the travel for both bookings must be the same. • The destination of the travel for both bookings must be the same. 	The consumer retains his/her original booking and gets a full refund.
Scoot	<p>There is a <u>no-refund policy</u> for duplicate / double booking.</p> <p>However, if the consumer is able to substantiate their case of bereavement or medical incapacitation of the passenger, they may request for a refund.</p>	The consumer retains his/her original booking but there is no refund.

Out of the four budget airlines surveyed, Scoot is the only airline that does not provide refunds for duplicate or double online bookings. However, Scoot stated that they had implemented various measures to prevent duplicate or double booking by consumers:

- A 12-hour window in which consumers may amend their dates and name without incurring additional amendment fees (though if a new service, product or higher-priced travel date is selected, the applicable price difference will apply). However, consumers will not be able to cancel their second booking and secure a refund.
- A booking system that prevents consumers from making any second booking with identical parameters within 30 minutes of the first booking. The system will allow the second booking to go through if it was done after the 30 minutes timeline.
- A message advising consumers to check their email account for their travel itinerary, or their bank or credit card issuer for any debit record before making any second booking.

CASE met up with Scoot on 28 January 2013 to request that they revise their no refund policy for double booking. Scoot indicated on 7 February 2013 by letter that they will review their system.

Additionally, CASE would like to remind consumers to remain alert in their dealings with any airline and to exercise due care and caution in reading the terms and conditions before booking air tickets online. Consumers are advised to check on the refund policies of each airline before booking their flights in the event of human or computer system error. It is also

good practice for consumers to check with their banks on their credit card transactions, especially if they are unsure whether their flight has been booked.

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Consumers Association of Singapore:

The Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) is an independent, non-profit organisation that is committed towards protecting consumers' interest through information and education, and promoting an environment of fair and ethical trade practices. One of its key achievements is in advocating for the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act (CPFTA) which came into effect on March 1, 2004.