

OUT OF HOME

Audi raises awareness for emission-free vehicle through dissipating billboard

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Audi billboard

By SARAH JONES

German automaker Audi is showing off its new A7 Sportback h-tron quattro, which emits only water vapor, with a conceptual billboard made of the same gaseous material.

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The brand worked with creative agency thjnk to develop “disappearing billboards,” which broadcast an image of the car and a message onto clouds. Rather than sharing its message of its eco-friendly exhaust on a traditional out of home display, these atypical billboards will likely get the attention of consumers.

"This is an interesting [strategy] for the luxury auto brand," said Chuck Mascola, president of [Mascola Group](#), New Haven, CT. "The fact that they're bringing their product into the streets with this water vapor 'stunt' shows that they're thinking way beyond the traditional media mix and that their brand has reached a level of sophistication where pulling something like this off is a worthwhile investment.

"However, the connection made between the water vapor wall and the fact that the new h-tron model only emits water vapor while interesting, can't really be considered a true 'billboard' but rather just a stunt executed by Audi in the hopes of building buzz via social

channels and earned media."

Mr. Mascola is not affiliated with Audi, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Audi did not respond by press deadline.

Disappearing act

Audi's A7 Sportback h-tron first premiered at the Los Angeles Auto Show in November. The car is a plug-in hybrid, which uses hydrogen for its fuel rather than gasoline, as in a traditional combustion engine.

Due to its h-tron technology, the vehicle only releases water vapor out of its exhaust pipe, making it cleaner for the environment.



Audi A7 Sportback h-tron

To demonstrate this lack of pollution left behind by the car, think designed water vapor billboards. Advanced technology enabled the agency to project images onto water vapor, which then dissipate.

In the mist, on top of a glowing vehicle, the name of the vehicle is spelled out.

These images were parallel parked between other cars, or in parking lots, seemingly just another in a row. However, the steamy visions attracted onlookers, who took photos and likely shared them on social media for organic word of mouth.

Following the car, the words "Leaves nothing but steam. And a lasting impression," appeared in the mist, before the billboard reminded consumers of the product name.

Embedded Video: <https://player.vimeo.com/video/123101000?color=e7e5d8>

think – Audi – Disappearing Billboards

"There is no question that this is a truly unique way to showcase your brand," Mr. Mascola said. "Part of our jobs as marketers of luxury brands is to place our client in the right spotlight, creatively, while still ensuring that the core messaging is carried out in an effective manner. In this case I'm really not sure that this was achieved versus if this had been done in a standard static or digital billboard.

"As I said, this only really lives and works if the video which was created is shared via

social media or through highly-valuable third-party endorsement by the media," he said. "That's some heavy lifting expected out of something that is merely a stunt. One of this biggest issues is replicating this kind of advertising in multiple locations on a consistent basis."

The great outdoors

Audi frequently reinvents the out of home display, garnering consumer attention for theatrics.

Audi of America is broadcasting the scores of the FIFA World Cup on a 40-foot shipping container display in the Greenpoint neighborhood of New York's Brooklyn borough.

As World Cup fans in New York go about their days and celebrate or mourn their team's performance, the scoreboard may provide an extra boost of excitement. Although almost every bar and restaurant in New York has some sort of World Cup promotion, Audi managed to insert itself into the tournament's narrative by executing a simple yet hugely visible display ([see story](#)).

A temporary outdoor display can attain a longer presence through social media.

Toyota Corp. automaker Lexus continued its "Amazing in Motion" campaign with the STROBE project in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

In this new video, the LED-dressed acrobats tumbled through the city to showcase the intricacy and beauty of motion. The campaign celebrates art, technology, innovation and movement in film while simultaneously highlighting the same elements in a Lexus ([see story](#)).

For Audi, this will bring attention, but it remains to be seen if it has any impact on sales.

"To be honest, this again is a creatively carried out stunt by Audi and their marketing partner to highlight their new h-tron, eco-friendly car, but I can't really see this having any tremendous impact on Audi's bottom line, or brand image beside a really interesting medium to showcase their new product," Mr. Mascola said.

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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