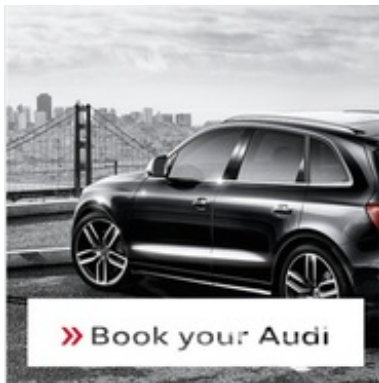


MOBILE

Audi reimagines brand possibilities with on-demand car app

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Audi on Demand app

By JOE MCCARTHY

German automaker Audi is testing a program in San Francisco that has significant implications for the auto industry.



Essentially, consumers in the Bay Area will be able to customize a model on the "Audi on Demand" iPhone application that they can then order for up to 28 days. The range of demands and possibilities such a program generates could change how consumers view cars.

"Audi on demand is one example of the brand's efforts to offer drivers new and innovative forms of mobility, and to give premium drivers flexibility and freedom of choice," said Brad Stertz, corporate communications manager at Audi of America, Herndon, VA.

"The Audi on demand audience is diverse," he said. "For example, drivers using Audi on demand for business might request an A8 L or S7 so that they can arrive in style, while those looking for a leisurely drive can take advantage of the Audi on demand cabriolet models.

"Drivers looking for a more rugged vehicle for a ski trip to the mountains might opt for a Q5 or allroad while brand enthusiasts even have the opportunity to experience the R8."

Disruptors

Rented cars are not a new concept. In 2014, more than a million cars were rented in the United States, with revenue among the major companies approaching \$13 billion.

The process of renting is usually a stodgy affair. The car sharing brand ZipCar has tried to disrupt this model with moderate success. The brand currently has 900,000 members and 10,000 vehicles available for 24/7 use.

Auto brands have not waded into the rental business in the U.S., instead abiding by the ancient system of going through car dealers in each state, yielding to various rules and procedures.

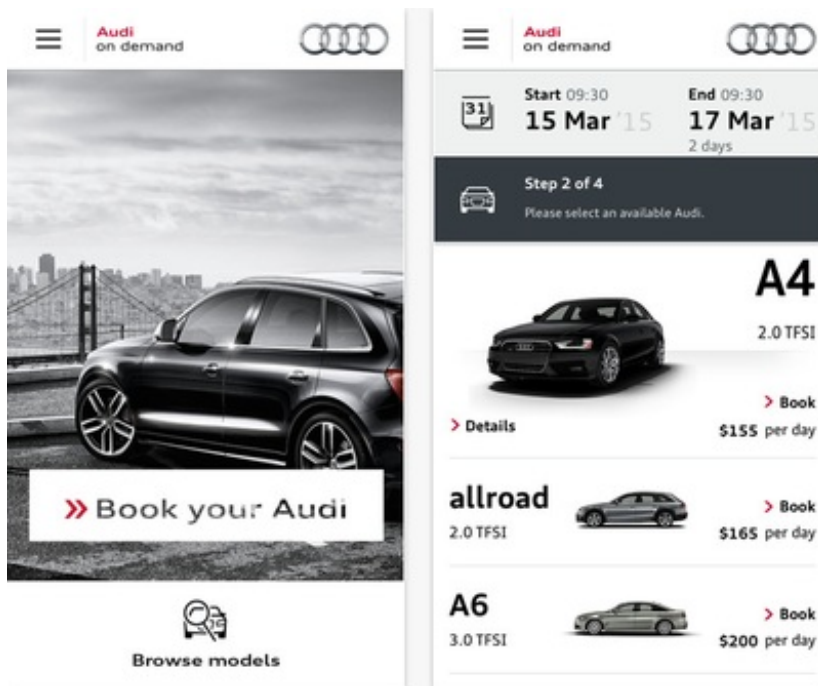
Electric automaker Tesla has refused to enter this arrangement and sells directly to consumers, clashing most notably with New Jersey.

However, Audi is working to optimize this situation. The brand is equipping dealership employees across the country with an iPad app that improves customer service and streamlines the car buying process.

The Audi Progressive Retail Experience revolves around the Sales Assist app that uses a variety of functions to present product information to the consumer in helpful ways ([see story](#)).

Audi's new iPhone app is a similarly bold step, and starting in San Francisco makes sense: it is city that espouses the "boundary-breaking" ethos of the tech culture and has scores of young, affluent professionals who may not want to own a car, but still want to drive one from time to time.

"Because Audi on demand is a mobility service, not retailing any vehicles or storing vehicles in street parking like other, similar services, there are currently no related regulatory issues being faced," Mr. Stertz said.



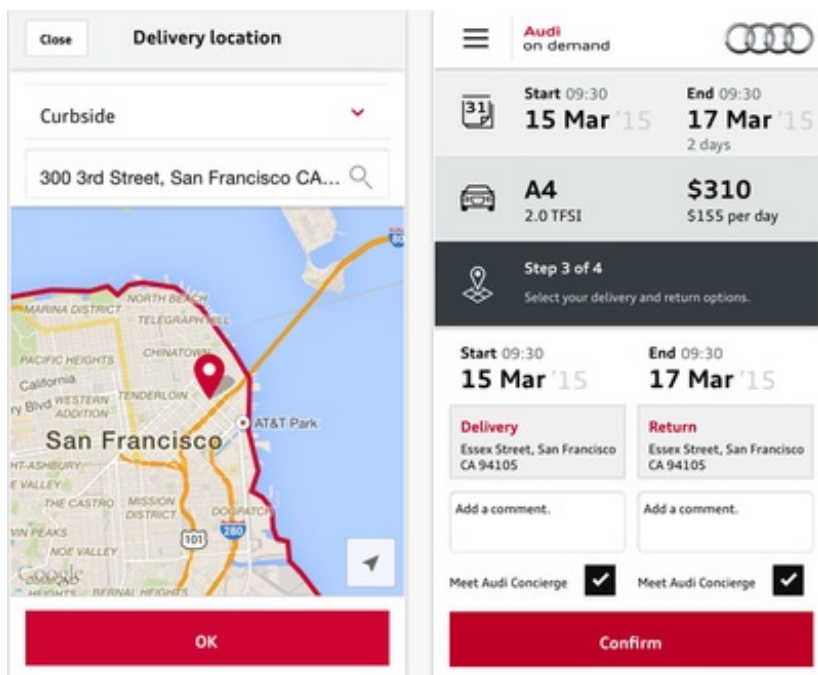
Audi on Demand app

San Franciscans will be able to browse a range of Audi vehicles, including the A4 sedan and the R8 supercar, customize certain features and then set a day for delivery.

Consumers can request child safety seats, ski racks, bicycle racks and more.

A concierge will deliver the car on the requested day to a driveway, parking garage or curbside location and will instruct the consumer on all aspects of the car. She will then have up to 28 days with the car.

Consumers have to become a member of the program to receive a car, but no membership fee is required. Rates for different models and accessories vary.



Audi on Demand app

Once received, consumers can use the Audi on Demand app to control car functions

such as opening and locking the doors.

All Audi on demand vehicles come equipped with "Premium Plus" trim and complimentary features such as SiriusXM satellite radio and MMI Navigation plus, as well as quattro all-wheel drive.

A waitlist is currently available for interested consumers.

Consumers can find more information on the app [here](#). The brand will roll out the program to more cities in the future.

Audi has embraced the sharing, entrepreneurial community in other ways with its "Audi at Home" program that allows residents in select condominium complexes to share among a fleet of Audi vehicles.

Open mind

Audi has stayed creative in other ways.

For instance, the automaker showed that its Audi A7 autonomous concept vehicle can seamlessly meld into traffic by going on a 560-mile test drive.

Audi piloted its concept vehicle, nicknamed "Jack," from Silicon Valley, CA to Las Vegas for the annual Consumer Electronics Show, which concluded on Jan. 9. In a time when many automakers are unveiling and testing autonomous driving experiences, showing the realistic implications helped consumers learn to trust the latest technologies ([see story](#)).

Also, Audi is giving job hunters a leg-up with a new Web site that demystifies the apprenticeship journey.

The Web site is intended to help Audi identify and groom the best young talent in Britain for positions across the company. As job markets across Europe recover, brands will have to be more competitive in their recruitment of talent ([see story](#)).

Location is always a key consideration when rolling out new projects.

"San Francisco is an epicenter for testing and developing new technology products and services, so it makes sense for us to pilot the program here," Mr. Stertz said.

"We will look to expand into other markets in the coming years," he said.

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York