

AUTOMOTIVE

## Audi UK ad ruled irresponsible for linking speed with excitement

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2017 Audi R8

By STAFF REPORTS

Audi UK has been ordered not to run a television commercial again in its same form after Britain's Advertising Standards Authority found it irresponsibly depicted acceleration as a thrill.

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The automaker's "The Eye," conceived by agency BBH Partners, portrays the experience of driving the Audi's R8 by zooming in on the eye's involuntary responses while behind the wheel. While Audi said that the ad was intended to communicate the focused drive of the vehicle and its brakes, the ASA upheld the complaint, barring Audi from running the commercial again.

### Eye on Audi

Audi's commercial starts with a close-up shot of an eye. As the car accelerates, the pupils contract and expand, and the viewer sees the driver's view of passing lights and the road reflected off his cornea.

The vantage point changes, and the camera then shows the exterior of the car driving in slow motion through a tunnel. At the end of the commercial, the tagline "More focus. More drive" appears.

As if on a racetrack, the Audi then zooms around a curve into the distance.

### *Audi R8 The Eye' - Directors Cut*

In response to the complaint, Audi said that it shot the ad with the vehicle traveling at 30mph or slower. It noted that even though the car's exterior was only shown briefly, the viewer could get an impression of the speed the car was traveling by watching the lights pass in the eye.

Audi also said that what was perceived as vast acceleration was its effort to show off the sounds of the new engine and the quick changes of the R8's gearbox. According to the automaker, even if a viewer thought that the car was going fast, the message would still be one of safety, since the brakes were the focus.

Moreover, they said the CGI-produced pupil's dilation was not meant to suggest excitement, but rather intense concentration.

The ASA said that the visuals accompanying the soundtrack of the engine revving did not do enough to counteract the impression of speed. Additionally, the ruling said that since Audi's commercial did not reference the engine specifically, the use of the audio did not come across as promoting the car's engineering.

The driver's pupil also led to the ASA's upholding of the complaint, as the response was reasoned to be fairly lifelike, with viewers apt to connect the physiological changes as signs of excitement rather than focus. The ad was found to breach BCAP codes for social responsibility and motoring ads.

According to the ruling, Audi's ad cannot run again in the same form. The ASA also told Audi to avoid ads that show power, acceleration or handling except when explicitly promoting safety with no reference to excitement.

Audi is not alone in facing scrutiny from the ASA.

German automaker BMW is making slight changes to its High Beam Assist advertisements following a legal ruling.

On July 13, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), an independent regulator of United Kingdom media, ruled that a radio ad for the 1 Series with High Beam Assist made a misleading and unverifiable claim. Advertisers walk a fine line between sharing enticing information and exaggerating to a falsehood, however slight ([see story](#)).

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