

MOBILE

McLaren shows off concept car via augmented reality mobile app

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By TRICIA CARR

British sports car manufacturer McLaren Automotive is flaunting its P1 concept aero car through an augmented reality mobile application for the iPhone and Android devices.

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The app requires users to print a sketch of the model from the automaker's Facebook page so that they can view the P1 model in front of them. By using augmented reality, McLaren will likely engage tech-savvy, aspirational sports car fans who are interested in the latest models.

"This effort extends the reach and awareness of the brand and brand equity," said Evan Nicholson, senior account manager at **5th Finger**, San Francisco. "Buzz is building around the app, giving many dreamers who did not make it to the Paris Auto Show a chance to spend some time with the McLaren brand.

"Ultimately the real super car shopper is going to want to see this vehicle much closer up and this may wet their appetite," he said.

"The effort also creates brand ambassadors by providing a virtual experience, but falls short by not extending that experience to social networks."

Mr. Nicholson is not affiliated with McLaren, but agreed to comment as an industry

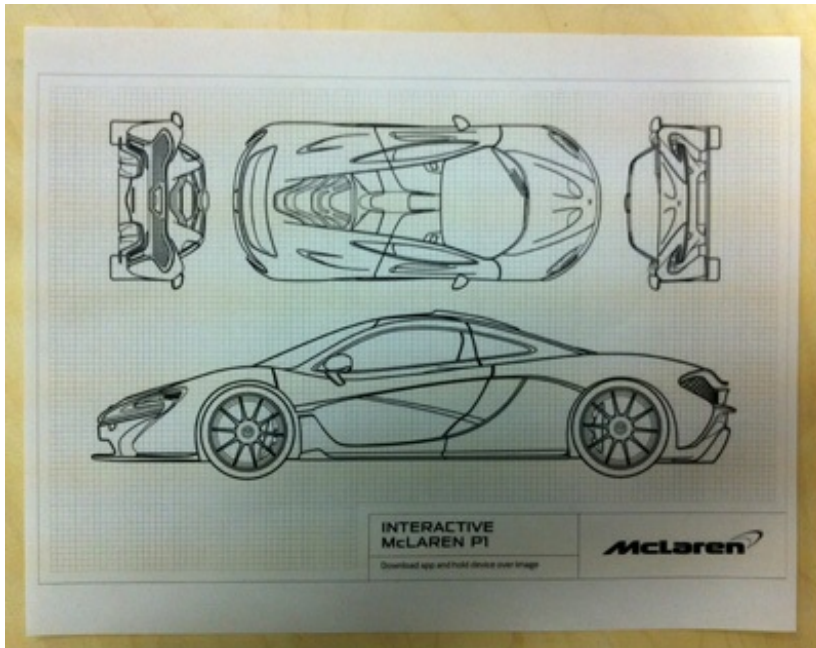
expert.

McLaren did not respond before press deadline.

Driving engagement

Users of the iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch and Android devices can download the McLaren P1 app from the App Store or Google Play.

The app instructs users to head to [McLaren's Facebook page](#) to print a target that is a drawing of the P1 concept. This is required to view the app content.



App target

Users can interact with the drawing from a computer screen on the mobile app, but by printing out the target they can view the car in any place around them.

The interface of the app uses a smartphone's camera to find the printed target. When it does, an orange P1 model appears on the screen where the piece of paper is.

For instance, if a user places the target on a desk, the P1 appears on the desk on the app screen.

Users can move their smartphone around the piece of paper to get a 360-degree view of the P1's exterior.



Back of the P1 on a table

They can also increase the speed of the model's aero trails via the slider at the bottom of the app.



App view with aero trails

The app was released at the same time that the concept car was reveal at the Paris Motor Show late last week.

Back to reality

Luxury marketers in a few different sectors are trying augmented reality to engage tech-savvy consumers.

For instance, German automaker Audi launched a mobile app last year for the Le Mans 24 hour race that integrated the brand with what is arguably the toughest sports car race in the world.

In fact, the automaker used augmented reality in the same way as the McLaren P1 app to allow consumers to test-drive multiple Audis that have won previous Le Mans races, such as the R8, R10 TDI, R15 TDI and R18 TDI ([see story](#)).

In addition, luxury appliance manufacturer Jenn-Air broadened its mobile presence

beyond a mobile site earlier this year with an augmented reality iPhone app designed to let consumers envision branded appliances in their homes.

On the app, consumers can take pictures of their kitchens and replace their old furniture with a Jenn-Air appliance, locate showrooms and contact the brand ([see story](#)).

Also, Louis Vuitton raised awareness for its handbag collaboration with Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama with a mobile app that uses augmented reality, photo sharing and push notifications.

The Louis Vuitton Kusama Studio iPhone app lets users take photos of their surroundings, transform them with effects that mimic Ms. Kusama's artwork and share them via a public gallery and social media ([see story](#)).

Augmented reality can help luxury marketers boost engagement with a seemingly impressive display of technology.

This mobile strategy could also help luxury brands gain exposure through word of mouth if the technology sparks interest and they should encourage the conversation by linking to social media channels.

"Given that a super car like the new McLaren P1 is out of reach for most people, a pocket-sized experience is a fantastic way to spread buzz for the new design," Ms. Bhukkarat said.

"But, the opportunity was missed to close the loop by capturing opt-ins or giving users a platform to gush over social media to extend the mileage of this experience," he said.

"The primary goal of an auto show reveal is to generate buzz, and Facebook as the leading social network is becoming a more mobile-centric activity.

"This app misses a chance to connect to Facebook and allow users to share their excitement."

Final Take

Tricia Carr, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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