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Liquid Billboard /

Adidas

Sportswear brand inspires female body confidence in UAE with swimmable billboard



Sportswear brand **Adidas** wanted to support the launch of its new inclusive swimwear collection in the United Arab Emirates, but faced a cultural hurdle when it came to connecting with its target audience.

According to a YouGov survey commissioned by the brand, only 12% of women in the UAE are completely comfortable wearing a swimsuit at a public beach or pool, with body shame and lack of privacy the key reasons why they don't feel comfortable in their swimsuits.

Further, 59% of women aged 18-42 in the United Arab Emirates agree or strongly agree that the 'media creates an unattainable body image for female swimmers' and only one quarter of women surveyed rate the availability of modest and size inclusive swimwear ranges as excellent.

▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdQeUvpdu4Y>

To launch its inclusive swimwear collection, Adidas worked with **Havas Middle East** to create a campaign film, *Beyond the Surface*, which celebrates how water accepts everyone unconditionally.

To support the launch film (above) and make its new product a topic of conversation with influencers and on social, Adidas unveiled its **Liquid Billboard** on 24 June at one of Dubai's most popular public beaches. Women of Dubai were invited to dive 'Beyond the Surface' into the 5-metre high and 3-metre-deep swimming pool, taking a 'leap of faith' to be immortalised in an advertising moment. The aim, to inspire confidence and build on the brand's commitment to make sport as inclusive as possible.



Adidas ambassadors Dareen Barbar, an amputee triathlete, and Raha Moharrak, the first Saudi Arabian female to climb Mount Everest, led the way by making public dives, while a conservative swimwear kit was sent in a special box as an invitation for members of the press and influencers to swim in the billboard on the day of the launch.

Cameras from inside the billboard filmed the swimmers and the footage was edited in real time and transmitted directly onto a digital screen above the Dubai Mall Ice Rink, next to the Adidas flagship store, allowing shoppers and mall-goers to enjoy the experience. Photos from each of the swimmers were also edited into personalised posters that were printed and were given to them once they were finished with the experience, together with social assets for their social profiles.

Results / According to the agency, the campaign had a total reach of **350 million** with **\$6m** in earned media. It scored PR coverage in **60** countries across six continents.

Update 16/09/21: You can now read our [Insight & Strategy interview](#) with **Fabio Silveira**, general manager, and **Joao Medeiros**, executive creative director at Havas Creative Middle East, to find out more about how this campaign went on to reach 300 million people in more than 50 countries.

Contagious Insight /

Platform for change / Understanding the cultural context of a market is key when launching a new product – if you don't know what the barriers to entry are, how can you overcome them? But identifying a specific cultural insight is one thing, acting on that insight is something else. Here, Adidas' OOH activation addresses the very issue of body confidence that its inclusive swimwear collection (designed for all women regardless of shape, ability, or religion) partly seeks to address. Every leap of bravery into the liquid billboard is there for all to see – at the beach and broadcast in Dubai's biggest mall – individual acts of body confidence that together create a compelling message to Adidas' target market. While the novelty of a 'swimmable billboard' coupled with the participation of female athletes ensured media coverage and got the word out about the new swimwear range.

Speaking to Contagious, Joao Medeiros, ECD at Havas Middle East, noted: 'One participant who dived in said: "Not once while I was in the water, did I think about what I looked like, if people were judging me and my body – I was totally and completely out of my head and in the moment." This sums up what the campaign inspiration was. Freedom. Getting famous athletes onboard amps the aspirational nature of the campaign further, seeding the social proof to be brave (and wear Adidas' modest swimwear while doing so).

Modesty blaze / From a business perspective, it's clearly worth embracing regional sensibilities about modest fashion, with Muslim spend on apparel and footwear up 4.2% in 2019 to \$277bn and projected to grow to \$311bn by 2024, according to the [State of the Global Islamic Economy report](#) from Dinar Standard and Thomson Reuters. But Adidas' new inclusive range is not just a grab for market share, it's a natural extension on the brand's broader [Watch Us Move](#) initiative to create more space for women in sport. While the liquid billboard is a small stunt, it underlines the support that Adidas is giving women to take part in sport.

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