
How Slow-Motion Video Ads Make Products More Luxurious



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Slowing down the speed of video ads can boost consumers' desires for the featured product or brand.

Gone are the days when traditional print advertising was touted as the gold standard. Now, running video ads on digital platforms – be it YouTube, TikTok, Instagram or Facebook – is an effective way for brands to grab the attention of consumers. This is especially so for those that target Gen Zs and millennials, who know and get to desire products and brands predominantly through videos.

Fuelled by the meteoric rise of apps such as TikTok and the widespread use of videos to encourage consumer purchases, global online video advertising is expected to reach US\$120 billion by 2024. And in a 2021 survey of over 500 marketing professionals and consumers, 88 percent of consumers stated that watching a video ad convinced them to buy a product, while 87 percent of marketers reported that videos generated a positive return on investment.

Given the enthusiasm for video ads, marketers must devise optimal strategies to leverage this medium effectively. Our research focuses on slow motion – a common cinematographic effect used to boost the effectiveness of video ads. We studied the effect that slowing down video speed has on consumers' perceptions of luxuriousness and their subsequent behaviours towards the featured product or brand.

Slow motion immerses viewers

Beginning with the observation that luxury brands often use slow-motion videos to advertise everything from watches and cars to fragrances and chocolates, we ventured to study whether incorporating slow motion could systematically generate greater consumer perceptions of luxuriousness and, if so, why.

We hypothesised that slow motion may make a product or brand seem more luxurious by increasing feelings of immersion, which lead to viewers expecting greater hedonic value from the featured product, thus boosting its perceived luxuriousness. Immersion is a state of feeling fully absorbed, engrossed or engaged in an experience. When immersed, people exhibit sustained attention and lose the sense that time is passing, and perceive that time is passing more quickly.

Slow motion unveils intricate, fine-grained detail in movements that cannot normally be observed in real life or at regular speed. For instance, it allows viewers to see the spectacular ripples and foam that an ice cube generates when it breaks through the surface of a glass of champagne. This extends the viewer's vision beyond its natural capacity, providing a novel aesthetic experience and making them more immersed in the video.

Feeling immersed in a slow-motion video ad leads to viewers anticipating greater enjoyment and pleasure from things related to that content. In other words, immersed viewers expect greater hedonic value from the product or brand being spotlighted.

These expectations carry over to influence the extent to which consumers view a product or brand as being high in prestige and status – or, in a word, luxurious. This is because multisensory pleasure and emotional gratification are some of the core benefits provided by luxury goods, meaning that hedonic value plays a central role in how individuals assess the luxuriousness of products and brands.

Taking things slow

We ran a series of experiments designed to test the effect of slow-motion video ads on consumers' perceptions and behaviour. The experiments featured video ads for products or brands spanning different categories, including chocolate, mineral water, wine and shampoo. After watching a video ad either in slow motion or at regular speed, participants indicated their perceptions of luxuriousness and their desire for the target product or brand.

Across 12 experiments, we found that when a video ad depicts a product in slow motion (vs. at regular speed), consumers judge the product or brand as being more luxurious and therefore desire it more (for instance, they are willing to pay more for the featured product). This effect was observed even after consumers were directly exposed to the featured product.

For example, participants in one of the experiments were split into two groups and were shown either a slow-motion or regular-speed video ad of wine before getting to sample the product. Despite being shown and tasting the exact same wine, participants who viewed the slow-motion video ad rated the wine as being more luxurious than those who viewed the regular-speed video ad.

This occurs as watching a slow-motion video ad can make consumers feel more immersed, which leads to them anticipating greater hedonic value from the featured product and perceiving it to be more luxurious. The effect weakens when video blurriness or buffering impairs the immersive viewing experience. It also dissipates for consumers whose absorption tendency is very low (for whom slow motion is unlikely to elicit immersion) or very high (who readily become immersed in videos irrespective of slow motion).

We also discovered that consumers' consumption goals moderate the effect of slow-motion video ads fostering their desire for the featured product. Our experiments revealed that slow motion boosted purchase intentions when the goal to consume luxury was made salient – such as by encouraging consumers to reward themselves with an expensive splurge – but not when it was not.

How brands can leverage slow motion

Heritage **luxury brands** – think Chanel, Dom Pérignon and Ferrari – have long used a multi-pronged, omnichannel approach to create feelings of immersion and perceptions of luxuriousness for their customers: from the in-person experience at brick-and-mortar stores to advertising in various formats. Their illustrious histories also help create perceptions of luxuriousness and prestige.

How can young brands with luxury aspirations but malleable and less-established images position themselves as high-end brands, strategically create a premium appeal or increase awareness of their product to break into a new market or category?

Our research suggests that slow-motion video ads can be an especially useful and important tool. While it's presumably harder to trigger feelings of immersion in an online context, slow-motion video ads can be a straightforward and simple way to achieve this. Thanks to recent technological advances, many smartphones can shoot high-definition slow-motion videos, and slow-motion editing software is available on a wide range of platforms.

Brands seeking to move upscale or position themselves as high-end offerings can therefore harness slow-motion video ads as a low-cost, easy-to-implement and product-agnostic tool to fine-tune their video-production strategy. This can shift consumers' perceptions and purchasing behaviour without requiring them to visit a physical store to attain an immersive experience.

Brand managers should consider pairing slow-motion videos with communications that encourage consumers to splurge, given that activating a splurging goal can boost the appeal of luxuriousness to consumers and make slow-motion videos more effective in enhancing purchase interest. However, brands must be mindful of where they deploy their video ads, as platforms or websites with limited bandwidth may inadvertently cause technical issues that dilute the immersive benefits of slow motion.

Find article at

<https://knowledge.insead.edu/marketing/how-slow-motion-video-ads-make-products-more-luxurious>

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About the research

"When and How Slow Motion Makes Products More Luxurious" is forthcoming in the *Journal of Marketing Research*.