



Want to Feel Good? Forget Kissing, Football and Dancing – Get a Sports Car

Forget romance, fine dining or an epic boxset binge – new preliminary research reveals that driving a sports car on a daily basis is among the best ways to boost your sense of wellbeing and emotional fulfilment.

The study measured “buzz moments” – peak thrills that play a vital role in our overall wellness – as volunteers cheered on their favourite football team, watched a gripping Game of Thrones episode, enjoyed a passionate kiss with a loved one or took an intense salsa dancing class. Only the occasional highs of riding a roller coaster ranked higher than the daily buzz of a commute in a sports car.

Working with neuroscientists and designers, Ford brought the research to life with the unique Ford Performance Buzz Car: a customised Ford Focus RS incorporating wearable and artificial intelligence technology to animate the driver’s emotions in real time across the car’s exterior.

Watch the video here

“A roller coaster may be good for a quick thrill, but it’s not great for getting you to work every day,” said Dr Harry Witchel, Discipline Leader in Physiology. “This study shows how driving a performance car does much more than get you from A to B – it could be a valuable part of your daily wellbeing routine.”

Study participants who sat behind the wheel of a Ford Focus RS, Focus ST or Mustang experienced an average of 2.1 high-intensity buzz moments during a typical commute; this compared with an average of 3 buzz moments while riding on a roller coaster, 1.7 while on a shopping trip, 1.5 each while watching a Game of Thrones episode or a football match, and none at all while salsa dancing, fine dining or sharing a passionate kiss.

For the research, Ford took one Focus RS and worked with Designworks to create the Buzz Car:

From concept, design and installation to software development and programming, the Buzz Car took 1,400 man-hours to create. Each “buzz moment” experienced by the driver – analysed using a real-time “emotional AI” system developed by leading empathic technology firm Sensum – produces a dazzling animation across almost 200,000 LED lights integrated into the car. The Buzz Car also features:

- High-performance Zotac VR GO gaming PC
- 110 x 500-lumen daylight-bright light strips
- 82 display panels with 188,416 individually addressable LEDs

Driver state research

Researchers at the Ford Research and Innovation Center in Aachen, Germany are already looking into how vehicles can better understand and respond to drivers’ emotions. As part of the EUfunded ADAS&ME project, Ford experts are investigating how in-car systems may one day be aware of our emotions – as well as levels of stress, distraction and fatigue – providing prompts and warnings, and could even take control of the car in emergency situations.

“We think driving should be an enjoyable, emotional experience,” said Dr Marcel Mathissen, research scientist at Ford of Europe. “The driver-state research Ford and its partners are undertaking is helping to lead us towards safer roads and – importantly – healthier driving.”

| Activity | Buzz Moments * |
|----------------|----------------|
| Roller Coaster | 3 |
| Driving | 2.1 |

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Shopping | 1.7 |
| Game of Thrones | 1.5 |
| Football Game | 1.5 |
| Kissing | 0 |
| Salsa Dancing | 0 |
| Dining | 0 |

* Average number of high-intensity buzz moments per participant