

Dual Momentum Investing

Dual momentum investing is a strategic approach that combines both relative and absolute momentum to enhance investment performance and manage risk effectively. This innovative method seeks to capitalize on market trends by assessing the strength of various asset classes relative to each other, as well as their individual performance over time. By integrating these two forms of momentum, investors can potentially improve returns, reduce drawdowns, and create a more disciplined, systematic investment process. In this comprehensive guide, we will explore the fundamentals of dual momentum investing, its core principles, how it differs from other strategies, and practical steps to implement it in your portfolio.

Understanding Dual Momentum Investing

What Is Momentum Investing?

Momentum investing is a strategy that involves buying assets that have performed well recently and selling those that have underperformed. The core assumption is that assets exhibiting upward trends are more likely to continue appreciating in the near term, while those trending downward are more likely to decline further.

Two Types of Momentum

Dual momentum combines two key concepts:

1. **Relative Momentum:** Comparing the performance of different assets or asset classes relative to each other to determine which are currently outperforming.
2. **Absolute Momentum:** Measuring an individual asset's own performance over a specific period to decide

whether to hold or sell that asset.

The Rationale Behind Dual Momentum

By merging these two approaches, dual momentum aims to:

1. Identify strong trending assets through relative momentum comparisons.
2. Confirm the sustainability of the trend via absolute momentum signals.
3. Reduce exposure to declining assets when momentum shifts negative.
4. Enhance risk-adjusted returns over time.

Core Principles of Dual Momentum Investing

1. Relative Momentum as a Top-Down Filter

This step involves evaluating multiple asset classes—such as equities, bonds, commodities, and real estate—and ranking them based on recent performance. The goal is to select the strongest performers to include in the portfolio. Key points include:

1. Compare total returns over a specified look-back period (e.g., 3, 6, or 12 months).
2. Identify the top-performing assets relative to others.
3. Shift allocations toward these assets to capitalize on prevailing trends.

2. Absolute Momentum as a Confirmation Signal

Once the top assets are identified through relative momentum, absolute momentum assesses whether these assets are still trending positively. Implementation involves:

1. Calculating the asset's return over a specific threshold period.
2. Applying a rule—such as a positive return over the look-back period—to determine if the trend is still intact.
3. Refraining from investing or moving to safer assets if the momentum turns negative.

3. Combining Both for Effective Allocation

The dual momentum approach involves:

1. Ranking asset classes based on relative momentum.
2. Confirming the selected assets with absolute momentum signals.
3. Adjusting portfolio exposures accordingly—investing in assets with positive signals and moving to cash or bonds if momentum declines.

Differences Between Dual Momentum and Other Strategies

Dual Momentum vs. Traditional Momentum

Traditional momentum strategies often rely solely on relative momentum metrics, which can lead to holding assets that are declining but still outperforming others. Dual momentum enhances this by adding an absolute momentum filter, reducing false signals and avoiding assets in a downtrend.

Dual Momentum vs. Buy-and-Hold

While buy-and-hold strategies maintain fixed allocations regardless of market conditions, dual momentum actively shifts positions based on trend signals, aiming to improve risk management and reduce losses during downturns.

Dual Momentum vs. Tactical Asset Allocation

Tactical asset allocation strategies may use various indicators or economic data, but dual momentum emphasizes trend-following signals based solely on past performance, making it more systematic and straightforward.

Implementing Dual Momentum Investing in Practice

Step-by-Step Guide

1. **Select Asset Classes:** Common choices include U.S. stocks, international stocks, bonds, commodities, and real estate.
2. **Determine Look-Back Periods:** Decide on the time frames for measuring momentum (e.g., 3, 6, or 12 months).
3. **Calculate Relative Performance:** Rank assets based on their total returns over the chosen period.
4. **Apply Relative Momentum Screen:** Select the top-performing assets.
5. **Verify Absolute Momentum:** Check if those assets are still trending upward based on their individual returns.
6. **Make Allocation Decisions:** Invest in assets with positive momentum; move to cash or bonds if signals turn negative.
7. **Regularly Rebalance:** Update rankings and momentum signals periodically (monthly or quarterly).

Tools and Resources

To effectively implement dual momentum, investors can utilize:

1. Financial data platforms (e.g., Morningstar, Yahoo Finance) for performance calculations.
2. Spreadsheets or portfolio management software to automate ranking and signal generation.
3. Dedicated dual momentum investment funds or ETFs, if available.

Benefits of Dual Momentum Investing

1. Potential for higher returns during trending markets.
2. Reduced losses in declining markets by shifting to safer assets.
3. Systematic and rules-based approach that reduces emotional decision-making.
4. Flexibility to adapt across various asset classes and timeframes.

Risks and Challenges

While dual momentum offers many advantages, investors should be aware of potential pitfalls:

1. Whipsaws in choppy markets can lead to frequent trading and transaction costs.
2. Lag in signals may cause delayed reactions to market reversals.
3. Requires disciplined monitoring and rebalancing.
4. Performance may vary depending on the chosen look-back periods and assets.

Real-World Examples and Empirical Evidence

Extensive research and backtesting have demonstrated that dual momentum strategies can outperform traditional buy-and-hold approaches, especially during periods of market volatility. Notable studies, such as those by Gary Antonacci—who popularized the dual momentum concept—show that portfolios using this method have achieved superior risk-adjusted returns and lower drawdowns over long periods.

Conclusion

Dual momentum investing presents a compelling, systematic framework for navigating complex financial markets. By harnessing both relative and absolute performance measures, investors can better identify trending assets, avoid prolonged downturns, and achieve a balanced approach to growth and risk management. While it requires discipline and regular monitoring, the strategy's empirical support and straightforward rules make it an attractive option for both individual and institutional investors seeking to enhance their investment results. Remember, as with any investment approach, it's important to tailor the dual momentum strategy to your individual risk tolerance, investment horizon, and financial goals. Combining sound research with disciplined execution can help you harness the power of dual momentum for a more resilient and potentially profitable portfolio.

Dual Momentum Investing: A Comprehensive Guide to Enhancing Portfolio Performance

In the realm of investment strategies, dual momentum investing has emerged as a compelling approach that seeks to harness the power of momentum across multiple asset classes. By combining both absolute and relative momentum measures, this strategy aims to improve returns and reduce downside risk compared to traditional buy-and-hold methods. In this article, we will explore the fundamentals of dual momentum investing, its historical background, how it works in practice, and practical steps for implementation.

What Is Dual Momentum Investing?

Dual momentum investing is an investment philosophy that evaluates the strength of assets through two key metrics: absolute momentum (also known as trend-following) and relative momentum (comparing assets against each other). The core idea is to invest in assets that demonstrate positive momentum both in absolute terms and relative to other assets, while avoiding or reducing exposure to underperforming assets.

The Core Principles

1. **Absolute Momentum:** Investing only in assets that are trending upward, i.e., their recent performance exceeds a certain threshold or is positive.
2. **Relative Momentum:** Comparing multiple assets or asset classes to identify which ones are performing better relative to others, and allocating accordingly.

By combining these two measures, dual momentum aims to capture the benefits of trend-following while also ensuring the portfolio is tilted toward the strongest performing assets.

Historical Background and Development

The concept of momentum investing has roots dating back to the 1930s, with studies by economists like Richard Dane and later, the influential work by Narasimhan and Fama on the persistence of stock returns. However, the modern formulation of dual momentum was popularized by Gary P. Brinson and subsequently refined by Gary Antonacci, who published the book *Dual Momentum: The Scientific Way to Invest*.

Antonacci's research demonstrated that dual momentum strategies could outperform traditional buy-and-hold approaches over long periods, especially in volatile markets. His approach combines the simplicity of trend-following with the comparative strength analysis among asset classes, leading to a disciplined, rule-based investment process.

How Dual Momentum Works in Practice

The dual momentum strategy involves a systematic process that typically includes:

1. **Selecting Asset Classes:** Common choices include global equities, bonds, commodities, and real estate.
2. **Measuring Absolute Momentum:** Calculating the return over a specified period (e.g., 3, 6, or 12 months). An asset is considered to have positive absolute momentum if its return exceeds zero.

3. Measuring Relative Momentum: Comparing the recent performance of each asset class against others over the same period.

4. Making Investment Decisions:

1. Invest in the asset class with the highest relative momentum if it also has positive absolute momentum.
2. Hold cash or a low-risk asset if none of the assets demonstrate positive absolute momentum.

1. Rebalancing: Regularly reassessing and adjusting the portfolio, often monthly or quarterly.

Step-by-Step Example

Suppose an investor is tracking three asset classes: U.S. stocks, international stocks, and bonds.

1. Step 1: Calculate the 12-month trailing return for each asset.
2. Step 2: Determine which asset has the highest return (relative momentum).
3. Step 3: Check if that asset's 12-month return is positive (absolute momentum).
4. Step 4: If yes, allocate the portfolio to that asset; if not, move to cash or bonds.
5. Step 5: Repeat the process periodically.

This disciplined approach aims to ride the trend of the strongest assets while avoiding significant downturns by exiting poor-performing assets.

Advantages of Dual Momentum Investing

1. Enhanced Return Potential

By systematically moving into assets with strong upward trends and relative strength, dual momentum can capture sustained rallies and avoid prolonged downturns, leading to superior long-term returns.

1. Risk Reduction and Drawdown Control

The strategy's trend-following component helps reduce exposure during declining markets, thereby limiting losses and smoothing overall portfolio volatility.

1. Simplicity and Discipline

Dual momentum provides clear, rule-based signals that remove emotional biases, leading to more disciplined investing.

1. Flexibility Across Asset Classes

It can be applied across various asset classes globally, allowing diversification and exposure to different sources of return.

Practical Considerations and Implementation

Choosing the Lookback Period

The lookback period for momentum calculations significantly influences performance. Common choices include 3, 6, or 12 months. Shorter periods may react faster to trend changes but can generate more false signals, while longer periods tend to smooth out noise but may lag in response.

Asset Universe Selection

Deciding which assets or asset classes to include affects diversification and performance. A typical dual momentum portfolio might include:

1. U.S. stocks (e.g., S&P 500)
2. International stocks (e.g., MSCI EAFE)

3. Bonds (e.g., U.S. Treasuries)
4. Commodities
5. Real estate investment trusts (REITs)

Rebalancing Frequency

Most dual momentum strategies rebalance monthly or quarterly. More frequent rebalancing can improve responsiveness but may incur higher transaction costs.

Using Thresholds and Filters

Some investors incorporate additional filters, such as:

1. Setting minimum momentum thresholds to avoid whipsaws
2. Incorporating volatility adjustments
3. Utilizing a “risk-on/risk-off” approach based on macroeconomic indicators

Handling Drawdowns and Market Crashes

While dual momentum reduces downside risk, it does not eliminate it. Investors should be prepared for periods of underperformance and consider integrating other risk management tools.

Limitations and Criticisms

Despite its strengths, dual momentum investing has some limitations:

1. False Signals: During sideways markets, momentum strategies may generate whipsaw trades.
2. Transaction Costs: Frequent rebalancing can incur costs, especially in less liquid markets.
3. Data Sensitivity: Results depend on the lookback period and asset selection.
4. Market Regime Dependency: Effectiveness may vary across different market environments.

Investors should weigh these factors and consider their own risk tolerance and investment horizon.

Conclusion: Is Dual Momentum Investing Right for You?

Dual momentum investing offers a disciplined, evidence-based approach to navigating volatile markets and enhancing long-term returns. By combining absolute and relative momentum signals, investors can systematically identify and capitalize on trending assets while avoiding prolonged downturns. Its simplicity, adaptability, and historical backing make it an attractive strategy for both individual investors and institutional portfolios.

However, like all strategies, it requires careful implementation, ongoing monitoring, and an understanding of its limitations. Whether you are a seasoned investor or new to the markets, incorporating dual momentum principles can add a valuable layer of discipline and potential growth to your investment approach.

Final Tips for Getting Started

1. Begin with a clear set of rules for measuring momentum and rebalancing.
2. Use reliable data sources for asset returns.
3. Start with a diversified universe of assets to spread risk.
4. Test your strategy through backtesting before live implementation.
5. Stay disciplined and avoid emotional decision-making.

By embracing the principles of dual momentum investing, you can position your portfolio to better ride the waves of market trends and achieve your financial goals with greater confidence.

Questions & Answers About dual momentum investing

No	Question	Answer
1	What is dual momentum investing?	Dual momentum investing is a strategy that combines both relative momentum (comparing the performance of assets against each other) and absolute momentum (assessing an asset's own performance over time) to make investment decisions aimed at enhancing returns and reducing risk.
2	How does dual momentum differ from traditional investing strategies?	Unlike traditional strategies that often rely on static asset allocations, dual momentum dynamically shifts investments based on the momentum signals, using both relative and absolute measures to identify trending assets and avoid declining markets.
3	What are the main components of dual momentum investing?	The main components are relative momentum, which compares asset performances to select the best performers, and absolute momentum, which determines whether an asset is in an uptrend or downtrend based on its own historical returns.
4	Can dual momentum investing be applied to different asset classes?	Yes, dual momentum can be applied across various asset classes such as stocks, bonds, commodities, and real estate, making it a versatile strategy for diversified portfolios.
5	What are the benefits of using dual momentum investing?	Benefits include improved risk-adjusted returns, reduced exposure to declining markets, and a systematic approach that adapts to market trends, potentially outperforming buy-and-hold strategies.

6	Are there any drawbacks to dual momentum investing?	Potential drawbacks include increased complexity, the need for regular monitoring and rebalancing, and the possibility of whipsaws during sideways markets, which can lead to false signals.
7	How do investors implement dual momentum in their portfolios?	Investors typically use a rules-based approach that involves ranking assets based on relative momentum, confirming with absolute momentum signals, and then allocating or reallocating funds accordingly at regular intervals.
8	Who popularized dual momentum investing?	Dual momentum was popularized by Gary Antonacci, who authored the book "Dual Momentum: The Strategic Guide to Investing in Stock and Bond Markets" and promoted its effectiveness through academic research and practical application.
9	Is dual momentum suitable for all investors?	While it can be effective for many, dual momentum investing is more suitable for investors who are comfortable with systematic, rule-based strategies and are willing to actively manage their portfolios based on momentum signals.
10	What are some popular tools or indicators used in dual momentum investing?	Common tools include moving averages, relative strength ratios, and performance rankings over specific time periods, which help identify trend directions and asset strength for making buy or sell decisions.

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