THE ROLE OF ASMR IN FUTURE ADVERTISING

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Figures 1, 3, 4 by Kuhl and Han, 2020.
Figures 2, 6, 9, 10 by Hannah Whitaker for the New York Times, 2019.
Figure 7 available at SutterStock.
Figure 8 featuring ASMR star “LifewithMak” shot for Wired UK, 2019.
I want to express my infinite gratitude to all the people who guided me and helped me accomplish the following dissertation, which concludes three years of hard work and passionate dedication.

First of all, I want to thank my thesis tutor, Teresa Buhigas, for being open and excited about a new and unfamiliar term like ASMR, which is a topic of investigation very close to my heart. I am grateful for her guidance when I felt uninspired and her availability every weekend when I needed urgent feedback. Thanks to Jose Guerrero for introducing me these past years to the world of advertising and communication, great motivators behind this dissertation, and Cristina Lastra, who was remarkably positive about my topic and motivated me to dive deeper into the world of advertising and ASMR.

A warm thank you to my father, who put up with me and my angry moods when I needed quiet and peace to study, and to my grandmother, for lending me her office space to work every week until long hours at night. Thank you to my friends and colleagues, Luna and Capucine, who responded to every single question I had, as silly as it was, and to my youtube ASMR community and followers who have shown all the support they could and are as excited as I am to see the thesis result.

I am thankful for my perseverance and the opportunity of academically studying ASMR, which has so much potential and helps and unites so many people around the world each night. I believe that this dissertation will be only the first step to turn ASMR into something more than Youtube videos, and I am so excited to have the opportunity to show everyone what this extraordinary phenomenon is all about.

Wholeheartedly,

Andrea Rovira
In the following dissertation, the role of ASMR (Autono-
mous Sensory Meridian Response) as a tool for creating
a new immersive and sensorial way of communication is
analyzed. ASMR is a video-format sensory phenomenon in
which people experience a tingly and relaxing sensation
in the body, specifically on the crown of the head or the
neck, when reacting to visual and auditory triggers such as
whispering, tapping or tracing. The popularity of ASMR has
risen within the last few years and has become so mains-
tream that even brands have started to use it cautiously.
This research intends to discover if brands can benefit from
ASMR as a new form of communication that allows them to
connect in a further profound and more sensorial way with
their audience. People are bombarded with advertising
inputs daily, so human nature has learned to block them
to avoid oversaturation of information. This study will be
relevant to open the doors for ASMR not only to be an in-
ternet sensation but to become a tool marketers can adopt
to attract their audience with a new type of advertising that
is immersive and sensorial.
The theoretical investigation dives into the scientific con-
structions of ASMR, its physical and psychological effects,
its relationship with sensory marketing and its probability
of success within the conventional advertising field. Practi-
cal cases where popular brands have employed ASMR in
their advertising are exposed to understand their success
and high engagement.
The investigation combines scientific, theoretical and prac-
tical information to decipher what makes ASMR attractive
for brands to use it in the near future.
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TOPIC INTRODUCTION

DISSERTATION I THE ROLE OF ASMR IN FUTURE ADVERTISING
MOTIVATION

The investigation conducted in the subsequent dissertation derived from the student’s personal experience regarding ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response). An interest that originated in 2016 and continued to the present day. The student has been watching ASMR content for five years and began to participate in it in 2019 when she decided to create her own ASMR channel on Youtube, which enabled her to have a broad view on the subject. By merging her interests in both ASMR and communication and advertising, the student will analyze this brand-new sensorial phenomenon to discuss if it can be used to create an innovative immersive and experimental type of communication by tapping into the consumer’s emotions and desires.

The Student’s ASMR Youtube Channel

The primary purpose of this research is to analyze if ASMR can be used as a successful tool for designing a new type of sensorial advertising that engages the viewer into an immersive brand experience. This project will investigate why and how ASMR has become an online phenomenon during the last few years and how some brands have integrated this new trend into their communication.

One primary objective is to define how the brain acts when presented with ASMR stimulus and discover the main traits people who regularly experience ASMR have. Understanding these attributes is essential to understand later how brands can communicate with this specific audience.

Another objective is to comprehend the consumers’ motivations and involvement when purchasing from a brand to discover what emotional needs have to be covered with advertising. If people crave emotional connections and new stimulations, ASMR can be the ideal vehicle to do so.

Furthermore, it is essential to understand the theory of sensory marketing and its models to understand how the senses have been used in past advertising and marketing activities.

The dissertation’s final aim is to explore if ASMR can work as a viable form of communication, opening the possibilities of new sensorial advertising that connects with a viewer more deeply and experimentally.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. ASMR
   • What are the physical and psychological traits of ASMR?
   • How does the brain react against sensorial triggers and ASMR videos?
   • Is ASMR just a trend? Why are ASMR videos so successful and addictive?
   • What are the personality and psychological traits of a person that experiences ASMR, and how brands can take advantage of it?

2. SENSORY MARKETING
   • How and why can “ASMR communication” create a revolutionary change in the world of traditional advertising?
   • How can the senses be used in order to create less aggressive advertising?

3. ADVERTISING AND STORYTELLING
   • How can advertising connect on a deeper level with the consumers? How can it tap into their emotions?
   • How can storytelling apply ASMR in advertising?
   • What are the good practices and narrative techniques brands use in order to speak to their audience?
In order to complete the dissertation, the student employs primary and secondary sources to extract any relevant information. The thesis is divided into three topics for organizational purposes: 1. ASMR Terminology and Scientific Context, 2. Sensory and Emotional Marketing and 3. Best practices in advertising.

Primarily, to comprehend the terminology of ASMR, its origins and its scientific context, secondary sources such as research papers, studies, and articles help the author gather data-based and scientific information to widen the knowledge about the sensorial phenomenon. Two of the most influential sources of information are the physiologist Craig Richard, founder of asmr.university.com, a platform dedicated to spreading knowledge and updated information regarding ASMR as well as psychologist Giulia Poerio, a British researcher pioneer in the scientific study on the effect of ASMR on the body who published the research article "More than a feeling: ASMR is characterized by reliable changes in affect and physiology", one of the first studies to show empirical evidence on the effects of ASMR.

Secondarily, sensorial marketing is studied to understand how the senses are employed in advertising to affect purchase behaviour and brand perception. Two studies conducted by Aradhna Krishna, considered by Harvard Business Review as one of the most productive marketing professors in the world and foremost expert in the field of sensory marketing, are the predominant sources of information consulted in order to analyze and understand the concepts of haptic imagery, smellizing, visual marketing and product orientation, touch and sound.

The definition of emotional marketing is also consulted to later compare in the third part of the literature review its connection with storytelling in advertising and its possibilities with ASMR observed in data analysis.

The third and last part of the theoretical research concentrates on advertising and the activities employed to achieve a successful connection with the consumer. Different aspects of research such as product or service involvement and motivation, the advertising tactics models and the different narrative techniques are studied.

For data results and data analysis, the platform Youtube is consulted as a crucial secondary source to find and evaluate ASMR content created by ASMR creators or by brands for advertising purposes. This video platform allows the student to get qualitative information and quantitative key performance indicators of ASMR on the internet.

Moreover, it will aid to compare and classify the different types of ASMR videos, niches of interest, and recurrent themes to better understand the most successful content.

The student must bear in mind the freshness of ASMR as a discussion topic, therefore knowing that scientific information might be limited and very new. There are no certified studies that classify or analyze specific ASMR youtube channels nor brands using ASMR for advertising purposes. Therefore, all the analysis executed on the data results is concluded and hypothesized by the student and does not have any scientific or academic support yet.
**DEFINITION**

The term relates to a calming, pleasurable and tingly physical sensation that originates in a person’s scalp and travels down to the spine in response to specific visual and auditory stimulation.

This stimulation usually comes in the form of online videos created by “ASMRtists” on Youtube. The tingles experienced typically are accompanied by positive emotions; therefore, some individuals use them to relax and cope with stress and depression (Barrat & Davis, 2015).

The most common triggers used in ASMR are whispering, tapping, scratching or the recreation of socially intimate encounters like videos simulating scalp checks, haircuts or spa treatments. According to Dr Craig Richard, founder of “ASMR University”, these ASMR videos, whether done unintentionally or intentionally, demonstrate most of the behavioural traits of bonding behaviour used by parents to soothe, comfort, and relax infants.

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**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**ASMR  AUTONOMOUS SENSORY MERIDIAN RESPONSE**

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**MAIN TRIGGERS CLASSIFICATION**

**VOCAL/** Include whispering, soft and slow speech, breathing sounds, smacking lips and tongue.

**NOISES/** Caused by interaction with objects, crunching, tapping, scratching, textured surfaces, rustle of pages.

**VISUAL-TACTILE/** Showing the process of applying makeup, hair care, combing, smooth hand movements, touching soft substances...

**COMMUNICATIVE/** A kind of role-play depicting communication situations where the ASMRtist acts as a care-taker of the viewer, creating an intimate bonding situation.

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**SENSATIONS PRODUCED BY ASMR**

**PHYSICAL SENSATIONS**

According to the author and researcher, Giulia Poerio, ASMR is a reliable and physiologically-rooted experience that may have therapeutic benefits for mental and physical health. After the realization of one study to discover if reliable changes in affect and physiology characterized ASMR, the sensory phenomenon was associated with reduced heart rate and increased skin conductance levels.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSATIONS**

The same study Doctor Poerio conducted proved that ASMR videos promote positive affect and reduce negative affect in people. Besides promoting a feeling of calmness and increased feelings of connectedness, ASMR is a complex emotional blend comprising activating and deactivating positive effects. The fact that opposing emotions like increased levels of excitement (+) and calmness (++), decreased levels of stress (+++) and sadness (+) take place when experiencing ASMR only shows its emotional complexity. ASMR is a phenomenon that creates a mixture of nostalgic feelings that engage the viewer with these sensorial online videos.
BRAIN ACTIVITY AND ASMR

The following paragraphs aim to describe and understand individuals’ brain activity when experiencing ASMR through different scientific studies that show empirical evidence about how this sensorial phenomenon affects the body physically and psychologically.

ASMR AS A SOCIAL BONDING EXPERIENCE

An fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) scan investigation conducted in 2018 by five scientists, including doctor Craig Richard, showed that ASMR videos generate tingling and relaxing sensations by the activation of brain regions previously observed during experiences like social bonding. The brain regions found most active during the tingling sensations were the NAcc (nucleus accumbens), responsible for the cognitive processing of motivation, aversion, reward and reinforcement learning, the mPFC (medial prefrontal cortex), associated with self-awareness, social cognition, and social behaviours including grooming. The insula, responsible for the awareness of our bodies and emotions and how they interact to create the perception of the present moment, and also linked to desires, craving and addiction, and the secondary somatosensory cortex, believed to perform higher-order functions like sensorimotor integration, attention, learning and memory.

The broadest explanation of the results and for most ASMR triggers is that they are related to affiliative behaviours. These behaviours are the caring behaviours that occur between parents and children, romantic partners or friends and involve interpersonal bonds that can include grooming behaviours along with other care-giving and care-receiving behaviours most of the ASMR youtube videos aim to emulate.

PERSONALITY TRAITS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO FEEL ASMR

A 2017 study reported that ASMR-sensitive individuals scored higher for empathic concern than individuals who do not experience ASMR. The association between ASMR and increased empathy may suggest that ASMR could be associated with personality traits and mental health.

Through a study where participants completed the Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI, John et al, 1991), individuals with ASMR demonstrated significantly higher scores on Openness-to-experience and neuroticism and significantly lower levels of conscientiousness, extraversion and agreeableness compared to matched controls.

Openness-to-experience: It is associated with curiosity, unconventionality, artistic or aesthetic tendencies, broad interests, and fantasy (John and Srivastava, 1999). People open to experience are generally curious about the world around them and may be prone to vivid fantasies or daydreams.

Neuroticism is associated with anxiety, angry hostility, depression and self-consciousness (John and Srivastava, 1999). In a survey of people with ASMR, a significant proportion of individuals who demonstrated moderate to severe depression reported using ASMR to temporarily attenuate symptoms of depression or anxiety (Barrat and Davis, 2015).

In conclusion, this neurological study might explain why ASMR is reported to help individuals to relax, deal with stress, increase their skin conductance levels, decrease their anxiety and heart rate and fall asleep more easily through the emulation of sensations of interpersonal bonding and grooming and care-giving behaviours that provoke a psychological state of comfort and calmness.
## HISTORICAL REVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Discussions about the ASMR sensation began as early as 2007 when the first online forum thread about “A weird sensation that feels good” was started by the user “okaywhatever” in the website “steadyhealth.com” looking for people with similar experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>In 2009 the first youtube channel dedicated to evoke a tingling sensation or ASMR was created by the user “WhisperingLife”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>In 2010, a forum member of “A weird sensation that feels good”, Jennifer Allen coined the term ASMR in order to describe the feeling discussed and went on to create a facebook group of ASMR research &amp; support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>In 2015 the first-peer-reviewed research publication (survey data) about ASMR “Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR): a flow-like mental state” was published by authors Emma Barrat and Nick Davis. The research showed that users consumed ASMR videos in order to seek comfort, relax and to relieve feelings of sadness or depression therefore legitimizing the sensorial phenomenon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>In 2016 ASMR went trending in Google, which would give the sensory phenomenon a push into the mainstream online community. Several youtube ASMR channels started to pop up and ASMR was beginning to be adopted by brands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Back in 2018, the hashtag #asmr, was the main trend on Instagram where over 6 million videos of ASMR videos were posted. In 2019, Youtube ASMR searches produced more than 12 million results with a large number of views and supporters.</td>
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Figure 13. Mountain landscape by Kuhl and Han, 2020.
THE SENSORY MARKETING THEORIES

The researcher Aradhna Krishna defines sensory marketing as marketing that engages the consumers’ senses and affects their perception, judgement and behaviour. She believes that this type of marketing can create subconscious triggers that make the consumer create its own perceptions of abstract characteristics of a product and a brand, such as its modernity, quality, sophistication, colour, taste, or smell.

Knowing the scientific nature of the five senses most humans have is a crucial tool to understand how they can be used in advertising. The following paragraphs show some of the main attributes of touch, smell, audition, vision and taste and how they can work within the marketing field.

Haptic derives from the Greek word Haptikós (suitable for touch) or Haptós (palpable), therefore meaning the ability to grasp something through the sense of touch.

Many studies have proved the importance of touch for humans. This sense is the first to develop in the womb and the last one that one loses with age. Even the Greek philosopher Aristotle proposed the theory of Aisthesis, which suggests that the five senses are ordered hierarchically, with touch being on top. For Aristotle, touch provided an accurate picture of the intrinsic nature of an object. For example, the soft coat of a kitten would indicate its natural soft character.

A study conducted by Peck and Childers in 2003 demonstrated that touch, whether between two products, two humans, or a product and a human, seems to impact consumer behaviour in significant ways.

HAPTIC IMAGERY

Researchers Peck and Wiggins found that when incorporating a touch element stimulating neutral or positive sensory feedback into a message is perceived as more persuasive than a message without a touch element, implying that ads can profit from incorporating a haptic component.

Unfortunately, in the traditional form of advertising (tv, radio or internet), it is not easy to provide a tactile element. Therefore, researchers have examined if haptic imagery, the activity of imagining touch, could serve as a substitute. “Individuals who have the opportunity to touch an object feel a stronger sense of ownership, increasing their perception of its value. Interestingly, the degree to which individuals feel a sense of ownership is the same, whether they touch the object or merely close their eyes and imagine touching it.” (Peck and Wiggins, 2003).
The majority of the marketing communication featured in radio, television, social media or even retail spaces is auditory, and it can come in many forms, as disclosed in the succeeding paragraphs.

**SMELL**

The olfactory sense is remarkable for being highly connected to memory, an important trait advertisers or business owners have smartly employed to create signature scents for products, stores, hotels, or restaurants.

The limbic system is the anatomical area where scents are linked with memory. This system, which contains the olfactory bulb, amygdala, and hippocampus, is characterized by quick synaptic transfers among its members (Herz & Engen, 1996). Synapses are the transmission of electric nerve impulses. The amygdala, recognized for its role in emotion and determining emotional memory, and the hippocampus are the closest to the olfactory nerve, having only two and three synapses between them and the olfactory nerve (Cahill et al., 1995).

Herz (2004) found that memories triggered by scent retrieval cues were rated as more emotional than those evoked by other types of cues. Chu and Downes (2002) found that scent cues (versus visual or verbal scent cues) generated more detailed autobiographical memories.

**AMBIDENT SCENT AND MEMORY**


**MUSIC IN ADVERTISING**

Ambient music has shown to affect consumer mood and purchase decisions. For instance, stereotypical French music versus German music has been shown to affect the choice of wine - people bought more French wine while French music was played.

**SMELLIZING**

Recent research has shown how ads can induce people to imagine smells, and olfactory imagery has proved to have the same effects as tangible smells. Researchers found an olfactory-imagery response when consumers could see the food in a picture or through visual imagery. Otherwise, the response was weaker. In conclusion, merely asking individuals to imagine what an advertised food might smell like can already lead them to desire the food more.

**MEMORY FOR SCENT ITSELF**

Herz (2004) found that memories triggered by scent retrieval cues were rated as more emotional than those evoked by other types of cues. Chu and Downes (2002) found that scent cues (versus visual or verbal scent cues) generated more detailed autobiographical memories.

**MUSIC FAMILYRITY**

Music Familiarity is highly effective in advertising since listeners tend to like the music they remember, and this familiarity impacts positively on their mood and brand recall.

**SOUND SYMBOLISM**

It is defined by attaching meaning to a word’s sound, even perceiving physical features for the sound, being animate or inanimate. For example, a high-frequency bark is associated with a small dog, while a deep growl is associated with a larger and intimidating one. “The sound the food makes when bitten plays a key role in taste perceptions for certain food items, impacting perceived freshness as well as quality” (Zampini and Spence, 2005).

**AUDITION**

It can also impact the perception of a brand. To exemplify, husky-voiced females make a cosmetic or perfume they are advertising appear sexier to the customer, while a TV news presenter’s deep and monotonous voice signifies seriousness and authority. Dahl confirms that voice pitch and vocal speech are two important influences of listener response to verbal communication. “Low-pitched voices are evaluated more favourably than high-pitched voices” (Brown et al.1973), and “listeners attribute greater credibility to individuals who speak more quickly” (Stewart et al.1982).

**VOICE**

It can also impact the perception of a brand. To exemplify, husky-voiced females make a cosmetic or perfume they are advertising appear sexier to the customer, while a TV news presenter’s deep and monotonous voice signifies seriousness and authority. Dahl confirms that voice pitch and vocal speech are two important influences of listener response to verbal communication. “Low-pitched voices are evaluated more favourably than high-pitched voices” (Brown et al.1973), and “listeners attribute greater credibility to individuals who speak more quickly” (Stewart et al.1982).
In terms of advertising affecting taste, Elder and Krishna (2010) show that an ad emphasizing multiple sensations (e.g., taste, touch and smell) results in better taste perception than one emphasizing taste alone. This effect works through sensory stimulation.

Researchers Elder and Krishna proved that when changing a product’s visual depiction for the viewers, they end up imagining an interaction with the product and increasing the purchase intention. Furthermore, they proved that a match between handedness and object orientation facilitates the mental stimulation of interacting with an object. For example, a right-handed person viewing a picture of a bowl of soup with a spoon on the right vs a right-handed person viewing the same bowl but with the spoon on the left.

However, when there is no match between the product orientation and the person handedness, it enhances a negative experience since it appears unappealing, decreasing purchase intention—concluding that a matched and enhanced mental simulation increases the appeal of a product and the purchase decision of the consumer.

Another characteristic that can provoke an automatic imagery response is perceived movement, which evokes a great sense of dynamism and movement. This perceived movement is employed in dynamic imagery, which is a static visual’s ability to convey movement without actually moving. Research has shown that this type of imagery creates a higher engagement for the viewer since it allows for images to continue in motion in their minds. The more dynamic the image is, the more time people spend looking at the ad, and more interest generates in the brand.

Emotional marketing is an experiential type of communication that relies on emotional involvement and ensures, as a strategy, to create a deep and personal relationship with the consumer.

Besides selling a product or service, brands have to tell stories that excite and connect with their audience. This emotional connection is a clear competitive advantage and selling point for brands that seek to create a community through their story.

Emotions represent another form of a language universally spoken and understood. An emotion is a mental and physiological state associated with a wide variety of feelings, thoughts, and internal (physical) or external (social) behaviours.

Emotion is a process in which the perception of a set of stimuli allows a cognitive assessment that enables people to label and identify a particular emotional state.

Customer emotions
In the actual saturated market, customers prioritize desires more than needs when buying. The customer wants trust, love and dreams, all intangible factors, besides quality and price. Product and services become the centre of symbolic, psychological and cultural meanings and a source of feelings and emotions.

Two kinds of needs drive customers.
- Functional needs: Satisfied by the practicality and quality of products.
- Emotional needs: Satisfied by the psychological aspects of product ownership.

Therefore, products must generate emotions but also show good functionality.
To understand how effective advertising is created, the subsequent paragraphs dive deep into advertisers’ best practices, narrative techniques, and strategies. The purpose is to identify what tools could be applied to ASMR in advertising and marketing to make it sensorial and commercially successful.

CREATING EFFECTIVE ADVERTISING

Contrary to popular beliefs and according to authors Percy and Rossiter, the main goal of advertising is not to affect purchase decisions but to raise awareness of a brand and then form some tentative attitudes towards it before the buyer considers a purchase.

To target the right audience, it is vital to consider the differences between brand awareness and brand attitude.

BRAND AWARENESS

“May be thought of as a buyers’ ability to identify a brand within a category in sufficient detail to make a purchase. This sufficient detail does not always require identification of the brand name since often it is no more than a visual image of a package that stimulates a response to a brand” (Percy and Rossiter, 1992).

BRAND ATTITUDE

According to the Rossiter and Percy model, brand attitude refers to a buyers’ overall evaluation of a brand concerning its perceived ability to meet a currently relevant motivation. The brand attitude depends upon the currently relevant motivation; if a buyers’ motivation changes, so might be buyers’ evaluation of the brand.

STRATEGIZING AN ADVERT

When creating effective advertising, the following factors must be considered; the type of decision involvement, the motivation process and the eight basic motives.

INVolVEMENT

Defined as “An economic perspective classifying a brand purchase decision as either low involvement, where trial experience is sufficient, or high involvement, where information search and conviction is required prior to purchase (Nelson, 1970).

MOTIVATION

It is the drive that might stimulate a brand purchase intention. “Seen as part of an energizing mechanism that helps relate perceived benefits of an advertised brand with the underlying needs of the consumer” (Rossiter and Percy, 1987). The motivation can be informational or transformational.

THE EIGHT BASIC MOTIVES

NEGATIVE MOTIVES

1. Problem removal. Ex/ Pain relievers
2. Problem avoidance. Ex/ A detergent
3. Incomplete satisfaction. Ex/ Low-tar tobacco products
4. Mixed-approach avoidance. Ex/ Low-tar tobacco products
5. Normal depletion. Ex/ Any loyal brand that one runs out.

POSITIVE MOTIVES

1. Sensory gratification. Ex/ A dessert
2. Intellectual stimulation. Ex/ A computer
3. Social approval. Ex/ Cosmetics or hygiene products

Figure 18. A model of brand awareness and brand attitude advertising strategies. Source: Rossiter and Percy.
NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED IN ADVERTISING

To achieve a company’s marketing objectives, advertisers have to develop fresh ideas of attracting and connecting with a customer that is swamped by commercial inputs every day. Compelling the customer by communicating them a story that connects on more profound levels is a critical tool that has been successfully exploited to influence their feelings towards brands since consumers are often non-rational and led by emotion when making a purchase decision.

According to authors Berger and Milkman (2012), consumers are willing to share content if it appeals to their emotions. An interesting fact since an ad with solid storytelling and sentiment might be more prone to be shared by users in their social media, hence enhancing word-to-mouth communication and brand awareness.

- NARRATIVE TRANSPORTATION
  PhD professors Green, Brock & Kaufman (2004) stated that transportation into a narrative world is described as “the process of temporarily leaving one’s reality behind and emerging from the experience somehow different from the person one was before entering the milieu of the narrative”. It proves persuasive through reducing negative cognitive response and eliciting strong affective responses (Green & Brock, 2002).

- NARRATIVE PREFERENCE
  Communication professors Slater and Rounder (2002) noted that sensation-seeking personality traits elicit a preference for story-based messages. High sensation-seekers are more responsive to messages that are high in narrative elements such as drama, emotion and event (Everett & Palmgree, 1995). In conclusion, when creating storytelling advertisements, a specific target audience will be more receptive to it.

- NARRATIVE IDENTIFICATION
  “Likability and expertise of the spokesperson play vital roles in influencing consumers’ purchase decision” (Till & Busler, 2000). That is why familiar faces such as celebrities are present in so many adverts since people are more likely to accept messages communicated by role models they like or aspire to be. Storytelling advertising employs characters like CEOs, celebrities, experts or customers, all effective differently.

PERCEIVED SIMILARITY
Communication model where real or fictional customers share their experience with the product in a story format. Consumers perceive peer customers as trustworthy because they are believed to care for consumers’ interests and not big corporations.

WISHFUL IDENTIFICATION
Communication model where a hero character is presented, such as a CEO explaining their story of how they created a business, and the customer admires and aspires to be like it.

Figure 19. ASMR content creator “LifewithMak” shot for Wired UK, 2019.
THE MESSAGE STRATEGY

In order to properly convey a story, a message strategy has to be followed. An advertiser has to have in mind what message to tell, to whom and with what tone. Dr Ronald Taylor, professor at the department of advertising at the University of Tennessee, developed in the late nineties “The six-segment message wheel,” proposing two types of advertising: Ritual (ego, social, sensory) and Transmission (routine, acute need and ration).

RITUAL ADVERTISING
Uses emotional tools to reach the consumers, and it is employed when selling products or services that appeal to the ego or the social and sensorial aspects of the viewer.

TRANSMISSION ADVERTISING
Uses informational tools to sell practical products or services. The message strategies included in this category are routine, acute need and ration.

NARRATIVE CHARACTERS
According to authors Fog, Budtz and Yakaboylu, the characters appearing in a storytelling ad are categorized into a hero, adversary, supporter and beneficiary.

Beneficiary
It represents the people who benefit from the hero achieving his/her goal. Usually the customer takes up this role, benefiting from the hero/brand struggles.

Hero
The brand or company usually takes up the role of “hero” symbolizing a brave and headstrong persona with a firm belief in him/herself. They are fighting for a better world and for what they believe.

Supporter
The means and tools that the hero needs to reach his/her goal. It represents the resources the company is going to use in order to defeat the adversary.

Adversary
Represents everything the company is against. It symbolizes negative values that create conflict for the hero.

Besides, German playwright Gustav Freytag determined a five-stage model of a plot which is used in nowadays advertising:

EXPOSITION
This part sets the scene and primarily introduces the characters, style, location, etc. The goal is to build the fictional world where the story takes place.

RISING ACTION
The tension begins to build as the rising action explores the story’s conflict up to its climax. Often in this part conflict gets created and as it unfolds the viewer learns more about the character’s motives and the themes being explored.

CLIMAX
The exciting bit where the story’s conflict peaks and the viewer learns the fate of the main characters. The climax is the turning point of the story, where the central conflict is addressed in a way it can not be undone and it needs to be short, fast and direct.

FALLING ACTION
Tidying up loose ends where the aftermath of the climax is explored, even though this part still has to engage the viewer.

RESOLUTION/ DENOUEMENT STAGE
Ending of the story where a resolution that gives the reader something to think about is created.

FREYTAG’S PYRAMID
KEY FINDINGS

1. ASMR creates a **mixture of nostalgic feelings** provoked by videos that show behavioural traits of **parental bonding** that make the viewer feel soothed and comforted.

2. People who experience ASMR are more likely to be **empathetic** and open to new experiences as they also have tendencies for **depression or mental health troubles**.

3. Using a **mixture of all the senses** proves to be more effective and engaging than enhancing one sense alone when employing sensory marketing. Customers are driven by their **emotional needs** so creating emotional and sensorial advertising is more appealing and efficient.

4. Traditional advertising uses **narrative techniques** to create clever storytelling that speaks to an audience. Through these narrative techniques the **viewer gets transported** into the brand’s world being more susceptible to advertising inputs.
2
DATA RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

DISSERTATION I THE ROLE OF ASMR IN FUTURE ADVERTISING
## ASMR IN NUMBERS

### VIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Searches</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 M Searches</td>
<td>10.30 PM</td>
<td>Globe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-24 Y.O</td>
<td>Mobile Phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

YouTube data shows that there are over 11 million global searches for ASMR every month. These searches began to grow by 200% in 2015 and are consistently growing. A top ASMR video can gain up to 16 million views (Mooney et al., 2016). Over half of these searches are from a mobile phone device and tend to peak around 10.30 pm when people wind down for the evening.

The target audiences are both men and women, with 18-24-year-olds comprising around half of the interested audience. ASMR views are geographically extended throughout Canada, North America, South America, Europe, Asia, South Africa and Oceania.

### FREQUENCY OF VISUALIZATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Several times per week</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times per week</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a day</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once a day</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than one time per week</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ASMR "More than a Feeling"

### MOST POPULAR ASMR TRIGGERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigger</th>
<th>Searches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Massage</td>
<td>256,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tapping</td>
<td>172,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Scratching</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Roleplay</td>
<td>34,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Personal Attention</td>
<td>32,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Whispering</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Hand Movement</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Blowing</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Typing</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Cat purring</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sharkey, L (2020) ASMR Triggers for Anxiety Relief, Sleep and More. healthline.com

### GEOGRAPHICAL INTEREST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Searches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 China</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Japan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 South Korea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Canada</td>
<td></td>
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<td>5 United States</td>
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<td>7 France</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 United Kingdom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Philippines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Finland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Google Trends, May 2021
CLASSIFICATION OF ASMR VIDEOS
AN ANALYSIS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR SUCCESS

TRADITIONAL ASMR

PERSONAL ATTENTION

SOUND & VISUAL

ROLEPLAYS

SPA & MASSAGE TREATMENTS

ALTERNATIVE ASMR

SATISFYING

MUKBANG

This section aims to analyze the most successful ASMR content to discover the elements that make this sensory experience attractive and suitable for future advertising techniques. The videos inside each category will be analyzed, putting special attention to the creator’s vision and approach, the storyline followed, the ASMR triggers featured, and the emotions produced on the viewers.

* By clicking in most of the images in the following pages an hyperlink will redirect the reader to the youtube video if he or she desires to view it*
1. What is the theme and storyline of the video?
This is a personal attention video where Maria, the ASMR creator, is casually chatting about her life while gently cleansing the viewer’s skin and taking care of them. Personal attention videos usually show an ASMR creator looking after their audience while conducting relaxing and bonding activities. In this video, Maria is casually chatting about her life while taking care of the viewer’s skin and well-being.

Exposition: Maria welcomes the audience to another video and tells them she will perform a cleansing and relaxing session for their skin. She starts by chatting for the first few minutes about her life with her newborn child.

Rising Action: This is the longest part of the video and most important since its main activities and actions occur. Maria examines the viewer’s face while telling them they have beautiful facial features, reinforcing their comfort and happiness. She performs a skincare cleansing routine.

Climax: An ASMR climax could be considered as the experience of a tingling sensation in the scalp and back zone followed by a deep state of euphoria and relaxation. In ASMR videos, it is impossible to establish a climax time or period since every person experiences different tingling sensations created by different triggers.

Falling Action: In ASMR videos, the falling action usually takes up the last 5 minutes of the video, where the creator says goodbye to the audience and wishes them goodnight.

2. How does the creator approach the audience?
In this video, the creator symbolizes the figure of a caregiver, like a friend or a mother whom the audience can trust. Maria talks to her viewers directly and confidentially as a friend since she has a loving and caring connection with them.

From the beginning of the video, where she affirms, “Tonight we are going to chat about life, and I am going to cleanse your skin”, she is making the viewers know they are going to be taken care of, also asks questions like “My hair is much shorter. What do you think about it?” “So how have you been?” to make her audience feel like an active part of the video. Maria uses positive words of affirmation and personal attention such as “You can lay back and just relax” “It’s okay” “You can doze off if you wish” inviting the audience to sleep and destress.

3. What emotions does the video create?
In ASMR’s personal attention videos, the main goal is to make the audience feel cared for and loved. To create physical tingles is as crucial as creating a psychological bond with the viewer who craves some company and attention at the end of the day. Some of the emotions this video creates are love, relaxation and companionship.

4. What are the main triggers featured?
Visual Triggers: Created when she gently caresses the camera and slowly moves the objects in front of it.

Auditory Triggers: Created by different objects used such as a rice pillow, a brush, rubber gloves or a steamer.

5. What are the products featured in the video?
The objects used in the video serve as props to create distinct sounds or visual stimuli that produce relaxing sensations. In these types of ASMR videos, the camera usually represents the viewer, so it is vital to keep in mind that all the products used on the camera are pretended to be used on the observer. Maria describes every object she uses, making it easier for the audience to imagine its texture, feel or sound. Maria uses makeup remover cottons (visual stimulation), a rice neck pillow (tingling sounds) rubber gloves (crinkly sounds), a makeup brush (visual stimulation), a towel (visual stimulation), a steamer (white noise) and a clay face mask (in real-life situation recreation).

6. What are the visual elements of the video?
The ASMR creator designs a calm ambiance by conceiving a soothing and aesthetic background that improves the relaxing experience. She places herself up close to the camera, feeling more intimate with her audience and sets a warm background with well-placed objects like a plant, fairy lights and a fireplace. It is a simple aesthetic that allows the audience to focus on getting relaxed.

1. What is the theme and storyline of the video?
The 48-minute video aims to emulate a brain massage for the viewer using a special binaural microphone with fake built-in ears that help the audience feel immersed in the sensorial experience. There is no narrative storyline, yet the lengthy video accumulates thousands of views thanks to its attractive visual and auditory triggers preferred by an audience that does not enjoy talking or narrative distractions.

2. How does the creator approach the audience?
The creator does not address the audience in any moment and does not talk throughout the video. The ASMR artist only shows her hands interacting with the objects in front of the camera.

3. What emotions does the video create?
Relaxation and excitement.

4. What are the main triggers featured?
Scratching and tapping triggers are created with different playful objects such as: Cups decorated with colorful beads, a wooden block, a pink brush or a fluffy orange and white duster.

5. What are the visual elements of the video?
Aesthetically pleasing imagery that uses colourful and playful objects while the ASMR creator’s hands interact with them to make sounds. A black background helps to create a sleepy dark atmosphere.

1. What is the theme and storyline of the video?
Each video has a different theme since there is a wide variety of personal care treatments available. While some people prefer to watch massages or chiropractic adjustments videos others opt to watch beauty treatment videos like facials, hair washing and cutting or manicures. The videos are not scripted and show professionals doing their jobs, which adds authenticity to the whole experience.

2. How does the creator approach the audience?
Usually the creator is the one receiving and paying for the treatment to then upload it to their platforms. Sometimes they talk to their audience to give their opinion about the treatment and other times they are just shown as regular customers.

3. What emotions does the video create?
Mainly relaxation. It is interesting to point out that most of the people who enjoy these types of videos probably have a high level of empathy (as seen on the big five personality traits wheel) because by watching another person get pampered they are able to feel it on themselves and get relaxed.

4. What are the main triggers featured?
Visual stimulation sometimes accompanied by a whispered or soft-spoken voice.

5. What are the visual elements of the videos?
Most of the videos show a professional setting where the creator is laying down at a spa or massage centre while she/he receives the treatment.

These types of ASMR videos mainly focus on creating tingling sounds. They are visually creative and engage the viewer showing them up-close objects that make different sounds. The presence of the creator’s face is not as important since the focus is on the sounds and some videos have dialogue while others do not.

These are ASMR videos where the creator films a real customer being pampered in a massage or personal treatment centre. These videos are not scripted and show authentic life experiences, so the viewer gets relaxed when watching other people being massaged. Some of the most popular personal treatment videos are back massages, scalp massages, face massages, ear cleaning, chiropractic sessions or facial beauty treatments.

COLOURFUL AND FLUFFY PROP  MICROPHONE  BLACK OPAQUE BACKGROUND

CLOSE-UP SHOT  THE CREATOR ONLY SHOWS HER HANDS  VISUALLY AESTHETIC OBJECTS

PERSONAL CARE  REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCE  PROFESSIONAL SETTING  EMPATHY

Figures 27-29. ASMR PPOMO, brain massage video, 2019, available on Youtube.

Figure 30. ASMR Twix on Youtube.

Figure 31. TV Shili on Youtube.

Figure 32. Mass Massage on Youtube.
ROLEPLAYS

Roleplays are a subcategory of very popular ASMR videos where the creator pretends to be a fictional character in made-up settings, or they appear to be imitating real-life experiences. Roleplays allow the viewer to doze off and relax while being immersed in narrative stories with different characters, backgrounds, props and costumes. Some roleplays imitating real-life experiences are very popular because they recreate situations where people get tingles like getting a haircut in a salon, having a cranial nerve doctor exam or being pampered in a spa.

Figures 33-36: Various roleplay videos from different creators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR ROLEPLAYS ARE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASMR Haircut Roleplay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. What is the theme and storyline of the video?
Every roleplay is based on different themes that employ unique storytelling aimed to recreate real-life experiences or made up fantasy stories.

2. How does the creator approach the audience?
In roleplays, the audience is the person to whom the treatments or activities are being performed. The ASMR creators interact with the viewers directly as if they were in the same room to make them feel an active part of the video even though they are not impersonating themselves but a made-up character that is the leading role of the video.

3. What emotions do these videos create?
Relaxation and comfort as also they entertain and educate the viewer.

4. What are the visuals of roleplay videos?
Roleplays stand out from other standard ASMR videos thanks to fictional scenarios where the creator carefully works on the background setting, costume, makeup, and narrative storyline. ASMR viewers enjoy seeing different props in every roleplay to experience distinct tingling sounds.

CHARACTERIZED ROLEPLAYS

These roleplays develop complex characters and storylines that immerse the viewer in cinematic ASMR universes where tingles and creativity meet. These kinds of roleplays have been appearing in the last year and do not amass a crazy high number of views yet but have high levels of engagement due to their freshness and creativity. The videos stand out due to their high-quality production, from make-up, costumes, props, setting, visual and audio effects and dialogue. The audience does not act as a third person but feels involved in the story since the creator talks to them throughout the video. Some of the most popular creators and pioneers are the following.

ATMOSPHERE
Atmosphere uploaded her first ASMR video back in December 2019 and since then has gained over 300K subscribers. Most of her roleplays immerse the viewer into a 19th-century Victorian era where she plays the main character while performing different roleplays such as; “Seamstress ASMR”, “Royal Ball ASMR”, “ASMR for Victorian Ladies. Preparing clothes and dressing you.”

MOONLIGHT COTTAGE ASMR
This French creator also started her channel a year ago and has over 300K subscribers. Like Atmosphere, she creates cinematic videos where the storyline is usually based in past centuries where she acts like a princess's servant, a healer or a medieval lady. She creates different characters with a storyline throughout all their videos connecting little details that make watching ASMR like watching a movie.

MADE IN FRANCE ASMR
Considered by most as the best cinematic asmrist, this French ASMR creator studied cinematographic and sound design, which allows him to produce the best ASMR sounds and visuals nowadays to help his viewers relax, sleep and enjoy a creative video. His roleplays have a wide range of themes from a “Tingle Tailor” to a “Peaky Blinders’s team member”.

Figure 37: Atmosphere’s “ASMR for Victorian Ladies” Roleplay on Youtube, 2021.
Figure 38: Moonlight Cottage ASMR’s “Cozy Hair Brushing” Roleplay on Youtube, 2021.
Figure 39: Made in France ASMR’s “Short Film Peaky blinders” Roleplay on Youtube, 2020.
This type of ASMR has been emerging since 2016, and it is based on more fluctuating trends than traditional ASMR. Satisfying ASMR and mukbangs comprise the most prominent types of content inside alternative ASMR and lead millions of views on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Alternative ASMR does not customarily contain strong storytelling, but it causes a relaxing feeling through certain sounds and aesthetic visuals.

1. What is the theme and storyline of the video?
This type of content does not necessarily rely on a narrative storyline. Satisfying videos are short and quick since the focus is the object, its movement and its sound. Some videos are also accompanied by soothing music or a soft-spoken/whispered voice, enhancing sleepiness.

2. How does the creator approach the audience?
The creators do not appear in the videos, and usually, only their hands are shown. There is no direct connection between the creator and the audience, hence a deep and caring emotional bond is not created.

3. What emotions does the video create?
When the viewers choose to watch satisfying ASMR, they are looking to feel instantly relaxed, relieved and comfortable; moreover, this type of videos have been proven to release serotonin and dopamine, which create a feeling of happiness. Satisfying videos provide a quick and easy way to feel better and happier.

4. What are the main ASMR triggers produced?
Interestingly enough, not all satisfying videos create a quiet and sleepy ambience like "traditional ASMR videos". The people attracted to satisfying content are visually stimulated by symmetrical and perfect imagery accompanied by auditory triggers like scratching, peeling, cutting, squishing or crunchy sounds. Touch, one of the most important senses for humans, is always depicted in satisfying ASMR videos. As Aristotle affirmed, "Touch provides an accurate picture of the intrinsic nature of an object". Most of the objects shown in satisfying videos are squishy and soft, providing aesthetic, comfortable imagery. Also, there is always a person interacting with the objects, and as stated in the literature review, people are more receptive to products when there is touch involved; they seem to be more trusting and less frustrated when they can touch a product before effectuating a purchase.

Just as researchers Elder and Krishna proved, a matched and enhanced mental stimulation increases the appeal of a product. When a match between product orientation and handedness occurs, the viewer is more likely to imagine an interaction with the product. Humans like symmetry, so satisfying videos are already attractive for their aesthetic value alone. These provide a perfect and symmetrical interaction between an object and a person, enhancing visual stimulation and relaxation.

ALTERNATIVE ASMR
This type of ASMR has been emerging since 2016, and it is based on more fluctuating trends than traditional ASMR. Satisfying ASMR and mukbangs comprise the most prominent types of content inside alternative ASMR and lead millions of views on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Alternative ASMR does not customarily contain strong storytelling, but it causes a relaxing feeling through certain sounds and aesthetic visuals.
Watching other people eat has become a trend. Mukbang refers to videos featuring people eating full meals alone in front of a camera in silence over an extended period of time. Even if controversial, some mukbang videos can be classified as ASMR due to the audible/eating sounds that may evoke some ASMR sensations in viewers. This trend has become a phenomenon in specific areas like South Korea, where a mukbang creator can generate up to 10,000 euros a week for videos. These videos are also highly adaptable to different platforms such as Instagram, Youtube and TikTok and gather millions of views. Mukbang is a more niche type of ASMR and people who enjoy it watch it due to the fascinating and aesthetic food presented. Some find it entertaining and amusing, while others get relaxed at the crunchy sounds of someone eating.

1. **What is the theme and storyline of the video?**
   There is no storyline or narrative logic to mukbang videos. The main focus is on a person eating food while standing in front of a camera. The food used tends to be presented in large quantities and decorated or enhanced to create a more appealing image.

2. **How does the creator approach the audience?**
   Some mukbang creators enjoy talking to their audience, while others remain silent during the length of the video. There is a subscriber-creator bond, but there is not a deep caring and loving relationship like in more traditional ASMR videos.

3. **What emotions do mukbang videos create?**
   To some fascination and relaxation, and to others disgust.

4. **What are the main ASMR triggers employed?**
   Munching on crunchy food, chewing, slurping, cutting and slicing.

---

**Figure 45-48. Zach Choi ASMR on Youtube.**
**Figure 46. Sooyoung on Youtube.**
**Figure 47. HunniBee ASMR on Youtube.**
In the last section of the data analysis, advertisements and videos of brands using ASMR will be analyzed and compared with the same brand's traditional advertisements to discover what differences make ASMR successful for brands.

Figure 49. Hands and feathers by Hannah Whitaker, 2019.
1. What product is the brand trying to sell?
The brand is not pushing a concrete makeup product since it is a whole face makeup tutorial. The video features several products like a skin foundation, makeup brushes, concealer, shadows, contouring products, highlighter and lipstick.

2. How does the protagonist approach the audience?
Unlike in the more relaxed ASMR video, Amandla acts more casual and spontaneous in this fun makeup tutorial. She salutes the audience by saying, "What'up y'all," and quickly explains how she applies the products. Interestingly, she does not describe the positive attributes of the makeup as she did in the ASMR video. She quickly goes through her makeup routine in under three minutes.

3. What are the visual/auditory elements of the video?
The whole video is accompanied by a background upbeat and fast-paced music that evokes positive feelings while Amandla talks about her makeup process. The camera focuses on her face and upper torso while not showing the whole space she is in nor the products at her disposal. Every product is textually described on screen when shown by Amandla but are not present throughout all the video, only when she grabs them.

4. What emotions does the ad create?
The fast-paced video creates a positive emotion in the viewer that gets a beneficial and pragmatic perception of Fenty Beauty's products as Amandla beautifully applies the makeup into her skin.

---

1. What product is the brand trying to sell?
The brand introduces its new Snap Shadow palette while indirectly selling other products used during the makeup application process.

2. How does the protagonist approach the audience?
Amandla, fenty beauty ambassador, addresses the audience directly from the beginning of the video, whispering into the microphone, "Today I will be giving you a Fenty Beauty tutorial that hopefully gives you tingles," setting a warm and caring tone towards the viewers. She personifies a character that transmits perceived similarity to the viewer since she comes across as a trustworthy friend giving her own opinion and reviewing the products.

3. What are the visual elements of the video?
A pastel pink neutral background that matches with the Fenty products colour palette. Three elements are the centre of attention; Amandla herself, the microphone and the products. There are several close-up shots of the products when Amandla creates tingling sounds with them. Every product is textually described on screen as well as whispered into the microphone by Amandla.

4. What emotions does the ad create?
The video creates a deep state of relaxation that the viewer gets while watching Amandla whispering into the microphone, gently applying products into her face and creating tingling sounds. Indirectly, it generates tremendous interest for all the Fenty makeup products shown and positively described by Amandla.

---

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1. What product is the brand trying to sell?

Lush is selling a line of handmade products infused with lavender, a flowering plant that helps improve sleep. The video features a body cleanser, a fizzy steamer tab, a moisturizer, a bath bomb, a body lotion and a body spray.

2. How does the protagonist approach the audience?

The YouTube creator ASMR Darling directly welcomes the audience by saying, "Today we are going to be doing a relaxing nighttime routine to help you fall asleep." Throughout all the video, the conversation is established solely between her and the viewer. ASMR Darling impersonates a character that transmits perceived similarity to the viewer since she comes across as an honest friend giving her own opinion and reviewing the products. Furthermore, since she is a respected and popular figure inside the ASMR world, she creates a feeling of admiration for ASMR Darling.

3. What are the visual elements of the video?

ASMR Darling is sitting on a sofa with cushions which makes the background familiar and cozy. The video shows a medium shot of ASMR Darling focusing on her face, setting a direct connection with the camera and audience. It also combines short clips of different activities, like scrubbing the cleanser into her hands or holding the fizzy bath bomb in water.

4. What emotions does the ad create?

The video creates a sleepy and relaxing emotion while tapping into a feeling of quick gratification and sensorial pleasure due to triggers like fizzy sounds and aesthetical visuals. Also, the whispered calmed voice creates a positive reinforcement of brand perception thanks to the beneficial adjectives which ASMR Darling describes in Lush’s products.

4. What are the visual/auditory elements of the video?

The video is highly visually aesthetic since it shows colourful materials being mixed, an enjoyable process and a pleasing final result. It could almost be classified as satisfying content. The animated background music paired with the overall feeling of happiness the workers exude creates a cheerful ambience that positively affects the viewer's brand perception.

5. What emotions does the ad create?

The ad creates happiness. It is not only about showing how Lush’s products are made, but showing that these are produced with love, passion and honesty.
1. What is the theme and storyline of the video?
The commercial shows an 18th-century family gathering around the table for dinner. The father makes his family wait for a painter to portray the perfect picture of their dinner to pass it around the village for people to see and evaluate. Once everybody in the village has given their thumbs up and approbation, the family is allowed to eat. The ad ends up showing the same family, now in the 21st century, around a dinner table, waiting for the father to snap the perfect picture of their food. It is an overall parody of modern times, where people are obsessed with taking the perfect picture of their food to upload it to social media and get validation. With this comic advertisement, Ikea wants to revive the simple joy of cooking, eating and being together. It is a cinematic short piece of advertisement that transports the viewer into a magical story.

2. How does the protagonist approach the audience?
The narrator’s face is never shown, but her hands and voice are present throughout all the video. She leads the pace of the video, slowly describing all the products in detail and their benefits.

3. What product is the brand trying to sell?
Ikea is not trying to sell any product directly, but they enhance the values of being together at the dining table, enjoying family time. It could be affirmed that the focus is on their kitchen and dining room furniture.

4. How do the main characters approach the audience?
The cinematic commercial is intended to be like a movie where there is no direct dialogue between the viewer and the brand. The main characters are the family, who become approachable when they turn out to be a 21st-century family most people can relate to at the last scene.

5. What are the visual/auditory elements of the video?
The famous song by Antonio Vivaldi’s “Summer” from The Four Seasons is used as background music. This music familiarity is highly effective in advertising since, as mentioned in the previous neuromarketing research, listeners tend to like the music they remember, and this familiarity impacts positively on their mood and brand recall. The viewer is transported into the story thanks to the ad’s high production visuals, costumes, hair, makeup and background setting.

6. What emotions does the ad create?
It is a commercial targeted to affect the perception of the brand using humour and parody.
1. What is the theme and storyline of the video?
This is another video produced for Gucci's #24HourAce. Through her psychological investigations about the world of adolescents and the paranormal, director Sue de Beer creates an alternative Gucci universe inspired by horror director Dario Argento, creator of Twin Peaks David Lynch and the story of Alice in Wonderland. It is a creative video aligned with Gucci’s original and inventive spirit.

2. What product is the brand trying to sell?
Its best-selling ace sneakers.

3. How does the brand approach the audience?
This is a cinematic video without a logical narrative storyline, any dialogue or music. It does not set any direct conversation with the audience, but it indirectly invites the consumer to experience the paranormal world of Gucci.

4. What are the visual/auditory elements of the video?
It is a two-channel video format, where there is a split screen that represents a double portal. The video shows a teenage bedroom lit with purple and greenish saturated lights. There is no music and no voices, but a recurrent noise of footsteps is present throughout the video. The scenes are short and rapid-changing and show between cut and cut the ace sneakers worn by the two characters.

5. What emotions does the ad create?
Mystery.
OVERALL COMPARISON

FENTY BEAUTY

As a traditional ASMR video, the first Fenty Beauty video is relaxing and informative. Even though it is not a typical commercial, YouTube content helps the brand stay relevant on the site. The video proves to be highly engaging since it relaxes the viewer and successfully shows the Fenty products being used, which indirectly affects purchase decisions. The second video, also a guided makeup tutorial, differs in the overall tone since it is more cheerful and fast-paced. While it can achieve a positive brand perception, it is not as effective in affecting purchase intentions since the products do not get that much attention or exposure as in the ASMR video.

LUSH

Both of the ads thrive on selling different aspects of the Lush brand. While the ASMR video focuses on selling a specific lavender product line while relaxing the audience, the second video successfully portrays the honest and happy production Lush factories have. The ASMR video is the longest one and shows a wide variety of products. Besides selling cosmetics, the video aims for the viewer to feel loved, taken cared of and soothed by a close friend, in this case, the creator ASMR Darling. This video creates a loving bond with the viewer, which will later positively affect its brand perception and recall. On the other hand, the “How It’s Made Series” also has millions of views on YouTube since people are curious to know how aesthetic cosmetics products are produced. Nevertheless, the video could ideally have employed the satisfying ASMR trend to achieve an even more sensorial and satisfying experience and reach more people on social media.

IKEA

Both ads are highly effective in remarkable different ways. “Ikea Oddly ASMR” uses the new sensory phenomenon to lure a targeted young audience who is a fan or already familiar with ASMR. While there is no cinematic storytelling, developed characters, or high production, the ad accomplishes engaging the viewer for 25 minutes, a lengthy and rare amount of time in the advertising world. On the other hand, “Let’s Relax” conventional advertising puts a smile on the viewer, tapping into their emotions and presenting crafted storytelling that uses several narrative elements. It can be concluded that while the conventional ad obtains a positive brand perception and recall, the ad that uses ASMR better succeeds in selling the bedroom products and directly affecting the purchase decision.

GUCCI

Both videos analyzed are part of the #24HourAce Gucci initiative to sell and bring product awareness to their ace sneakers. Gucci is a fashion house known as alternative, hip and modern; therefore, the content they create is expected to follow along the lines. The ASMR series they put out in 2019 proved a high success since it amassed millions of views. The brand used the perfect ASMR trend (satisfying) in the perfect platform (Instagram) to attract the right audience and achieve a high engagement. It is always refreshing to see fashion houses get out of their regular flashy and commercial route to explore new fields of creativity. On the other hand, the video created by director Sue de Beer could be classified as a classic fashion film, and even being highly creative lacks a surprise or innovative content that shocks the audience, and that is reflected in its YouTube views.
KEY FINDINGS

1. ASMR content can be classified into 1. Traditional ASMR (Long content enhancing emotional bonding) or 2. Alternative ASMR (Short content that creates a quick response of relaxation).

2. A closeness between an ASMR creator and its audience is needed to create an intimate, caring ambience. The camera angles play a significant role in achieving the perfect visual scenario, being crucial close-up or medium shots.

3. All ASMR content is whispered or soft-spoken, so an overall gentle auditory tone is crucial to relax.

4. Brands have used ASMR on their own platforms as an internet trend to position themselves positively.

5. ASMR is applicable to an enormous range of scenarios, topics. From low involvement to high involvement and transformational or informational services or products.
The dissertation's fundamental purpose is to discover if ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) can be a successful tool to employ in the marketing and communications world to conceive a new type of sensorial and immersive advertising and how this can be made. The student had noticed that people unconsciously block recurrent advertising stimulus due to their oversaturation of information inputs. However, when presented with videos of brands using ASMR for advertising purposes, people spend more time watching them, being more engaged and open to the new experience.

The initial part of the theoretical research has proven that this sensorial-rooted experience affects specific individuals and certain brain parts activated in front of particular stimuli. Knowing individuals' physical and psychological traits with ASMR can help create or adapt a new type of advertising, triggering people who might need a more sensorial, truthful and immersive communication and targeting the right advertising tactics to the right audience.

The neurological study conducted in 2018 by Doctor Craig Richard affirmed that ASMR goes beyond creating a physical tingling sensation but affects the viewer emotionally and psychologically, producing neurohormones like dopamine, oxytocin and endorphins that present a significant role in making people feel relaxed, at peace and cared for. As also activating parts of the brain linked with affiliative and caring behaviours proper in familial, romantic or friendship relationships.

The secondary part of the literature review examines the techniques employed in sensory marketing that have made using the senses in advertising successful. It can be concluded that the five senses play an important role in influencing people's perception of branded content. Nevertheless, conventional advertising customarily takes place in non-sensorial platforms like TV, the radio, and a computer and mobile phone screen; therefore, brands have to adapt different techniques to convey a sensorial experience properly. Researchers Peck and Wiggins suggest that Haptic Imagery has to be applied when aiming to provide a tactile element. Smelling plays with olfactory imagery to induce people to imagine smells. Music, sound symbolism and voice affect the viewer's perception and mood when hearing different auditory stimuli. Emotional music is highly persuasive, while music familiarity affects brand recall. A low-pitched voice can be perceived as more relaxed and trustworthy, while a high-pitched voice can be considered annoying. Researchers Elder and Krishna show that a well-produced visual stimulus orientation, dynamic imagery, and advertising copy help the viewer engage with an advertisement and imagine an interaction with the product or service. They also point out that when advertising taste, emphasizing multiple sensations rather than taste alone results in better ad performance.

Hinting a product’s or service’s characteristics through the senses might be more productive than aggressively conveying the brand’s attributes by the advertiser. “Given the amount of advertisements that consumers see every day for the thousands of products that are available in the marketplace, it seems that unconscious triggers, like those appealing to the basic senses, may be a more efficient way to appeal to consumers. Also, these sensory triggers might result in consumers’ self-generation of desirable brand attributes, rather than those verbally provided by the advertiser. Such deductive engagement may be more persuasive than deliberate statements (Sengupta & Gorn, 2002)”.

The last part of the theoretical framework is dedicated to identifying what tools and practices make traditional advertising more effective to discover how brands can successfully use ASMR. Customers are driven by their emotional needs that are satisfied by the psychological aspects of product ownership. When buying, they will consider their level of involvement and motivation towards a product or service. It has been proved that high involvement products and services such as a car, a house, perfume or a laptop demand advertising with a high emotional authenticity portrayal of the brand. In order to fulfill this emotional demand, storytelling and narrative techniques are crucial to create attractive and successful advertising. People want to be pulled into a brand’s world, connecting with...
them emotionally using transportation techniques such as music, storytelling, characters, logical narrative and visual imagery.

The research conducted in the data collection focuses on analyzing how brands in the mainstream media have been adapting ASMR for advertising and understanding why ads featuring ASMR have been so successful and engaging.

ASMR began trending back in 2016 and nowadays amasses over 11 million global searches every month, with top ASMR youtube videos being able to gather millions of views in less than a week. This data only proves that the sensorial phenomenon has fluctuated from being a trend to becoming an established niche of interest. All kinds of brands, from furniture, food, makeup and fashion, have employed ASMR in their communication channels since it is a phenomenon that contains a wide variety of subcategories being adaptable for multiple audiences and platforms. Traditional ASMR videos are the most common one can find on youtube, ranging from themes like personal attention, role-plays, massages or guided meditations. Satisfying ASMR videos have gone viral due to their short duration and aesthetic visuals that cause a quick relaxation and wow-effect response. On the other hand, mukbangs, being more controversial, have stepped forward as the ultimate ASMR food trend. As seen in the examples portrayed in the data results, Gucci used satisfying ASMR in the format of short visual videos on Instagram while Ikea lured a young audience into a 25-minute commercial by employing a female caring and gentle voice and tingly furniture sounds.

Different types of ASMR have been compared to find out that the common factor all ASMR videos have is their inducing feeling of relaxation and sleepiness, nevertheless not all of them convey the same emotions. Conventional ASMR, where the creator adopts the role of a caretaker and establishes a loving conversation with the audience, creates a feeling of affection, familiarity and bonding, on the other hand alternative ASMR where the focus is only on the sounds of the aesthetic objects create a feeling of instant gratification and relaxation but do not go down the emotional path.

The interesting fact of people being more engaged with a 20-minute ASMR ad than a normal advertisement can be due to the freshness of the sensorial phenomenon. ASMR brings new visual and auditory imagery that targets curiosity, satisfaction and happiness. It is a flourishing phenomenon that permits the viewer to break from more aggressive advertising inputs and open to a new immersive experience.

DISCUSSION
CONCLUSION

Having analyzed the theoretical framework of ASMR and various marketing and advertising strategies, it can be concluded that this is a thriving phenomenon that has been tested commercially by some brands but has not been exploited to its highest capacity. The fixation of positive associations, the urge to watch long video content multiple times, and the coverage of emotional needs make ASMR attractive for its use in advertising and marketing. The following manual hypothesizes the steps brands should follow to properly integrate ASMR as a commercial tool in their advertising activities.
THE MANUAL
“HOW TO USE ASMR IN ADVERTISING”

1. APPLYING TRADITIONAL ASMR

KEY ADVANTAGES
- Option to do long videos (10-20 minutes) to sell products and services that require focused explanations and reinforcement techniques.
- It allows for a wide range of emotional portrayal.
- It allows establishing a brand-audience emotional bond.
- Type of ASMR that can be more suitable for platforms like Youtube or TV.

BEST APPLIED FOR
High Involvement Informational or Transformational products and services.

CINEMATIC TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES TO EMPLOY
- Use of close-up shots of the product to enhance an immersive experience.
- Use of medium close up shots of the main character to establish a direct relationship between the viewer and the ad.
- Employment of high-quality sound and HD imagery.

ADVERTISING WITH TRADITIONAL ASMR EXAMPLES
ROLEPLAY Recreating real-life situations through storytelling. A dental care centre, a hair salon or a tailor shop.
PERSONAL ATTENTION Establishing a personal/caring bond. A cosmetics & hygiene brand, a perfume brand or a furniture brand.
SOUND & VISION The principal point of attention is the product. Lipstick or a piece of jewellery.
MASSAGE/SPA To promote personal treatment services. Spas or massage centres.

2. APPLYING ALTERNATIVE ASMR

KEY ADVANTAGES
- It requires less dialogue or convincing actions.
- It allows to create short duration and quick "wow-effect" videos.
- It allows to easily focus on the benefits of the product.
- Type of ASMR that can be more suitable for platforms like Instagram or TikTok.

BEST APPLIED FOR
Low Involvement Informational or Transformational products and services.

CINEMATIC TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES TO EMPLOY
- Use of close-up shots of the product to enhance an immersive experience.
- Employment of high-quality sound and HD imagery.
- It is important to create a visual aesthetic imagery that catches the viewer's attention in just the first seconds of the ad.
- Create a fast tingling response on the viewer.
- Employment of visual symmetry and perfection to create a sensation of visual satisfaction.
- Use of haptic imagery to enhance the sense of touch and texture. Sound is the best sense that can accompany touch in satisfying ASMR, while taste accompanies better mukbang ASMR.

ADVERTISING WITH SATISFYING ASMR EXAMPLES
Best suited for products that have an aesthetic appeal and show easy learnable benefits. More adaptable for platforms like TikTok or Instagram (reels or posts).
Product examples/ Chewing gum, an appealing face mask or a bar of chocolate.

ADVERTISING WITH MUKBANG ASMR EXAMPLES
Mixing taste and sound to portray the sensations experienced when eating certain food. Trend deeply rooted in Korea and the USA. Ex/ A hamburger or crispy crisps.
An advertiser must have in mind that all the previous types of ASMR can be mixed to create an even more sensorial experience depending on the product or service being sold.
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“I don't know the rules of grammar. If you're trying to persuade people to do something, or buy something, it seems to me you should use their language.” – David Ogilvy
WHAT THE AUDIENCE IS SAYING

ODDLY IKEA ASMR AD YOUTUBE 2017

Gianni Wasserman hace 2 años
I love relaxing to the sweet sounds of capitalism.

Deena Smith Smith hace 1 año
Me gets angry about a 1 minute ad. Also me: happily watches a 25-minute ad.

Fenty Beauty ASMR AD YOUTUBE 2019

Gigi Hadid

Give the marketing department a raise. They just devised a way to make people willingly listen to a 25 minute ad. Absolute genius.

ASMR MAKEUP WITH AMANDLA STENBERG

Selma Rasmus hace 1 año
Let's just be honest, this is not the first time you watching this.

Angel Amare O'Connor hace 1 año
I love that ASMR is becoming so mainstream. I used to watch it in secret lol!

LUSH ASMR AD YOUTUBE 2017

Mason Hoody hace 3 años
This is legit the most amazing brand ad I have ever seen.

Jennaseditling Tutorials hace 3 años
Her: I can feel it softening my skin
Me: I can feel it making me sleepy