

Determining Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) Effect on Advertising Effectiveness by Using Content Analysis

Gizem TOKMAK DANIŞMAN¹ 

ABSTRACT

Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response which is abbreviated as ASMR, is emerging as a content that brands prefer to use in their advertisements recently. However, the effects of ASMR contents on consumers can be positive as well as negative, making ASMR contents a risky choice for brands. In the literature, the outcomes of ASMR contents on advertising effectiveness are quite insufficient. Based on this gap, it is aimed to reveal the effect of ASMR on advertising effectiveness by obtaining consumer insights into ASMR contents in ads. For this purpose, ASMR-containing Permolit Paint ad and LC Waikiki (LCW) ad advertised in Turkey were chosen and the comments for these ads in the digital media platforms were analyzed by using content analysis. The results showed that both ASMR ads were mostly evaluated as relaxing and positive, but also provided a positive behavioral attitude such as using the brand and voluntarily watching the ads repeatedly. Yet, some auditory triggers, especially whispering and surface sounds such as tapping and/or scratching the product surface, were found to be prominent sources of negative attitude towards LCW's advertisement.

Keywords: ASMR, ASMR Triggers, Consumer Insight, Advertising Effectiveness, Content Analysis.

JEL Classification Codes: M31, M37

Referencing Style: APA 7

INTRODUCTION

Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response, which is used worldwide with the abbreviation ASMR, expresses the feeling of arousal and happiness experienced by the audience who is exposed to visual, tactile and mostly auditory elements. Jennifer Allen, who first introduced the concept of ASMR, emphasizes that the feeling of arousal created by ASMR is something different from sexual arousal. Thus, she intentionally preferred the word "meridian" instead of "orgasm" when choosing a name for the concept in order to prevent the sexuality associations (Richard, 2016). The elements that create the ASMR effect are whispering, softly speaks, sounds coming from touching, tapping and/or scratching with the surface of some objects, eye contact with the audience, gentle and slow hand and mouth movements as if touching the audience's face, etc. (Aytakin, 2019). The ASMR effect triggered by these elements is generally expressed as a type of feeling that comes with a tingling sensation in the scalp and spine, stimulating the person, giving him relaxation and satisfaction.

ASMR contents are generally consumed by people who have sleep problems and want to fall asleep in a relaxed way (Breus, 2019). ASMRtists who produce ASMR content

on social media use triggers that appeal to the senses of touch (haptic), sight and hearing to give the audience a sense of relaxation. The haptic triggers are the massage movements of the ASMRtist to the audience and movements such as playing with the face and hair. Triggers for the sense of sight are the ASMRtist's harmonious hand movements, eye contact with the audience and playing with the objects such as slime that give a feeling of relaxation. Triggers for the sense of hearing include elements such as whispers, incomprehensible sounds from mouth movements, sounds made by tapping and scratching certain objects with nails and/or fingers (Guy-Evans, 2022). In order to create an ASMR effect, those triggers must be presented in a repetitive, systematic and non-threatening manner. In addition, it is important that the ASMRtist, who prepares ASMR content, is perceived as polite, caring, relevant and reliable by the audience, in other words, by the ASMR consumers.

ASMR finds its place in the marketing world with the advertisement of Dove chocolate with ASMR content published in China in 2015. Auditory triggers such as breaking the chocolate and opening the package of the chocolate were used in the ad (Richard, 2015). IKEA, another brand that uses ASMR content in its ad, tried

¹ Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Zonguldak, Turkey, gizem.tokmak@beun.edu.tr

to attract attention by creating an ASMR effect in the audience by using some triggers such as the surface sounds of the IKEA products with its “oddly IKEA” ad lasting for 25 minutes. In addition, brands such as KFC, Toyota, McDonald’s, Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Adidas, BMW, Lego and Google have also tried to attract attention with their ASMR ads. The increase in awareness of ASMR worldwide was realized with the ASMR-containing ad of Michelob Ultra, which was viewed by 100 million people during the Super Bowl. In the ad, American actress Zoe Kravitz speaks in a whisper in a calming nature landscape, opens the cap of the beer, pours the foamy beer into the glass and touches the surface of the beer bottle with her nails (Tiffany, 2019). Thus, the auditory, visual and haptic stimuli of ASMR are used together in the ad. With the worldwide awareness of ASMR, besides the content produced by ASMR channels on YouTube, the number of ASMR content videos of other channels such as food, cosmetics, hair care, massage, etc. is increasing day by day.

Although videos and ads with ASMR content are designed to create a sense of relaxation in the audience, such content may not always give a sense of relaxation. On the contrary, it can trigger other emotions and effects such as discomfort, irritability, disgust and misophonia for the audience (Greer, 2022). Therefore, gaining consumer insight into ASMR-containing ads can guide brands to prepare such ads more effectively. The purpose of this research is to provide guiding outcomes for the practitioners to prepare ASMR ads more effectively by obtaining consumer insight into ASMR ads, which can be evaluated as a new concept in terms of practice and theory. For this purpose, the comments on the ASMR-containing LC Waikiki ad and the Permolit Paint ad advertised online in Turkey were collected from digital platforms and analyzed with a content analysis approach.

In studies on ASMR (Sands et al., 2022; De Kerpel et al., 2021; Aytakin, 2019; Smith et al., 2017), the responses of participants to the ads were generally collected in the manipulated environments, not in their natural environment. However, ASMR effect especially occurs when people’s attention is not distracted and when they generally focus on ASMR content. Thus, they feel ASMR effect more in their natural environment (e.g., at home before sleeping), not in the manipulated environments such as labs. Therefore, results obtained from the data from such manipulated environments in the literature can be misleading. Thus, there is a gap in the literature in terms of measuring natural reactions of ad audiences towards ASMR-containing ads. This creates an important

need for measuring consumer insight towards this kind of ads in the literature. In this paper, spontaneous and true (natural) comments for ASMR-containing ads were collected from their natural environment and analyzed with the content analysis approach to gain consumer insight. This point, while creating the original value of the research and the point of contribution to the literature, provides more accurate inferences from the analyzed comments.

This paper continues with literature review, methodology, analyses and discussion and conclusion sections. In the literature review section, studies on ASMR-containing ads effectiveness and responses towards ASMR triggers were discussed. In the methodology section, firstly, the information about the analysed ads (LCW and Permolit ASMR-containing ads) and the reason why these ads were chosen for this research were given. Secondly, content analysis was explained. Then, coding procedure of the research, population and sample and research questions were given. Analyses section consists of two parts which are Findings I and Findings II. The Findings I includes the content analyses findings of LCW ad, and the Findings II includes the content analyses findings of Permolit ad. Finally, in the discussion and conclusion section, the results of the research were discussed, the advantages and disadvantages of using ASMR content in ads and suggestions were given by making inference from the results, and the opportunities for future research were provided.

LITERATURE

It was observed that the number of studies in which ASMR is associated with advertising effectiveness is quite limited. The studies’ findings stating that the ASMR content in the ad positively affects recall (Sands et al., 2022), strengthens the emotional bond with the brand (Pilny et al., 2022; Chae et al., 2021; Kim, 2020) and provides an increase in purchase intention (De Kerpel et al., 2021; Kaushik & Gokhale, 2021) indicate that ASMR contents can have an impact on advertising effectiveness. On the other hand, Pastore (2018) revealed that while ASMR content may be effective on attitude towards advertising, it may not be effective on attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. At this point, it is important to determine strategies that will increase the effectiveness of ASMR ads. The consumer insights obtained for the ASMR containing ads can be a guide in determining the strategies that will increase the ad effectiveness.

It should be considered that the emotions evoked by the ASMR contents in the ad may have a directing effect on the effectiveness of the ad. Because there are findings indicating that the ASMR content in the ad activates emotions such as happiness, surprise, disgust, calmness and stress (Çerçi, 2021) as well as produces sexual stimulation response (Çerçi, 2021; Aytekin, 2019). At this point, ASMR content can create a kind of vampire effect, overshadowing the product and brand and reducing advertising effectiveness. On the other hand, this situation contradicts the emphasis of Jennifer Allen, who introduced the concept of ASMR, and emphasized that ASMR is something different from sexual arousal. In addition, it is inconsistent with the findings of the study (Poerio et al., 2018; Barratt & Davis, 2015), which states that ASMR does not produce a sexual stimulation response. Therefore, it is important to prepare ASMR content in a way that will not develop a sexual stimulation response in order to achieve effectiveness with ASMR-containing ads.

Whispering, an ASMR trigger that is frequently used in ads and videos with ASMR content (Cash et al., 2018), can be comforting for some, while it can be quite disturbing for others. Whispering can trigger the feeling of disturbance, especially in people with misophonia syndrome, which expresses extreme sensitivity to some sounds such as yawning, heavy breathing sounds and snoring. It was observed that ASMR contents created a feeling of relaxation in some people (Aytekin, 2019; Poerio et al., 2018), while others provided outcomes similar to misophonia syndrome (Aytekin, 2019; McErlean & Banissy, 2018). Therefore, to benefit from the auditory triggers such as whispering, which is frequently used in ASMR-content videos and ads, these triggers must be used effectively and conveniently.

It was observed that the above studies on ASMR effectiveness in the literature did not measure the natural response of the participants towards ASMR contents due to experimental design. Thus, the participants in those studies showed a split attention towards ASMR contents which decreases the validity and reliability of those studies. Because ASMR becomes effective in a natural environment, without any distraction. However, when the participants are integrated with such devices (e.g., EEG, fMRI devices) in such experimental designs, their attention becomes distracted, and they may feel uncomfortable which decrease their focus on ASMR content. A study (ASMR University, 2022) which supports this statement showed that ASMR consumers did not deal with two tasks at the same time and they did not

show a split attention. Also, they indicated that they consumed ASMR contents to relax. This shows the importance of measuring natural/true response of ASMR consumers to gain insight for ASMR contents. Because in an experimental design, the participants probably don't feel relax and their attention will be separated due to some interventions because of the experiment's nature.

Sometimes brands may prefer not to create their own ASMR-containing ad, but to display their products in an ASMR content. A study (Magna, 2022) showed that a product placement in this kind of contents decreased purchase intention, brand respect, perceived quality of the brand, and brand trust. Thus, product placement in ASMR content may create a split attention and disturb ASMR consumers in this way which creates negative outcomes for the brands. On the other hand, product category may affect this outcome. For instance, Mooney and Klein (2016) determined that ASMR consumers were particularly interested in beauty and fitness containing ASMR contents. Thus, ASMR consumers may not feel discomfort if they see cosmetics and fitness products in these contents. They may perceive these products as natural items belonging to ASMR content. They may not think that they are exposed to some kind of advertising messages. Therefore, congruence with ASMR content is important for product placement effectiveness in ASMR contents. Also, this shows that brands can gain advantages if their products are congruent with ASMR contents. Thus, ASMR contents may be useful for congruent (with ASMR contents) brands in terms of native ads.

There is a lack of studies measuring the effect of gender on ASMR effect in the literature. Although there is a finding indicating that females consume ASMR contents more than males consume (Richard, 2019), the reason behind this behavior and difference remains unclear. In addition, there is also a finding indicating that ASMR consumers prefer female voice as a whisper trigger over male voice (ASMR University, 2022). However, there is a lack of studies scrutinizing the reason why ASMR consumers prefer female voices more as a whisper trigger, and this preference differs according to gender, in other words, male consumers prefer female voice more than female consumers do, or vice versa. Thus, more research is needed in terms of relationship between gender and ASMR effect.

Overall, gender issue on ASMR effect has remained unclear in the literature. Also, there is a gap measuring natural responses of ad audiences towards ASMR-containing ads due to mostly preferred experimental design in the literature. Thus, gaining consumer insights towards ASMR-containing ads needs to be investigated.

METHODOLOGY

In this paper, it is aimed to gain insights about LC Waikiki ad and Permolit Paint ad with ASMR content by revealing the attitudes towards the ads, the reasons and the directions of the attitudes. For this purpose, the comments for the ads were collected on social media platforms and analyzed. The reason for the collection of data on social media platforms is that the people on the relevant platforms are self-motivated to comment and the comments are developed naturally and therefore remains intact (Varnalı, 2019). There are several reasons why these ads were chosen for this research. Firstly, these ads do not contain a celebrity as a message source that may distract the audiences' attention from the product/brand and decrease ASMR effect in this way. Secondly, these ads are very similar in terms of content and structure. For instance, both ads use whispering triggers in the same time and at the same amount. Also, in the both ads, ASMRtists create triggers by using the brands' products. In other words, products also serve as ASMR triggers in the both ads. Lastly, the both ads are online ads and shown in the internet. This is important for ASMR effect. Because an ASMR-containing ad designed for TV may not create ASMR effect and increase its effectiveness due to a lot of noise factors that TV audiences may encounter while being exposed to the TV ad. On the other hand, this kind of ads such as LCW and Permolit ASMR-containing ads may create this effect, because they are displayed in the online platform where ASMR consumers feel the effect and consume the content most. For these reasons, LCW and Permolit ASMR-containing ads were specifically chosen for this research. A total of 501 comments obtained within the scope of the research were analyzed with the content analysis approach.

LC Waikiki's ad, titled "the voice of e-commerce lcwaikiki.com", is an online ad and lasts one minute and 37 seconds. Although the message source in the ad is not a famous person, the face of the message source is not completely shown in the ad, but rather the hands of the message source when touching LCW products are shown. During the research period, it was observed that the ad was viewed 83,844 times on YouTube and 386 comments were made on the ad. On the other hand, it was observed that one page (seven) of comments were entered in *Ekşi Sözlük* with the title of "LC Waikiki's ASMR advertisement". When the LC Waikiki ad is evaluated in terms of the ASMR triggers used in its content, it is seen that the whisper is used only in the part where the message source whispers "lcwaikiki.com" at the beginning of the ad and "kıyafetlerinin seslerini dinleyebileceğin adres lcwaikiki.com

(the address where you can listen to the sounds of clothes lcwaikiki.com)" at the end of the ad. In addition, there are different triggers in the ad such as the sounds of touching, tapping and scratching with the LCW products (opening/closing coat zipper, touching the coat, etc.), the opening of the cargo package, the sound of the message source tapping and scratching the cargo box and keyboard, and clicking on the mouse with their hands, and rubbing sound of the mouse on the mousepad.

The ad of the Permomax product group of the Permolit Paint brand titled "Ben Permomax'ı Sesinden Tanırım (I Know Permomax by His Voice)" is an ad advertised online and lasts for three minutes and 28 seconds. Although the message source in the ad is not a famous person, the face of the message source is not completely shown in the ad, but rather the hands of the message source are shown when touching Permolit products. In addition, it is seen that the mouth area of message source's face is focused in the parts where she speaks in a whisper by saying "Ben Permomax'ı sesinden tanırım (I know Permomax by his voice)" at the beginning of the ad and "rengin ritmini Permolit'le yakala (capture the rhythm of the color with Permolit)" at the end. During the period of the research, it was observed that the ad was viewed 1,117,481 times on YouTube and 55 comments were made on the ad. On the other hand, during the research period, it was seen that the first share of the ad was viewed 432,948 times on Instagram and 46 comments were made on the ad. In the second share of the ad on Instagram on April 9, ASMR day, it was determined that the ad was viewed 21,760 times and seven comments were made on the ad. It is seen that Permolit shared the ad twice on his Instagram account. The second share of the ad was made on April 9, which was declared as ASMR day with the motto "it's time to sit back and watch ASMR videos". When the ad is evaluated in terms of ASMR triggers, it is seen that triggers such as whispering at the beginning and at the end of the ad, scratching the color scheme and paint can, stirring the paint, opening the paint brush packages, paint sounds, plaster sounds and some visual triggers such as paint dropping and chatming paint colors were used in the ad.

Content analysis was used to analyse the texts (comments) in this paper. Content analysis focuses on the content of a recorded form of communication. Three types of approaches can be adopted in content analysis which are quantitative, qualitative and mixed. In the quantitative approach, content analysis is performed by statistically analyzing categories and/or the frequency or percentage of coded text (Stemler, 2000). In the qualitative approach, content analysis is carried out

Table 1. Coding Scheme

Main Category	Subcategory	Category definition
Direction of the attitude (Yes=1, No=0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Negative • Mixed • Noneliciting 	It is a comment that indicates an attitude in a certain direction. (Note: The noneliciting direction of the attitude means that the comment does not contain any positive or negative attitude expression).
Attitude expression (Yes=1, No=0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive expression • Negative expression 	It is a comment that contains a specific attitude statement towards the advertisement. (e.g., "fantastic", "irritating")
Reasons (Yes=1, No=0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ad-related reasons • Brand-related reasons • ASMR-related reasons 	It is a comment that contains a statement about the reason for the attitude towards the advertisement.
Targets (Yes=1, No=1)		It is a comment directed at a specific target (e.g., "the product", "the ad agent")
Behavioral attitude (Yes=1, No=0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive behavioral attitudes • Negative behavioral attitudes 	It is a comment stating that it has developed a behavioral expression towards the product/brand due to the advertisement.

by making subjective interpretations on the texts and revealing the meanings, patterns or themes that may be explicit or implicit (Mayring, 2011). At this point, it can be said that the quantitative approach analyzes the content from an objective and systematic point of view, while the qualitative approach analyzes the content from a subjective point of view. On the other hand, if quantitative and qualitative content analysis approaches are used together, mixed content analysis approach is adopted (Bal, 2013). In the content analysis, after the selection of the content, analysis units are determined and categories are defined. Thus, content units are created. Then, rules for coding are developed in line with variables, research questions or hypotheses, and the content is coded within the framework of these rules. At this point, word count and/or categories are determined. Finally, interpretation is made after the text is analyzed and conclusions are drawn (Sallan Gül & Kahya Nizam, 2021).

Coding Procedure

In this paper, as suggested by Krippendorff (2012), comments were coded by two independent coders to increase the reliability of the study. Before the analysis, the two coders were recruited and trained by the author on how to code the data. As suggested in the literature (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991), the two coders did not communicate in the process of coding and made coding

decisions independently. Sample comments were selected from the comments to be analyzed later, and the coders were expected to code these comments in line with the instructions given to them. Before the coders began the actual coding process, the discrepancies of the coders were discussed and resolved in the presence of the author. The pilot coding process continued until a high reliability score was reached between the two coders. After that, the actual coding process started. Miles and Huberman's (2016) reliability formula ($\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Number of Consensus}}{\text{Total Consensus} + \text{Number of Disagreements}}$) was used to ensure reliability between encoders. As a result, the correlation between the codes in terms of categories was found to be between 89% and 91.5%. Since these scores above 80% indicate that the reliability is at an acceptable level (Macias & Lewis, 2004; Riffe et al., 2005; Kassarian, 1977), it can be stated that the reliability of the study is ensured.

Due to the originality of the subject discussed in the study, no categorization that can be a guide for coding has been found in the literature, and it has not been possible to adopt a deductive approach. Therefore, in the study, inductive coding procedure was followed and open coding approach, which is also a technique of embedded theory, was adopted. All of the comments, which were examined in line with open coding, were read several times without skipping, examined in depth, divided into

parts and coded with temporary tags, and categories were created by comparison and conceptualization. On the other hand, in vivo coding was adopted in the determination of specific attitude expressions, and attitude expressions were taken directly.

In terms of the face validity of the study, it is necessary to present the meaning of the categories used in the study (Saldana, 2019). At this point, Table 1, which shows the coding scheme of the study, is a summary table expressing the main categories, subcategories, category definitions and coding procedure in the study.

Population and The Sample of The Research

The population of the research is digital media platforms. In the research, purposive sampling method, which is the sampling method, in which the researcher chooses a sample about a subject he wants to explore or reveal (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), was adopted. Ekşi Sözlük, Instagram and YouTube, which are digital media platforms, were chosen purposefully and formed the sample of the research. Ekşi Sözlük was chosen because it is Turkey's largest digital dictionary that receives the most comments and provides up-to-date content on almost every subject. On the other hand, since YouTube is the most visited social media platform in Turkey (Papuççıyan, 2020), this platform was included in the sample. Instagram, on the other hand, was included in the sample for reasons such as being an important sales, marketing and advertising medium, the high rate of visits to brand pages on Instagram, and Instagram's second place in Turkey in the ranking of the most frequently used social media. The comments were reviewed over a four-month period, October 2021-January 2022, and all comments in the relevant period were addressed. A total of 501 comments were analyzed by analyzing 441 comments on YouTube, 53 comments on Instagram, and 7 comments on Ekşi Sözlük.

Research Questions

This research is shaped on the main question of what is consumer insight towards ASMR ads. The sub-questions shaped under this main question and investigated within the scope of the study are as follows:

- What do the audiences think about the ASMR-containing ads? (What is the general attitude towards the ads analyzed in this research?)
- What is the direction of the attitudes towards the ASMR-containing ads?

- What is the reason (source) of the ad audiences' attitudes towards the ASMR-containing ads?
- Who/what is/are the target(s) of the comments for the ASMR-containing ads?
- Do the ASMR-containing ads lead to any behavioral attitude (using the brand, giving up the brand, etc.) in the ad audience? If it leads to behavioral attitude, what are the statements of this attitude?

ANALYSES

In the study, first of all, a content analysis of the comments towards LC Waikiki's ASMR-containing ad was carried out within the scope of the research questions.

Findings I

Findings regarding the direction of attitude towards LCW ad are shown in Figure 1:

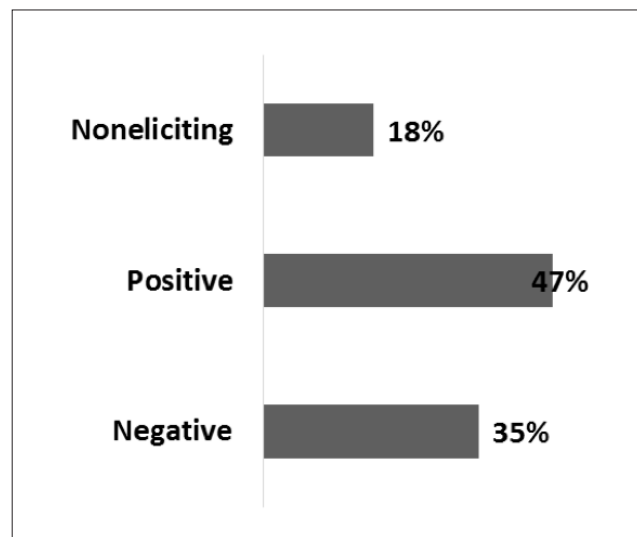


Figure 1. Proportional distribution of the direction of attitude towards LCW ad



Figure 2. Cloud image of expressions used by those with a positive attitude towards the ad

It was determined that the majority of the participants (47%) have a positive attitude towards the ad. The positive expressions used by those who have a positive attitude towards the ad are shown in Figure 2 as a word cloud.

As a result of the content analysis, it was determined that 23 positive statements about the ad were used. It can be seen that some statements are written larger and more distinctly than others on Figure 2. This indicates that these statements are used more frequently than others. Within the scope of the research, it was determined that the most frequently used expression to express a positive attitude towards the ad is "relaxing" (13 times). "Pleasant" (11 times), "fantastic" (10 times), "up-to-date" (5 times), "the most beautiful ad with ASMR content" (4 times), "good" (4 times), "creative" (4 times), "pleasing" (4 times), "successful" (3 times), "the most beautiful ad in the world" (3 times), "excellent" (3 times), "super" (3 times), "nice" (2 times), "distinctive" (2 times), "fabulous" (2 times), "hair raising" (2 times), "revolutionary" (2 times) were found to be the other frequently used positive expressions. In addition, expressions such as "cleverly", "addictive", "proud", "of good quality", "engrossing" and "innovative" were used once and emerged as positive attitude expressions towards the ad.

In the comments, in which the reasons for the positive attitudes towards the ad were stated, it was determined that the aforementioned reasons were grouped under two categories as ad-related (44%) and ASMR-related (56%). The proportional distribution of the categories related to the ad-related reasons that create the positive attitude is shown in Figure 3:

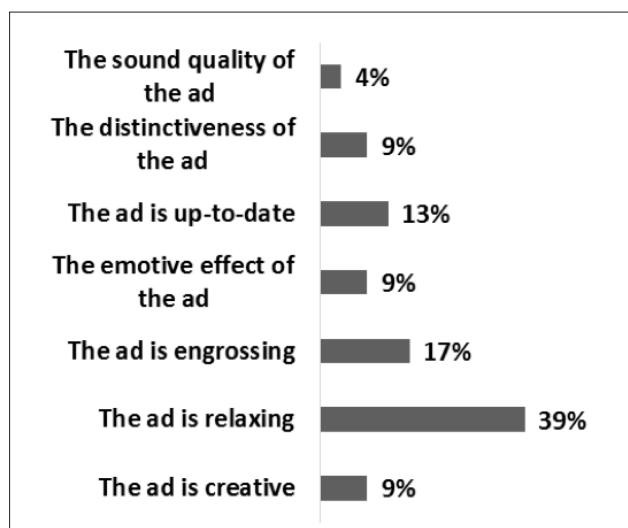


Figure 3. The ad-related reasons that create the positive attitude towards the ad

The reason that "the ad is relaxing" emerged as the most frequently indicated (39%) ad-related source of positive attitude towards the ad. Besides, the creativeness of the ad, that the ad is engrossing, the emotive effect of the ad, that the ad is up-to-date, the distinctiveness of the ad and the sound quality of the ad emerged as the other ad-related reasons creating positive attitude towards the ad.

The proportional distribution of the categories related to the ASMR-related reasons that create the positive attitude is shown in Figure 4:

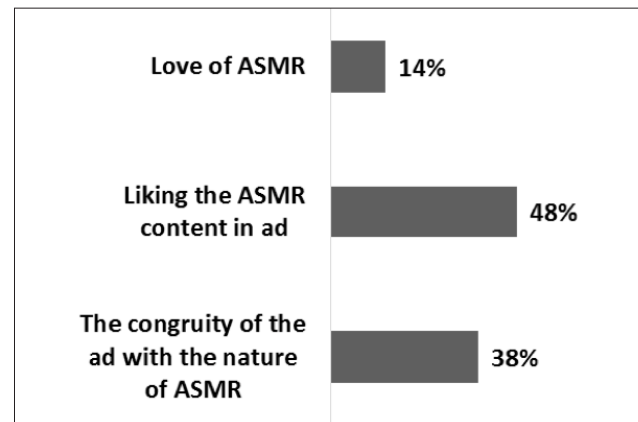


Figure 4. The ASMR-related reasons that create the positive attitude towards the ad

The reason that "the liking the ASMR content in the ad" emerged as the most frequently indicated (48%) ASMR-related source of positive attitude towards the ad. It was determined that the ad audiences developed a positive attitude towards the ad as a result of liking the ASMR content, which expresses ASMR triggers such as whispering, the sound of touching the coat (the product in the ad), and the coat zipper sound. On the other hand, the congruity of the ad with the nature of ASMR emerged as the second most frequently indicated ASMR-related source of positive attitude towards the ad. In the comments, it was understood that some audiences were exposed to the ad during the commercial break of a video with ASMR content. Most of the ads that appear during the commercial breaks of ASMR-containing videos can cause discomfort to the ASMR-influenced audience since they are not ASMR-containing. On the other hand, these audiences stated that they watched the ad with pleasure, without jumping, startled, thanks to the congruity of the ad with the nature of ASMR. That the ad audiences love ASMR emerged as the third ASMR-related source of positive attitude towards the ad.

It was determined that the 35% of the participants have a negative attitude towards the ad. The negative

expressions used by those who have a negative attitude towards the ad are shown in Figure 5 as a word cloud:



Figure 5. Cloud image of expressions used by those with a negative attitude towards the ad

As a result of the content analysis, it was determined that 20 negative statements about the ad were used. Within the scope of the research, it was determined that the most frequently used expression to express a negative attitude towards the ad is “irritating” (8 times). “Nonsense” (7 times), “unlikeable” (6 times), “annoying” (5 times), “pointless” (4 times), “frightening” (3 times), “meaningless” (2 times), “plagiarism” (2 times), “foolish” (2 times), “bad” (2 times), “garbage” (2 times), “cringe” (2 times), “disgusting” (2 times), “sickening” (2 times) were found to be the other frequently used negative expressions. In addition, expressions such as “awful”, “ugly”, “abhorrent”, “contemptible”, “waste of time” and “ASMR effect is insufficient” were used once and emerged as negative attitude expressions towards the ad.

In the comments, in which the reasons for the negative attitudes towards the related ad were stated, it was determined that the aforementioned reasons were grouped under three categories as ad-related (9%), the brand-related (12%) and ASMR-related (79%). Considering the ad content to be plagiarised (67%) and uncreative (33%) emerged as the ad-related reasons that create the negative attitude towards the ad. Advertising the brand as if it were an ASMR channel (75%) and disliking the brand (25%) emerged as the brand-related reasons creating the negative attitude towards the ad. On the other hand, ASMR-related reasons were analyzed under seven categories. The proportional distribution of the categories related to the ASMR-related reasons that create the negative attitude is shown in Figure 6.

The reason that ASMR triggers in the ad are annoying emerged as the most frequently indicated (45%) ASMR-related source of negative attitude towards the ad. It was determined that the ad audiences developed a negative attitude towards the ad due to the ASMR triggers such

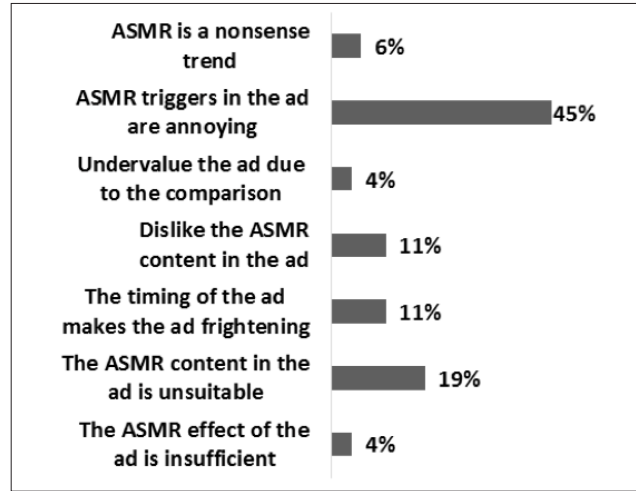


Figure 6. The ASMR-related reasons that create the negative attitude towards the ad

as especially whispering, the sound of touching the coat, and the sound of nylon packaging opening. On the other hand, it was determined that the timing of the ad makes the ad frightening for some ad audiences. They expressed that they startled when they were exposed to the ad in the commercial breaks of any ASMR video content they watched. It was also determined that some ad audiences expressed that they undervalued the ad after they made a comparison between LCW ad and IKEA ad with ASMR content. They indicated that IKEA ad with ASMR content-oddly IKEA ad-was much better than LCW ad with ASMR content. Thus, it can be thought that IKEA’s ASMR advertisement can be a reference point for the ad audiences evaluating the ads with ASMR content by creating a kind of anchoring effect.

The targets of the comments for the ad was examined and a total of 13 target categories were determined. To whom/what the comments about the ad were directed towards, in other words, the proportional distribution of the targets is shown in Figure 7:

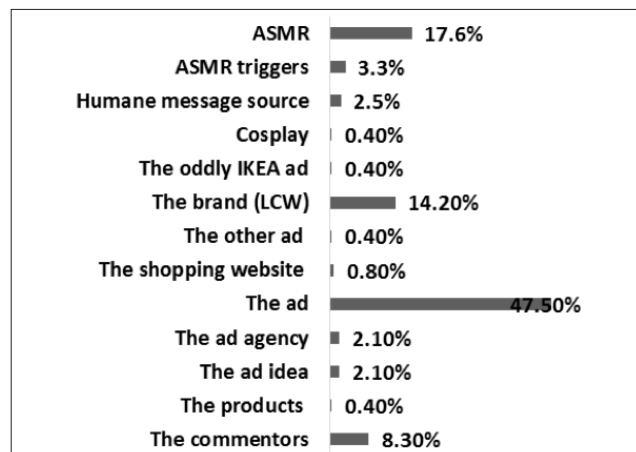


Figure 7. The proportional distribution of the targets of comments for the ad

It was determined that the target of the great majority (47.5%) of the analyzed comments was the ad itself. Besides, the brand itself (LCW) and ASMR were found to be the other remarkable targets of the comments.



Figure 8. Positive behavioral attitudes towards the ad

It was also examined whether there were expressions about behavioral attitude in the comments. The behavioral expressions identified were grouped into two categories as positive and negative behavioral attitudes. Figure 8 shows the distribution of positive statements about behavioral attitudes towards the ad.

It was determined that the ad audiences asked for links to the products, placed an order after they saw the ad, and they voluntarily watched the ad over and over within the same proportion (22.2%). Besides, it was also determined that the ad audiences started using the brand and shopping website of the brand as well as they subscribed to the brand's social media channel within the same proportion (11.1%).

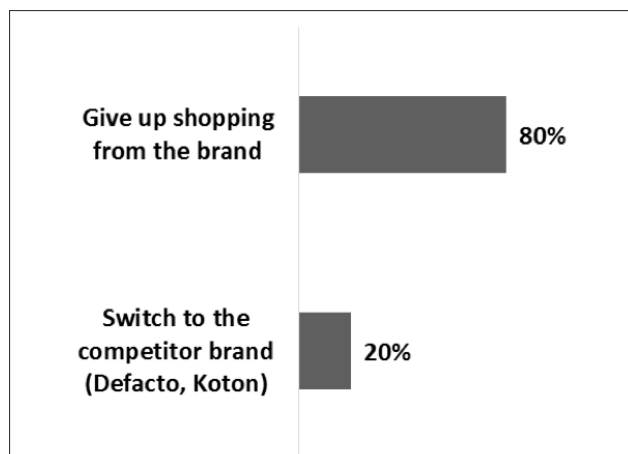


Figure 9. Negative behavioral attitudes towards the ad

From the findings, it seems that the ad can cause negative behavioral attitude as well. Figure 9 shows the distribution of negative statements about behavioral attitudes towards the ad.

As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the ad lead to negative behavioral attitudes such as giving up shopping from the brand (80%) and switching to competitor brands which are Koton and Defacto (20%).

Findings II

In the study, second of all, a content analysis of the comments towards Permolit Paint's ASMR-containing ad was carried out within the scope of the research questions. Findings regarding the direction of attitude towards Permomax advertisement are shown in Figure 10:

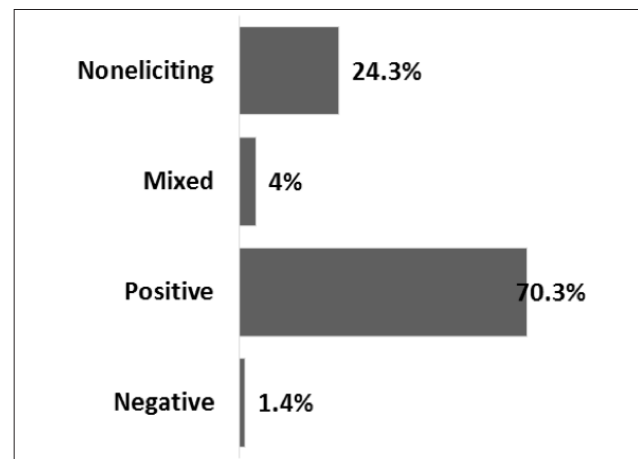


Figure 10. Proportional distribution of the direction of attitude towards Permomax ad

It was determined that the majority of the participants (70.3%) have a positive attitude towards the ad. The positive expressions used by those who have a positive attitude towards the ad are shown in Figure 11 as a word cloud:



Figure 11. Cloud image of expressions used by those with a positive attitude towards the ad

As a result of the content analysis, it was determined that 14 positive statements about the ad were used. Within the scope of the research, it was determined that the most frequently used expression to express a positive attitude towards the ad is “relaxing” (18 times). “Pleasant” (13 times), “good” (6 times), “successful” (4 times), “the best ad” (2 times), “fantastic” (2 times), “super” (2 times) were found to be the other frequently used expressions. In addition, expressions such as “path-breaking”, “attention grabbing”, “the most beautiful ad”, “the best ASMR”, “the most relaxing ad”, “nice” and “of good quality” were used once and emerged as positive attitude expressions towards the ad.

In the comments, in which the reasons for the positive attitudes towards the related ad were stated, it was determined that the aforementioned reasons were grouped under two categories as ad-related (54%) and ASMR-related (46%). The proportional distribution of the categories related to the ad-related reasons that create the positive attitude is shown in Figure 12:

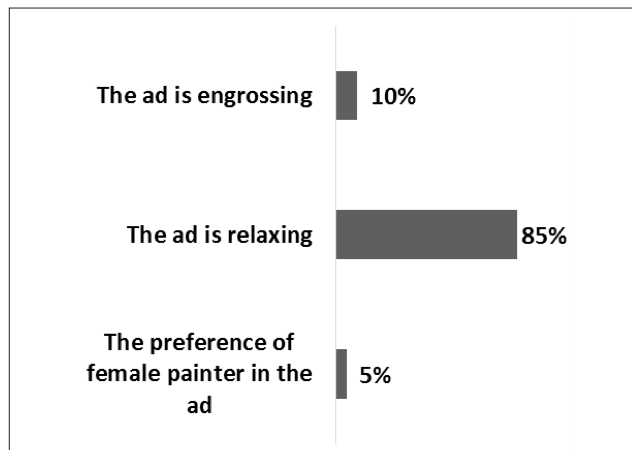


Figure 12. The ad-related reasons that create the positive attitude towards the ad

The reason that “the ad is relaxing” emerged as the most frequently indicated (85%) ad-related source of positive attitude towards the ad. Besides, the reason that the female painter preference in the ad and the ad is engrossing were found to be the other ad-related reasons creating positive attitude towards the ad. The proportional distribution of the categories related to the ASMR-related reasons that create the positive attitude is shown in Figure 13.

The reason that “the liking the ASMR content in the ad” emerged as the most frequently indicated (70.6%) ASMR-related source of positive attitude towards the ad. It was determined that the ad audiences developed a

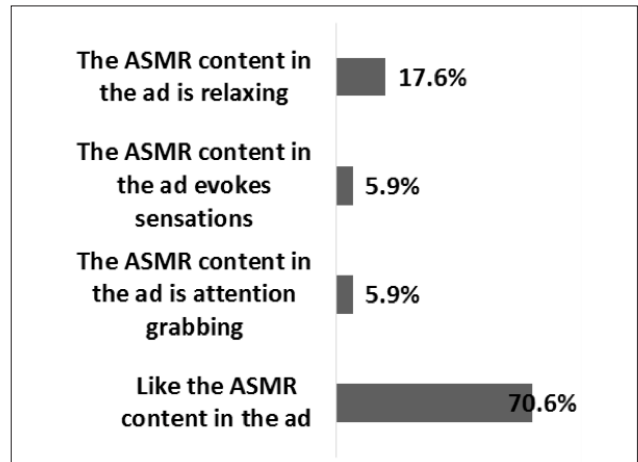


Figure 13. The ASMR-related reasons that create the positive attitude towards the ad

positive attitude towards the ad as a result of liking the ASMR content, which expresses ASMR triggers such as whispering, the sound of paint mixing and painting, and the plaster sound in the ad. Besides, the ASMR content in the ad is attention grabbing, relaxing and evokes sensations were found to be other ASMR-related reasons causing positive attitude towards the ad.

It was determined that only 1.4% of the ad audiences have a negative attitude towards the ad. The only negative expression used by those who have a negative attitude towards the ad was “irritating”, and no reason could be identified for the negative attitude in the comments analyzed. On the other hand, it was determined that 4.1% of the ad audiences have a mixed attitude towards the ad. The reasons for mixed attitudes were grouped under four categories. Figure 14 shows the proportional distribution of the aforementioned categories:

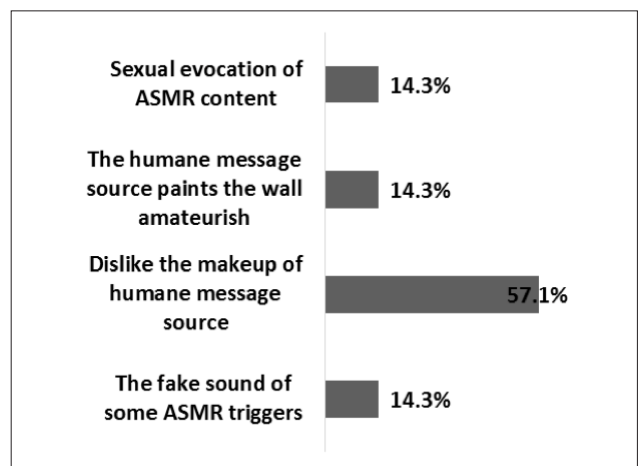


Figure 14. The reasons that create mixed attitude towards the ad

Most of the ad audiences that have a mixed attitude towards the ad (57.1%) indicated that they disliked the lipstick application of the humane message source in the ad. It was observed that the ad audiences mocked the lipstick application even if they evaluated the ad was successful. On the other hand, the female painter (humane message source) in the ad was evaluated as an amateur painter. Besides, it was also understood that the female painter in the ad has a potential of causing a sexual evocation of ASMR content creating a mixed attitude towards the ad. Yet, as it was mentioned above, the choice of female painter was one of the positive ad-related reasons. Thus, it can be said that humane message source in the ad has a potential of creating both positive and mixed attitude towards the ad.

The targets of the comments for the ad was examined and a total of 13 target categories were determined. To whom/what the comments on the ad are directed towards, in other words, the proportional distribution of the targets is shown in Figure 15:

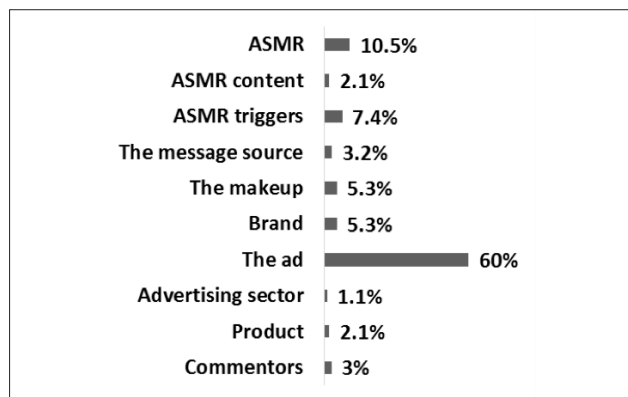


Figure 15. The proportional distribution of the targets of comments for the ad

It was determined that the target of the great majority (60%) of the observed comments was the ad itself. Besides, ASMR and ASMR triggers in the ad were found to be the other remarkable targets of the comments after the ad itself.

It was also examined whether there were expressions about behavioral attitude towards the ad in the comments. The behavioral expressions identified were grouped into one category which is positive behavioral attitudes as there were no expressions of negative behavioral attitude determined. Figure 16 shows the distribution of positive statements about behavioral attitudes towards the ad.

Voluntarily watching the ad over and over was found to be the major (58%) positive behavioral attitude towards the ad. Besides, trying the product and preferring the brand after viewing the ad were found to be other positive behavioral attitudes towards the ad.

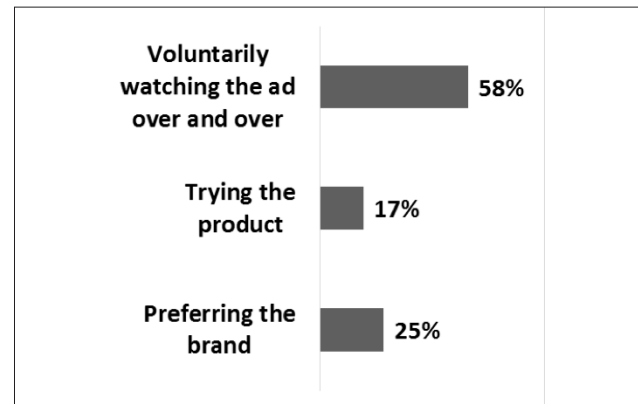


Figure 16. Positive behavioral attitudes towards the ad

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The most prominent positive expression for both ASMR-containing ads analyzed within the scope of the study is the expression “relaxing” (used 13 times for LCW ad, 18 times for Permolit ad). The most obvious reasons of positive attitude towards these ads are the ad is relaxing (has 39% share for LCW ad, 85% share for Permolit ad) and the liking of the ASMR content in the ad (has 48% share for LCW ad, 70.6% share for Permolit ad). At this point, it can be thought that ASMR content in ads can be used as a kind of experiential marketing tool and attract the audience by giving them a feeling of relax. On the other hand, it should be noted that the most prominent expression in the negative attitude towards the ads is “irritating” (used 8 times for LCW ad, and this is the only negative expression used for Permolit ad). Although no obvious reason could be identified as to why the Permolit Paint ad was expressed as irritating, the fact that the ASMR triggers such as whispering in the ad were found to be annoying, is the prominent source of discomfort when the LCW ad was evaluated as irritating. Therefore, ASMR triggers in ads can provide a positive attitude by giving the audience a feeling of relax, as well as cause a negative attitude by giving a feeling of discomfort.

As a result of comparing the LCW ad with IKEA’s 25-minute “oddly IKEA” ad with ASMR, some audiences (4% of the participants with negative attitudes in terms of ASMR-related reasons) did not like it. This may suggest that IKEA’s ad creates a kind of anchoring effect for the ads with ASMR content. In the oddly IKEA ad, IKEA’s products are promoted by a soft-sounding voice-over, using ASMR triggers. In the

ad, soft-toned speech was used, not whispering. Only the hands and arms of the person in contact with the products are visible. Information such as the color, price, material properties, texture and function of the products promoted in the ad are conveyed in a way that creates an ASMR effect. In this respect, it can be said that the ad functions as an experiential marketing tool. Due to the fact that the ad is taken as an “anchor” by some audiences, the ad can provide clues that can be used by brands that want to use ads with ASMR content. For instance, in order not to irritate the audience, it may be preferable to use a soft voice-over instead of whispering, which has the potential to be considered “annoying”.

It was observed that the ads provide important outcomes related to positive behavioral attitudes such as starting to use the brand and ordering from the brand. In addition, findings related to the behavioral attitude that both ads were watched voluntarily and repeatedly were also obtained (has 22.2 % share for LCW ad, 58% share for Permolit ad). The aforementioned outcomes can be interpreted that if the ASMR content is liked, the ad may take a long time to reach the wipe out threshold. On the other hand, it was determined that the LCW ad causes negative behavioral attitudes such as switching (20% of the participants with negative behavioral attitude) to the competitor brand (Defacto and Koton brands) and giving up using the brand (80% of the participants with negative behavioral attitude). Therefore, the reason that the ad audiences dislike ASMR content may cause the brand lose existing customers.

It was determined that the ASMR-containing Permolit Paint ad provides a remarkable positive attitude. Although it is appreciated that a female message source is preferred as a painter in the ad, some reasons related to the female message source have emerged as the main sources of the complex attitude towards the ad. Reasons such as criticism of the way the lipstick of the female message source in the ad is applied (57.1% of the participants with mixed attitude), the way the female painter paints are amateurish (14.3% of the participants), and the sexuality association (14.3 % of the participants) have been identified as the sources of the mixed attitudes. The comments that the Permolit Paint ad evokes sexuality support the findings in the literature that ASMR contents evoke sexuality. In addition, the aforementioned reasons show that the human message source has the potential to lead to a kind of vampire effect by attracting attention and overshadowing the product and the brand. At this point, if a female message source is preferred in ads with ASMR content, how the message source will be positioned emerges as an important factor. In order to prevent sexuality association and to prevent

the vampire effect, the female message source should be positioned in such a way where she is not attention grabbing, as it is in the aforementioned ad of IKEA.

Based on the findings obtained from this study, the possible advantages, disadvantages and application recommendations for brands planning to use ASMR-containing ads can be expressed as follows:

Advantages:

ASMR content, if liked, may delay the ad’s reaching the wipe out threshold.

Thanks to its relaxing effect, ASMR contents can be watched/viewed repeatedly and can position products and brands with a positive attitude in the minds of consumers.

ASMR contents can be used as an experiential marketing tool by harmonizing with the products and activating the emotions of the consumer.

With ASMR contents, a dynamic image perception can be created that the brand follows new trends and catches up to date.

Disadvantages:

ASMR content can create a negative attitude towards the brand due to the potential to be perceived as irritating and annoying by some audiences.

Some auditory triggers of ASMR (whispering, surface tapping/scratching sounds, etc.) may trigger misophonia syndrome for some audiences.

ASMR contents may cause a vampire effect by overshadowing the product and brand due to its sexuality association.

Ads with ASMR content may cause the audience to be frightened and startled, especially when the ASMR-containing ad is exposed during the commercial break of any ASMR video, if the timing is not correct and is not prepared in accordance with the nature of ASMR.

Suggestions:

Creating ASMR content by associating it with the product, in other words, using the brand’s products as ASMR triggers tool, just like in the ads analyzed in this study, can make the products more catchy.

Whispering, which is one of the most commonly used ASMR triggers, should be used in moderation as it may irritate some people. Whispering can be used at the beginning and/or at the end of the ad, not throughout the ad. On the other

hand, considering the potential of whispering to trigger misophonia syndrome, brands may use a soft voice-over instead of whispering as an auditory trigger, as in IKEA's oddly IKEA ad.

The ASMRtist (human message source) in the ad should not be positioned to overshadow the product and the brand so that it does not create a vampire effect and interrupt and/or decrease the ASMR effect.

Auditory triggers of ASMR by physically contacting with the product (e.g., tapping, scratching the surface) should not be perceived as fake or exaggerated, and the consumer should really be convinced of these sounds. At this point, the sounds in the ad should be in good quality.

The auditory elements in the ad should be arranged in such a way that they do not frighten the audience. Because of the algorithms, there is a possibility that the audience may be exposed to such ads during the commercial break while watching the ASMR-content videos in a relaxed way. Therefore, frightening the audience and detachment from the effect of ASMR can result in gaining their hatred.

Brands should publish ads with ASMR content in digital rather than offline media such as TV and radio. Because the noise factor is intense in offline communication environments, it may be difficult for the audiences to feel the ASMR effect. In the digital environment, the audience may be more focused. At this point, the ASMR effect can be felt more in digital environments.

This study is limited to the comments analyzed within the scope of the data collection period from the digital media platforms within the sample. It was avoided to make erroneous inferences about the gender of commenters on digital media platforms, such as using pseudonyms and misleading profile photos. Within the scope of the study, only the comments on ASMR-containing ads of LCW and Permolit Paint were examined. For all these reasons, the results obtained should not be generalized to all ASMR-containing ads and to a certain product category.

There are several opportunities for future research on ASMR-containing ad effectiveness. First of all, the literature on the possible effect of both the ad audience's and the ASMRtist's gender on the formation of the ASMR effect are quite inadequate. Therefore, it is revealed that the effect of gender on ASMR effect should be analyzed in future studies. More consumer insight is needed to gain insight into ASMR's advertising effectiveness. In addition to content analysis, a netnography approach can be adopted, which can provide more in-depth information on ASMR-content ads to gain consumer insight. On the other hand, the effectiveness of

visual, auditory and haptic triggers according to the product category can be analyzed with a qualitative and quantitative approach. In this way, ASMR contents can be used more effectively in ads. Moreover, the product-ASMR content congruence should also be investigated in future research. Also, ASMRtist's trustability and celebrity effect should be measured. For instance, is the ASMRtist (not a celebrity) more trustworthy for the audiences than a celebrity ASMRtist in the ad? Do the celebrity ASMRtists decrease ad effectiveness by distracting audiences' attention? Does the celebrity's existing image affect ASMR effect and ad effectiveness? In addition, the platform effect should also be investigated in future research. For instance, researchers can compare ASMR-containing TV ad and ASMR-containing online ad in terms of ad effectiveness. In this way, the effect of noise factors on ASMR effect can also be measured. Future studies also have opportunities to measure trigger effectiveness according to product category as well. Does the type of ASMR triggers affect ad effectiveness? Is there any trigger-product category congruence that can be mentioned? For instance, researchers can scrutinize which trigger (auditory, visual, haptic) is more effective on which kind of product. They can measure trigger-product category congruence if this congruence exists.

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