

ASMR as Example Narrowcasting and Its Audience: A Review on Turkish ASMR

Tematik Yayıncılık Örneği Olarak ASMR ve İzleyicisi: Türkçe ASMR Üzerine Bir Araştırma

Recep BAYRAKTAR* 

Abstract

In the new media where there are many presentations and representations, the audience who are increasingly fragmented, are integrated around different thematic areas, and more specific interests that affect their mass characteristics. In this study, ASMR the phenomenon, which is among the popular contents of YouTube, and has begun to gain a place in the mainstream media, is discussed as a new contextual category that corresponds to the more specific interests of the audience and within the scope of narrowcasting. The expansions that ASMR brings to both narrowcasting and fragmented audience are presented. In this context, ASMR videos were observed by the netnography method during a year on YouTube, 8 Turkish ASMR content creators/ASMRtists were interviewed with, and the audience comments in the three most watched videos of these ASMRtists on YouTube were examined. Among the more significant findings of the study are that the ASMR has 14 content categories in the context of narrowcasting, that the audience who expect relaxation/therapy with ASMR make requests like an active content producer/prosumer, and they need media mediation even so as to fall asleep.

Keywords: Narrowcasting, Audience Fragmentation, ASMR, Prosumer, YouTube

Öz

Birçok temsilin ve sunumun olduğu yeni medyada izleyiciler giderek bölünmeye uğramakta, kitleliliklerini etkileyen spesifik ilgiler etrafında ve farklı tematik alanlarda bütünleşmektedirler. Bu çalışmada YouTube'un popüler içerikleri arasında olan ve ana akım medyada da kendisine yer edinmeye başlayan ASMR olgusu izleyicilerin daha spesifik ilgilerine cevap veren tematik yayıncılık kapsamında ele alınmış ve ASMR'in hem tematik yayıncılığa hem de bölünmüş izleyiciliğe dair getirmiş olduğu açılımlar ortaya koyulmuştur.

* Research Assistant, Dr. Atatürk University, Faculty of Communication, Radio, Television and Cinema Department, Erzurum, Turkey, E – mail: recep.bayraktar@atauni.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-6285-8059

This research has been approved by Atatürk University Ethics Committee on 12.03.2021, decision number: 48.

This study is derived from the doctoral thesis of Atatürk University Social Sciences Institute named "Narrowcasting and Audience Relationship: A Study on ASMR".

Bu bağlamda netnografi yöntemiyle YouTube'daki birçok ASMR videosu bir yıl boyunca gözlemlenmiş, 8 Türkçe ASMR içerik üreticisiyle/ASMRtist ile görüşmeler yapılmış ve YouTube kanallarındaki en çok izlenen üç videodaki izleyici yorumları ele alınmıştır. Çalışmanın önemli bulguları arasında ASMR'in tematik yayıncılık bağlamında 14 içerik kategorisine sahip olması, ASMR ile rahatlama/terapi bekleyen izleyicilerin aktif bir içerik üreticisi/üretüketici gibi davranmaları ve uykuya dalabilmek için bile medya dolayımına ihtiyaç duymaları bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tematik Yayıncılık, İzleyici Bölünmesi, ASMR, Üretüketici, YouTube

Introduction

Narrowcasting, which starts with the presentation of more particular contents chosen from among broadcasting practice, meets audience's specific interests. Thanks to the narrowcasting, more professional steps are taken both in terms of contextuality and recognizing the target audience. The new media that increase interaction and targeting ability shapes narrowcasting, and facilitates audience participation, and turns in favor of amateur users, content production previously dominated by professional producers. Thematization in new media proliferates by splitting up various fractions, and contributes to the creation of new contents that respond to more specific interests of the audience. Thus, the stereotyped practices of broadcasting, and the audience definitions of the past are also transformed. In this context, ASMR videos in YouTube, are considered as a new dimension for narrowcasting, and they are defined with concept ASMR narrowcasting, and the new expansions which ASMR narrowcasting brings to both narrowcasting and the fragmented audience are explained.

In this study, after the development of narrowcasting, fragmented audience, and ASMR phenomenon are explained; the content taxonomy of ASMR narrowcasting and the general characteristics of ASMR audience are revealed. The revealing the content taxonomy of ASMR in terms of broadcasting, and determining that the concept of prosumer which is attributed to today's audience is more prominent in ASMR videos, is thought that may be a guide for future research.

Narrowcasting

According to media historians, the development of any media takes place in three stages: (i) elite stage, (ii) mass stage, and (iii) specialization stage. A new medium is first adopted by the elite. As the price of this medium decreases, it spreads to all segments of society and thus, the mass stage of the media emerges. As this medium becomes more widespread, the medium before itself moves from the mass stage to the specialization stage in order to survive, and starts to create contents that corresponds to more specific interests (Neuman, 1991, p. 117)

Broadcasting phenomenon has become a situation that surrounds the audience with radio and television. In the early years of television broadcasting, there were content categories such as news, entertainment, sports, documentaries, and cartoons in a single channel, and the general interests of the audience were addressed (Srivastava, 2002, p. 2). This situation changed with TV narrowcasting. The main factor that led to the start of TV narrowcasting is cable TV. The first cable TV broadcasts

took place in the USA in 1949. Home Box Office that is a Pay TV network, has acquired many subscribers (Tekinalp, 2011, pp. 124-126).

The one of the general contents of TV (news, sports, documentaries, etc.) is selected in narrowcasting, and broadcasts are performed in the direction of chosen category. Any of the TV channels that adopts narrowcasting focuses on the specific interests of the audience rather than the general interests. Fiske (2003, p. 102), states that the codes of broadcast and narrowcast are determined by the nature of the audience, that heterogeneous structure of the audience in broadcasting codes, and the homogeneous structure of the audience is taken into consideration in narrowcasting codes.

As the broadcasting sector became more sophisticated over time, various thematic forms which took notice of the demographic characteristics of the audience were developed, and certain contents for target audience were created. Today, micro content features are used for each audience, and contents are created in line with their special interests and expectations (Silverblatt et al., 2014, p. 414). In this context, Castells states that today's communication systems have evolved from mass communication to mass self-communication, from a general text to my individualized text, to the combination of images and words chosen by the audience (2016, pp. 1-3). In this way, the generally accepted categories of narrowcasting are transformed and intertwined in new media, and the audience emerges as a more atomized phenomenon.

Fragmented Audience

An important phenomenon that integrates with the broadcasting is the concept of audience. The concept of audience incorporated different meanings in various periods of history, and it is under debate as a mass or a group (McQuail, 2010), public or market (Ang, 1991). While the emphasis was placed on the passive audience in the early years of mass communication research (Biocca, 2012), the notion of active audience gained importance later on (Casey et al., 2008, p. 291). Questioning how audience activity can be, Biocca (2012, pp. 53-54), tries to explain it with the concepts of selectivity, utilitarianism, intentionality, involvement, and imperviousness to influence. Seaman, on the other hand, opposes the exaggerated idea of the active audience thesis, and states that audience can be active to a certain extent while watching television, but they cannot be active audience, unless the audience are aware of the information, ideas, beliefs, and images that are systematically excluded from the media systems (2005, p. 255). While the debate on the passivity and activeness of the audience continues, the new media enables the audience to access a lot of content in line with their interests, to involve in the content and to recirculate it by adding different meanings.

McQuail states that today's audience have moved away from the meaning of coming together, and their interest is shifting from the general content to the content that they can always be satisfied (2010, pp. 398-403). In a similar vein, Dimmick implies that the basic dynamics of today's media is to provide satisfaction, and the audience's spending time and money on the media depends on their satisfaction (2003, pp. 24-34). The audience's satisfaction search both increase the varieties of content supply and cause the audience fragmentation. Thus, fragmented audience try to satisfy their specific interests thanks to the growing diversity of content. In this context, Webster (2014, pp.

1-5) highlights audience's interest importance among almost limitless contents, and states a interest market is formed as a result of limitless content and limited interest.

Many companies research to determine the characteristics of audience, what they like, and what they dislike. In these researches, generally, three categorical features are tried to be revealed. These are listed as demographic, psychographic, and lifestyle categories (Turow, 2009, pp. 44-45). Napoli (2003, p. 96) points out that demographic characteristics such as age, gender, income level are only one of the factors that determine the audience structure, and should not be ignored by defining them, structure of the audience market, the structural/technological features of the media, and the value that audience give to media content.

McQuail says that audience fragmentation occurs in four stages. These are holistic, pluralism, core environment, and separation models, respectively.

- The holistic model represents the viewing period in the early years of TV broadcasting. In this period, the expectations of the audience are similar.
- In the pluralism model, in which the TV channels increased, the audience have been fragmented within the framework of daypart, regional, and special broadcasts.
- In the core environment model that emerges after cable and satellite broadcasting, national borders disappear, audience begins to be disconnected from mainstream media, and broadcasts many types of contents.
- In the separation model in which there is no certain center, audience/users had too many varieties (1997, p. 138).

New media can be given as an example of the McQuail's separation model. Audience can access content that is included in networks from anywhere of the world, and thus, they fragment thanks to various contents.

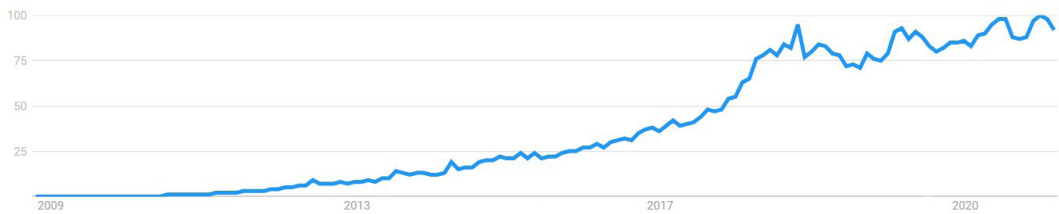
ASMR

Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) is a perceptual phenomenon that starts in the head and scalp, and spreads to other organs of the body as a tingling sensation (Fredborg at el., 2017). ASMR tingling sensation, which occur involuntarily as a result of visual, auditory and cognitive stimuli, is similar to the effects of whispering, light touching and hair brushing on the body. In the early years, researchers of this phenomenon made it definitions such as Attention Induced Head Orgasm (AIHO), Weird Head Sensation (WHS), and Unnamed Feeling (UNF) (Young and Blansert, 2015, pp. 5). The terminology of the ASMR experience in online communities started with question about what a user's feeling might be, on the steadyhealth.com website in 2007, and it took shape with questions and answers of the other users. A website called aiho.org and Society of Sensationalists (SoS) group on Yahoo were created for the ASMR phenomenon for the first time in 2008. Then, ASMR Research & Support website launched by Jennifer Allen, and Unnamed Feeling blog launched by Andrew MacMuiris in 2010 (Richard, 2015). The definition of tingling sensation which has been embraced by almost everyone conceptualized as ASMR by Jennifer Allen in 2010. The word expansions of the ASMR term are as follows;

- Autonomous: It refers to behaviors over which the individual has no control.
- Sensory: It is a type of nerves that carry information to the brain.
- Meridian: It is a chakra used in Chinese medicine, which means life energy and passes through the center of the human body.
- Response: It is described as the body's reply to certain stimuli and thoughts (Young and Blansert, 2015, pp. 5).

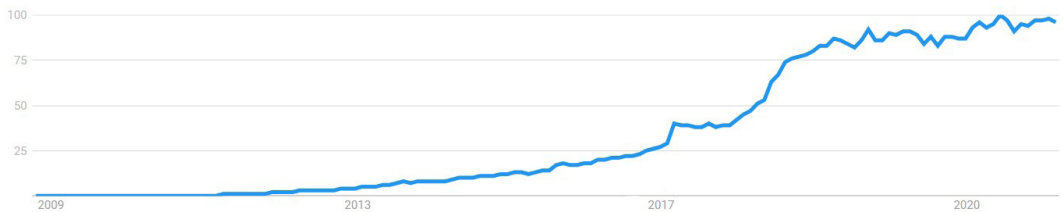
The ASMR has become a reference word for those who want to experience the tingling sensation. After 2010, it is observed that the trend of searching for ASMR in Google search engine (Graphic 1) and YouTube (Graphic 2) is on the rise.

Graphic 1. ASMR's Google Search Trend



Source: (Google Trends, 2022a)

Graphic 2. ASMR's YouTube Search Trend



(Google Trends, 2022b)

Andersen states that it is wrong to evaluate the ASMR effect as a single sensory state, and it is a relaxing effect consisting of a whole of emotional content blended with interest (2015, p. 15). The triggers that create the ASMR tingling sensation may vary from person to person. In their study using 14 different triggers, Fredborg et al., revealed that watching others apply makeup or nail polish to themselves, chewing sounds and dentist simulation triggers had different variants in people who experienced the ASMR tingling sensation (2017, s. 4). Hostler (2018), remarks that ASMR videos include professional services such as someone's cutting your hair or massaging you, and triggers in ASMR videos is not different from real-life triggers.

Those who produce the content for ASMR tingling sensation are called ASMRtist (Young and Blansert, 2015, p. 10). Gentle Whispering ASMR channel, which was created on February 24th, 2011, is among the first ASMR channels on YouTube, and the introduction of this channel is as follows:

“In this world of stress and chaos, I wish my channel to be your secret island of relaxation and peace. I'm here to comfort you, to share my love and care with you, to make you feel relaxed and stress-free through creative and soothing videos. Let me try and keep you company at hard times, let me calm you down and help you sleep on restless nights, let me be your friend and be a trigger for your tingles (ASMR) or simply help you find beauty and peace in places you might have never thought of looking.” (YouTube 2011a¹).

The number of subscribers reaching millions on YouTube is also seen in the ASMR phenomenon. The general features of the top 20 ASMRtist channels on YouTube are presented in (Table 1).

Table 1. Top 20 ASMRtist List on YouTube

Rank	Channel Name	Creation Date	Subscribers	Videos	Views
1	Zach Choi ASMR	7/5/2014	10,400,000	575	1,710,831,905
2	Jane ASMR	11/17/2012	10,300,000	907	3,174,943,049
3	SAS-ASMR	4/6/2016	8,950,000	1,156	2,269,001,823
4	Hongyu ASMR	9/9/2018	6,350,000	296	1,555,069,151
5	AlmazanKitchen	5/20/2015	3,550,000	445	322,041,889
6	G-NI	7/31/2018	3,500,000	341	775,268,731
7	Kim&Liz ASMR	9/3/2016	3,450,000	858	1,196,565,348
8	N.E Let's Eat	10/7/2015	3,380,000	849	948,703,942
9	JaeYeol ASMR	4/15/2016	3,090,000	832	690,543,255
10	HidaMari ASMR Cooking	9/26/2017	3,090,000	408	283,041,090
11	Gibi ASMR	6/19/2016	2,850,000	671	989,923,200
12	HANSE	5/16/2015	2,590,000	551	327,375,069
13	ASMR Darling	12/11/2014	2,510,000	215	547,524,379
14	SIO ASMR	1/23/2017	2,500,000	289	329,486,847
15	ASMR PPOMO	10/22/2013	2,330,000	410	574,153,908
16	suellASMR	4/23/2017	2,090,000	407	567,252,579
17	ASMR Phan	6/4/2018	2,030,000	859	432,675,373

1 The YouTube bibliography has been arranged according to the opening dates of the channels. The exact fonts of the channels and contents have been written in order to be easily found.

18	Chynaunique ASMR	9/21/2017	1,960,000	291	311,457,143
19	Gentle Whispering ASMR	2/24/2011	1,960,000	515	815,331,055
20	MINEE EATS	3/11/2017	1,870,000	752	508,895,404

Source: (Equipment Nerd, 2022)

Harper states that ASMR videos often contain health and therapy discourses, and are designed to help people fall asleep and relieve anxiety (2020, p. 2). In their first peer-reviewed study of ASMR phenomenon with 475 participants in whom the ASMR tingling sensation happens, Barrat and David (2015), found that most of participants were temporarily relieved after watching ASMR videos, and participants watched ASMR videos to help them sleep, to deal with stress. On the other hand, Hostler (2018), lists the main problems using for treatment of ASMR as the existence of personal trigger differences in the experience of the ASMR effect, the lack of studies on the strength and reliability of ASMR, and the need for more comprehensive scientific research on the origin of its effect, and he asserts that these problems can be overcome thanks to scientific research that will be carried out with the assumption that the ASMR effect may be something against misophonia².

Strengthening its popularity with the YouTube platform, ASMR often finds its way into the mainstream media. ASMR-formatted ads are used for the products of many popular companies. The Michelob Ultra Pure Gold beer ad (Figure 1), which was broadcast during the American football league championship game, is among the most striking.

Figure 1. Michelob Ultra Pure Gold beer ad



Source: (YouTube, 2019b)

2 Misophonia that define as selective sound sensitivity, is an automatic response of a person to certain sounds. It is also expressed as hatred for the sound. Misophonia is a chronic condition characterized as an unpleasant and emotional experience (Cavanna, 2014, p. 357).

This ad contains many elements such as whisper, clicking, and natural sound found in ASMR contents. In a similar vein, Head & Shoulders shampoo ad (Figure 2) that broadcasted in the mainstream media in Turkey is among ASMR-formatted ads.

Figure 2. Head & Shoulders shampoo ad



Source: (YouTube, 2020c)

Examining whether the ASMR-formatted ads cause six basic emotions in the audience: happiness, disgust, surprise, anger, fear, and sadness, Çerçi (2021, pp. 938-939), revealed that ASMR-formatted ads have a significant effect on creating feelings of happiness, surprise, and disgust. Aytekin (2019), who investigated the way ASMR processing in the body with Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) measurement technique, determined that the ASMR-formatted ad videos were more striking than the popular YouTube ASMR videos, but it was noted that the characteristics of the target audience should be carefully analyzed in the ads created with the ASMR technique, since the ASMR-formatted ad videos left a negative impression on some of the participants.

ASMRtists have had a variety of monetization methods after the growing importance of ASMR on the YouTube platform. Special content requests can be made for the next videos with a certain fee on the YouTube. It is possible to donate ASMRtists thanks to sites such as Kickstarter, GoFundMe, Patreon, and PayPal Donations outside the YouTube platform. There is also a mobile application called Tingle, which can be downloaded from the Google Store to experience ASMR tingling sensation without ad interruption, and to reach the exclusive content of many ASMRtists. In addition to these, there are websites tingletastic.com where ASMR-formatted t-shirts, slippers and bags can be purchased, and asmriversity.com where many data about ASMR are presented. Community members who are interested in ASMR celebrate every year 9 april as international ASMR day to raise awareness of this phenomenon.

Methodology

New media that incorporate the feature of computer information processing and broadcasting of mass media offers fluidity to its users thanks to networks (Törenli, 2005, p. 87). It is important to adapt to

the logic, and language of digitalized communication, order to participate in new media (Castells, 2005, p. 500). New media platforms that allow audience to be micro-fragmented have an important place in today's media studies. In this study, qualitative research method was used in order to understand audiencehood and ASMR narrowcasting which is considered as a new thematic dimension in new media ecosystem, and it is aimed to create a perspective on the structure of both narrowcasting and fragmented audience with the definition of ASMR narrowcasting. The field plane was examined with the netnography that conceptualized for online environments. Kozinets (2002, p. 63), says that ethnography must be adapted to digital environments because of many topics, groups, messages, interactions, data for researches, and develops netnography concept. The ability to copy data from online communities by computer-mediated communication (2010, pp. 56-58), to access a lot of data in a short time at low cost, to conduct a completely lurker observation, to obtain data asynchronously as if the conversations and discussions in online communities were in their natural environment are among the important features of netnography. In line with these features, it was recorded to analyze, and was accessed to many data, the most watched videos, audience comments for ASMR phenomenon with netnography method in YouTube ecosystem.

The current research questions are as follows:

RQ 1: What are the main features of ASMR narrowcasting?

RQ 2: Why do ASMR audience prefer this type of content?

RQ 3: What kind of relation is there between the ASMR narrowcasting and its the audience?

Sampling and Data Collection

ASMR was investigated during a year for current study on YouTube platform. The popular ASMR YouTube channels were examined thanks to the algorithms provided by YouTube (views, subscriptions, relevance, etc.), and it was determined that ASMR videos have similar content categories. These content categories are classified to understand ASMR narrowcasting in the findings section, and 8 Turkish ASMR channels (Table 2) were selected with snowball sampling in line with these categories to understand the ASMR phenomenon from the eyes of ASMRtists. In addition, it was taken into account whether they produced content in the last year or not, their viewing rates, and subscriptions of those channels, and have had semi-structured interviews with ASMRtists/content creators of those channels. Audience comments in three most watched videos of 8 Turkish ASMR channels in the sampling were also discussed in order to make sense of the ASMR phenomenon in the eyes of ASMR audience. The audience comments before December 10, 2021, were examined due to the exponentially increasing data flow in channel of ASMRtists

Table 2. Interviewed ASMRtists and YouTube channel information

Channel Name	Creation Date	Subscribers	Videos	Views
Selen ASMR	8/31/2019	218,000	189	50.126.397
Mehtap Ziyagil ASMR	7/22/ 2016	129,000	199	39.133.034
Serappu ASMR	9/10/2018	27,600	196	4.845.027
Sarikız ASMR	4/22/2018	32,000	96	6.136.685
Pekka ASMR	5/ 20/2020	22,200	187	4.900.122
Zey ASMR	6/21/2014	12,800	94	2.575.931

Pamuk ASMR	1/12/2018	21,500	96	4.468.262
Doğal ASMR	7/13/2015	6,430	168	2.037.859

Source: (YouTube, 2021d³)

The data of the study were analyzed with descriptive analysis, under two main headings, and the participants were numbered and coded as (P). Audience comments were also quoted directly. This research has been approved by Atatürk University Ethics Committee on 12.03.2021, decision number: 48.

Findings

Characteristics of ASMR Narrowcasting

ASMRtists' sincere attitudes (Figure 3) are among the most distinctive features of ASMR Narrowcasting.

Figure 3. Sarıkız ASMR



Source: (YouTube, 2019e)

ASMRtists who address their audience demonstrate an effective communication style With the “I’m here for you” attitude, and the continuity of their attitudes increases the loyalty to the them. ASMRtists must be very concerned and careful in their content. There are many factors that can prevent the emergence of a ASMR tingling sensation for an audience that focused on the content, such as the slightest increase of sound, uncomfortable image transition, indifferent attitude, pretended behavior.

“Even though I seem to be talking to the camera in my house, I actually speak with the sincerity as if there were someone in front of me.” (P6)

3 YouTube channel data was compiled on 20.12.2021.

“We have a very close relationship with my audience, such as sister relationship.” (P4)

“We have a strong bond of friendship with my audience.” (P3)

“I see my audience like my family.” (P8)

“My audience are like my friends.” (P5)

“My audience see me sincere.” (P1)

Precise sound recording is very important for ASMR videos that take the impact of sound. Especially, when ASMRtists integrate with the microphone, suddenly approach it, and move away from it, the triggering effect of the recorded sound increases, and multidimensional feature is added to the sound. In this context, binaural microphones are an indispensable option for ASMRtists. The smallest sound in the environment can be recorded with such microphones, and the tingling sensation created by ASMR triggers activate by the headphone. The most important feature of this microphone is that the sounds in ASMR video that was listened to with headphones create an effect that massages the inside of your ear, and while performing the performance of the ASMRtist, the transition between the right-left ear-shaped apparatus is felt in the right and left ears of the audience in the same way. Such sound transitions are an important factor that trigger ASMR tingling sensation. Among binaural microphones, the 3dio microphone series (Figure 4), is used a lot for voice triggers.

Figure 4. 3dio microphone



Source: (3diosound, 2021)

In broadcasting, elements such as decor, camera angles, lighting, make-up, and costumes are important in terms of visual harmony of the content, and these are professional production stages.

ASMRtists use decor, light, make-up, and many ambience elements to create ASMR tingling sensation in their content. ASMRtists, who prepare the audience for sleep and soothe them in dim light and by whispering sentences like “I take your negative energy”, “I prepare you for sleep”, “I want you to forget all the negativity you have experienced today”. In addition, ASMRtists use various apparatuses, and ambiances of the characters they play in to increase the effect of the content (Figure 5) and (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Role Play



Source: (YouTube, 2020f)

Figure 6. Role Play



Source: (YouTube, 2020g)

There are many video contents such as nature sounds, hypnosis, meditation, soap cutting, slime, and mukbang on the YouTube platform. Such content is also processed in ASMR videos, and is converted into hybrid content by many ASMRtists. ASMR videos were developed over time according to the expectations of the audience, and a categorical-contextual terminology emerged. These categories, which are often used intertwined, had a decisive influence on the creation of an ASMR video. It is possible to find many content types associated with the ASMR term on the YouTube platform, such as ASMR massage, ASMR chiropractic, ASMR barber, ASMR manicure/pedicure. In such contents, the emphasis of some professional practices on comforting people is integrated with ASMR, and daily work practice is presented as ASMR content. In this study, such contents associated with ASMR are considered the result of a popular trend, and the content categories of ASMR narrowcasting are determined by taking into account the content producers who call themselves ASMRtist, and who have ASMR channel on the YouTube platform. These content categories are as follows:

Hand Movements: In this content category, ASMRtists try to attract the attention of the audience with soft hand movements and hand rubs in front of the camera. Here, visual triggers are more forefront than sound (Figure 7).

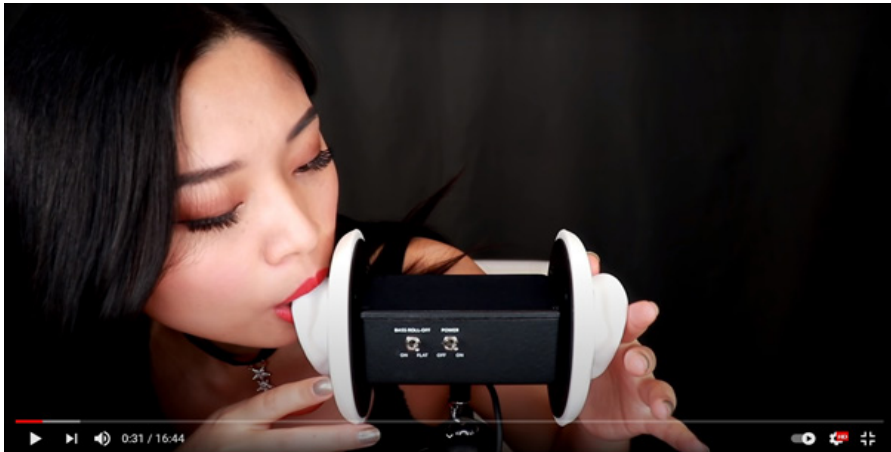
Figure 7. Hand Movements



Source: (YouTube, 2021h)

- **Mouth Sounds:** Strange and soft sounds are tried to be made from the mouth in the contents here.
- **Triggers:** ASMR videos contain all the triggering elements. In fact, triggers is possible to characterize as all audio-visual elements that stimulate the ASMR tingling sensation. Such a categorical distinction is due to the fact that trigger titled videos focus on particular objects and repetitive words much more. Here, the audience are provided to receive more intense stimuli.
- **Ear Licking/Ear Eating:** In videos in this category, ASMRtists try to make strange noises by licking the microphone (Figure 8). This category is distinguished as sensitive/intense ear licking.

Figure 8. ASMR Ear Eating



Source: (YouTube, 2021i)

ASMRtist attitude and ambiance in ear licking/ear eating videos are criticized by some people for sexual stimuli activating. In this context, Copeland (2017) states that ASMR is criticized as a phenomenon that stimulates sexual stimuli, because of ASMRtists generally composed of young and attractive women, and expressions such as brain orgasm and whispering porn are common in the comments below ear licking/ear eating videos

- **Role Play:** The roles of many characters are presented in the contents of this category. ASMRtists can be a doctor, a masseur, a waiter, a hairdresser or a sister in role play contents. In addition, the natural environments of the characters who play the role are also designed in the background in order to increase the effect of ASMR (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Role Play



Source: (YouTube, 2021j)

- **Personal Attention:** Although this category is similar to the role play category, it differs from it in some respects. Here, ASMRtists ask questions such as how his/her day passed or what his/her mood is, and tries to answer themselves these questions.
- **Soothing Sounds:** Videos in this category, which can contain many sounds in terms of variety, are mostly composed of rustling, scratching, and rubbing sounds.
- **Tapping:** The purpose here is to create sounds that evoke clicks. Clicks are usually created by using long nails, and tapping objects (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Tapping



Source: (YouTube, 2021k)

- **Tingles/Tickle Sounds:** The tingling is the objectified state of the ASMR sensation in the body. Different sound combinations are tried to be created for audience who have difficulty in experiencing the ASMR tingling sensation in the videos in these category where sound is at the forefront.
- **Inaudible Whispering:** ASMRtists try to take all the effects of whispering. Videos in the inaudible whispering category usually consist of phrases that even ASMRtist cannot understand. Here, written materials such as newspapers, magazines, and books are also read by whispering
- **Affirmations/Compliments:** • Affirmation/Compliment ASMR videos, which contain many suggestions for people who want to get rid of their tensions, and to relax, can consist of words that emphasize positivity such as “You can succeed”, “You can never give up”, “Everything will be fine”, “Think beautifully”, “You are the most valuable”, “You are different”, “You deserve the best”, “You are lucky”, “You shouldn’t be upset”. There are also various recommendations about life.
- **Counting:** Here, the audience is expected to immerse themselves in the flow of counting, and its various combinations. (up to a hundred, backward, twos, etc.).
- **Ear to Ear:** Sound triggers are prioritized in ear to ear ASMR videos. The stereo feature of the sound is tried to be reflected to the audience with transitions between two microphones or binaural microphone (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Ear to Ear



Source: (YouTube, 2021)

- **ASMR Mukbang:** The mukbang videos that is among the popular contents of YouTube, have been intertwined with the ASMR, and contain many ASMR triggers as both visual and auditory. Especially, the mouth smacking sounds allow the integration of mukbang and ASMR.

Audience of ASMR

In the new media, where the contextual diversity is increasing exponentially, important transformations are experienced in the usage purposes of media. The audience who try to find a place for themselves in general broadcasting categories (news, sports, entertainment, series/movies, etc.) to relax/relieve stress, now turn directly to content that correspond to their expectations with the emergence of new thematic areas that can be met the more specific interests. In this context, the ASMR may think as an area where tended to relax the audience who face with stress, anxiety and depression.

“I both relax myself and my audience. They are actually my sleep friends.” (P3)

“It makes me very happy to hear that I can cure sleep problems and troubles.” (P1)

“I really like the feeling of being able to put them to sleep and clear their heads even when I shoot my videos. I got a lot of little brothers like I’m singing a lullaby to them.” (P2)

“The last video was very nice. You made me very comfortable, thank you.”

“Sister, you are transferring your positive energy to people. You are a perfect person.”

“I was very depressed and stressed. You came like a medicine. Thank you, I love you.”

“You relax us, and you are like medicine. Well, who is comforting you, and who is your medicine?”

“There are many people who watch my role play videos in order to get away from work stress and school stress.” (P1)

“They want your support very much because of problems in their lives. There are no sincere people around them. They are unhappy and lonely. Their loneliness makes me very sad.” (P3)

“In generally, people who often feel lonely, have sleep problems, have trouble or just want to relax, watch my videos. So today’s people.”(P2)

The emphasis of ASMR narrowcasting to distract its audience from stress also leads to the formation of various expectations. even for the diseases that will be performed with medical treatment methods, ASMRtists exhibit behavior towards the treatment of the disease in the role play, affirmation, and personal interest content categories (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Role Play



Source: (YouTube, 2021m)

“My audience consists of those who cannot find a place for themselves in this world or have a hard time trying to find it. I want to help them.” (P4)

“ASMR has helped my sleep problems for years. So, it feels so good to see me help people.” (P2)

“I have audience whose parents are separated, who have anxiety problems, and they say I wish I had a sister like you.” (P7)

“They are begging me not to leave their lives. They tell me that I am their doctor and have taken up a lot of space in their lives.” (P3)

“I wish someone would actually take care of me like that.”

Audience trying to sleep with ASMRtists’ online lullabies have a considerable place in ASMR narrowcasting. ASMR audience are getting ready for sleep with various suggestions such as “Leave yourself to me”, “I want you to concentrate completely on me”, “Now your eyes are closing slowly”.

“I have audience who have sleep problems.” P1)

“Your videos are so relaxing. I can sleep with them”

“Every night, I sleep with your voice and your videos.”

“I am sure that nobody knows the end of this video because we fall asleep in 5 minutes.”

“It’s clear which video I’m going to sleep with tonight.”

One of the factors that should be emphasized here is that the sleep modes in which the audience are disrupted because of the ads that attached to the content on the YouTube platform. It is possible to get rid of this negative situation in paid subscriptions on YouTube, but this situation is a matter of complaint for general subscribers.

“I wish there was an arrangement in the ads taht be put on the videos. I usually put ads at the beginning and the end of the videos.” (P3)

“Ad interruption negatively affects ASMR tingling sensation. I’m trying to put ads at the beginning and end of the video.” (P8)

“Generally, the most complaint of my audience is the ads on my videos.” (P1)

“Advertising barrier before falling asleep.”

“God damn, I got an advertisement at fifth minutes. My ear was shattered.”

“Please do not put these advertisements in such videos. I would have a stroke.”

“I literally jumped out of my place with the advertisement.”

New media offers its audience many opportunities to interact directly with both content producers and content. When the traces of such developments that cause transformations in the audience paradigm are examined on YouTube, the existence of instant notification, comment, rating (like/dislike), and special subscription opportunities increase the possibilities to be involved in content. In the context of the ASMR narrowcasting, it seems that this tendency is primarily used in the creation of more satisfactory contents, and provides a kind of online request culture. ASMRtists who are aware of this situation, take advantage of the opportunities which their platforms offer in order to determine the expectations of the audience.

“I mostly read comments, and try to present contents what my audience wants.” (P8)

“I read almost every comment.” (P3)

“I analyze what kind of videos my audience like from the comments. In addition, I take YouTube channel analysis into consideration, and check the viewing rates of my videos. I create content based on the most liked.” (P1)

“I try to make the categories of content that my audience insist on”. (P7)

“It was one of the videos I wanted you to do the most. It was amazing.”

“Sister, I don’t want to bore you, but please, can you make a new apply lipstick video?, I memorized the old ones.”

“Do you make concepts about winter? If you make soft and beautiful sounds, I think, it might be nice.”

“I can’t tell you how much we need such low whispers as subscribers.”

Such requests may be in the contextual categories of ASMR, as well as in the direction of the ambiance, make up, sound, and various apparatuses used. These types of comments, which support ASMRtists on the one hand, and contribute to the content on the other, actually present framework of the specific expectations of the ASMR audience. (i) What the content can be, (ii), how the impact on the content can be increased, and (iii), how the ambiance and technical equipment will be used more effectively are the main items that reveal the general lines of this framework.

“Please make lots of mouth sounds.”

“Can you just make kiss without speaking in a video?, please.”

“One of videos had a towel soaking episode. It’s great there, but it’s too short. Please, see this comment, and make a content like a wet towel, or water sounds.”

“Sister, please, do ASMR 50 triggers. I think you will do very well.”

For some, intense sounds are an ASMR trigger, while softer sounds are a trigger for others. In this context, ASMR audience try to obtain the most suitable triggers for the ASMR tingling sensation, and make various suggestions to ASMRtists.

“I think, everyone has an ASMR trigger, and different triggers like character difference. For example, I do not like mouth sounds.”(P3)

“I do not like tapping sounds.”(P7)

“Repeat what you did to your nail at the beginning. It is so relaxing.”

“Can you make tapping noises from different objects?, I love your clicker videos so much. They are not hard and uncomfortable like others. I immediately fall asleep because yours are softer.”

“You are very good at tapping and scratching. I only recommend that you should talk to us a little more while tapping.”

ASMR audience offer many suggestions to ASMRtists about the way technical equipment and various objects (artificial nails, wigs, spongy materials, etc.) are used in the contents.

“I think, it would be better to look at the camera while you’re telling something.”

“Nice, but raise a little bit closer to the microphone.”

“The video is very good, but it was like Tascam⁴ was better.”

“As in 18:20, if you make a whisper that cannot be understood closely while the microphone is in your hand, and if you increase the volume two more levels with Tascam, it will be great.”

“It could have been a darker background.”

“If you use a high aperture, your hand will look clear as well, and the high aperture is definitely more suitable for your style.”

“No matter how much I dimmed the screen brightness, the light disturbed my eyes”.

“Can you remove the artificial nails in the other video?”

4 Tascam is a stereophonic microphone type used by ASMRtists.

Discussion and Conclusion

The general practices of traditional broadcasting have changed, especially with the internet-based broadcasting, where users have come into play, and many new thematic areas have emerged. The addressing way to the lowest interest, and the to the largest audience of broadcasting has been transformed primarily by narrowcasting. This situation has changed to appeal to the biggest interest, and to the smallest masses in new media ecosystem, where there are no limited options and television channels. Accordingly, the contents are more personalized, and are shaped according to special interest. In addition, narrowcasting, which has been developing with the competitive environment of the media, and the specific interests of the audience, has been the reason for a continuous increase in content and options. Narrowcasting has enabled the media to become more involved in the audiences' living spaces by meeting the more specific expectations of the audience. Chayko expresses that people satisfy their natural needs and desires in digital environments (2018, p. 83). Today's audience now show a trend towards their interests thanks to the increasing contextual diversity. In Castells's words (2005, p. 457), they are in the bespoke huts, and are increasingly fragmented in line with their interests/desires.

ASMR narrowcasting, in terms of the audience that interested in ASMR for relaxation and therapy, tries to directly address the audience who try to satisfy this interest within the general categories in traditional media (music, entertainment, TV series, movies, sports, etc.), and it differs from previous narrowcasting practices with this feature. One of the important factors that should be emphasized here is that ASMR will not have the same effect on everyone, and is that can occur the effect of misophonia. In addition, the triggers that create ASMR tingling sensation differ from individual to individual. Some need more intense visual triggers, while others just like tapping combinations. This situation contributes to the proliferation of contextual diversity of ASMR narrowcasting, and allows it to be shaped by audience interest, ASMR audience try to be involved in the content production such as prosumer in order to create content that they can feel satisfied. Besides making requests categorically, they guide ASMRtists on how must factors such as camera angle, make-up, decor, ASMRtist attitude be. Although audience have categorical content requests that contribute to the creation of new content on YouTube, ASMR audience differ from many YouTube audience with these features, and they are one step closer to the concept of prosumer. Also, one of the most prominent features of ASMR narrowcasting is sincere of ASMRtists. ASMRtists behave audience like the touch of a masseur trying to comfort a client in a massage parlor. This method is applied visually and audibly. Thus, The audience interest in ASMR, and does not occur misophonia effect satisfy their more specific interests with a different type of content beyond traditional narrowcasting.

References

- 3diosound. (2021). 3dio microphone. Retrieved from <https://3diosound.com/products/free-space-binaural-microphone>
- Andersen, J. (2015). Now you've got the shiveries: Affect, intimacy, and the ASMR whisper community. *Television and New Media*, 16(8), 683–700. doi.org/10.1177/152.747.6414556184
- Ang, I. (1991). *Desperately seeking the audience*. London: Routledge.

- Aytekin, B. A. (2019). Investigation of the effect of autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) as a new YouTube phenomenon in the context of audience, and content interaction with galvanic skin response (GSR) measurement technique. *OPUS International Journal of Society Researches*, 10(17), 1568-1600. doi:10.26466/opus.533789
- Barrat, E. L. & David, N. J. (2015). Autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR): A flow-like mental state. *PeerJ*, 3, e851. doi.org/10.7717/peerj.851
- Biocca F. A. (2012). Opposing conceptions of the audience: The active and passive hemispheres of mass communication theory. In James A. Anderson (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 11* (pp. 51-80). New York: Routledge.
- Casey, B., Casey, N., Calvert, B., French, L. & Lewis, J. (2008). *Television studies the key concepts*. London: Routledge.
- Castells, M. (2005). *Ağ toplumunun yükselişi [The rise of the network society]*. İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Castells, M. (2016). *İletişim gücü [Communication power]*. İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Cavanna, A. E. (2014). What is misophonia and how can we treat it?. *Expert Review of Neurotherapeutics*, 14(4), 357–359. doi.org/10.1586/14737.175.2014.892418
- Copeland, L. (2017). How researchers are beginning to gently probe the science behind ASMR. Retrieved from <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/researchers-begin-gently-probe-science-behind-asmr-180962550/>
- Çerçi, M. (2021). The role of autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) advertisements in creating emotion. *The Turkish Online Journal of Design Art and Communication*, 11(3), 932-942. doi:10.7456/11103100/011
- Dimmick, J. W. (2003). *Media competition and coexistence: The theory of the niche*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Equipment Nerd. (2022). Top ASMR artists list. Retrieved from <https://www.equipmentnerd.com/top-asmr-artists-list/#>
- Fredborg, B. Clark, J. & Smith, S. D. (2017). An examination of personality traits associated with autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR). *Front. Psychol.* 8:247. doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00247
- Google Trends. (2022a). ASMR's Google search trend. Retrieved from <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2009-11-12%202022-03-11&q=asmr>
- Google Trends. (2022b). 'ASMR's YouTube search trend'. Retrieved from <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2009-11-12%202022-03-11&gprop=youtube&q=asmr>
- Harper, P. C. (2020). ASMR: Bodily pleasure, online performance, digital modality. *Sound Studies*, 6(1), 95-98. doi.org/10.1080/20551.940.2019.1681574
- Hostler, T. (2018). ASMR videos could be a new digital therapy for mental health. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/amp/men-tal-health-asmr-videos-could-be-a-new-digital-therapy-100989?__twitter_impression=true
- Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The field behind the screen using netnography for marketing research in online communities. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39(1), 61-72. doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.39.1.61.18935
- Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. London: Sage Publications.
- McQuail, D. (1997) *Audience analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory*. London: Sage Publications.
- Napoli, P. M. (2003). *Audience economics, media institutions and the audience marketplace*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Neuman, W. R. (1991). *The future of the mass audience*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Richard, C. (2015). History of ASMR. Retrieved from <https://asmruniversity.com/history-of-asmr/>
- Silverblatt, A., Smith, A., Smith, J., Miller, D. & Brown, N. (2014). *Media literacy: Keys to interpreting media messages*. Santa Barbara: Praeger.
- Srivastava, H. O. (2002). *Interactive TV technology and markets*. Norwood: Artech House.
- Törenli, N. (2005). *Yeni medya, yeni iletişim ortamı [New media, new communication environment]*. Ankara: Bilim ve Sanat.
- Turow, J. (2009). *Media today: An introduction to mass communication*. London: Routledge.
- Van Dijk, J. (2018). *Ağ toplumu [The network society]*. İstanbul: Kafka.
- Webster, J. G. (2014). *The marketplace of attention: How audiences take shape in a digital age*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Young, J. & Blansert, I. (2015). *ASMR: Idiot's guides as easy as it gets!*. New York: Alpha.

YouTube Bibliography

- YouTube. (2011a). Gentle whispering ASMR. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/user/GentleWhispering/about>
- YouTube. (2019b). Michelob ultra pure gold beer ad. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Wol1p5GRw>
- YouTube. (2020c). Head & Shoulders shampoo ad. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wjd6Q1c7RI>
- YouTube. (2021d). 'Interviewed ASMRtists and YouTube channel information. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com>
- YouTube. (2019e). 10 dakikada 50 trigger ASMR [50 trigger ASMR in 10 minutes]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-kanC1OiX8>
- YouTube. (2020f). ASMR roleplay göz doktoru [ASMR role play oculist]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vU2XuVY2mA>
- YouTube. (2020g). ASMR barber roleplay [ASMR barber roleplay]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dfZEcYOKJk>
- YouTube. (2020h). Derin uyku telkini, rahatlatıcı sesler ve el hareketleri ile rahat uyku meditasyonu, Türkçe ASMR [Relaxed sleep meditation with deep sleep suggestion, relaxing sounds and hand gestures Turkish ASMR]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg_ddayYzDY
- YouTube. (2018i). ASMR ear eating and intense mouth sounds (no talking). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R214C1w5KXA>
- YouTube. (2021j). ASMR doktor roleplay, okul revirinde pansumanını yapıyorum [ASMR doctor roleplay, I'm dressing in the school infirmary]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39IXXQ3Z-Ow>
- YouTube. (2021k). Farklı objelerle tıkırtılar [Tapping on random objects]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4teG3yDcqN4>
- YouTube. (2021l). ASMR ear to ear close up whispers. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YIqZ_7i4LY
- YouTube. (2021m). Migren ve baş ağrısına iyi gelen yatıştırıcı telkinler [Soothing suggestions for migraine and headache]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nP5046gHW80>