

ASMR: Tingle or Torture

Exploring the Diverging Effect between Responder Types in Advertising

Gallus William Houghton^{a*}, Sammy Wals^b, Lieve Doucé^a

^aDepartment of Marketing and Strategy, Hasselt University, Hasselt, Belgium

^bDepartment of Marketing, RWTH Aachen University, Aachen, Germany

*Universiteit Hasselt - Campus Diepenbeek, Agoralaan Gebouw D - B-3590 Diepenbeek, Belgium. Email: galluswilliam.houghton@uhasselt.be

Abstract

Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR), known as a pleasurable, heightened response to typical everyday sounds, has recently been utilised in advertising. This paper explores the diverging effect of ASMR between types of responders. We exposed six positive and six negative responders to a series of ASMR adverts while recording their facial reactions and Electrodermal Activity. Participants then completed a Self-Assessment Manikin and an in-depth interview. We found that the focused, isolated and detailed properties of ASMR sounds create a psychological closeness that is deemed either intimate by positive responders or intrusive by negative responders. This psychological perception results in a diverging physiological response. Positive responders reported a pleasurable, relaxed state, whereas negative responders reported an unpleasant, agitated state. Over time, EDA decreases for positive responders (decreased arousal) but increases for negative responders (increased arousal). This diverging psychophysiological response underscores the importance of targeting positive responders when utilising ASMR in advertising.

Keywords

ASMR, Advertising, Electrodermal Activity, In-depth Interviews, Consumer Psychology.