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***The impact of ASMR content on advertising:
how our senses shape communication
engagement***

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Introduction

What is ASMR and why are we hearing so much about it?

Nowadays whoever owns an Instagram, TikTok or YouTube account has encountered at least once the phenomenon of ASMR, that for many years now has been expanding overall those said platforms and around different channels of various content creators upon the internet.

ASMR, which literally stands for “Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response”, is a practice that leverages on the sensory responses of a human being to enhanced sounds and natural noises, such as the tapping of fingers on a wooden platform or the whispering of some pleasant sounds, in order to bring out pleasure in the form of a tingling sensation, usually felt around the scalp and spine (Barratt & Davis, 2015).

Being born basically for entertaining purposes, ASMR had a long journey across various social media: as a matter of fact, more and more creators with time started using it as an amusing tool to talk to people with, also considering the fact that ASMR videos historically happen to collect more views and succeed overall more than the average videos on the media.

Hence, when people recognized the value of those added visualizations for their content, they started to integrate it, making all the videos about that (therefore becoming pure ASMR videos where the practice of it is the content’s core), or alternatively continuing their communication format but integrating ASMR in it as a tool for their storytelling. For instance, a make-up artist that simply talks out all the processes of the make-up, could now do it through ASMR; the same thing could be applied to a virtual cooking class, a gaming channel or any other form of online entertainment.

As a result, as it normally happens within several internet trends, ASMR shifted from being a simple tendency that social media users enjoy watching in the free time, and that

creators are simply curious to try out, to a real discipline with theories, studies and more attention dedicated to it, ending up in almost making it an art.

With its features being defined more and more with time, ASMR started to be noticed not only by the simple user's eyes, but also by companies and by people that wanted to monetize on it, using it as a communication tool in the marketing environment: after all, why not to use something that catches so much a person's attention for advertising purposes?

As a matter of fact, several marketers have used this tool in their campaigns for important and known brands, from fashion to beauty and many other industries. Those campaigns, exactly how it occurred for the entertaining videos, redeemed very much success in their views and overall engagement with the customers, making ASMR the winner variable for a functioning digital advertising. In fact, the campaigns to which this phenomenon is applicable consist in digital marketing communication efforts, which are the more modern and recent ways that a brand or a company can communicate its features and values with, going beyond the classical advertising tools.

The discipline of ASMR, specifically seen under the eye of a marketing perspective, has been observed also by researchers and examined in multiple studies over time. However, like it often happens with new phenomena that become matter of scientific research, the existing literature appears to be limited since this matter is still young and it has many sides of itself that are still to be examined and observed by future research.

Therefore, the main goal of this thesis is to furthermore research this specific topic: precisely, the aim is to investigate the influence of ASMR and its sensory elements in digital advertising content, exploring the phenomenon for which, with the presence of these elements, the efficiency of the advertising itself and the overall positive impact of the communication efforts towards the final customer will be improved, leaving the audience with a more positive and impressive perception of the advertised product or brand and moreover improving the memorability of the overmentioned product.

CHAPTER 1

Features of the phenomenon of ASMR

1.1 The discipline of ASMR and its main effects

When we talk about ASMR we refer to a popular phenomenon that for many years now has been taking the attention of the internet population, creating a modern entertainment form for whoever navigates into the social media platforms. Literally, the phenomenon is an acronym which stands for “Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response”: these four words describe a recent phenomenon that can be defined as experience-dependent sensation in which specific audio, visual, tactile and also emotional stimuli (such as tapping or whispering), induce a usually pleasant tingling sensation, typically occurring around the scalp and spine (Mahady et al., 2023). Following this definition, it is deductible that ASMR is a very broad topic, that leaves space to the creativity and fantasy of whoever want to practice it: the fields of application of it can go from the whispering of some peculiar words, personal attention, crisps sounds, slow movements and much more that have become common “triggers” used to achieve ASMR effects (Barratt & Davis, 2015).

The phenomenon has found its place with the rise of the digital media, and it takes place within the content published online by some content creators, that decide to comprehend it in the entertainment proposed to their audience. Hence, it is something that nowadays exists in function of the digital devices and social media platforms.

If we were to illustrate in practice what does it mean to make ASMR, we could infer that it is about an entertaining content produced by a content creator (that in these cases is called ASMRtist) which ranges from purely visual and auditory stimuli designed to elicit positive sensations to role plays where the ASMRtist itself guides the viewer through an activity generally found to be relaxing, even if we talk about real life situation, for example an haircut, a doctor visit and many more (Smejka & Wiggs, 2022).



“ASMR Roleplay | Full Medical Exam (Whispered)” by Sarah Lavender ASMR, Source: YouTube

In this example showed by the picture, taken by a simple ASMR YouTube video, there is a simulation of a doctor that is giving to the viewer a full medical exam, as we can see from the thumbnail of the video. Apart from this specific case, other generic and very popular kinds of ASMR can be illustrated as it follows: for instance we can see a comb scratching the microphone, a slimy sponge simply poked by a hand and a brush going over the microphone.



Photographs sourced from Shutterstock.

The point is that it doesn't matter what are the specific stimuli and techniques used to trigger the viewers, because the important thing is to arouse in the audience the wanted positive effects of pleasure, attention and happiness.

What are in the specifics those said effects? This discipline is relevant because it brings both physical and psychological consequences for whoever attends it (Repsol, 2024). Hence, the combination of the different ASMR stimuli can bring diverse reactions both in the human body and in the mindset and mental status of the audience, depending on the specific stimuli that is being used and on the characteristics of the person itself watching it: that is due to the fact that everybody is different and reacts uniquely to external triggers.

A study by Zielinski-Nicolson, Roberts and Boag from 2023 researches this latter factor, assessing it as ASMR propensity: this peculiar research highlights that not everybody manifests the same propensity to understand and perceive ASMR content, or at least not in the same way and with the same intensity as the others. To this it adds up that whoever shows said propensity is more likely to reflect a mentally flexible cognitive style and to have a higher tendency towards imaginativeness. So, this shows how only some people, being the more mentally flexible ones, can fully appreciate and perceive all the features of ASMR and enjoy its benefits.

Going in the specifics, the main effect and relevant consequence of one's exposure to an ASMR content is the typical so called "tingling sensation", which is a complex feeling unleashed in the human body and mind consisting in an involuntary, atypical, non-medical and non-harmful feeling, often accompanied by relaxation and calmness (Valtakari, 2019). The first sensation felt by ASMR experiencers has to deal with an improvement in the mood, meaning the way we feel in that specific moment (Barratt & Davis, 2015).

As a matter of fact, it has been studied that the breeze resulted from said triggers is followed by a soothing and pleasant effect, that can be capable to bring happiness to people, specifically the ones affected by depression (Smejka & Wiggs, 2022). Moreover, since many upon the ASMR audience watch the videos in bed before going to sleep, it can be inferred that the soothing sensations consistently help people to fall asleep, and therefore it can also help to fight insomnia within people that suffer this condition: this happens as a result of improvement in mood and relaxation when watching the videos (Barratt et al., 2017), which naturally brings to falling asleep.

Why do we feel these positive sensations whenever hearing ASMR? That is because we associate the sounds with elements in real life we already know: this discipline simply takes something familiar to us, something that is typically perceived as pleasant, like the sound of the ocean or a light burst of rain, and it enhances it, giving as a result a greater impact in terms of sensation. Specifically, the tingling sensation, in response to external stimuli, has been compared with previously identified sensations with a scientific denomination: these are paresthesia, frisson, synesthesia, and misophonia (Barratt & Davis, 2015). Giving a short description of these phenomena, we can say that paresthesia

is the general denomination that captures within itself all the tingling, prickling or itching sensations on the skin, as assessed by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke in 2019. Paresthesia is the most relevant between the latter phenomena, since it is where ASMR falls into: however, comprehending ASMR in the conceptual umbrella of paresthesia would be wrong, since it implies a medical connotation of the event, which does not apply in our case. In fact, ASMR is a non-medical experience that is typically positively valued, unlike the disliked medical forms of paresthesia, which are often discomfort associated (Mahady, 2023).

An interesting feature of ASMR effects is about their duration: in fact, all the physical and psychological consequences enlisted before are in average very brief, lasting only for a short period of time after the exposure to the stimulus; but this doesn't depend on the duration of the video itself.

As a matter of fact, an average video of ASMR content can have different durations, depending on the platform they are being reproduced on and on the intent of the ASMRtist. We could infer that the range of its duration goes from 15 minutes to even 4 hours (Adobe, 2024), but the majority of them are circa 40 minutes long: this counts for platforms that can support these kinds of videos like YouTube. On the other hand, the phenomenon found a major audience in other platforms like Tik Tok and Instagram that are more likely to reproduce shorter videos. In those cases an ASMR video could last from a few seconds to 2 or 3 minutes, with a maximum of 10 minutes, following the guidelines of the same platforms and also considering that the average duration of a Tik Tok video ranges from 24 to 31 seconds (Buffer, 2023).

However, as anticipated before, the duration of the tingling sensations often differs from the length of the video itself. It is rare for a video to elicit all the desired effects throughout its all duration; it is on the other hand more common that a viewer, after a few seconds or minutes of exposure, will end up getting the positive sensations for a brief moment, only to reoccur with each subsequent trigger.

This element is what then makes the ASMR viewer go back for more content and more videos, creating an "addictive effect". In fact, if a person encounters a pleasing and overall positive experience, it is reasonable for the average human being to go back to have more of it and to feel again the same sensations. As it happens in many situations in life

(typically with substances like drugs or alcohol), it also occurs in this situation. More specifically, as illustrated by the blog of Emotion Market in 2023, when a person watches many ASMR videos in a day, they start to develop a real habit, spending more and more time on social media: as a consequence of that, with time the brain can associate certain situations with the consumption of ASMR sounds, for example associating a situation in real life with the triggers heard in a video. This can lead to an automatic desire for said triggers in external situation, because the brain seeks through them an escape from reality, offering an immersive experience that leaves behind the stress and the boredom of everyday life.

We could say that this aspect can be considered as the “dark side” of ASMR, that can be associated with the addiction to social media and the internet in general, phenomenon that has been spreading rapidly from many years now. Basically, whenever a person gets too attached to the contents offered by a certain video, that in this case in ASMR, they could manifest a compulsive need to watch more of it, neglecting other activities and isolating themselves. Nevertheless, considering that the stimuli are self-accessible and pose a limited psychological and physical risk, also given their short duration, we can infer that the benefits overweight the disadvantage, especially from a therapeutical point of view (Mahady, 2023).

Finally, having enlisted the major characteristics of the phenomenon of ASMR and all its feature, considering its duration, the main effects and its proper definition, we can assess the ASMR is a unique sensory experience that entails a blend of arousal, relaxation, alertness and emotional connection, which can produce positive feelings, increases in alpha brain activity, reduced heart rate, increased skin conductance and pupil dilation (Barratt & Davis, 2015). Hence, it can be described only as a positive event that brings beneficial and constructive consequences in our lives, despite its young age, being a relatively new discipline with a brief story, that I’m going to illustrate in the next section of this thesis.

1.2 History and the phenomenon through time

The phenomenon of ASMR has skyrocketed in recent years within the social media platforms, coming to achieve international popularity. However, how did it start initially and most of all, how did it get to reach these incredible results?

In order to analyze the origins and the full history of ASMR, it is important to highlight an important factor, which is that, ever since its origins, this event has aroused from the people: it was always the willingness of a group of individuals to make ASMR a reality as we know it nowadays and not the action of a single man.

As a matter of fact, the term ASMR was coined initially by a woman named Jennifer Allen in 2010, who ran across a group of people on an internet forum (and more specifically a steadyhealth.com forum) where they all described a tingling sensation that they could not address well (Dicitonary.com, 2018). With the objective of better defining this phenomenon, she decided to create a Facebook group, calling it Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response Group, utilizing the words that described perfectly in her opinion the sensation of the discussed sounds. According to Keiles (2019), the explanation of the etymology of the acronym could be assessed in the following way:

- “Autonomous” reflects the spontaneity and the self-governing features of it.
- “Sensory” is about the senses and sensations felt with the event.
- “Meridian” is signifying a point of peak and higher development of the climax.
- “Response” is referring to experience triggered by something external or internal.

By giving this name to ASMR, Jennifer Allen was driven by the willingness of shaping an event that was still raw for the community, using non-personal and almost medical terms, not knowing that the term would then become the name of a worldwide community.

However we have to specify that the phenomenon of ASMR existed long before the term was coined by Jennifer Allen: in fact, if we have to explain the full origin of ASMR, we need to go back in time.

Although technically ASMR always existed in our sensational spectrum, since it is basically an enhanced attention to external stimuli and hence an innate instinct of the

human body to absorb them, the first written testimony of something that can recall ASMR can be found in the English literature dating circa 100 years ago. It could result unusual or absurd to think that it was Virginia Woolf in her *Mrs. Dollaway*, a famous book published in 1925, to describe something comparable as a tingling sensation with the expression *"deeply, softly, like a mellow organ, but with a roughness in her voice like a grasshopper's, which rasped his spine deliciously and sent running up into his brain waves of sound"* (Setz, 2015). According to the study by Setz in 2015, this passage would allude to a human voice softly whispered exactly like an ASMR trigger would behave, for those who unknowledge it.

Skipping a few decades and coming to the present century, the phenomenon found a real identity and a first definition specifically in the 2000s. During the first years of online blogging, individuals experiencing the initial ASMR began finding each other on health forums in the early 2000s, and they began circulating "unintentional" videos (Gallagher, 2016). It was upon an internet forum that a random user called *"okaywhatever51838"* renominated a thread with the denomination "Weird Sensation Feels Good", capturing in a way the real essence of ASMR (Dictionary.com, 2018). It was right in this forum that the same Jennifer Allen found the inspiration to create the term that we all know (Gallagher, 2018).

In those years, around 2008 circa, there was the "boom" of YouTube as a streaming platform, and of the videos published inside of it: people discovered a new media to express themselves, both as spectators and also as creators. The first creators started to publish different kinds of videos, proposing various contents of entertainment, depending on their audience and differentiating the topics following the tastes of early communities. Indeed, this social media was immediately characterized by the presence of online communities that grouped themselves together around shared interests: within the groups, the matters of discussion could vary from make-up to videogames (categories that still exist upon the platform nowadays). Moreover, following the clamor around the event of ASMR on the forums, there also started to arise online communities on YouTube dedicated to the pursuit of a similar shivery sensation called ASMR (Andersen, 2014).

In those "golden years" of YouTube, creators started purposely to produce ASMR videos for entertaining purposes. Following the study by Lange in 2019, the reason YouTube was

so successful for the development of ASMR lays in the reciprocal relationship at the core of YouTube's culture, and specifically in transactional tingles: this latter denomination consists in a sociocultural exchange that draws different benefits from traditional modes of artistic production (Maddox, 2020). Basically, this is a patronage model that has been dominating the artistic world for centuries now, that consists in an exchange of "favors" from a counterpart to another. In our case the reciprocity is applied in the way ASMR brings benefits to the creation of digital contents and at the same time as YouTube embodies a relevant platform for the ASMR diffusion and awareness between communities (Maddox, 2020).

If we have to unknowledge on of the most famous ASMR creators on YouTube, we can name certainly Bob Ross, a painter that built around his artistic videos a community that found relaxing and calming his soothing voice that he used to talk out the processes of his paintings (Andersen, 2014). Although Bob Ross started his mediatic career on a TV program long before YouTube existed, his videos were largely popularized by said platform years after being initially published.



Picture taken from a Bob Ross video (Source: YouTube)

Apart from the success on YouTube, ASMR continued to still gain a great success between blogs, forums and overall in the search queries make on the internet by random users: as indicated by a relevant blog by MacMuiris kept between 2010 and 2013, whenever the matter of the query regarded 'a destination for a sensation that is seemingly unnamed', the most used tag or keyword was always ASMR, instead of other terms and synonyms like AIE (Attention-Induced Euphoria) or AIH (Attention-Induced Head). This

data is useful to understand how already in those years ASMR became the reference for a community network to describe a shared sensation, charting the development of a chosen vocabulary for the rising phenomenon (Gallagher, 2018).

However, if YouTube represented the perfect platform for the initial stages of media diffusion for ASMR, with time the platform's business model started to pivot in a different direction that did not meet with ASMR necessities (Cunningham and Craig, 2019): as a consequence of this, the video-platform began to misunderstand the phenomenon its videos were demonetized both in YouTube financial rewarding system (not being selected for the advertising) and also within the algorithm of the platform, not resulting as a video suggestion for the users (Maddox, 2020).

It was right in this time of crisis for YouTube that ASMR found a new space and a whole new audience for its content to be developed into. We are discussing newer social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. Particularly on TikTok, a social media platform firstly launched in China in 2016 with the name "Musically" and then changed into TikTok, the phenomenon was widely embraced by the audience, which differs from that of YouTube. This audience is part of a younger generation (mainly Generation Z) which, due to their shorter attention span, prefers brief videos lasting only a few minutes or even seconds, as opposed to YouTube's longer 40-minute versions (Hollyland, 2023). Even though it was initially challenging to shorten longer videos into a few-seconds long clips, beginning from 2020 creators started to use consistently TikTok as the main channel for ASMR popularization.

Within this social media, creators started to invent new formats of ASMR content, such as Food ASMR, the up-cited Role Play ASMR, Nature ASMR and much more, apart from the traditional tapping and whispering (Hollyland, 2023).

We can sum up the matter by saying that YouTube was the perfect breakthrough for an event like ASMR; however, in the years of its development, the site was recently shifting from being a digital video repository to promoting User-Generated Content, also known as UGC in marketing (Maddox, 2020). Specifically for this reason, other social media like TikTok became the ideal "home" for ASMR to continue its development: those modern platforms allow the users to have a greater space and hence leave more room for the creator-viewer interaction. This is at the base of the UGC concept, a movement born

between online communities, that creates value that rises upwards from the people, becoming the emblem of the social power in a world dominated by social media (Mahady et al. 2023); however, I will better explain this concept in the next paragraph.

Nowadays a large culture and community circulates around ASMR, and only upon the YouTube platforms there are over 13 million videos tagged with this definition (Maddox, 2020). The current ASMR creators come from all over the world, as well as the viewers, making it for all purposes an international matter of discussion. Precisely for this reason, ASMR started to be discussed in recent years not only for entertainment purposes, but also for business cases, being observed by some corporate realities, which is a matter that will be better developed in the next section.

1.3 ASMR in marketing communication

In the developing years of ASMR, the phenomenon was starting to get known to an increasingly higher number of people, in all of its features and most of all, for all of its benefits. The increased audience of ASMR did not countian only viewers that watched the videos for pure amusement anymore, but at the same time it started to comprehend people that had a business interest in it.

Companies understood that this discipline could actively contribute to their interests, bringing its positive features into their business. More specifically, ASMR started to be noticed by marketers and by the range of people that work on one's brand communication inside a corporate team; those professionals are people that work actively on the subject of marketing, which, together with the identification of consumers' preferences and tastes and the analysis of significant data, deals with the overall communication of a brand, a product or a person. With their daily activities regarding this latter matter of discussion, marketers try to transmit a product's value both to the internal and external environment of the company.

In order to do so, there are several methodologies to apply to a product's communication that are comprehended in what is commonly called "brand communication", that has become a crucial component in marketing. In the specifics, a brand or product can be communicated in different ways, from the most traditional to the more modern and sophisticated ones. Moreover, inside of the broader world of communication, there is a specific category called advertising, which is a field of marketing that has the main objective to communicate the product's value through paid and non-personal media, also defined as a commercial practice that has the ultimate goal to sell the product, showing its features and characteristics (Pelsmacker et al., 2017).

If we were to describe the communication process, it would progress as it follows: after developing a prompt analysis phase in which the company studies its consumers and the competitive environment where it is working, marketers then are able to find the proper instruments and media through which they could best deliver the brand identity to their audience. Traditionally, and before the digital revolution, the most used communication media were the radio, TV, cinema, billboards and the same newspapers, which can be described precisely as the "traditional communication media". However, being with time

recognized their limitations and losing more and more efficiency on people, new ways to communicate a product emerged from the discipline. In particular, with the new century there was the birth of the “digital media”, being first the innovative blogs and online forums and then social media.

Focusing more on the latter, we can infer that in the last 10 years, social network have become a fundamental component of our lives, coming to be nearly indispensable for our day-to-day activities. Having determined that almost 3 billion people use social media on their mobile device every day for an average of 135 minutes a day (Statista, 2018), there is a reasonable base for which companies should have switched the focus on a new and digitalized communication method, substituting the previous practices in its favor. According to Voorveld (2019), the majority of companies and brands are present on social media, both for identification purposes, appearing as a user on the network, and for advertising communication intentions too. As a matter of fact, the advertising techniques adapted to social media after its popularization, creating new “digital advertising” tools.

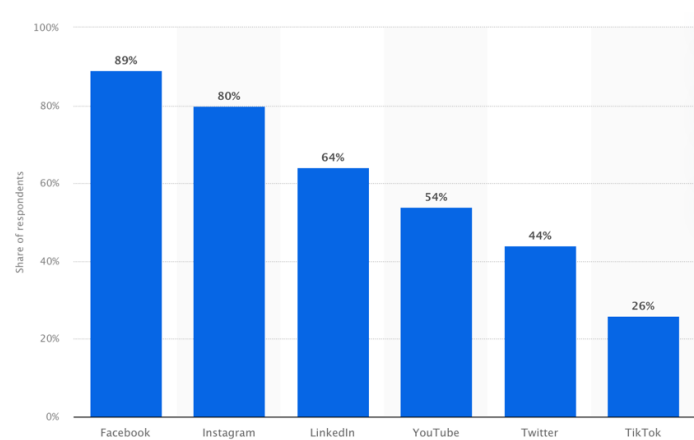
Those tools can be divided in three macro categories:

- **Paid Media:** content promoted through paid placements, like video ads, banners on websites and sponsored social media posts, which are more efficient in terms of visibility and revenue, being paid for and not spontaneous.
- **Owned Media:** content published on any self-controlled and owned online channel, like the brand’s own social media, a blog or a website, which do not have the same visibility as the paid ones but still, if used with care and in large scale, can bring a big difference to the brand image.
- **Earned Media:** content that is diffused by sources not controllable or bought by the brand, but that come from other people’s unplanned and spontaneous contributions, like with articles, Word-of-Mouth (WoM) and User-Generated-Content (UGC); these are the most effective because of their natural trait that makes them more credible from an external point of view.

The social media realm demonstrated to be extremely dynamic and suitable for advertising and product communication purposes (Voorveld, 2019), so much that new versions of it arise very quickly, never making it boring or repetitive for the targeted audience. Indeed, the main benefit of social media advertising lays in the fact that it

enables internet users to access, share, engage with, add to, and co-create (Alhabash et al., 2017): this element links perfectly with the concept of UGC, since these media allow users to create from scratch content in favor of a certain brand, making them real creators and shortening the distance between the brand and the consumer. Now the content can rise up from the audience, following a bottom-up movement, rather than a top-down guided direction from the brand.

Moreover, if in the beginning a few platforms were used by the companies, nowadays brands use on a daily basis all kinds of social networks.



“Leading social media platforms used by marketers worldwide as of January 2023”

Source: Statista, 2023.

As illustrated by the research by Statista, in 2023 the most used and best performing social media by share of respondents was still Facebook; however, new and interesting platforms are growing more and more, such as Tik Tok itself. The data showed how nowadays an increasing number of companies are using this new social media for promoting purposes (26% of the respondent marketers).

It was right on this platform that, to lead us back to the topic of ASMR, companies started to unknowledge this phenomenon. Precisely because social media offered them always new and alternative forms of expression for their promoting and communication purposes, ASMR started to look like one of them: brands imagined that the product could be communicated through ASMR, using its triggers to manipulate the attention of the viewer and bringing an increased effect in the advertising efficiency.

As a matter of fact, one of the main benefits to draw from ASMR, and that was particularly relevant for business purposes to the eyes of marketers, was the enhanced attention from an audience: these contents are able to bring more sensation than a simple advertising with a catchy jingle or with a popular song as a base of it, since the sound perceived by the consumer is first of all familiar and recognized in their everyday lives, and moreover connected to a visionary stimulus that enhances the overall experience, bringing the customer to behave as if they were in a placebo effect.

It was discussed that ASMR brings as a consequence of its effect soothing and pleasant sensations, that put the audience in a relaxing status, where their mind is absorbed by a calming experience. In turn, after a repeated exposure to said sensations, the viewer starts to expect a reduction in the symptoms of stress and discomfort, trusting the ASMR to “cure” their mental status and hence, they reduce those themselves (Cash et al., 2018), ending up in the overmentioned placebo effect.

If we were to give a definition of the phenomenon, the placebo is a form of therapy in unconventional medicine used to give a sense of pleasure and satisfaction to the patient (Margo, 1999). On the other hand, the placebo effect is a contemporary term used to define when a person's physical or mental health appears to improve after taking a placebo or “dummy” treatment (Better Health Channel, 2021). In this sense, putting it in perspective of ASMR in advertising, the discipline of ASMR itself could constitute a form of placebo effect, giving a numbness to the viewer, that is put in a situation of condescension towards a content: hence, if inserted inside an advertising, ASMR could allow the audience to better absorb the adv content and most of all to be more compliant towards it.

It is, in fact, reasonable to assume that the insertion of auditory and sensational stimuli, such as the one introduced by ASMR, could bring an important added value to the overall efficiency of an advertising content. Those elements have the capacity not only to make the communication more amusing to the consumer's perception, but to make a greater impact on the consumer recall and memory of the message that a brand has the goal to communicate (Sands et al., 2021).

What would then be the consequences of ASMR marketing? The main consequence to highlight is the altogether of sensations unleashed in the consumer's sensory spectrum: a

sense of nostalgia and commitment would be released in the consumer that will naturally connect the ASMR sensation with a previously lived experience, linking the showed content as a familiar item. This automatically gives a positive impact on brand equity (which is the commercial value derived from consumers' perception of the brand), providing the power to connect even more the consumer with the brand, over rational and common reasons (Chae et al., 2021).

Nowadays ASMR marketing has become an affirmed phenomenon, and several brands are currently starting to incorporate this discipline in their adv messages: for example Pepsi developed an ASMR commercial for the Super Bowl in 2019 (Harper, 2020) and before them IKEA and Apple incorporated the discipline in their advertisement campaigns (Greenspan, 2019). However, I will report more in-depth cases of interesting circumstances when brands incorporated ASMR marketing in their communication techniques.

Finally, we can infer that ASMR greatly contributed to enlarge and enrich the world of marketing, covering now an important role in a specific field of marketing communication, that leverages on the human senses in order to release a positive reaction: this phenomenon is called sensory marketing.

1.4 Sensory marketing

As it is deductible from the previous paragraph, ASMR can be comprehended inside of a certain marketing branch, considering that marketing overall is a vast and broad subject that nowadays specifies in all different versions. In our case, ASMR is a phenomenon that triggers the human senses, releasing sensations both in one's mind and body: hence, the perfect area of competence of ASMR in marketing would be precisely sensory marketing.

Sensory marketing is a new area in the great marketing communication environment; this is a concept developed within the field of marketing communication, specifically in the one of experiential marketing, a discipline consisting in implementing marketing plans through offering experiences to people (Erenkol & AK, 2015). Moreover, it can be inferred that sensory marketing accounts for majority of experiences offered to consumers by experimental marketing: in fact, this discipline consists in leveraging on the human senses such as sight, smell, texture and sound in order to have a greater impact on the audience in the communication efforts (Krishna et al., 2016).

But how did sensory marketing arise from the general marketing sphere? It is reasonable to infer that in the last years the world of communication changed drastically, evolving from unidirectional conversations from company to consumer, to a real dialogue with the audience, that becomes an integral part of it (Krishna et al., 2016). Now companies care about how the consumers subconsciously response to their stimuli, and therefore they give a systematic augmented importance to the five senses in marketing. This is how sensory marketing was born: it is defined as “marketing that engages the consumers” senses and affects their perception, judgment and behavior (Krishna et al., 2016); hence, it is a discipline born by the increased attention given to the customer.

Analyzing the functioning of it from a managerial point of view, sensory marketing can be used to create unconscious triggers that characterize consumer perceptions of abstract notions of the product. In order to have an efficient effect on the consumers, marketers have different options of sensory marketing applications, depending on the sense they want to leverage on, whether they want to make the content more visual or more auditive.

Generally, we can infer that sensory marketing triggers differ within each other on the basis of the various senses, which are: smell, sight, taste, hearing and touch.

Considering that all five human senses have great importance for an individual's different purchase experiences and consumption processes (Erenkol & AK, 2015), we could illustrate how leveraging on different senses could change the sensory marketing content.

- Smell: it is known that olfaction's role in marketing can have a positive impact on consumer's attitudes, both used for ambient purposes, like inside of a store, or directly infused on the product (Rathee & Rajain, 2017); certain smells have the ability to transport us back in time, evoking a familiarity sensation and changing our initial attitudes.
- Sight: alternatively called "vision", this sense is upon the most relevant for sensory marketing purposes, since colors and shapes are the first method of identification and differentiation (Rathee & Rajain, 2017). Visual elements can create a strong brand identity, for example bold and vibrant colors can transmit a sense of energy, while pastel tones can convey a calmness (GGI Insights, 2024). Moreover, the strategic use of colors can be also useful to attract the consumer's attention and understanding their power could really enhance and change the consumers' purchasing experience.
- Taste: although the limitation of this sense, if used within a communication content (even more if it is a digital one), taste can provide us one of the biggest pleasures, being linked to food itself. In this case, brands can offer samples or tastings in public events in order to let the customers interact with the product, but also to create a strong sensory connection with it (GGI Insights, 2024).
- Hearing: audition is another fundamental sense for marketing, since there are many levers to work on when it comes to it; starting from music, but including jingles, ringtones and much more, the audition sense does not require effort from our mind, being a non-voluntary perception (Rathee & Rajain, 2017). Popular applications of hearing in marketing are the background music, the catchy jingles of an advertisement, or the amusing sounds of the product itself (like the crisp sound of an apple or the crunch of a cookie).
- Touch: finally there is touch which can be described as still in the early stages of use for sensory marketing purposes; this sense is highly influenced by situational factors, and it changes depending on the customer, the environment and the product itself. Although it could take a back seat in this context, it touch can still

play an important role influencing a consumer decision, since, if the purchasing situation allows it, the touch of a product can drastically change one's opinion (i.e. touching the material some clothes).

Marketers started to adopt this technique so much that it became known that also engaging multiple senses at the time brought to an increased result, thanks to the synergy within those. As a matter of fact, it has been proven that the synergy between senses, and therefore their cumulative use in sensory marketing, brings more positive effect than the use of a single sense does.

There have been several famous cases of sensory marketing in marketing communication campaign across popular brands. For example, Apple leverages on the sight sense of its stores to release in the consumer a pleasant sensation of aesthetic delight; Starbucks makes itself recognizable by the scent smell of coffee, making the smell the crucial point of their identity; Visa has made a distinguished sound for whenever a customer makes a transaction with their card (Jan Bask Digital Design, 2024).



Source: "How To Use Sensory Marketing To Boost Your Brand?" by Jan Bask Digital Design, 2024.

This is where ASMR finds its relevance within the context of marketing communication, being a tool that incorporates in all its aspects the fusion of the sensory engagement in order to find an amusing reaction in those who represent the audience of whatever message they are carrying out. In the specifics, in the environment of sensory marketing, ASMR uses mainly two of the five senses enlisted before, which are the auditory and visionary realm, sight and hearing. However, the two senses in the matter are not used singularly in ASMR; on the contrary, the discipline leverages on sight and hearing together, mixing them up and ending, like said before, with an increased pleasant effect on the customer, using the positive synergy between the two.

Indeed the links between the field of sensory marketing and ASMR have brought out a willingness of researching better the effects of this phenomenon on people, analyzing the different aspects characterizing the synergy between the two. Hence, relevant literature has risen from multiple studies in recent years.

Although ASMR is considered to be a relatively new concept, taking into account its youth in the streaming media environment and even more in the marketing field, still many studies have been conducted on the subject. The phenomenon is in fact quite interesting to analyze from a research point of view, with the aim to investigate, from the marketers point of view, new ways to advertise and communicate a product or a brand, and at the same time to discover new and modern applications of ASMR itself.

However, ASMR still remains an unexplored field of investigation, and my research with this thesis will try to better analyze undiscovered aspects of its being and more specifically of its linkage with the marketing communication world.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical background and relevant business cases

2.1 Present literature on ASMR communication

In recent years, the phenomenon of ASMR has started to get more and more diffused across different platforms, both on internet blogs and forums, but also for a large part on social media like first You Tube and then Tik Tok.

The increasingly higher attention given to this discipline has enlarged the typical ASMR audience, both in a quantitative and also in a qualitative manner. For what concerns the quantitative side, the viewers grew largely in number, being now spread not only on the few pre-existing YouTube channels, but also in many other platforms (like the overmentioned social media).



Increase of ASMR search queries from 2008 until today; Source: Google Trends, 2024

Moreover, analyzing the qualitative point of view, said audience was with time differentiated within the typologies of viewers watching ASMR content: as a matter of fact, if initially the audience consisted in people watching the content purely for entertainment and amusement purposes, considering it an escape from reality, eventually the public expanded to include people that saw an interest slightly different from personal enjoyment.

Those new viewers consisted mainly in the so-called marketers and business owners that, seen and considered the hype and high numbers achieved by ASMR content, started to notice it as a plausible alternative for their communication campaigns, as a tool to transmit a product's features and to have a great impact on their customers. Therefore, the topic of ASMR began to catch a general attention and people started to analyze in detail the features of it: in the specifics, a scientific research base began to take shape, and researchers started to investigate peculiar aspects of ASMR.

The initial research concerned the phenomenon in general: in fact, if the event was new within the environment of research and scientific papers, the first thing to analyze was precisely the features of it and the definition of its being. The most relevant literature of the ASMR definition can be found in the works of Andersen and Barratt & Davis, whose contributions helped to get a first dimension of it.

As a matter of fact, before knowing a real fame and popularity with the new audience, ASMR was only practiced, but nobody cared to give a real definition of it: in order to analyze it properly and to make it a real communication tool, researchers had to give themselves a description of what ASMR is and how it can be identified, as a starting point to a deeper and further discussion about it.

As anticipated before, one of the main contributors to this aim was Joceline Andersen; the American teaching professor wrote and published in 2014 an article on Sage Journals called "Now You've Got the Shiveries: Affect, Intimacy, and the ASMR Whisper Community", which opened the discussion for what ASMR really is. The article described the phenomenon to be the center of a Whisper Community, an online group of people comprehending both content creators and their audience, that create and share videos with the intention of transmitting relaxing sensations.

The article designed in the specifics the characteristics of ASMR, outlining the transgressive nature of it and its "non-traditional intimacy" traits: in fact, Andersen claims how ASMR is characterized by a great intimacy emotion, for the fact that the taps and sounds alone would not give the same augmented sensation if not accompanied by a story, a narrative, and in turn a psychological connection that created affection. This point of view is immediately deductible by the name of the article, that mentions the "shiveries",

a playful concept often adopted by children, used in this specific case to address the sensory experience of contact that we have while engaging with an ASMR content.

Apart from describing the phenomenon from a childish point of view, Andersen goes on in the article providing a sexual perspective of ASMR: as a matter of fact, the sexual arousal in the typical pleasing sounds of ASMR contributes to the attraction felt by the viewers, which brings them to come back for more content, creating a sort of “addictive” effect. In the specifics, the consequential tingles of ASMR were described as real brain orgasms (AdenClements, 2012), due to the positive sensations released in the mind and body.

However, the so called “Whispering Community” was always averse to the public sexual denomination of ASMR, rather preferring the denotation of it as experience of bodily pleasure that is conjured up by the pure interaction between sound waves and brain. The community on the other hand refused categorically the purely physical and sexual allegation for a precise reason. As the article explains, the reason is linked to the profound emotional connection of the phenomenon: in fact, ASMR, by those who really appreciated it, although it is not merely a physiological experience of pure affect, is just as clearly linked to the emotional associations created through the experience of public intimacy.

This leads to the discussion of the other matter of discussion, which is the affect and the affection variable per se. It was firstly Masumi in 1995 that described ASMR from an emotional perspective, defining the affection variable as a physiological reaction to experience that precedes the cognitive coding of the event as an emotion. As it happens, it is known that ASMR usually represents real life and routinary scenarios, like for instance a doctor’s visit, other role-plays of ordinary tasks and common sounds heard everyday like the sound of a brush or of a plastic bottle cracking; these scenes, properly for the fact that are usual and not extraordinary, should not elicit any particular emotion. However, ASMR defies the logical barriers of the routinary tasks, enhancing them in a way to make them cognitively triggering, and therefore to elicit an emotion.

Why affection though, between all the emotions? It could appear almost as strange that common sounds like scratching and tapping, that in real life can be also annoying, not only are pleasant in ASMR form, but also elicit affectionate sensations. Andersen goes on to describe this phenomenon in the article: these actions arouse a sense of nostalgia,

reenacting something that we were always used to hear, and therefore that we embodied in our sensory system, ever since we were children. In turn, the enhancement of said actions, together with the nostalgic feelings, end up with releasing in us affection towards said sounds.

Indeed, the contribution in the literature of Andersen's work put a fundamental basis for the future discussion of the topic. In particular, we could wrap up her overall contribution in the overmentioned article by highlighting some of the major points of hers: starting from the position that ASMR exists as pure sensation apart from the experience of intimacy and the connotations of care in all its forms, it could still seem to be pure affect, colored with memories of intimacy, care, and attention, transmitted by the whisper itself.

The fact of providing a solid definition of the phenomenon gave the possibility to describe ASMR as a real discipline, with defined rules, characteristics and paths to follow in order to release the expected sensations. Moreover, as a consequence many researchers took Andersen's contribution as a starting point to initiate their own contribution and literature about the topic of ASMR.

More specifically, researchers now expanded the overall vision of the research itself, not focusing only on the mere definition of it, but enlarging the point of view by applying ASMR to other cases, like advertising and marketing itself. As a matter of fact, a vast literature has been developing, specifically in the last ten years, on the application of ASMR to the great world of marketing communication and advertising. The researchers, with their projects of research, wanted to investigate the phenomenon in all the consequences it could bring to advertising itself.

Within the various point of interest in the literature, some of the most interesting emerged from this thesis' research and are worth to talk about to analyze what has been already discussed on the topic and what is in way of development in the current discussion, in order to have the overview of the research environment for the future contributions.

2.1.1 The ASMR effect on advertising recall

As overmentioned, researchers started to apply consistently the sound-branding effects together with the typical auditory and sensory stimuli to marketing communication and advertising, analyzing how those elements could really enhance the effect of the new advertisings incorporated with said element on the final customer.

As a matter of fact, much of the existing literature on ASMR applied to advertising considers the effect of ASMR from the perspective of those predisposed to ASMR, which can be interpreted as the same consumers (Sands et al., 2022). Companies and marketers in particular are in fact relentlessly interested in obtaining and maintain the interest and attention of their customers, in order to acquire new ones and retain the antecedents.

The objective of the companies in this sense is to create innovative ways to stimulate the consumer to pay attention to their contents in the first place, and then to invite them to buy their product; their aim is to do so with the thought of purchasing as their own original idea, while in truth it is the willingness of the marketer that orchestrated the whole operation, from the first purchase idea to the final act. However, in order to do so, a consumer should be able to remember the initial stimulus that a company executed towards them, to create a sharp picture of the brand and what it is offering to them.

Talking in marketing terminology, the personality characteristics and features that are associated with a brand, and communicated on the outside by a company, is called “brand identity”: this phenomenon can be assessed as the identikit of the brand, and particularly how the company wants to identify itself. If the brand identity originates from the company itself, on the other hand the so-called “brand image” is the projection of the brand identity into the consumers’ minds, and therefore it consists in how the company’s stakeholders perceive a certain brand, by summing the total of impressions that they can receive from various sources (Nandan, 2004). Linking the definition to our case, in order to be remembered and noticed, companies need to build a strong and solid brand identity, in order to reflect the same strength in the image and then in the recall.

The point of view of the consumer, in this sense, can be analyzed measuring how much the consumer remembers a certain advertising campaign, a poster, a banner on the street or, in our specific case, a digital insertion in form of advertising: this specific effect in

marketing is called recall, which can be described as an effect denoting how many customers can remember the brand name and characteristics, whether they are aided with a mention or a concept associated with it, or unaided (and in that case the recall is called top-of-mind). Companies have always tested the recall of their brands on customers, analyzing how a plain traditional commercial could affect said recall. However, the interesting point to analyze with the insertion of ASMR is how the differences brought by the creative contributions of it change the effects of recall itself.

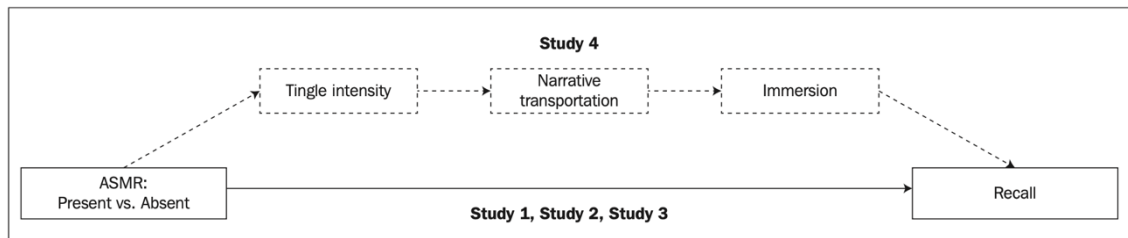
Hence, many studies started to research and measure the augmented effects of ASMR on advertising and in turn on brand recall. In fact, creative advertising tends to have positive effects on consumer responses, as it enhances attention and processing (Pieters et al., 2002). This finds its coherence with ASMR, being that the latter reports all the characteristics of creativity: it has the possibility to draw consumers not only with sounds, but also with multiple sensory elements, including the storytelling variable, reaching high levels of entertainment and attention from the customers.

The ASMR storytelling, however, is not characterized by a typical narrative; in fact, being a discipline born and developed in the digital era, it can be described as an advanced form of telling a story. It draws on traditional elements, such as subjective first-person perspective, allowing listeners to feel that they are a part of the experience and become transported (Chae et al., 2021).

Moreover, the narrative transportation infers that whenever the consumers feel the overmentioned transportation effect, being cradled in a built-up vision of things, it could happen as a result to have a positive impact on the advertising itself. What makes transportation so effective in the sense of advertisement effectiveness, is the persuasive variable that portrays the consumer conversion process: through this powerful tool, companies have the possibility to bring their audiences into their own narrative world, integrating imagery, attention and feelings, resulting in a positive experience for the customer, that will transform at the same time into a positive turnover for the company (Sands et al., 2022).

In the specific case, there was an interesting study about the topic, conducted in 2022 by Sands, Campbell, Mavrommatis and Kadomskaia entitled “*Can a Whisper Boost Recall*

Of Video Advertisements? Exploring the Effects of Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) in Advertising”, which focuses precisely on the narrative element on the recall variable, as shown in their research model underneath.



Research Model (Figure 1) – Source: Sands et al., 2022

To explain the research model, the authors tested that advertisements featuring ASMR can enhance recall and, across each study brought out by the investigation, the authors created experimentally equivalent advertisements that differ only in the manipulation of the presence (or absence) of ASMR, leaving all other content (brand, advertisement content, voice artist, and advertisement length) the same.

In the general discussion of the studies, after the experiment was developed and finished with the final results, it was assessed by the authors that advertisements featuring ASMR characteristics can actually have positive effects on recall, proving their initial hypotheses positively.

The reported case was one of the first cases of scientific research investigating the topic of ASMR applied to marketing and advertising, contributing greatly to the literature on the effects of narrative and transportation. However, the study highlighted different research gaps that will be analyzed in the last paragraph of this chapter.

2.1.2 ASMR marketing through commitment and nostalgia

Although the focus on the brand recall and the narrative transportation idea of ASMR as a storyteller can be considered one of the first real attempts of bringing the discipline into the research reality, the research expanded into other diverse, but always linked, theories and areas of interest.

In the same year of the previous research, multiple topics evolved into new concepts: one of the most relevant was the concept of “storyscaping”. As it is deducible from the name of the phenomenon, storyscaping is an evolution of the concept of storytelling, although it brings many positive innovative traits to it.

In fact, on one hand, storytelling was one of the most used marketing tools from companies, consisting in crafting narratives that resonate with your target audience, creating a sense of belonging, and nurturing a brand identity that goes beyond mere products or services (NoGood.io, 2023). On the other hand, storyscaping built an added value to the narrative, bringing the emotional variable as a connecting tool to really connect with the client: in the storyscaping environment, the brand is in charge of creating a world where the customer is the main character of the story, being totally immerse in the vision presented to them, where the brand itself is part of the story (Dassuite.com, 2024).

What changes in storyscaping is that the narrative does not follow a logic flow with a beginning or an end: as a matter of fact, the important thing is not that a story has an ending, but that a whole universe can be created and maintained around the client, being him or her the main character, able to change the story as many times as they want.

Also, in this universe, the brand is always in charge pleasing its customers, satisfying their emotions and needs: what is sought is a total immersion in which the consumer is the hero, and the brand is the mentor that accompanies them on this journey (Dassuite.com, 2024). The aim of storyscaping overall is to connect deeply with the customer, getting to know all their needs and personal traits, joining them in their emotions, in a way that, whenever comes the moment of purchasing and actually becoming real customers, it would be easier to get new sales, clients and loyal customers.

One of the main elements that characterize the discipline of storyscaping is that, differently from storytelling, the latter was born and developed in the digital era, where much more tools and methodologies were available to the companies to create a more unique and differentiated world. With tools like social media and artificial intelligence, the customer are able to totally plunge into the brand-build imaginary world, not having to strain too much their imagination, because they are able to see it through the digital media.

The concept of storyscaping was particularly analyzed in the study of 2021 by Chae, Baek, Jang and Sung, called “*Storyscaping in fashion brand using commitment and nostalgia based on ASMR marketing*”, which constitutes the second reported piece of literature in this study. In this scientific paper, the authors aim to firstly analyze significant value of ASMR in auditory sense field in modern days; second, to identify the characteristics of ASMR marketing through commitment and nostalgia; third, to investigate the effect of ASMR marketing on consumers. Moreover, the interesting point of the study is to explain how these sensations and effects are in the end brought out by storyscaping itself.

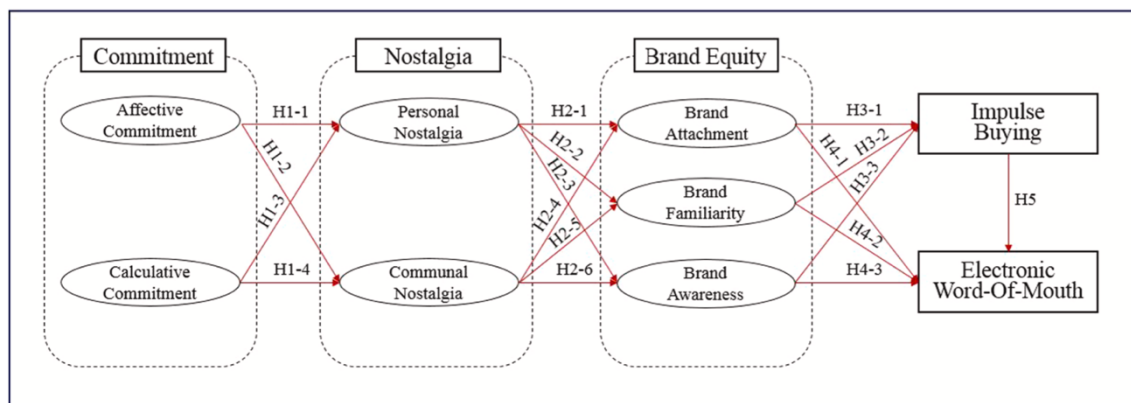
As a matter of fact, the authors start to introduce the discipline of storyscaping by defining it as an advanced way of storytelling, which emphasizes maximizing the customer experience through nostalgia. It focuses on triggering the consumers’ auditory sense in social media to induce commitment, ultimately providing them with an unforgettable experience while increasing brand equity and electronic word-of-mouth through social media (Park et al., 2016).

Storyscaping differs from previous brand marketing methods, which intends to increase its value by presenting the story of the brand itself. Instead, it focuses on making the customers experience commitment, and the customers would relate their own stories to the brand through that experience, which is nostalgia. Storyscaping could be finally completed when the three factors of the story, nostalgia, and final value come in harmony with each other (Chae et al., 2021).

As the study explains, since storyscaping is a digital narrative form and ASMR is a proper phenomenon trending on social media, the linkage between these two concepts comes natural to apply: since consumers constantly feel the need to be stimulated, especially

when they are told a story, ASMR is perfectly capable of doing so, not only stimulating the consumers with its soothing and relaxing sounds, but also leaving the same consumers with a sense of commitment that brings them back form more content. In fact, commitment could be understood as a continuous desire to find a stimulus, which a person can always be immersed. More in the specifics, since commitment focuses more on the positive sensual factors, ASMR in its nature is a perfect subject for commitment since it focuses on bringing nostalgia by providing familiar, pleasant sounds from our everyday life, which leads to a sensual and emotional experience (Chae et al., 2021).

The authors in the study wanted to investigate how ASMR can affect the commitment of the customer, while at the same time influencing the variables of nostalgia, brand equity, impulsive buying and electronic word-of- mouth.



Research Model (Figure 1) – Source: Chae et al., 2021

From the general discussion of this complex research it could appear how ASMR was tested to be a valuable marketing tool: the research provided a solid theoretical contribution to ASMR research, claiming that the variables of commitment and nostalgia are also involved whenever we watch an ASMR content in a storyscaping environment.

Hence, we can conclude that the authors have proved that ASMR can be actually used as a potential instrument for marketing content, specifically in digital advertising. IN fact, in recent years there were significant cases of the first companies that intentionally inserted ASMR as their major communication tool.

2.2 Relevant existing cases of ASMR advertising

As anticipated in the latter paragraph, in this last step of ASMR evolution, companies and most of all brand managers have now the knowledge that ASMR is a valid alternative for their digital advertisement forms. Having a scientific basis for their research instilled a strong belief that this tool could represent a significant investment for the company. They believed it could be easily acquired and implemented through the same digital platforms.

Since 2015, brands have slowly started trying their hands at ASMR-based advertising, ditching the brash voices and bass-thumping music consumers have become accustomed to when reaching for the 'skip ad' button (EuropeanCeo.com, 2024). Companies realized that they don't need any more bright and loud stimuli to catch the consumers' attention, since these ones were starting to be ignored and unappreciated by the audiences. On the other hand, the softer stimuli proposed by this discipline could really help to reach the real consumer attention, with the intent to elicit the famous autonomous sensory meridian response that cause the positive sensations.

How did companies started to use ASMR in their advertising communications? As it happens, the brands did not incorporate internally this tool from the very beginning, but they started using it externally, taking advantage of the existing experts in the field, without creating a new branch at the inside of the company: in this way, companies were able to test out the results of the phenomenon for their product, without having to do a sudden big investment inside the company.

Hence, in this first phase of application, marketers began to engage with the ASMR personalities or, as we already know, ASMRtists: the aim of the companies in this sense is the exploit the capabilities and discipline knowledge proper of the same artists. The ASMRtists have reported, in fact, to have a real commercial value, racking up millions of followers and views to their videos, all of whom can be monetized (EuropeanCeo.com, 2024). For instance, one of the most popular ASMRtist on YouTube, called Gentle Whispering ASMR, is estimated to earn over \$130,000 (€115,550) per year from her videos.

However, those artists have different ways to gain a commercial value and earn money in their content creation activity: apart from the monetization of the same videos, happening

through the views acquired by the single content, they also have the possibility to make a profit from different partnerships.

For example, artists can benefit from the YouTube partnership, in which the site shares ad revenue with video makers, to the tune of \$7 CPM, or payment per thousand clicks, as a low-end estimate. But the greater the total views a partner channel has, the better its pay rate tends to be (SmartAsset.com, 2023).

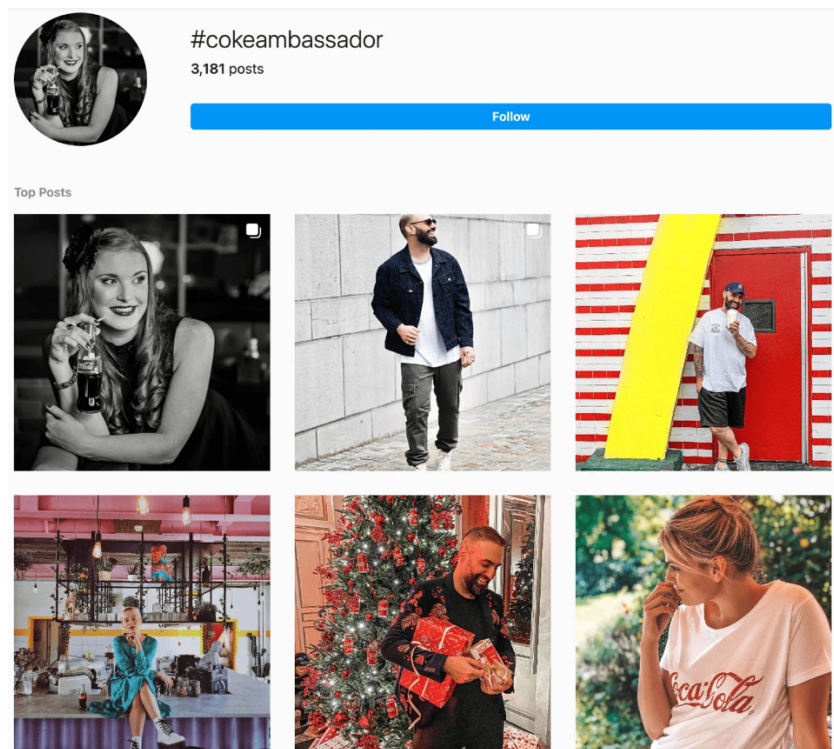
Nevertheless, ASMRtist can also benefit from the partnerships established with other actors, such as the same companies. The functioning of the partnership is actually very simple: normally, an average content creator would publish the content on the basis of their personal tastes, the feedback from their audience and simply what the algorithm prioritizes in displaying the video to the audiences, in order to have more views and to make more money. Instead, whenever a partnership with a brand is in action, the company provides the content creators with the products they want to advertise and publicize, instructing them with the information they also want to divulge to the audience: basically, it is the company that provides to the creators all the content for their videos.

However, we do not live in a punitive and forced world where everything is dictated in a top-down perspective. The creators still maintain a margin of creativity in their content, otherwise the whole goal of exploiting their content would be useless for the company. In this way, creators have the “copy” or the general track through which they should develop their final outcome, but without taking space to their own creative way to explain something, which in this case is product or a service.

Usually these partnerships consist in an exchange of favors and benefits: as the content creators help the companies to have a great efficiency in their advertising's impact, exploiting the positive wave of ASMR given by the algorithm, on the other hand companies pay said creators for their collaboration.

The fees paid by the brands are very variable, depending on the notoriety of the creator itself and on the dedicated budget of the company: overall, from an estimation of two years ago, circa 22% of B2B companies was shelling out at least half their marketing budget on content between 2022-2023, with an average dedication of 5,000 to 20,000 dollars a month for their marketing content creation budget (Barnett, 2024).

Many companies use the so-called influencer marketing to reach a higher success for their communication campaigns and for the awareness of their brand. To make an example, Coca-Cola, the leader in the field of beverages, has been using influencer for centuries, starting ever since 1912 to engage with the strategy to get to the masses. Today, the company uses movie stars, athletes and other creators that are commonly called “Coke Ambassadors”, as they advertise the brand (JoinBrands.com, 2023).

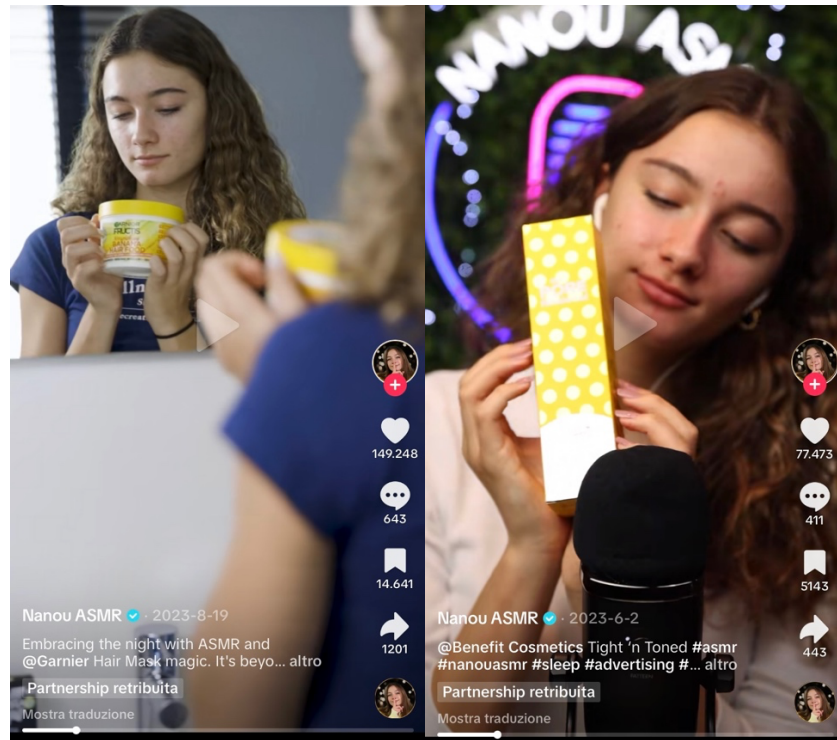


Instagram frame of “#CokeAmbassador” query – Source: JoinBrands.com

Brands like Coca Cola carry on and invest on this kind of advertisements because it provides brands the possibility to really engage with the customer, who becomes part of the company.

However, in order to reconduct with the main topic, companies started the habit to engage with influencers and content creators not only with “normal content” such as the building of an online community and the partnership with a popular influence, but also with ASMR content. As a matter of fact, after having understood the basic functioning of the

relationship between companies and content creators, which in our case are ASMRtists, we are now able to explore the first real cases of past advertisements in recent years that used ASMR.



Frames taken from promotional videos by Nanou ASMR – Source: Tik Tok

In the reported example we can see how a content creator, in this case called Nanou ASMR, creates a classical ASMR content, but focalizing the main point of the video on an advertised product (on the left the Garnier Hair Mask; on the right the Benefit Cosmetics “Tight ‘n Toned” facial toner). Moreover, it is clear how the content reflects a promotional video, since the hashtags in the video caption report the wording #adv and #advertising: this means that the video is paid for by the promoted company.

The only involvement of external elements to exploit the art of ASMR is obviously not the only way to insert the discipline into the advertisements. As anticipated before, companies have also the possibility to internalize ASMR, no longer addressing outer content creators, but producing themselves ASMR content. Brands have the possibility to take two different paths, whenever they take this decision: whether they can do the same thing that an ASMRtist does, hence publishing online videos but this time on their own

social media platforms and profiles, or they can decide to create studied and well-structured commercials that use ASMR as a main lever.

With time, many companies became famous for their ASMR based commercials, even if they were not entirely intentional. There will be shown some renowned cases of famous commercials covering a range of almost thirty years, from the early 90s to the present day.

In fact, one of the first structured commercials using (in this case unintentionally) ASMR was Pringles, the brand famous for producing chips in a tube. The commercial goes up to 1996 and it was called "Once You Pop, You Can't Stop".



Images from the 1996 Pringles Campaign "Once You Pop, You Can't Stop" – Source: YouTube

As a matter of fact, Pringles has been succeeding in its commercials even before that ASMR was really affirmed as a trend and recognized by a relevant population: the crunching sound that the Pringles chips make whenever these are eaten by somebody has always been a distinguished trait for the company. These is precisely what happens in the overmentioned commercial, where there is a refiguration of people eating the chips;

moreover, the crunch sound was not the only one being enhance like ASMR, but there were other pleasing ASMR sounds such as the popping of the tube opening, the tapping that the actors made on the packaging and many more.

The interesting element was also that Pringles made a clear distinction with other competitor brands of bagged potato chips: in the commercial only the Pringles tubes and chips were able to make those while sounds, while the other chips were portrayed as unable to produce the same crunch. The company focused willingly on the crunching sound, imaging that it could constitute an attraction lever for who would find themselves watching the adv.

These sounds definitely helped them establish a distinctive brand identity since everybody in 2024 can identify the sound of a Pringles can being opened from across a crowded room. But it also relied on the same principles of ASMR: certain sounds evoke good feelings (CMS Connected, n.d.).

Another very famous case of ASMR application in commercial was actually presented by IKEA; the company always developed very complicated and sometimes weird commercials (e.g. the commercial of Spike Jonze gem with a sad lamp).



Frame from IKEA “Sad lamp” commercial in 2002 – Source: YouTube.

Hence the company was very prone to try out ASMR in their untypical commercials. In fact, the advertisement, called “Oddly IKEA”, consists of a 25-minutes long video uploaded on YouTube in 2017, that has reached circa 3.3 million views now in 2024. The video consists in a pure ASMR video set in a typical IKEA bedroom: it develops with a

hand that touches and squeezes the items in a way to create and reproduce the classical ASMR triggers.

This brilliant idea from the company brought out only positive comments and overall reactions underneath the video from the viewers: if normally an average consumer would avoid an advertising, finding unbearable even 10 seconds of insertion or a banner on a website, in this way IKEA made millions of people watch and, most of all, enjoy a half-an-hour long commercial (CMS Connected, n.d.). This is due to the fact that using ASMR, people actually enjoyed the content and were willing to watch it as their choice.



Frame of the bedroom used for the ASMR commercial “Oddly Ikea” – Source: YouTube.

Having seen the food field and the furniture market, nevertheless ASMR was used also in other important environments, such as the beauty market. One relevant case of this filed is reported by Lush: this is a beauty company specialized in soaps, face masks and lotions between a large scape of products.

In their attempt of integrating ASMR content in their commercials, Lush decided to partner up with an expert: more specifically it produced a video collaborating with the influencer ASMR Darling on a sponsored video, where the artist, whose real name is Taylor, goes through an evening skin care routine of Lush products. Her pace is leisurely, which is typical of ASMR videos.

She whispers softly about each product, while gently tapping and scratching the containers. There are also long sequences of bath bombs and steamer tabs fizzing. It's an effective showcase for Lush products that feels authentic to her brand as an influencer (CMS Connected, n.d.).

This video can also be considered a mixture between the production of the companies' own digital content and the plain partnership with a content creator, as illustrated in the first part of the paragraph.



Frame of the Lush video "Lush Nighttime Routine" by ASMR Darling – Source: YouTube.

All the reported cases constitute relevant evidence of the fact that ASMR have been used in recent years for advertising and promotion purposes as a valid tool and alternative to the traditional communication methods, in order to stimulate greatly the consumer attention.

However, the greatest example of ASMR application in an advertisement has not still been discussed: the most famous and discussed case of ASMR communication happened in fact during the 2019 Super Bowl, the annual league championship game of the National Football League (NFL) of the United States. During the sport event, watched every year by millions of people, the beer brand Michelob Ultra debuted with a commercial for their new light beer called Pure Gold, featuring the presence of the famous actress and model Zoe Kravitz.

The peculiar thing of this commercial was its focus entirely on ASMR sound: in fact, the scene was set in a nature environment characterized by majestic cliffs overlooking the ocean, where star actress Zoe Kravitz, the main character of the whole commercial, sits

in a plain and empty table with only two microphones around her and the main product, the Pure Gold beer.

Basically, in the commercial the actress pours herself a glass of beer, but the way that she does that is intentionally ASMR coded, using a combination of isolated, textural sounds which can trigger tingly physical sensations in the listener. She then leans forward towards the mics and whispers, “Let’s all experience ... something ... together”. Furthermore, she drags the bottle of Pure Gold across the smooth table and picks it up, drumming her fingernails against the glass, saying another catchphrase “This place ... so pure ... you can feel it”, and by doing so focusing the attention of the audience on the nature environment that transmits a sense of calm and peacefulness, in order to release in them positive pleasant sensations.

She spins the bottle on its edge against the table’s surface, and then pops the cap, the click-hiss filling the air. Pouring the liquid into a glass, Kravitz leans back with a subtle smile on her lips as the fizzing bubbles reach a crescendo (Rolling Stone, 2019).

In this way, the beer brand Michelob Ultra exploited all the positive features of ASMR, going mainstream in the trend of ASMR for their commercials, and also achieving positive feedbacks from said advertising.



Frame from Michelob Ultra commercial at Super Bowl in 2019 – Source: Rolling Stone.

The use of ASMR in advertising, by the end of 2019 and the beginning of the 2020s, began its consolidation between the companies that caught the habit of using it in their advertising ideas, including it in their overall communication budget.

In recent years, many other applications of ASMR started to arise. For instance, it was not only the brand to be publicized together with the product, but in some cases regarding certain companies, the brand and product concern the person behind it, creating a case of personal branding. In fact, The rapidly rising enthusiasm for celebrity-owned brands (COBs) in developing economies in recent years has encouraged many celebrities to start their own product lines (Singh & Pandey, 2017).

This phenomenon happens with celebrities that became famous for different reasons, whether they were bloggers, singers, actors or simply family-rich, who then decided to create their own brand. In these situations, the success of the company strongly depends on the personal branding of the founder, since the plausible customers of said brands would most likely buy its products simply for the person that owns the brand.

These typologies of brands also started to use ASMR in their promotion content: but, in this case, it was the same celebrity-owner to be part of the ASMR, creating a mixture between a classical brand commercial and the overmentioned User-Generated-Content by other creators on social media: we could include it between the ASMR content creation made by brand on their own social media.

A well-known example that went viral across all platforms is the case of Kylie Jenner. The youngest billionaire of the Kardashian-Jenner family owns multiple brands, with Kylie Cosmetics being the most successful. This make-up brand is also what initially established her reputation as a businesswoman.



Frame taken from the Kylie Jenner ASMR promotional video – Source: Tik Tok

To publicize the launch of the line's new concealer, the long-lasting power plush concealer, Kylie Jenner recorded a video where she shows off the product by whispering and creating noises by tapping on the packaging. Apparently, fans loved it, as the video has 3.4 million likes (Fanpage.it, n.d.).

In the reported video, it is precisely Kylie in first person to advertise her own products and not an external person. In the video she talks softly about her own product, showing all its characteristics and methods of use, and most of all including ASMR features in the way she speaks and behaves towards the camera. Moreover, she leveraged on the make-up application element, being the latter one of the main areas of interest in ASMR in general: therefore, she found perfect coherence of her field with the discipline without necessarily forcing it.

Together with her, many similar cases were developed in the same way, like for instance the Italian blogger and businesswoman Chiara Ferragni made a promotional video on Instagram in 2023 for the Christmas Launch of her collection with her own self-titled brand. It is clear how the influencer on the video intentionally uses ASMR as a communication lever, even naming the caption of the video as “ASMR video to show you all the pieces of my new collection”.



Frame taken from the Chiara Ferragni ASMR promotional video – Source: Instagram

In conclusion, we have seen different cases of ASMR application in promotional content, as it is possible to infer that now ASMR is an affirmed tool to apply in said circumstances, being proved the positive consequences brought by it in terms of brand recall and

efficiency of the advertisement overall. In the reported situations of brands using ASMR, the feedback and reactions from the audience were almost always positive, being that people showed enthusiasm and pleasurable behaviors towards the phenomenon.

Nevertheless, the possibilities of ASMR applications stay open to different versions of it, as the phenomenon evolves and transforms in time, but always with the one objective of providing pleasurable sensations to the human ear, in order to provoke positive consequences in its different areas of application.

2.3 Theoretical background

Reviewing the reported cases, it can be inferred that it has been now established how ASMR brings positive effects on the consumer recall of a certain brand: however, my research aims to analyze another aspect akin to the brand recall itself, with the goal of investigating how the presence of ASMR in the advertising can influence the customer engagement through the emotional and sensational mediating variables, inherent to the same ASMR. Specifically, the aim is to investigate how much an advertisement can appear to be iconic and memorable to the consumer's eye, hence measuring the memorability of said advertising communication.

In particular, the element that this thesis would particularly like to focus on is precisely the effect of ASMR on the same consumers, making them the center of the investigation. Seen the overmentioned researches, it could be interesting to show how the soothing sensations that have always being the focal point of ASMR, could actually influence the way a consumer behaves and engages with the brand, and, in turn, influencing its decision-making process. It is, in fact, focal that an advertisement appears to be memorable to the consumer, in order to let them recall it in the purchasing phase: this study aims to investigate how ASMR could accentuate this precise variable, making the ad memorable for the audience.

Of course, ASMR has the capability to make an ad memorable thanks to certain aspects and features of its being, that influence the consumers' sensibility and emotional sphere: specifically, thanks to its emotional and sensational levers that tickle the viewers' both body and mind, ASMR has the possibility to lever on the empathy variable. In particular, this tool can engage with the customers, making them empathize with its content and, therefore, remember it.

Building on what has been said so far, we can sum up by assessing that the main objective of this paper is to verify how the presence of ASMR can influence not only the memorability of the ad, that is, its effectiveness in terms of recall in the consumer's mind, but also and above all its more emotional function in terms of empathy, playing the role of an immobile engine of engagement.

2.3.1 Literature review

As previously anticipated, the focus of the research regards the attention to the consumer and how different triggers like ASMR could actually affect its memory. In fact, it is known how the sound triggers have a powerful influence on the consumers; however it has not been studied yet how ASMR, which is a combination of sound and vision, can affect the consumers, specifically on their memory (Cohen et al., 2024).

ASMR might conceptually impact ad outcomes in a similar way to novelty, for instance resulting in deeper information encoding and more elaborate memory traces (Craik and Tulving, 1975). The same overmentioned study by Cohen et al. (2024) reports that, after defining ASMR advertisements to include common triggers such as whispering, advertisers can leverage ASMR elements to boost the engagement and memorability of advertisements.

Moreover, it was acknowledged the same positive effect of ASMR on memorability within a study by Molina-Collado et al. (2024) about the use of a sensory versus personal environment as antecedents of the creative food tourism experience: in particular, it was suggested inside the study that, as a possible lever to enhance the memorability of a certain restaurant (as a food tourism experience), it could be used ASMR in a way to generate temptation and let the customer remember the advertising. For example, by means of very visual videos that focus on the food and how it is slowly cooked, projecting the sounds of the kitchen and whispering how the whole process has been developed (Molina-Collado et al., 2024).

Therefore, having analyzed the literature relevance of the relationship between ASMR on an advertising and the memorability effect of it, it can be hypothesized that the presence of an ASMR trigger within an advertising content can actually have a more positive influence on the effectiveness of the advertisement itself, compared with a scenario with an absence of ASMR stimuli; more precisely, these triggers could positively affect the consumers' memorability of said advertisement, leaving the consumer with a clearer comprehension of the latter.

H1: The presence of ASMR more positively influences consumers' memorability regarding advertisement compared to the absence of ASMR.

Following the explanation of how the discipline of ASMR can actually influence the memorability in the consumer's mind, we can proceed with the analysis of the linkage between ASMR itself and the empathy variable.

As a matter of fact, the two elements are extremely linked with each other: more specifically it was studied how ASMR is able to have an influence on the people's empathetic traits and moreover how empathy is inherent in ASMR itself. For instance, role playing, which is one of the main triggering activities of the discipline, may maximize opportunities to engage creative abilities, strengthening mental flexibility during ASMR: it is in fact related to greater mental flexibility through openness, divergent thinking, creative empathy, and creative art (Zielinski-Nicolson et al., 2023).

Moreover, a study by McErlean and Banissy was conducted upon the overmentioned variables: in the specifics, the researchers aimed to discover how ASMR could apport individual variations in the personality and empathy traits of a person. The results of the study reported how ASMR-respondents, which are people predisposed to it, had a better response on the scale of the empathetic concern, whenever exposed to a stimulus. Hence, the study assesses that ASMR appears to not only be linked to unusual multi-sensory experiences, but is also associated with individual differences in personality traits, like for instance, empathy (McErlean & Banissy, 2017).

Therefore, having visualized how the two variables of ASMR and empathy are connected between each other, we can conclude by saying that the element of empathy could affect the general influencing force of the presence of ASMR on external stimuli, strengthening its final effect by impacting more on the consumer's personal traits. Being empathy extremely inherent and linked with ASMR, it could effectively contribute to the influencing movement of ASMR towards the advertising in which it is present. Hence, in light of these elements, we are ready to enunciate the second hypothesis of this research.

H2: Empathy mediates the relationship between the presence or absence of ASMR and memorability. In particular, the presence of ASMR has a more positive effect toward empathy.

Finally, the third element to analyze is the relationship between the element of empathy and the consumer's memorability, specifically on the mediating effect of empathy on the relationship between the previously exposed variables, which are the presence of ASMR and the memorability effect.

Based on the present literature, an empathetic approach applied to an advertising or to a storytelling in general, can effectively bring a change in the consumer's attitude: for instance, the use of human-recognizable objects (which enhance the empathy effect of a communication), may enhance memorability, comprehension, and recall in a visual communication attempt (Liem et al., 2020).

Moreover, another study by Mai in 2009 contributed to better explain the mediating effect of the empathetic and emotional variables towards the memorability effect: more specifically, the study explains how the insertion of emotional levers and triggers inside a TV commercial can bring positive attitudes from the consumers' side towards the advertisement and the memorability itself, ending up with a positive correlation between those.

Therefore, we are able to assess that empathy can efficiently mediate the relationship between the presence of ASMR in an advertising and the memorability of the adv itself: in particular we expect that, adopting an empathetic approach in the communication (inherent to the discipline of ASMR), the consumer would be more prone to have a recall effect on the advertisement. We can then enounce the last hypothesis of the study.

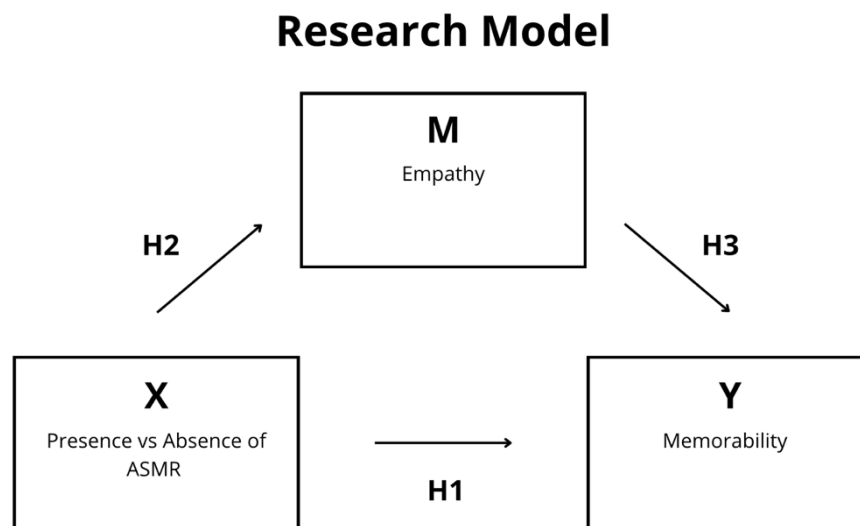
H3: Empathy mediates the relationship between the presence or absence of ASMR and memorability. Specifically, a high level of empathy leads to a positive effect toward memorability.

2.3.2 Conceptual framework

The main objective of this experimental study is to investigate how the presence or absence of ASMR in the adv affects the memorability of the commercial relative to the effectiveness of the communicated message.

To test this relationship, it was decided to complete the conceptual framework through the indirect effect represented by the mediating factor related to the empathy generated by the presence or absence of ASMR. Following this assumption, it was decided to implement the research model using a mediating factor represented by empathy, an independent variable related to ASMR (presence vs. absence), and a dependent variable concerning the memorability of the advertisement.

Therefore, for the development of the conceptual framework, Andrew F. Hayes' Model 4 was adopted, which turns out to be characterized by the presence of an independent variable (X), a dependent variable (Y), and a mediator (M).



More specifically, the dependent variable X named “Presence vs Absence of ASMR” regards the possibility of inserting the discipline of ASMR into advertising contents; the mediator M, indicated as “Empathy” consists in the empathetic variables inherent to ASMR itself, thanks to which it is able to influence the advertising; finally, the

independent variable Y named “Memorability” refers to the consumers’ ability to better remember the advertising communication.

Therefore, after exposing the research model of this thesis, we are able to enunciate the research question of this specific study.

RQ: Can the presence of ASMR content in an advertisement positively influence the efficiency of the advertising communication in terms of memorability of the advertisement, through the use of the empathetic levers inherent to ASMR itself?

2.4 Gaps in the research

While proponents of ASMR say that these softer advertisements could be the start of a new era of marketing, others believe that the little-understood technique may be too niche to be regarded as anything more than a trend (EuropeanCeo.com, 2024).

As a matter of fact, although the overall research upon the topic has been expanding largely across the current literature, involving different areas of interest, from green advertising to the fashion market and so on, the topic of ASMR can be still considered as a young element within the environment of scientific research. As a consequence, researchers are just at the beginning of the investigation process regarding the phenomenon, but the road ahead to have a full comprehension of its being and its possible benefits in business are definitely still to discover in the future years of research.

In turn, even though many relevant aspects of ASMR have been discussed and investigated with scientific relevant research, we can infer that, precisely deriving from those investigations, some uncovered topics have risen, as areas of future development for the upcoming studies on the matter.

For instance, some of the features that are still not analyzed in the present literature can be identified in the following themes. To show a few of them, we can find between many the study of the repeated exposure of the stimulus rather than in the singular visualization of ASMR content, following with the focus on the auditive stimuli sensation (rather than the association video-audio), together also with the study on how those stimuli affect the consumer decision making and again in the question of whether or not a specific sense has a greater impact and effectiveness depending on the advertising medium used to transmit it (Sands et al., 2022).

Those are only some of the aspects that the previous literature has highlighted as some research gaps for the current topic in investigation. However, having highlighted significant literature in the previous paragraphs of the chapter, it is appropriate to expose their limitations and their proposals for future research.

The first study analyzed in the literature review of this chapter was, in fact, the scientific research by Sands, Campbell, Mavrommatis and Kadomskaia published in 2022 inside the Journal of Advertising Research and called “*Can a Whisper Boost Recall Of Video*

Advertisements? Exploring the Effects of Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) in Advertising". Although the paper successfully proved that the insertion of ASMR content in advertising communication could actually appport positive implications for the company using said tool, the research appeared limited in certain aspects. The authors indicated that, since the topic was relatively new, the plausible effect of ASMR were still unknown and to discover, requiring further work of investigation.

Since their research studies how consumer respond to a single ASMR advertisement, the first limitation here, as anticipated before, regards the possibility to study a repeated stimuli exposure over time, analyzing how the reaction could change exposure after exposure: it is, in fact, possible that the effect could either strengthen with a repeated exposure or lose faster its benefits due to a habituation effects, making the stimuli result annoying (Sands et al., 2022).

Moreover, the authors indicate the limitation of the media used to transmit the ASMR content, proposing not only on visual-based media like a smartphone, but also on audio-based formats like radio and podcasts, hence using other typologies of advertising media. The paper then analyzes the possibility to study the length of the content itself: if typically the average ASMR content takes up a long duration, with half-an-hour long videos published on YouTube, there is the possibility to investigate how a shorter video could affect the effects of the phenomenon.

Finally the authors indicate as potential limitations the possibility to study if the ASMR could be turned down in an advertisement, for those who could find it irritating or simply do not psychologically perceive it in the right way; and then they asked themselves when do an ASMR content stop being a useful tool to leverage on in order to have a successful communication and start wearing out, losing its known positive effects on the audience (Sands et al. 2022).

The second case study previously analyzed was published by Chae, Baek, Jang and Sung in 2021 in the Journal of Business Research and it is called "*Storyscaping in fashion brand using commitment and nostalgia based on ASMR marketing*". Along the paper the authors proved their hypotheses right, showing how ASMR could give a relevant marketing contribution, involving the variables of commitment and nostalgia in a storyscaping environment. In particular, the theoretical implications of this study are that

it systemized the procedure of storyscaping-based ASMR marketing through a more comprehensive approach, which could be perceived as an attempt of theoretical expansion. This research suggested a path model, which presented how key factors such as commitment and nostalgia could be induced from watching ASMR, while also showing how those factors shift into (affect) brand equity, impulse buying, and electronic word-of-mouth (Chae et al., 2021).

However, the study showed some limitations along the way. For instance, the authors indicated how the lack of previous literature constituted a barrier for a deeper analysis, since the existing papers on the matter did not discuss in depth the application of ASMR content to marketing; moreover, the limitations discuss how in the future there could be a further investigation on diverse media application, since to the present day many of the used media do not present diversity and appear in a limited number, at least for what concerns fashion brands (Chae et al., 2021).

Therefore, we can conclude by assessing the number of limitations in the existing research, which is in need of a further exploration of the item of discussion. In particular, the origin of this thesis' research question and analysis has to be reconducted precisely to the limitations of the present literature, as it is usual. Hence, the gaps will provide the starting point from which my research will take place, following the path of the previously exposed hypotheses of investigation and research question that will be illustrated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Experimental research

3.1 Methodological approach

Having illustrated the conceptual framework of the present investigation in the previous chapter, together with the subsequent hypotheses for its specific development, we are now ready to go ahead with the proceedings of the experiment itself, showing the characteristics of each step of research.

3.1.1 Methodology and study

The present experimental study consists of a conclusive causal between-subjects 2 x 1 research design. The results of the experiment are represented by responses to a questionnaire obtained through an independently administered survey conducted in Italy during July 2024 and through the use of the online platform Qualtrics XM. Survey participants were selected by adopting a non-probability sampling methodology.

Specifically, it was decided to use a convenience method, thereby taking advantage of both the ease and speed of access and selection of elements of the sample population. This technique implies no economic cost, and it is advantageous in terms of high speed of data collection and high response rate. Considering the target sample, it was decided to include respondents of all registry ages by collecting data from both male and female individuals, as demographic variables were not expected to influence the results of the experiment in a statistically significant way.

3.1.2 Participants and sampling procedure

The survey was distributed to 210 individuals, of whom 203 respondents fully participated in the experimental study, answering completely and comprehensively all the questions within the questionnaire. The remaining 7 incomplete responses were first

selected and later discarded from the dataset during the data cleaning procedure. Specifically, respondents were contacted through an anonymous link generated by the Qualtrics XM online platform and sent at a later time through instant messaging applications and social media networks as the main distribution channels (specifically Instagram and WhatsApp). The sample of the target population reached by the survey included mainly undergraduate college students and newly hired employees located in different cities in Italy.

Therefore, following this assumption, the average age of the respondents was found to be 26,47 years, although the age range fluctuated between a minimum of 16 and a maximum of 54 years. Regarding the gender of the respondents, the predominant gender of the sample was found to be female, represented by 59,6 % (121/203), while the male gender was characterized by 39,9 % (81/203). The remaining 0,5 % (1/203) of the respondents preferred not to identify with a specific gender, while no one selected the third gender/non-binary option.

3.1.3 Data collection and questionnaire composition

To conduct the experimental study, it was necessary to develop a questionnaire consisting of 8 questions, 6 of which were specific and 2 demographics.

In order to manipulate the independent variable (Type of video: Presence of ASMR vs Absence of ASMR), it was essential to make two visual stimuli different from each other.

The first scenario turns out to consist of a video of a Lindt brand commercial characterized by the presence of ASMR. More specifically, this stimulus was taken by an existing advertising communication content published by the brand Lindt in the month of January 2020 on the YouTube platform of Lindt Chocolate Canada. The video reports as the main description the phrase “Prepare your senses for a Lindt Excellence ASMR experience. Sense the Excellence”; as a matter of fact, the whole video applies the logic of ASMR in an advertising, with a simple scenario of a woman behind a desk with a microphone and some chocolate bars on top, using the product as an ASMR tool itself and therefore integrating the whole concept of sensational stimuli in the advertising.

Moreover, the commercial does not respect the common rules of advertising duration, since the video results to be 2:47 minutes long, which is a huge amount of time, considering the maximum benchmark of 30 seconds that an adv commonly reaches.

There it follows the link to the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1grFIM55qO0>.



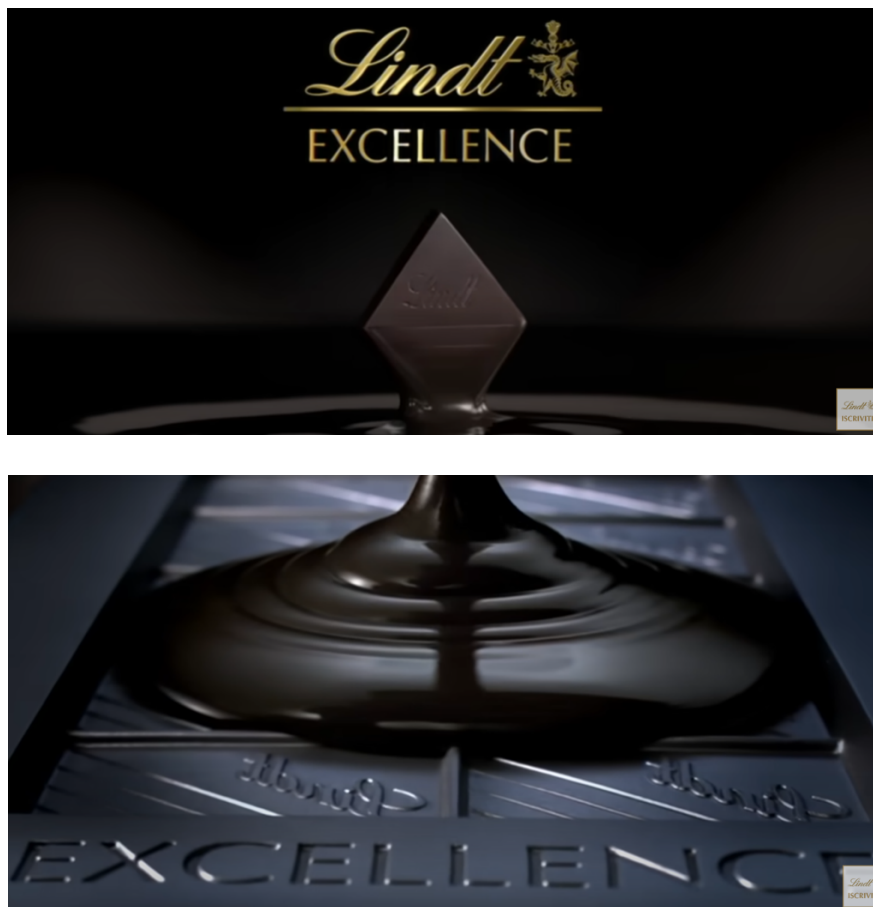
Frames from the ASMR Lindt commercial – Source: YouTube

The second scenario turns out to consist of a video of a Lindt brand commercial characterized by the absence of ASMR. In fact, the opposite scenario reports a very different communication from the first stimulus: in this video we can observe a traditional typology of advertising communication, consisting in a 15 seconds long commercial that aims to advertise the same product seen before, which is the Lindt Excellence chocolate bar. More specifically, the video was also published on YouTube in the month of January 2021 by the YouTube channel of Lindt Cioccolato Italia with the only description being

“Discover Lindt Excellence, Lindt's range of dark bars with high cocoa percentages and ingredients. Learn more at www.lindt.it”.

The video leverages on peculiar marketing levers such as dark colors to indicate luxury and deep voices to better get to the customer; however, if the inherent levers seem to have a sensational approach, they at last differ from an ASMR approach to communication.

There it follows the link to the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjrwTNjiKKs>.



Frames from the Lindt Excellence commercial – Source: YouTube

As mentioned earlier, data were collected through a questionnaire, which turns out to be divided into four main parts.

At the beginning of the questionnaire was a brief introduction with an explanation of the academic purpose of the experimental research attached; in particular, the introduction

was explained as it follows *“Hi, my name is Maria Giulia Coricelli, and I am a Marketing student attending the Market Relationship & Customer Engagement course at LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome. I am conducting research for my Master's Thesis, and I would be grateful if you could take a few minutes of your time to answer some questions. Your responses to this study will be used for academic purposes only, will be treated confidentially, and will remain completely anonymous. The study is about ASMR Communication. Only a limited number of people will be interviewed, so your opinion is very important to the success of the research. It will only take 3 minutes to complete the survey. Please answer as openly and honestly as possible; there are no right or wrong answers. Thank you for taking part in the project!”*.

Also, after including the university's credentials, full and complete compliance with privacy regulations regarding the anonymity policy about data collection and management was ensured.

The second part of the questionnaire turns out to be represented by a randomized block consisting of two separate scenarios. Specifically, the randomization process was essential within the structure of the questionnaire so that a uniform number of exposures to both visual stimuli could be obtained. Specifically, in order to avoid potential cognitive bias and possible conditioning related to brand sentiment, both scenarios refer to the same chocolate brand, namely Lindt Excellence. In addition, both visual conditions were obtained from official brand advertisements. Moreover, the choice of the chocolate brand Lindt was purely random, always following the principle of non-biasing and non-conditioning selection, but however it was not driven by the goal of testing the experiment on the specific field of food-related brands and products. In fact, product from a different brand and industrial field could have been chosen for the same experiment.

The third part of the survey was introduced to respondents after they were subjected to the observation of one of the two scenarios. Specifically, this block of the questionnaire turns out to consist of 6 questions: the first 3 relating to the Mediator (Empathy) and the other 3 relating to the Dependent Variable (Memorability). All questions were rated through a Likert scale based on 7 rating points.

The first scale, concerning the Mediator, was derived from the pre-validated scale by Escalas and Stern (2003) “Affective Response to the Ad (Empathy)”. The scale consists

of five seven-point items designed to measure how much a person reports feeling the same emotions as characters in a commercial. It is not just an awareness of the characters' emotions, but an absorption or "feeling into" another's affective experience. Therefore, although empathy is related to sympathy, this scale is intended to measure something different (Escalas & Stern, 2003).

The scale items offered by the study were the following:

1. While watching the ad, I experienced feeling as if the events were really happening to me.
2. While watching the ad, I felt as though I were one of the characters.
3. While watching the ad, I felt as though the events in the ad were happening to me.
4. While watching the commercial, I experienced many of the same feelings that the characters portrayed.
5. While watching the commercial, I felt as if the characters' feelings were my own.

However, only the items 1, 4 and 5 were used for the sake of this study.

The second scale, related to the dependent variable, is derived from the scale pre-validated by Smith, Chen, and Yang (2008) "Attitude Toward the Ad (Memorable)". The scale consists of three seven-point Likert items that measure the degree to which a person exposed to an advertisement describes its message as easy to remember and indicates that he or she learned a lot from it (Smith et al., 2008).

The scale items of this study are exposed as it follows:

1. I remember a lot about the ad message.
2. The claims made in the ad were memorable.
3. The ad message was easy to learn and remember.

Both scales were adapted according to the needs of the experimental research.

Finally, the fourth and final part of the questionnaire features the block devoted to demographic questions, in which the gender and age of the respondents were asked.

3.2 Experimental results

3.2.1 Data analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire provided by the survey generated on Qualtrics XM were exported to SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science), a statistical software for analysis.

Initially, it was decided to perform two exploratory factor analyses in order to examine and validate the items of the scales used in the conceptual model of the research analysis. Specifically, the principal component analysis was performed as an extraction method by applying Varimax as a rotation technique. To decide how many factors to extract, the total explained variance table was observed by verifying that, according to Kaiser's rule, the Eigenvalues were greater than 1 and that the cumulative variance as a percentage was greater than 60%. In addition, both the communalities table and the component matrix were observed. Specifically, all the items were found to have an extraction value greater than 0,5 and a loading score greater than 0,3. Therefore, it was decided to retain all the items making up the scales by validating them.

After validating both scales, two reliability tests were conducted in order to verify the level of reliability of the scales considered. Specifically, the Cronbach alpha value of both constructs was observed, making sure that it was above 60 percent. With regard to the scale related to the mediator, a value of 0,963 was found while with regard to the dependent variable scale, a value of 0,945 was recorded. Therefore, both scales were found to be reliable.

In addition, the KMO test related to the measure of sampling adequacy was performed. With regard to the scale related to the mediator, a value of 0,781 was found while with regard to the dependent variable scale, a value of 0,774 was recorded. Therefore, in both cases the level of adequacy was found to be more than adequate. Next, Bartlett's test of sphericity was performed, which was statistically significant, finding a p-value of 0,001 in both cases ($p\text{-value} < \alpha = 0,05$).

3.2.2 Hypotheses results

After conducting both the factor analyses and the reliability test, the main hypotheses of the conceptual research model were examined so that its statistical significance and, therefore, relative success could be confirmed or rejected.

H1

To test the statistical significance of the Direct Hypothesis (H1), a comparison of averages was conducted by applying a One-Way ANOVA as an analysis in order to test the effect of the independent variable (Video type: Presence vs Absence of ASMR) against the dependent variable (Memorability). Specifically, the independent variable (X) is nominal categorical in nature, and it is separated into two different conditions coded with 0 (Absence of ASMR) and 1 (Presence of ASMR), while the dependent variable (Y), is continuous metric in nature.

After conducting the ANOVA, looking at the descriptive statistics table, it was possible to see that the group of respondents subjected to the scenario coded with 0 (99 people) had a mean value of 2,7542 while the respondents exposed to the visual condition labeled with 1 (104 people) had a mean value of 5,7692. In addition, when considering the ANOVA table, a p-value related to the F-test (Fisher's exact test) of 0,001 was found to be statistically significant ($p\text{-value} < \alpha = 0,05$). therefore, a statistically significant difference between the group averages could be found, thus confirming the effect of X versus Y. Thus, the direct hypothesis H1 (Direct Effect) was proved.

H2 – H3

In order to test the statistical significance of the indirect hypothesis (H2 - H3), a regression analysis was conducted through the application of Model 4 of the SPSS Process Macro version 4.2 extension developed by Andrew F. Hayes in order to test the mediation effect caused by Empathy (Mediator) against the relationship between the independent variable (Video type: Presence vs Absence of ASMR) and the dependent variable (Memorability). In order to test the success of the mediation effect, it was necessary to distinguish it into two different relationships: the first effect between the independent variable and the mediator (H2) and a second effect between the mediator and the dependent variable (H3).

Specifically, to demonstrate the statistical significance of both sections of the hypothesis, a 95% confidence interval was adopted with an alpha of 5%.

In addition, it was necessary to make sure that the extremes of the confidence range (LLCI= Lower Level of Confidence Interval; ULCI = Upper Level of Confidence Interval) for each hypothesis had met the sign concordance (both positive or both negative), so that no 0 was passed within it. Finally, to assess sign and magnitude of each effect, the β coefficients of the regression analysis of both relationships between the variables were examined.

H2

Regarding the first part of the indirect effect (X - M), through observation of the output of SPSS, a p-value of 0,0000, a favorable confidence interval (LLCI = 3,0201; ULCI = 3,6513) and a positive β regression coefficient of 3,3357 could be seen. Therefore, this section of the indirect effect was found to be statistically significant, thus confirming Hypothesis H2.

H3

As for the second part of the indirect effect (M - Y), through observation of the output of SPSS, a p-value of 0,0000, a favorable confidence interval (LLCI = 0,5778; ULCI = 0,7836) and a positive β regression coefficient of 0,6807 could be seen. Therefore, this section of the indirect effect was found to be statistically significant, thus confirming hypothesis H3.

In light of the results obtained, since both sections of the indirect effect were found to be statistically significant, it was possible to decree the overall success of the mediation effect (Indirect Effect). In addition, considering the statistical significance of the direct effect contained within the regression analysis, it was possible to find mediation of a partial type.

CHAPTER 4

General discussion and conclusions

4.1 Theoretical contributions

In light of the previously analyzed academic literature, more specifically in the second chapter of this thesis, and, considering the obtained results from the experimental research in the third chapter, it was possible to highlight how all the hypotheses in the conceptual framework were demonstrated and positively endorsed.

Therefore, it was possible to contribute to the present literature with a real scientific evidence and, most of all, the study was able to redress the research gap. In the specifics, the three hypotheses added a theoretical contribution to the existing literature in the following way.

H1: The presence of ASMR more positively influences consumers' memorability regarding advertisement compared to the absence of ASMR.

The first hypothesis of the study regarded the influence of the ASMR discipline on the consumer's memorability of a commercial, whenever applied to the advertising itself. Regarding this matter, it was possible to prove, by observing the results of the present study, how the presence of ASMR applied to an advertising content, can indeed positively influence the independent variable of the memorability. As a matter of fact, in the experiment, the respondents exposed to the two different scenarios (Presence vs Absence of ASMR) confirmed to better remember the content of a certain commercial whenever ASMR was present. The validation of said first hypothesis was moreover observable by the statistical results of the analysis: in fact, the means of the two scenarios' results appeared to be significantly different (with a mean of 2,7 for the scenario without ASMR, compared with a mean of 5,7 for the ASMR scenario).

Confronting this thesis' results with the current literature, we can infer that those results meet the present literature's statement regarding the influence of ASMR on memorability. In fact, the positive influence of the discipline was already met in several findings by

different researchers, such as the ones from Cohen (2024), stating that the application of a sound-enhancing discipline like ASMR could effectively have a positive outcome on the efficiency of the advertising, leading the consumers to have a better memory of the commercial's contents.

H2: Empathy mediates the relationship between the presence or absence of ASMR and memorability. In particular, the presence of ASMR has a more positive effect toward empathy.

The second hypothesis reports the mediating effect of empathy in the model, more specifically inferring that the presence of ASMR can have a higher effect on empathy itself. In this case, we can also observe by the study's results how the hypothesis was confirmed. More specifically, the regression analysis brought out by the Model 4 of SPSS highlighted that the mediation effect reported a good p-value (0.0000) and a positive β coefficient (3,3357), therefore proving the statistical significance of the hypothesis.

We can therefore reconduct the thesis' results with the existing literature, noticing a congruence between the overall findings both of this study and the ones regarding pre-existing academic statements. The findings meet, for example, the theory exposed by McErlean & Banissy (2017) by which the typical ASMR-respondents demonstrate a higher level of empathetic concern, which shows a great influence linkage between the two variables. The hypothesis is moreover supported by Zielinski-Nicolson et al. (2023), stating that ASMR is able to enhance the mental flexibility of whoever is exposed to it, leading to a more positive attitude in empathetic terms.

H3: Empathy mediates the relationship between the presence or absence of ASMR and memorability. Specifically, a high level of empathy leads to a positive effect toward memorability.

The third and final hypothesis is still coherent to the mediating effect of empathy, but instead stating that the high level of empathy has a positive influence on memorability itself, analyzing the linkage between the mediator and the dependent variable.

The results of the experiment in this case regarded the indirect effect of the mediator (empathy) on the dependent variable (memorability) and followed, such as for the previous hypothesis, the regression analysis of the Model 4 of SPSS. During the analysis it was observed how also this third hypothesis was confirmed, considering the positive p-value of 0.0000 and the results of the β coefficient (0,6807). Therefore, it was proved that the empathy variable can have a positive influence on the consumer's memorability towards the advertising.

This finding was also met in the present literature, which proposed a positive relationship between the two variable: for example, the theory proposed by Liem et al. (2020) inferred that an empathetic approach can effectively bring a change in the consumer's attitude enhance memorability and visual recall.

In conclusion, we can affirm that the collected data from this study are perfectly coherent with the analyzed literature, reporting that the presence of ASMR applied to an advertising content can effectively have an impact on the consumers' memorability of the advertisement through the positive mediating effect of empathy. This study therefore strengthens the existing statements on the topic, providing a wider base of knowledge on ASMR literature.

4.2 Managerial implications

In light of the observed results of the research and seen the theoretical contributions to the literature, we can infer that the application of ASMR to an advertising content could bring relevant advantages to the companies: in particular, it could result in a major success of their communication efforts, bringing the marketing managers to obtain significant suggestions for their work.

Moreover, the augmented efficiency of the advertisement could in this way benefit the whole marketing funnel, leading to a new asset to the sales, the revenues and the overall market share of the specific company adapting these new communication techniques. As a matter of fact, we can derive from this study different managerial applications of the topic within the corporate environment, suggesting diverse insights.

1. First of all, considering the scenario in which a certain company is willing to adopt ASMR in their communication, the main step to address is the technological investment toward the innovation: in fact, ASMR for the moment exists in function of social media and mainly applied to a digital communication effort (i.e. the promotion of a product or service through a sponsored video by an influencer/ASMRtist on a platform such as Tik Tok, Instagram or even YouTube). Therefore, the companies would have whether to start investing consistently in social media managers and techniques of digital advertising or, in case they already did that, stimulating themselves with new scenarios to keep their communication young and interesting on their social networks. In this way, establishing a major presence in the ASMR communication, the company could acquire a big advantage on the competitors in terms of innovation, bringing as a consequence to a high managerial advantage towards said competitors and starting to gain more and more market share.
2. Another element of interest is constituted by the personification of the commercial: as a matter of fact, the possibility to personalize the advertisement using different artists, messages and modalities of communication could help the company to better reach their target audience and moreover to have a clearer segmentation of the customers. They now have the possibility to address a very

specific message to a certain segment of their audience, leading to the possibility to build a strong connection even with the segments that before seemed unreachable. For instance, many companies nowadays struggle with the engagement of the younger generations such as Generation Z: ASMR has a dedicated and growing following, particularly among young consumers who pass a lot of time on these platforms and empathize very much with the online communities, believing significantly more to a TikTok-communicated message rather than a traditional commercial advertisement. Moreover, social media are able to produce a unique platform for each user, even naming it “for you page”, bringing all the showed content to match perfectly the tastes and preferences of each consumer. Therefore companies can leverage this trend to target advertising messages to this market segment, achieving greater and more personalized impact.

3. The emotional engagement obtained through ASMR could also lead the companies to have a brand improvement, perfecting their image to the public. In fact, the challenge offered by the creation of this diverse content could bring the company to study the topic, specializing themselves in internet trends and taking care of their image on the world wide web. This could inevitably lead to a more curated image of the company that will automatically appear as a more valid choice for the indecisive customer in the step of purchase decision.
4. The brand image improvement could be also obtained by the association of the ASMR values and characteristics with the company; ASMR is commonly associated with soothing and relaxing sensations, that lead to an overall wellness. If these sensations are linked with the company, the overall image will be nothing but better perceived, specifically whenever applied to brands that promote products related to comfort, personal care or wellness.

Finally we can conclude with some practical suggestions for the managers. Considering that the discipline of ASMR is relatively new, the brand managers need to constantly monitor the advertising performance, by collecting mainly the customers' feedbacks (like for example the comments left on the online videos or the reviews regarding the

campaigns) and also through different metrics and KPIs that indicate the company success before and after the ASMR adoption. Moreover, they should always monitor sales, and the revenues brought by the advertisement, which constitutes the main interest for the company.

Lastly, managers need to be aware of different cultural and individual reactions to ASMR. As a matter of fact, not all consumers respond positively to these stimuli, being that every human being has a different predisposition to it. The tastes and, in turn, the reactions can vary depending on the specific country the campaign is addressed to (considering the deep differences between the occidental and the oriental world), together with the language (often many messages are not translated in the right way) and the customs (i.e. a whispering sound could sound offensive or provocative to some cultures). Hence, it is important to consider the cultural context and ensure that the message is not perceived negatively by the audience.

4.3 Limitations and future research

We can infer that overall the study reported positive results, confirming the totality of the hypotheses together with wrapping up the research question's aim with success: it was in fact proved how the discipline of ASMR brings a relevant positive influence towards the advertising in which it is inserted, apportioning a peculiar positive effect on the memorability of the advertisement from the consumers' point of view by empathizing with the communication content. However, the research reports many limitations that could represent the starting point for the potential future researches on the topic.

In the specifics, there will be listed the series of individuated limitations of the research that spread from the respondents' age to the methods of the study.

1. Age: The questionnaire was proposed to a series of people from 14 to 80 years old, but it effectively collected responses from people covering a range between 16 and 54 years. Although the results were well generalized within the respondents, the range resulted to be almost too much vast: in fact, not all the generations in the range (comprehending Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z) are fully immersed in the world of social media, and more specifically ASMR. Focusing the research on a more concentrated target of younger generations (such as the only Generation Z and Generation Alpha) could be useful to have more precise results; this would happen for the mere fact that these generation are more used to such contents, and they would better comprehend the dynamics of the phenomenon, providing the research with more coherent responses.
2. Gender: Although the questionnaire was addressed both to men and women, generalizing the overall results of the study to both genders, a more precise research would be useful by targeting the more passionate and involved gender towards the phenomenon. In particular, it was studied how women are the largest cohort, and this maybe because women are the largest ASMR video-making cohort (Ramirez, 2017); moreover, another study by the University of Alabama highlights that women experience ASMR more frequently and strongly on average (Begg, 2022), strengthening the thesis. Therefore, it could be stimulating

to address another study to women only, in order to see diverse and possibly more focused results, since they result to be the ones who watch more ASMR.

3. Language: The questionnaire was written and diffused in Italian for matters of easiness in the divulgation of the same and in the collection of responses; therefore, the results are exclusively generalizable to an Italian population. However, using another more general language such as English itself would be useful to help collection a vaster range of responses, reaching a more diverse population and maybe changing the results. This would be given by a bigger population, the international environment and obviously the possibility to generalize more the results of the study.
4. Quantitative method vs Qualitative method: the research was conducted through a quantitative method, which is the process of collecting and analyzing numerical data and it is used to find patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and generalize results to wider populations (Bhandari, 2020). This methodology of academic research brings out many advantages: it is, in fact, very time efficient, considering the collection of many data in a little time through a simple questionnaire, it in turn consents to collect larger samples of responses, being replicable and able to easily compare the results of each response. On the other hand, this method does not offer a high response quality, not going in the depth of a consumer's thought: it can result as superficial, narrow focused and, if not well-structured, with a lack of context for the respondent. The valid alternative to a quantitative research is the qualitative method. Qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems; Instead of collecting numerical data points or intervening or introducing treatments just like in quantitative research, qualitative research helps generate hypothenar to further investigate and understand quantitative data though the use of tools like in-depth interviews and focus groups (Tenny et al. 2022). Therefore, the use of a more qualitative method could help to gather more precise data and have a deeper, even if less generalizable, vision of the study.

5. Traditional method vs Innovative method: The study was conducted through a traditional method, following the classical path of data collection, analysis of the results and interpretation, with the connected conclusions. On the other hand, the alternative of this classical research path is represented by the innovative method: more specifically, it consists in the application of the neuro-sciences to the research, linking it with the practice of neuromarketing. Neuromarketing is the study of how people's brains respond to advertising and other brand-related messages by scientifically monitoring brainwave activity, eye tracking and skin response (Lutkevich, 2022). In the specifics, for this peculiar research, one of the neurosciences to apply would be the user EEG recording for the cerebral waves: whenever exposed to the stimulus of ASMR, the consumer's responses in terms of cerebral waves would be recorded by EEG (Electroencephalography), an electrical activity recorded from the surface of the scalp with the help of metal electrodes and a conducting medium (Abhang et al., 2016). This tool would be useful to record the brain movements of the consumer exposed to ASMR, in order to have a more precise view of their sensations. Another method would be the Galvanic Skin Response (GSR), also named Electrodermal Activity (EDA) and Skin Conductance (SC): this is the measure of the continuous variations in the electrical characteristics of the skin, i.e. for instance the conductance, caused by the variation of the human body sweating (Brainsigns, 2018). This tool would also help to monitor the consumer's arousal, for the same overmentioned purposes.
6. Practical application: Another limitation for the study lays in the practical application of the experiment; as a matter of fact, the research was mainly and exclusively conducted thanks to the survey, limiting the collected data to mere responses to a questionnaire. The possible alternative to this methodology would be the practical application on field, by physically approaching to the customer. In this scenario, there would not be the limitation given by the online barrier: the customer would not have the typical biases encountered in the world wide web, such as the selection bias (when participants self-select into the survey), the nonresponse bias (participants stop the compilation of the survey, leading to

incomplete answers), the confirmation bias (the survey's design is influenced by the survey-maker's expectations), and many more. The direct approach to the consumer would lead to a more spontaneous and real response, surpassing all the previously exposed limitations.

7. Area of investigation: Finally, the last individualized limitation for this study was the field of investigation of the research. More specifically, the questionnaire reported an example of ASMR advertising applied to the product of chocolate; it is in fact reasonable to infer that chocolate can be a biased product when applied to ASMR, since it already reports in its own characteristics the sensuality and the persuasion that ASMR aims to transmit and moreover to add up to the overall output of the advertising. Using different products could not bring the research to the same results reported by this specific investigation, considering the possibility of a worse scenario of influence or perhaps to a better one. Therefore, the area of investigation was definitely a limitation for this research, and, in turn, it would be useful for the future research to extend the analysis to other environments of products and services (test ASMR on different kinds of products and services, like fashion items, furniture, hotel services and much more). Alternatively, the investigation could be carried on with a summed analysis of different products, analyzing at the same time two different items, in a way to better generalize the results of the study.

Therefore, we can conclude by inferring that the topic of ASMR in advertising has many aspects to further investigate in the upcoming future research, which with time will provide a fuller vision of the topic, giving a solid base of knowledge for the feasible managerial applications of the discipline.

Conclusion

From this study it emerged a new point of view of the discipline of ASMR applied to the world of digital communication and advertising in general. It came to light how the topic is very actual and popular within a certain segment of the current customer audience for the average company, bringing consistency to the overall research's aim. It was proved how ASMR can actually bring a positive impact on the customers' sensations and therefore, though the theory of sensory marketing, how applying it to a communication effort, it can improve the brand's memorability for the audience itself, bringing positive effects on the overall performance.

More specifically, ASMR is able to have a great influence on the recall effect of the brand: by applying it in an advertisement, in association with the brand itself, the customers are driven by the soothing sensations of the discipline and therefore their brain is more prepared to embrace the communication. In the end, the customers will result in better remembering the advertisement, which, in turn, will bring positive consequences on the sales, the revenues and the market share of the product/brand in the matter.

My research verted property on this topic; the initial research question recited as it follows “RQ: *Can the presence of ASMR content in an advertisement positively influence the efficiency of the advertising communication in terms of memorability of the adv, through the use of the empathetic levers inherent to ASMR itself?*”. As a matter of fact, the resumed research question was proved right: through the study it was assessed that ASMR applied to advertising can effectively positively influence the consumers' memorability of the brand, by impacting their sensations through empathy.

More specifically, in the conceptual framework the first hypothesis H1, inferring that the presence of ASMR has a positive impact on the memorability, rather than the absence of it, was proven with success, reporting statistically significant results in the study. The same happened with the other two hypotheses H2 and H3 regarding the mediating effect of empathy: the two respectively claimed that the presence of ASMR has an impact on empathy and that empathy itself has an influence on memorability. Both the hypotheses were in fact successful, reporting statistically significant results to the study.

In conclusion, we can infer that ASMR is a fertile and prolific topic on which marketing managers could invest both in the present and in the future, in order to have new and enthusiastic application for their communications ideas. The world of marketing is in fact continuously seeking new stimuli to keep their audiences invested and, most of all, interested in their products or services.

With this thesis it was made another step towards the adoption of this powerful tool for the previously exposed goals: in particular, the hope of the study is to strengthen this principle in those who already believed in it and to let it grow in those who were skeptic facing ASMR. I am sure that this is a still young and raw ground; however, with the faith in the future research and in the general excitement of the researchers and marketing enthusiasts, many changes could happen in the future within a short period of time.

Finally, I can conclude by saying that I really enjoyed conducting this investigation, being myself an enthusiast of the topic: this research not only increased my knowledge on the discipline, but it also boosted my curiosity of the vast world of ASMR, sound-branding and marketing communication overall. I am now able to infer that this project constituted the perfect ending to my great and adventurous course of studies though marketing and I am happy to have apported a personal contribution to this incredible field, hoping to let it be the professional environment of my upcoming future career.

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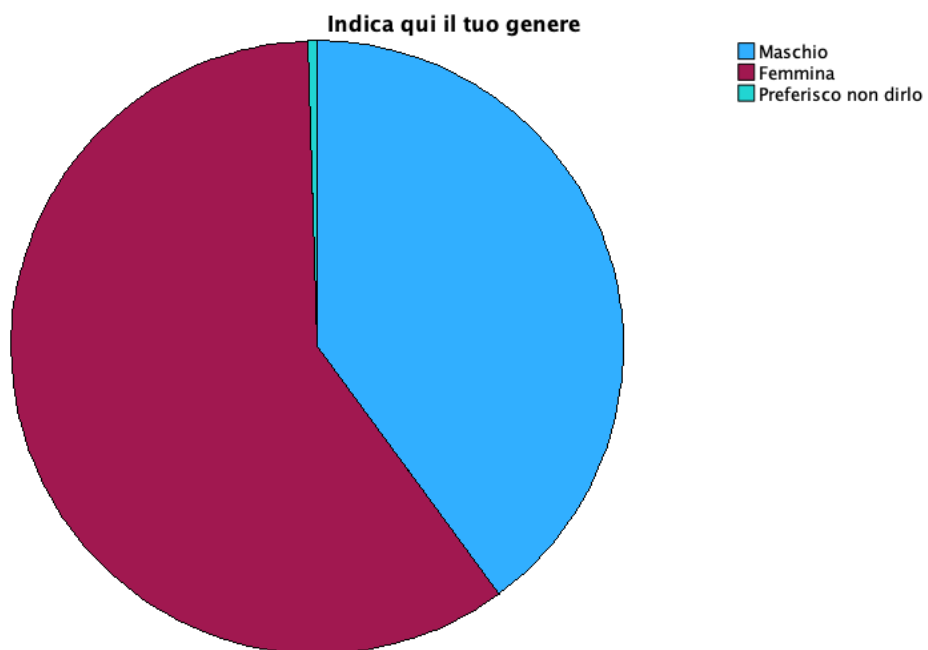
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Appendixes

Descriptive statistics: Gender

		Indica qui il tuo genere			
		Frequenza	Percentuale	Percentuale valida	Percentuale cumulativa
Valido	Maschio	81	39.9	39.9	39.9
	Femmina	121	59.6	59.6	99.5
	Preferisco non dirlo	1	.5	.5	100.0
	Totale	203	100.0	100.0	



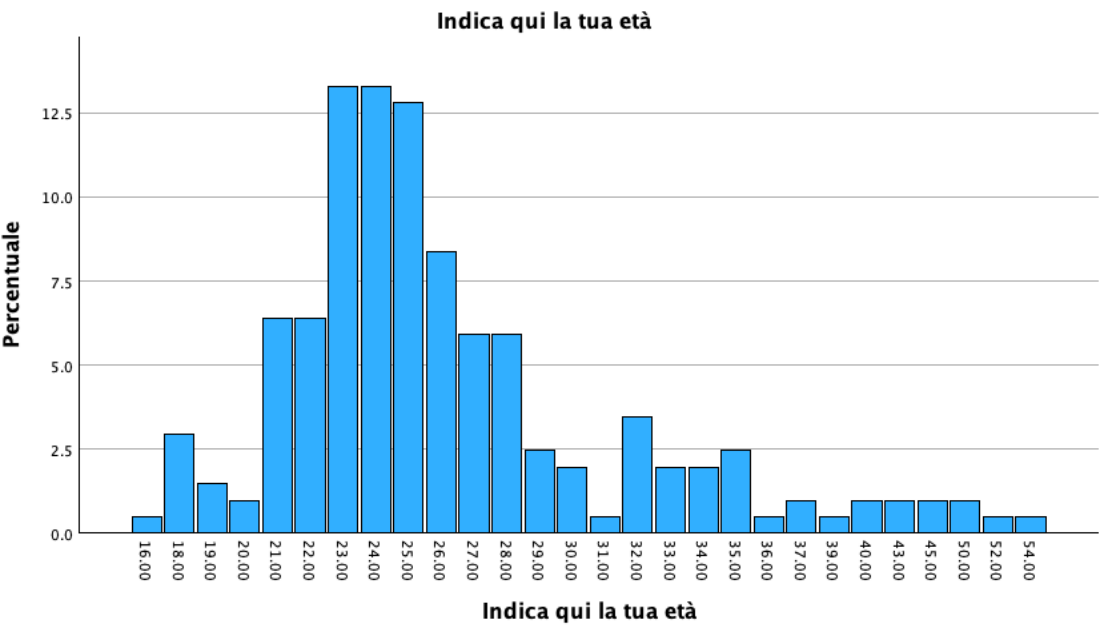
Descriptive statistics: Age

Statistiche

Indica qui la tua età

N	Valido	203
	Mancante	0
Media		26.4778
Mediana		25.0000
Modalità		23.00 ^a
Deviazione std.		6.16789
Varianza		38.043
Intervallo		38.00
Minimo		16.00
Massimo		54.00

a. Esistono più mode.
Viene visualizzato il
valore più piccolo



Factorial analysis: Mediator

Varianza totale spiegata

Componente	Autovalori iniziali			Caricamenti somme dei quadrati di estrazione		
	Totale	% di varianza	% cumulativa	Totale	% di varianza	% cumulativa
1	2.795	93.172	93.172	2.795	93.172	93.172
2	.112	3.736	96.908			
3	.093	3.092	100.000			

Metodo di estrazione: Analisi dei componenti principali.

Comunalità

	Iniziale	Estrazione
Indicare su una scala da 1 (completamente in disaccordo) a 7 (completamente d'accordo) in quale misura sei d'accordo o in disaccordo con le seguenti affermazioni. – Mentre guardavo lo spot, mi sono sentito come se gli eventi in esso contenuti stessero accadendo a me.	1.000	.934
Indicare su una scala da 1 (completamente in disaccordo) a 7 (completamente d'accordo) in quale misura sei d'accordo o in disaccordo con le seguenti affermazioni. – Mentre guardavo lo spot, ho provato molti degli stessi sentimenti che i personaggi hanno rappresentato.	1.000	.936
Indicare su una scala da 1 (completamente in disaccordo) a 7 (completamente d'accordo) in quale misura sei d'accordo o in disaccordo con le seguenti affermazioni. – Guardando lo spot, mi sono sentito come se i sentimenti dei personaggi fossero i miei.	1.000	.925
Metodo di estrazione: Analisi dei componenti principali.		
Indicare su una scala da 1 (completamente in disaccordo) a 7 (completamente d'accordo) in quale misura sei d'accordo o in disaccordo con le seguenti affermazioni. – Mentre guardavo lo spot, ho provato molti degli stessi sentimenti che i personaggi hanno rappresentato.		.967
Indicare su una scala da 1 (completamente in disaccordo) a 7 (completamente d'accordo) in quale misura sei d'accordo o in disaccordo con le seguenti affermazioni. – Guardando lo spot, mi sono sentito come se i sentimenti dei personaggi fossero i miei.		.962

Metodo di estrazione: Analisi dei componenti principali.

a. 1 componenti estratti.

Test di KMO e Bartlett

Misura di Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin di adeguatezza del campionamento.		.781
Test della sfericità di Bartlett	Appross. Chi-quadrato	708.285
	gl	3
	Sign.	<.001

Reliability test: Mediator

Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	Alpha di Cronbach basata su elementi standardizzati	N. di elementi
.963	.963	3

Factorial analysis: Dependent variable

Varianza totale spiegata

Componente	Totale	Autovalori iniziali		Caricamenti somme dei quadrati di estrazione		
		% di varianza	% cumulativa	Totale	% di varianza	% cumulativa
1	2.707	90.222	90.222	2.707	90.222	90.222
2	.153	5.103	95.325			
3	.140	4.675	100.000			

Metodo di estrazione: Analisi dei componenti principali.

Comunalità

	Iniziale	Estrazione
Indicare su una scala da 1 (completamente in disaccordo) a 7 (completamente d'accordo) in quale misura sei d'accordo o in disaccordo con le seguenti affermazioni. – Ricordo molto del messaggio pubblicitario.	1.000	.905
Indicare su una scala da 1 (completamente in disaccordo) a 7 (completamente d'accordo) in quale misura sei d'accordo o in disaccordo con le seguenti affermazioni. – Le affermazioni contenute nello spot erano memorabili.	1.000	.903
Indicare su una scala da 1 (completamente in disaccordo) a 7 (completamente d'accordo) in quale misura sei d'accordo o in disaccordo con le seguenti affermazioni. – Il messaggio pubblicitario era facile da imparare e da ricordare.	1.000	.898

Metodo di estrazione: Analisi dei componenti principali.

Matrice dei componenti^a

	Componente 1
Indicare su una scala da 1 (completamente in disaccordo) a 7 (completamente d'accordo) in quale misura sei d'accordo o in disaccordo con le seguenti affermazioni. – Ricordo molto del messaggio pubblicitario.	.952
Indicare su una scala da 1 (completamente in disaccordo) a 7 (completamente d'accordo) in quale misura sei d'accordo o in disaccordo con le seguenti affermazioni. – Le affermazioni contenute nello spot erano memorabili.	.950
Indicare su una scala da 1 (completamente in disaccordo) a 7 (completamente d'accordo) in quale misura sei d'accordo o in disaccordo con le seguenti affermazioni. – Il messaggio pubblicitario era facile da imparare e da ricordare.	.948

Metodo di estrazione: Analisi dei componenti principali.

a. 1 componenti estratti.

Test di KMO e Bartlett

Misura di Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin di adeguatezza del campionamento.		.774
Test della sfericità di Bartlett	Appross. Chi-quadrato	569.546
	gl	3
	Sign.	<.001

Reliability test: Dependent variable

Statistiche di affidabilità

Alpha di Cronbach	Alpha di Cronbach basata su elementi standardizzati	N. di elementi
.945	.946	3

One-Way ANOVA

Descrittive								
DV	N	Medio	Deviazione std.	Errore std.	95% di intervallo di confidenza per la media		Minimo	Massimo
					Limite inferiore	Limite superiore		
.00	99	2.7542	1.38635	.13933	2.4777	3.0307	1.00	6.67
1.00	104	5.7692	.85279	.08362	5.6034	5.9351	2.67	7.00
Totale	203	4.2989	1.89360	.13290	4.0368	4.5609	1.00	7.00

ANOVA					
DV	Somma dei quadrati	df	Media quadratica	F	Sig.
Tra gruppi	461.056	1	461.056	352.020	<.001
Entro i gruppi	263.258	201	1.310		
Totale	724.314	202			

Regression analysis: Model 4