

Sensory Narratives and Silent Interaction: A Case Study of ASMR Viewership in Advertising among the Youth of Kakkanad

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Abstract

ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) based advertising, employs sensory triggers such as whispering, tapping, and product handling to engage audiences. This study investigates the impact of ASMR-focused advertisements on the purchasing behaviour and decision-making of young consumers in Kakkanad.

A quantitative research design will use a structured questionnaire to collect primary data. On awareness of ASMR content, media consumption habits, and attitudes toward ASMR features in advertising. Data will be analysed using percentage techniques and presented graphically. Participants are expected to recognise ASMR content and encounter it frequently on platforms like Instagram and YouTube. Perceiving such advertisements as less aggressive and more enjoyable than traditional ads. With sensory elements like tapping and product-handling sounds holding particular appeal.

The study will also examine whether advertising enhances emotional engagement perceived authenticity and trustworthiness and whether this translates into greater brand awareness, reduced ad avoidance, and stronger purchase intent.

Keywords: ASMR, sensory marketing, silent interaction, purchase intention, consumer behaviour

1. Introduction

Advertising has continuously evolved in response to changes in technology, media, culture, and consumer behaviour.

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Traditionally, advertising relied mainly on print, radio, and television, where advertisers had greater control over the message, and audiences had limited options for avoiding advertisements. The emergence of smartphones, social media platforms, YouTube, and short-form video content has made audiences more active and selective in their media consumption. Today, viewers can easily skip, scroll past, mute, or ignore advertisements that do not capture their attention. As a result, advertisers face increasing challenges such as advertising avoidance, ad fatigue, and declining attention towards conventional promotional content. This has created a need for advertising approaches that are more engaging, relevant, immersive, and less intrusive.

Social media platforms have further increased the importance of short, visually attractive, and emotionally engaging content. The use of headphones has also created a more private and intimate media environment, allowing users to experience subtle sounds that may not be effective in traditional advertising environments. Advertisers are increasingly exploring alternative methods to attract audiences without relying solely on loud music, dramatic visuals, celebrities, or direct promotional messages.

One such emerging approach is Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR). ASMR refers to a calming or tingling sensation that some individuals experience in response to specific sensory stimuli such as whispering, tapping, scratching, soft speaking, product-handling sounds, slow movements, and close-up visuals. Although ASMR initially developed mainly as online relaxation and entertainment content, its popularity on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram have attracted the attention of advertisers and brands. ASMR techniques can be incorporated into

advertisements to create a quiet, immersive, and sensory viewing experience.

ASMR-based advertising can be applied to a wide range of products and services. In this way, ASMR advertising moves away from conventional interruption-based communication and focuses more on sensory intimacy and experience. The concept of “silent interaction is therefore important to this study, as communication can take place through subtle sounds, visuals, pacing, and product interaction with limited verbal explanation.

The youth audience is particularly relevant to the study because young people are among the most active users of smartphones, social media, online entertainment, and short-form digital content. Kakkanad, as an important commercial and technology-oriented area of Ernakulam, provides a suitable context for examining these changing patterns of digital media consumption. Therefore, understanding how they respond to ASMR-based advertising can provide insights into the changing relationship between sensory experiences, digital media, and advertising.

This study therefore focuses on the perception, engagement, and motivations of young audiences towards ASMR-based advertising. The study also applies Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which considers audiences as active media users who select content according to their needs and motivations. In the context of ASMR, these motivations may include relaxation, stress relief, entertainment, concentration, curiosity, and sensory enjoyment.

2. Review of Literature

Wens (2021), examined whether ASMR could be used as an effective and innovative advertising technique for promoting products and services. The study focused on the growing problem of information overload and advertisement skipping, particularly in digital and video advertising. Wens explored ASMR as an alternative to conventional advertising approaches, suggesting that sensory and auditory elements could provide a different way of attracting and engaging consumers. The study also compared ASMR-based advertising with traditional advertising to understand whether ASMR could offer a more engaging advertising experience.

The study further investigated the use of ASMR techniques in commercial settings by comparing two advertisements: one incorporating ASMR-related audio elements and another using conventional music. The research mainly focused on the auditory aspects of the advertisements and examined how participants responded to the two different advertising approaches. The objective was to identify the potential advantages of ASMR as an innovative advertising strategy and to understand whether sensory sounds could influence consumers' responses towards advertisements and products (Wens, 2021).

The findings indicated that although there was no statistically significant difference in relaxation levels between the ASMR and traditional advertisements, the ASMR advertisement performed better on several measures of advertising effectiveness. Participants who viewed the ASMR advertisement showed more positive attitudes towards the advertisement and the product and reported higher purchase intentions. They also perceived the advertised food products as more delicious, better tasting, and more refreshing. The study additionally found higher levels of mental and sensory imagery

among viewers of the ASMR advertisement, suggesting that ASMR-based advertising may enhance advertising effectiveness by encouraging consumers to imagine and experience the product through sensory cues (Wens, 2021).

3. Research Methodology

The study was conducted among youth residing in Kakkanad. For the purpose of the research, the youth of Kakkanad are defined as individuals between 18 and 35 years of age who actively consume digital media and are exposed to online advertising. The field of study is therefore localised to Kakkanad, while the subject matter relates to the broader development of sensory advertising in digital media.

The study was conducted from December 2025 to April 2026, covering a period of five months. A sample of 120 respondents was selected. The methodology section identifies simple random sampling as the sampling method, while the limitations section also acknowledges the practical limitations associated with sample representativeness. The study uses both primary and secondary sources of data.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contained closed-ended questions, including multiple-choice and Likert-scale items. It was administered online through platforms such as Google Forms. The questionnaire covered demographic characteristics, media consumption, ASMR awareness, ASMR viewing frequency, platforms used to encounter ASMR, recognition of ASMR in advertisements, preferred sensory triggers, perceptions of calming qualities, emotional connection, attention, annoyance, skipping behaviour, authenticity, brand recall, product interest, purchase consideration, and perceptions of ASMR as a future digital marketing trend.

Secondary data were obtained from books, academic journals, research articles, and credible online sources relating to ASMR advertising, consumer behaviour, digital media, and sensory marketing. These sources provided the conceptual and theoretical foundation for interpreting the primary data.

The major operational concepts were defined clearly. ASMR refers to a sensory experience associated with calming or relaxing feelings triggered by soft sounds, whispering, tapping, slow visual movements, and similar stimuli. Sensory marketing refers to marketing strategies that engage consumers' senses in order to influence perceptions, emotions, and behaviour. Silent interaction refers to advertising communication that uses minimal or no verbal messaging and instead communicates through sensory cues, visuals, and subtle sounds. Purchase intention refers to the likelihood or willingness of a consumer to consider purchasing a product after exposure to an advertisement. Consumer behaviour refers to responses involving engagement, advertising avoidance, product interest, and purchase-related decisions.

4. Hypothesis of the Study

H0: ASMR-based advertising has no significant influence on consumer behaviour or purchase intention among the youth of Kakkanad.

H1: ASMR-based advertising, through sensory marketing and silent interaction, has a significant positive influence on consumer behaviour and purchase intention among the youth of Kakkanad.

5. Results and Discussions

The study surveyed 120 participants, predominantly aged 18–22 (48.3%), with a majority female (62.5%) and postgraduate (55.8%) composition. Smartphones dominated content

consumption (86.7%), reinforcing the study's focus on mobile-based sensory advertising.

Awareness of ASMR was high (94.2%), though regular engagement varied — 43.3% watched occasionally, 25% daily. Instagram (51.7%) and YouTube (44.2%) were the primary platforms of exposure, underscoring the centrality of short-form visual media in ASMR distribution. A large majority (77.5%) had already noticed ASMR techniques within advertisements, indicating that sensory advertising has entered mainstream awareness among this demographic.

Among sensory triggers, product-handling sounds were most preferred (34.2%), followed by tapping (24.2%) and whispering (22.5%), suggesting that sounds tied to tangible product interaction resonate more than purely vocal or visual cues.

Perceptions of ASMR advertising were consistently favourable. Respondents found such advertisements calming (68.3% agreement), emotionally engaging (62.7%), and effective at sustaining attention despite minimal dialogue (68.3%) — supporting the study's premise that reduced verbal content need not weaken communicative effectiveness. Quiet, minimal-dialogue advertisements were also perceived as less intrusive (66.7%), while conventional digital advertisements were frequently skipped (77.5%), confirming the ad-avoidance behaviour central to the study's rationale.

ASMR elements appeared to counter this avoidance: 66.6% reported being less likely to skip advertisements containing ASMR sound cues. Respondents further associated ASMR advertising with greater authenticity (63.3%), improved brand recall (65%), heightened product interest (67.5%), and a positive, if more tentative, inclination toward purchase consideration (56.7% agreement, with a notable 25.4% remaining neutral).

Collectively, these findings indicate that ASMR-based advertising engages youth audiences more effectively than conventional formats across attention, emotional connection, and recall, while its influence on purchase intent remains comparatively modest — suggesting sensory advertising builds engagement and brand salience more reliably than it drives immediate conversion.

8. Conclusion

The research was undertaken in the context of increasing advertising clutter, changing audience behaviour, mobile-first media consumption, and the growing need for less intrusive forms of communication. The central concern was whether sensory elements such as whispering, tapping, product-handling sounds, close-up visuals, and minimal dialogue could create stronger audience engagement and influence consumer responses.

The study demonstrates that ASMR is already familiar to a large proportion of the respondents. With 94.2% reporting awareness of ASMR content, the phenomenon has clearly moved beyond a small online subculture for this sample. Instagram and YouTube are the major platforms through which respondents encounter ASMR, reflecting the importance of social media in shaping contemporary sensory media practices. The dominance of smartphones, used by 86.7% of respondents, further confirms that ASMR advertising is closely connected with mobile and personalised media consumption.

One of the most important findings is that respondents perceive ASMR advertisements as calmer and less intrusive than traditional advertising. In a digital environment where audiences frequently skip advertisements, the ability to communicate without creating irritation is significant. The results show that quiet and minimal-dialogue advertisements

are often perceived as less annoying, while sound-focused formats can maintain attention. This suggests that ASMR may offer an alternative to the loud, interruption-based model that has historically dominated advertising.

The study also demonstrates the importance of specific sensory triggers. Product-handling sounds were the most preferred element, followed by tapping and whispering. This indicates that the physical characteristics of a product can become part of the advertising message through sound. Instead of simply describing a product, advertisers can allow viewers to hear aspects of its use, packaging, texture, or interaction. This approach can make the product experience more immediate and memorable.

Emotional connection is another significant outcome. A substantial proportion of respondents reported a deeper emotional connection to ASMR-based advertisements. The intimate nature of whispering, close-up visuals, and slow movements can create a sense of personal attention. This connects with the study's concept of silent interaction, in which communication occurs without extensive verbal explanation. The viewer is invited to experience the advertisement rather than merely receive a sales message.

The findings concerning authenticity are also important. Many respondents perceived ASMR advertisements as more natural and genuine than standard advertisements. Minimalist production, realistic product interaction, and sensory details may reduce the distance between the advertisement and the viewer. However, authenticity depends on execution. If ASMR is used only as a superficial trend or becomes overly artificial, the intended effect may be weakened.

The research further indicates that ASMR can support advertising attention and reduce ad-skipping. More than half of the respondents agreed that ASMR elements make them less

likely to skip advertisements, while traditional digital advertisements were frequently skipped as soon as the option became available. This finding is particularly relevant in the context of short-form digital media, where viewers can move away from content immediately.

Brand recall and product interest also show positive results. Many respondents reported that ASMR techniques make brand names easier to remember and increase interest in products presented in advertisements. This supports the idea that sensory information can make an advertisement more distinctive. When a product is associated with a particular sound, texture, rhythm, or visual experience, the advertisement may become easier to recognise and recall.

Purchase consideration shows a positive tendency as well. More than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would consider purchasing a product after watching an ASMR advertisement. This suggests that the effect of sensory advertising may extend beyond attention and emotional response into consumer decision-making. Nevertheless, the relatively large neutral group indicates that ASMR alone does not determine purchase behaviour. Product quality, price, brand reputation, individual preference, and other factors remain relevant.

The findings therefore support the alternative hypothesis that ASMR-based advertising has a positive influence on consumer behaviour and purchase intention among the youth of Kakkanad. The study concludes that ASMR can be considered an effective sensory advertising technique within the population examined. It should not, however, be treated as a universal replacement for traditional advertising. Its effectiveness depends on audience sensitivity, product category, platform, creative execution, and the appropriateness of the sensory triggers.

Several recommendations emerge from the findings. First, advertisers should design ASMR advertisements to remain non-disruptive. Low-volume sound, controlled pacing, limited dialogue, and carefully selected sensory cues should be preferred over excessive noise or aggressive promotional messaging. The objective should be to create a calming and immersive environment rather than simply making the advertisement quieter.

Second, advertisers should experiment with different ASMR triggers according to the target audience and product category. The study shows that product-handling sounds, tapping,

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