Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR): Psychological Distance Underpins a Gentler Approach to Advertising

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Abstract:

The traditional hard sell is criticised for its impact on consumers' psychological well-being. Coercing, manipulating and guilt-tripping consumers through advertising messages negatively impacts mental health and should be avoided in ethical marketing. Other tactics are possible. Advertising that promotes consumer well-being and encourages feelings of relaxation, pleasure, and intimacy can yield the same brand outcomes. This paper examines ASMR advertising as a technique for inducing hedonic well-being and concludes that this soft-sell tactic can also elicit positive brand outcomes. However, ASMR advertising must be targeted at the right audience. Across two experiments, we find that ASMR creates a psychological closeness that, when interpreted as intimate, leads to increased brand warmth and positive brand attitudes. However, when deemed intrusive, the opposite effect occurs. This interpretation arises from one's preference for ASMR. Those who like ASMR interpret it as intimate. Those who dislike ASMR interpret it as intrusive.

Keywords: ASMR Advertising, Psychological Distance, Intimacy, Brand Warmth, Brand Attitude.