

1 Reactions

Reading

1 Read the article about ASMR. Choose the best subtitle for the article.

- 1 How to make successful ASMR videos.
- 2 Why do companies love ASMR?
- 3 Understanding why ASMR is so popular.

2 Read the article again. Tick (✓) the options that are true according to the article. There may be more than one.

- 1 Topics of ASMR videos can be:
 - a everyday activities that are presented in an unusual way.
 - b artistic activities that people do in silence.
 - c instruction videos on how to learn a particular skill.
 - d films of unusual and exciting challenges that experts have completed.
- 2 While watching the videos, viewers describe:
 - a a sense of calm.
 - b feeling unpleasant physical sensations.
 - c having positive feelings.
 - d some pain in their head or back.
- 3 A study showed that ASMR reactions:
 - a are not based on fact.
 - b are not seen in everyone.
 - c can't be influenced by the viewer.
 - d do not have the same causes for everyone.
- 4 The effects of ASMR:
 - a are better than some other relaxation activities.
 - b are neither beneficial nor harmful.
 - c are seen in people's bodies as well as their minds.
 - d can be measured in the human body.
- 5 Before 2014:
 - a people watched private ASMR channels on social media.
 - b the only place to see ASMR was in TV adverts.
 - c there were no ASMR artists on YouTube.
 - d very few people knew they had ASMR.

3 Match the beginnings of the sentences (1–6) with the endings (a–f).

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| 1 You might discover ASMR accidentally because of | a companies started to make ASMR adverts. |
| 2 ASMR artists often whisper, since | b people show consistent responses to ASMR videos. |
| 3 Scientists think that the sensory reactions are real, because | c some people find it annoying. |
| 4 ASMR is effective because of | d the way it affects heart rates. |
| 5 Due to the popularity of ASMR, | e the way YouTube works. |
| 6 ASMR can produce strong reactions. That's why | f this makes their viewers feel relaxed. |

4 Read the sentences from different research studies. Do they suggest the evidence is strong (S) or weak (W)?

- 1 The most common cause of ASMR seems to be a very quiet voice. _____
- 2 Research into the physical effects of yoga shows clear benefits in the areas of blood pressure and heart disease. _____
- 3 Noise pollution is likely to increase anxiety in some groups of people. _____
- 4 Loud music may affect men and women differently. _____
- 5 Physical exercise has been consistently shown to improve sleep. _____
- 6 Listening to music while you work might help you concentrate. _____

How does it make you feel?



1 If you have ever watched videos on YouTube, then you're probably familiar with the videos that come up as suggestions for you to watch next, some of which have strange titles like 'soap cutting' or 'oil painting with commentary'. Click on these videos and you enter a whole new world – the world of ASMR.

ASMR stands for 'autonomous sensory meridian response', and the word *autonomous* means that your reaction, or 'response', is automatic – you don't control it. Here you can find, for example, a thirty-minute video showing hands, a knife and a bar of soap which is slowly cut to nothing – with only the sound of the knife scratching and scraping against the surface of the soap. Or an artist completing a painting and whispering a commentary while she does so. These types of video often have in common someone repeating actions very slowly and very, very quietly.

20 What is the purpose of these videos, many of which have millions of views? According to their viewers, these videos make them feel calm, relaxed and comfortable. And unusually, they also feel physical effects. Some people describe a tingling sensation that starts at the top of their head and goes down their back. Others say they feel like a warm wave is washing over their head.

So what's going on? Dr Nick Davis, of Manchester Metropolitan University, did the first study into ASMR in 2015. He studied the autonomous aspect, that is to say the effects that are independent from the viewer's control. Dr Davis found that the causes of the sensory responses that viewers describe

are different for different people. However, it seems that the most common cause is a voice that speaks in a whisper. As Dr Davis explains, some people don't have any response at all to ASMR videos, but others show a strong reaction every time.

25 An interesting question is whether the feelings of relaxation are due to changes in the body or only in the mind. Scientists at the University of Sheffield looked at what happened to people's heart rates when they watched videos of ASMR and non-ASMR videos. Their results show that people's heart rates lower when they experience ASMR. The scientists reported that the effect of ASMR videos is similar to other stress-reduction techniques, but only in people who are sensitive to ASMR. The research suggests that ASMR may have benefits for our health.

One thing is clear: before around 2014 not many people knew anything about ASMR or even that they were sensitive to it. People discovered it mostly through YouTube and its popularity has grown as there are more and more videos to watch. Some ASMR artists, as they are known, have millions of subscribers on their channels. These days, we can also find the influence of ASMR in popular culture, from pop music to advertising. Snack foods, furniture companies and cosmetics firms have all made adverts that feature whispering and quiet sounds. You might not realize what they are doing, but these adverts seem to be effective. Unless, that is, you are one of the people who finds ASMR makes you feel annoyed, irritated or even stressed!