

***whispers* Are you soothed by ASMR and “oddly satisfying” videos? You’re not alone.**

ADVERTISING EDINBURGH PASSION

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A knife skims across the top layer of a bar of soap, a power hose rips a patio clean leaving a perfect white strip, a solid block of kinetic sand is sliced clean in half.

Are you one of the many people who find so-called oddly satisfying content relieves that certain psychological itch? On the surface much of this content is mundane compared with the instant updates and relentless refreshing of social media- so why are we so drawn in to this type of gratification, and how are brands fitting into the trend?

In the early days of Facebook one of the hallmark behaviours was to *like* pages: not only of music, brands or places but phrases, quotes and ‘relatable things’. It’s one of the many examples of how the platform was used back then which wildly differs to today. Here are a few from the embarrassing catalogue of things I liked over the years:

- *Being confused after waking up from naps*– 291,923 likes
- “*did she get off the plane?!... I got off the plane!*” – 69,946 likes;
- *Hate to be that fella that fell over on the RTE news*– 98,909 (if you’re not familiar, it’s a true classic Irish TV moment:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3vVDUuC0yw>)
- *I leave all my assignments until the last minute then I want to die*– 165,588 likes
- *A nice cup of tea* – 427,880 likes.

With regard to Facebook today, there is one particular page I want to talk about, and it’s called ‘*Things that fit perfectly onto other things*’. It’s listed as a ‘community’ and has 102,636 likes. It’s full of images and videos of objects fitting perfectly together as well as other *oddly satisfying* videos that many find pleasing to watch. It got me thinking about *why* this kind of thing is so satisfying and according to experts, the calming effect we get is due to a number of factors:

- Completion (e.g. watching a bottle fill up with nail polish right to the top)
- Aesthetic symmetry- it’s suggested that this is because our brains find it easy to process,
- The curiosity of seeing something up-close you might not have seen before such as woodworking or cake decorating,
- Repetition- similar to a Zen Buddhist raking sand.

In 2017, Ikea made a 25 minute ASMR video that generated over 2.6 million views. ASMR: Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response: the tingling feeling some people experience when they hear certain sounds. In Ikea’s ad, a woman slowly and carefully made a bed,

taking time to caress the bedsheets while softly narrating a description of each product, drawing attention to the sound of the fibres and the look of each dot in the spotted pillowcase.

ASMR isn't for everyone (many people find it creepy and disturbing) but others can't get enough.

YouTube is full of ASMR – my favourite account (purely for how bizarre it is!) is called SouthernASMRSounds where a woman makes sandwiches, plays with jewellery and even pretends to be a librarian for 30 minutes as she stamps books, types, scans, and whispers to the camera. The channel has over 63 million views so, people enjoy the relaxing and soothing sensory experience of ASMR and brands are tapping into this.

FuzeTea who want people to take some time out of their busy lives and relax have created a spine-tingling ASMR audio ad and in 2018 they even launched an ASMR immersive experience day. The ads are a risk though: ASMR is auditory marmite. There's even a forum on Reddit linking a petition to Spotify to remove the ad, with one user commenting: "Whoever came up with the idea of forcing unpaid Spotify users to listen to 30 seconds of it on a regular basis needs to try and revise for exams while listening to someone speak uncomfortably close to them every time they get through a couple of songs. I've resorted to just muting my laptop and watching the advert run its course in glorious silence, but even that's still annoying me. I swear next time I see a Fuzetea bottle I'm going to buy it just so next time this ad comes on I can drown my headphones in it."

I would even argue that Mrs Hinch Has a kind of *oddly satisfying* pull. Mrs.Hinch is a 28-year-old Essex woman who has become an Instagram phenomenon by showing viewers how she cleans and tidies her home. Her rise in popularity (2.6 million accounts now follow her) has confused many, but it seems to me that people enjoy watching her content for similar reasons to ASMR and *oddly satisfying* videos- it relaxes them to see order restored. Who doesn't love a good before-and-after picture, or seeing a stubborn stain being rubbed off a window?

During these uncertain times, it's no wonder that an increasing number of people are finding

solace in the mundane. So I urge you all to go forth and give into temptation. Feel your anxiety melt away at the sight of a row of DVDs that fit perfectly side-by-side on a shelf. It will wholesomely comfort your brain to watch a video of a newly-wed woman shining her sink until it half blinds you, and self-care really can be about listening to someone slowly glugging iced tea.

SouthernASMRSounds channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpw8ZudbxklOi73pWel6s9A>

IKEA ASMR: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLFaj3Z_tWw

Things that fit perfectly onto other things Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/thignsperfectlyfitting/>

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