

Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) Project Instructions for Professor

ZMET Project: Professor chooses well-known product brand names (think best global brands as ranked by Interbrand) and writes the brand names on slips of paper. Choose one brand name for every two or three students in the class. Mix-up the slips of paper and allow students to choose one. Students will be grouped by brand name chosen for an in-class exercise in a following class session. Each student is told to find five pictures (original photos, internet images, magazine pictures, or other source) that represent his/her thoughts and feelings about the brand. The images are not to have the product itself or the brand name in the picture. Pictures are to be brought to the next class session.

At the beginning of the next class session (or assigned as homework after pictures are collected), show the Harvard Business Review (HBR) interview with Gerald Zaltman explaining The Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET). The video, titled “Understanding Your Customers’ Minds,” can be found on YouTube via the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxoEQ7zeUIA>

After the video is shown and the ZMET technique is discussed, provide class time for students to work in small groups (according to similar brand name chosen) to complete a trial ZMET interview and branding exercise. Student groups should engage in the following:

- Share pictures with one another and take turns telling stories about each of the images, explaining the images in as much detail as possible (Why were the particular images chosen? Do other people, things, or memories come to mind when thinking about the image or brand?).
- Discuss sensory images (sight, scent, sound, taste, touch) that may be expressed within the pictures, or sensory images that come to mind when thinking about the brand.
- List any metaphors or key themes that emerge from the discussion that might be associated with the brand. Does an “uber” metaphor – one overall, dominant metaphor – emerge?
- Choose five to seven of the most meaningful pictures from the group to create a collage. Write a detailed description of each image, its meaning, and any metaphor that may have emerged in group discussion. Explain how marketers may want to use the information gathered to communicate the brand or product more effectively to other consumers.

Professor may ask students to present their findings and suggestions in the form of a short, collaborative paper or as an informal presentation. This exercise provides students with: insight into the ZMET technique, a unique and collaborative small-group experience, and a deeper understanding of consumers’ internal perceptions of brands. This exercise works well with consumer behavior marketing studies, marketing research, or neuromarketing discussion.