

## The impact of zero moment of truth on consumer buying decision: An exploratory research in Turkey

Adnan Veysel Ertemel<sup>1</sup>

Peyvent Peyk<sup>2</sup>

Received Date: 07 / 03 / 2018

Accepted Date: 15 / 05 / 2018

### **Abstract**

*As a result of technological improvements, consumer purchase decision process deviates from its traditional behaviors. Considering the traditional consumer behavior, process of product purchase decision begins with being exposed to a stimulus, to various phases, finally to decision phase. Technological changes enable consumers to have ready access to available rich information about all types of products immediately after being exposed to a stimulus. At this stage, a new concept Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT) plays a crucial role that accompanies more information seeking activity prior to going to the store. In this study, theoretical and existing academic literature investigated with a prior similar research conducted in US and Asia to analyze the results across different demographic segments, and to compare ZMOT against other MOTs.*

**Keywords:** Moment of Truth, Zero Moment of Truth, Purchasing Decision, Impulsive Buying

### **1. Moment of Truth (MOT)**

Moment of Truth (MOT), in marketing, can be described assistances of contact between a consumer and a brand that gives the consumer an opportunity to form an impression about the brand in question. While traditionally considered one point in time, these four marketing moments of truth can occur over time since they involve more interaction.

#### *1.1. First Moment of Truth (FMOT)*

Procter & Gamble in 2005 define this first interaction between customer and product and they saw the critical importance of the seven seconds after a shopper first encounters a store shelf. Hence, they labeled this at the shelf decision moment as the First Moment of Truth (FMOT) (Ellison, 2005). FMOT is the first interaction between product and the visual appearance, packaging, beauty is critical point of determining whether a consumer makes a purchase. The customers see the product and her impression will be first step of buying, so the brands should try to turn shoppers into the customers.

#### *1.2. Second Moment of Truth (SMOT)*

Actual use of the product – or experiencing the brand – is known as the Second Moment of Truth (SMOT). Procter & Gamble CEO, Lafley described the new challenge of brands as winning two moments of truth. The first moment occurs at the store shelf, when a consumer decides whether to buy one brand or another. The second occurs at home, when she uses the brand – and is delighted, or isn't. It is the challenge for shopkeepers to keep these standards at high level. If

<sup>1</sup> Asst. Prof. Dr., İstanbul Commerce University, İstanbul, Turkey, [adnan.ertemel@gmail.com](mailto:adnan.ertemel@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> İstanbul, Turkey, [peyvent@hotmail.com](mailto:peyvent@hotmail.com)

Ertemel, A.V., Peyk,P. (2018). The impact of zero moment of truth on consumer buying decision: An exploratory research in Turkey. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, 4(2), 309-316.

they do not, they may lose the chance of converting a one-time shopper into a repeat customer (Löfgren, 2005)

### 1.3. Third Moment of Truth (TMOT)

Third Moment of Truth (TMOT) can be described as buyers criticism or response towards a brand, item or service i.e. purchaser gets to be brand promoter and gives back by means of verbal exchange or online networking publishing (Ashby & Miles, 2002). At this point, the customer has potentially become a great advertisement and approval. They reflect their emotion, satisfaction, curiosity or even anger by experience of product. The consumer behaves like your walking advertisement tool. If they like or dislike the product that can share on social media, they can write their opinion the forums websites.

### 1.4. Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT)

Nowadays; customers want to search how products improve their lives. According to brands the operations that meeting with these shoppers is called Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT). ZMOT is a crucial new addition to classic three-step process of stimulus, shelf and experience (Lecinski, 2011). Marketers today have faced up a new idea or stage which can be called a new moment between stimulus and shelf in every product category. In recent years, with the advent of smartphones consumers start to learn more about the considered products at the time of stimulus. They start experiencing the products first in digital world. Many consumers use the Internet to collect information on brands and products before making purchases offline (Venkatesan et al. 2007; Teltzrow et al. 2007). Shoppers are check on more information from more sources, before they buy. Digital technologies are changing consumer behavior and enabling the creation of a credible, consumer-led information cycle. Digitally empowered consumers actively search online for brand and market information ahead of making purchase decisions. Those interactions constitute new “Moments of Truth” (MOT) between brands and consumers that are not accounted for before. Consumer behavior is changing in the light of advancing digital capabilities. The importance of online recommendations is more significant as consumers turn to their peers and user generated content (reviews, ratings etc.) — rather than marketers—for brand information. As consumers share their experiences online, this information becomes available to other consumers either through interpersonal connections, searchable results or suggestions. This new phenomenon is called ZMOT, which is the moment consumers are exposed to a stimulus and readily grabs his smartphone, laptop, tablet etc. to seek credible 3rd party information online about what they are looking for. Moments of Truths created following a brand experience produce both positive and negative user generated content, which increasingly are being indexed to appear in search-engine results—and represent an initial moment of truth (ZMOT) for information seeking consumers.

## 2. Research methodology

This research gives insight on alternative ways to solve the issues related with brand switching intention, customer loyalty, and customer complaint management. Also, the results could be compared with the prior researches which were conducted in US (Lecinski, 2011), and Asia (Lecinski & Flint, 2013) to analyze the effects of regional and demographic variables on consumer buying decisions. All details have been discussed below.

Ertemel, A.V., Peyk,P. (2018). The impact of zero moment of truth on consumer buying decision: An exploratory research in Turkey. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, 4(2), 309-316.

### 2.1. Research aim

This research investigates the effects of ZMOT on consumer buying decision in Turkey in the following aspects: examine ZMOT based on the different demographic variables, analyze ZMOT against Stimulus and FMOT in 6 different sectors, and compare ZMOT among with 6 different sectors. Additionally, to investigate whether there is a meaningful relationship between the sources that customers use while purchasing and the demographic characteristics.

### 2.2. Research method & limitations

The research is constrained to consumers living in Turkey who have recently have as of late had a shopping background in the previous 3 months. It is applied to as an exploratory research on 279 surveyors. Questions are obtained from a similar study applied in US (Lecinski, 2011).

### 2.3. Data collection methods

Survey questionnaires was used as an information gathering strategy during this study which are mainly classified as descriptive or analytical surveys where the descriptive survey refers to the survey that is focused on frequency analysis by counting the number of responses attained from the sample group on a particular question within the questionnaire. Survey questionnaire applied in this study is based on web-based and the paper-pencil. The surveyors choose randomly from consumers both Turkish citizens and foreigners who lives in Turkey for studying or working.

### 2.4. Data analysis methods

In the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics are presented with frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation. Analyzes were done with SPSS 22.0 package program.

### 2.5. Data analyzing

The outcomes from survey questionnaire will is analyzed both across different sectors and demographic information as seen below. In addition, responses will help decide the role of demographic factors such as age, gender, level of education and income to define what will be the significant phase among all phases in consumer decision process.

#### 2.5.1. Determination of variables affecting customer group

A chi-square analysis was conducted to investigate if there is a meaningful relationship between customer groups and participants' genders. The results obtained are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Group and gender

Gender		Group			X <sup>2</sup>	p
		Stimulus	FMOT	ZMOT		
Male	n	28	49	60	0.15	0.93
	%	20.4%	35.8%	43.8%		
Female	n	28	54	60		
	%	19.7%	38.0%	42.3%		

A chi-square analysis was conducted to investigate whether there is a meaningful relationship between the age of the participants and the customer groups. The results obtained are summarized in Table 2.

Ertemel, A.V., Peyk,P. (2018). The impact of zero moment of truth on consumer buying decision: An exploratory research in Turkey. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, 4(2), 309-316.

Table 2. Group and age

Age		Group			X <sup>2</sup>	p
		Stimulus	FMOT	ZMOT		
18 - 25	n	6	19	18	24.41	0.01
	%	14.0%	44.2%	41.9%		
26 - 34	n	33	66	69		
	%	19.6%	39.3%	41.1%		
35 - 44	n	17	17	19		
	%	32.1%	32.1%	35.8%		
45 >	n	0	1	14		
	%	0.0%	6.7%	93.3%		

A chi-square analysis was conducted to investigate whether there is a meaningful relationship between customer groups and marital status of the participants. The results obtained are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Group and marital status

Marital Status		Group			X <sup>2</sup>	p
		Stimulus	FMOT	ZMOT		
Single	n	34	63	71	0.10	0.95
	%	20.2%	37.5%	42.3%		
Married	n	22	40	49		
	%	19.8%	36.0%	44.1%		

A chi-square analysis was conducted to investigate whether there is a meaningful relationship between the customer groups and the participants' educational levels. The results obtained are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Group and education level

Education Level		Group			X <sup>2</sup>	p
		Stimulus	FMOT	ZMOT		
High School	n	4	7	17	7.19	0.30
	%	14.3%	25.0%	60.7%		
University	n	26	42	44		
	%	23.2%	37.5%	39.3%		
Master	n	23	50	49		
	%	18.9%	41.0%	40.2%		
PhD	n	3	4	10		
	%	17.6%	23.5%	58.8%		

A chi-square analysis was conducted to investigate whether there is a meaningful relationship between the customer groups and the participants' educational levels and results shown in Table.5.

Ertemel, A.V., Peyk,P. (2018). The impact of zero moment of truth on consumer buying decision: An exploratory research in Turkey. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, 4(2), 309-316.

Table 5. Group and income level

Income Level		Group			X <sup>2</sup>	p
		Stimulus	FMOT	ZMOT		
No income	n	6	14	10	31.14	0.01
	%	20.0%	46.7%	33.3%		
0-2500 TL	n	6	23	20		
	%	12.2%	46.9%	40.8%		
2500-5000 TL	n	23	42	48		
	%	20.4%	37.2%	42.5%		
5000-7500 TL	n	14	20	14		
	%	29.2%	41.7%	29.2%		
7500-10000 TL	n	3	1	21		
	%	12.0%	4.0%	84.0%		
10000 TL+	n	4	3	7		
	%	28.6%	21.4%	50.0%		

A chi-square analysis was conducted to check if there is a meaningful relationship between the customer groups and the occupations of them. The results obtained are summarized in Table 6 shown below.

Table 6. Group and occupation

Income Level		Group			X <sup>2</sup>	p
		Stimulus	FMOT	ZMOT		
Employee	n	0	0	6	34.79	0.01
	%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
Housewife	n	2	5	3		
	%	20.0%	50.0%	30.0%		
Private Sector	n	20	37	41		
	%	20.4%	37.8%	41.8%		
Public Sector	n	16	23	23		
	%	25.8%	37.1%	37.1%		
Retired	n	0	0	6		
	%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%		
Self-employment	n	5	7	9		
	%	23.8%	33.3%	42.9%		
Student	n	3	17	13		
	%	9.1%	51.5%	39.4%		
Unemployed	n	5	8	3		
	%	31.3%	50.0%	18.8%		
Other	n	5	6	16		
	%	18.5%	22.2%	59.3%		

Analysis of variance was used to examine whether the participants' mean resource use in the procurement process differed from the difference in the analysis of Sidak. The purpose of identifying the groups that caused the difference was the analysis of Sidak. The results could be seen in Table 7.

Table 7. Number of source and group in 6 different sectors

Sector	Group	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	p
Automotive	Stimulus	56	4.70	3.00	0.01
	FMOT	103	6.50	3.62	
	ZMOT	120	4.71	2.60	
Baby Care	Stimulus	56	1.70	2.90	0.43
	FMOT	103	2.27	3.18	
	ZMOT	120	1.91	2.56	
Skincare / Cosmetics	Stimulus	56	3.50	2.48	0.03
	FMOT	103	4.40	2.77	
	ZMOT	120	3.78	1.66	
Household	Stimulus	56	2.23	1.46	0.01
	FMOT	103	3.17	2.29	
	ZMOT	120	3.40	2.01	
Books	Stimulus	56	3.20	2.03	0.40
	FMOT	103	3.85	2.70	
	ZMOT	120	3.60	1.95	
Clothing	Stimulus	56	3.14	2.28	0.40
	FMOT	103	3.61	2.92	
	ZMOT	120	3.28	1.68	

### 2.5.2. Hypotheses

In order to define the relationship between procurement process (ZMOT, FMOT and Stimulus) and different demographic variables and sectors, hypotheses below have been set.

Based on the data analysis, the outcomes of these hypothesis could be found as below:

H1: It differs according to the behaviors of the genders of the participants in the procurement process. – Rejected

H2: The marital status of the participants is different according to the attitudes of the participants in the procurement process. – Rejected

H3: It differs according to the behaviors of participants' ages in the purchasing process of participants. – Accepted

H4: It differs according to the attitudes of the participants 'educational level in the Participants' purchasing process. – Rejected

H5: Income levels of participants are different according to the behaviors the participants follow in the procurement process. – Accepted

H6: It differs according to the behaviors of the participants' professions in the Participant's procurement process. – Accepted

H7: The average number of resources the participants spend in the procurement process differs according to the behavior of the participants in the procurement process. – Accepted

### 3. Discussion and findings

In today's communication environment, the shoppers are digging up more information from more sources before they buy. In fact, ZMOT is now just as important as stimulus and FMOT. It could be also seen in the outcomes of the questionnaire that consumers' Internet based research take place, acts as the most determining phase in decision making process. The outcomes of this research start with determining on a macro and industry level how shoppers and consumers make decisions, by understanding three core components: the average length of the decision-making purchase cycle; the sources used to make final decisions and the last purchase time. Based on the results, the dwell time that consumers spend during ZMOT is much longer than the time they will spend at a store shelf. In other words, ZMOT gives the brands a powerful way to truly influence customers before the store moments. We can say that planning in each sector happening a day to 1 years or more before purchase. The role of demographic factors such as age, gender, level of education and income level among all phases in consumer decision process also studied. The research is constrained to consumers living in Turkey who have recently have as of late had a shopping background in the previous 3 months. It is determined that the marital status of the participants was not effective on the customer groups and that the married and single participants exhibited Stimulus, FMOT and ZMOT behaviors at similar rates. Also, it is determined that the gender of the participants did not affect the customer groups and male or female participants exhibited similar behaviors of Stimulus, FMOT, ZMOT behaviors. The age of participants is influential on customer groups. Additionally, it is determined that there was a significant relationship between participants' attitude levels of Stimulus, FMOT, ZMOT according to their profession was found more frequently among workers, employers and retirees and among ZMOT, housewives, unemployed and students.

#### 3.1. Recommendations

It is critical to clearly comprehend what has changed during the technological development and how the Internet and smartphones have streamlined access to data. Beforehand, we would have seen an advert (Stimulus) and afterwards moved specifically to the product or service (FMOT). We would have gone to the shop and would have had to trust the salesperson. Nowadays, we do not need to trust the experts. We can be the experts with conducting our own examination, finding the best price, product or service and then make a well-informed decision. We do not have to accept the price that the salesperson offers us, as we have researched the real price that they will let the item go for, and we certainly do not take the product or service they are pushing, as we know that has a common issue if it has. We – the customers – changed the game. We want better, and we now have the tools / devices to improve our decision while purchasing something. With the support of these tools, the products need to be better, and businesses needs to be transparent. The weak will falter, while the strong will prosper and customers will become ever more intelligent in their purchase research. Marketers have to help the consumers in their quest for information. They have to be there at ZMOT and support users through first, second and third moments to help create new moments of truth for new prospects. This study links this recent phenomenon to already existing literature on the concept that has its roots in suggestive impulse buying. Having discussed the theoretical foundation, a research also is conducted on Turkish consumers to examine the relative importance of the altered phases in decision-making process. It has been discovered that ZMOT phase is significantly important in buying process across all sectors being examined. The research can be extended further with among other sectors. This way,

Ertemel, A. V., Peyk, P. (2018). The impact of zero moment of truth on consumer buying decision: An exploratory research in Turkey. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, 4(2), 309-316.

more insights can be obtained about consumer buying decision process in today's communication environment. As a further research idea, this newly theorized phenomenon can also be studied in relation to brand preference, brand switching intention and behavior, customer loyalty and customer complaint management issues.

## References

- Ashby, M. D., & Miles, S. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Leaders talk leadership: Top executives speak their minds*. Oxford University Press.
- Babbie, E., (2006). *The Practice of Social Research*. 11th Edition. CA: Wadsworth.
- Brown, R., (2009). *Public Relations and the Social Web: How to use social media and web 2.0 in communications*. Kogan Page Publishers. USA
- Ellison N., 2005. In a shift, marketers beef up ad spending inside stores. Wall Street Journal, [online] 21 September 2005, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB112725891535046751> [accessed 2 January 2017].
- Ertemel, A. V. & Basci A., (2015). Effects of zero moment of truth on consumer buying decision, an exploratory research in Turkey. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*. 1 (2), 642-653.
- Lecinski J., (2011). *Winning the zero moment of truth*. Google Inc.
- Lecinski J. & Flint J., (2013). *Winning the zero moment of truth in Asia*. Google Inc.
- Löfgren, M., (2005). Winning at the first and second moments of truth: An exploratory study. *Managing Service Quality*. 15 (1), 109.
- Teltzrow, M., Meyer, B., & Lenz, H. J. (2007). Multi-channel consumer Perceptions I. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 8(1), 18.
- Venkatesan, R., V. Kumar, and N. Ravishanker, (2007). Multichannel shopping: Causes and consequences. *Journal of Marketing*. Vol. 71, No. 2: 114-132