

Winning the Zero Moment of Truth

Google / Shopper Sciences, April 2011 · Macro Study, N = 5,003 shoppers across twelve categories, United States.

In travel, 99% of shoppers said that online research before purchase shaped their decision — the highest share of every category measured. Across all categories the figure was 84%.

What the “zero moment” is

Google gave a name to the stage that sits between seeing an advertisement and arriving at the point of sale: the moment a person opens a search engine, a map, a review site, and forms an opinion before ever contacting the business. The study measured how often that moment decides the outcome — and found it as influential as advertising and the in-person experience combined.

Travel leads every category

The influence of pre-purchase research is not the same everywhere. Groceries sat at 61%, health and beauty at 63%. Travel reached 99% — ahead of automotive (97%), consumer electronics (92%) and banking (91%). Travellers also consulted an unusually wide range of sources before booking. The reason is intuitive: a trip is bought unseen, cannot be returned, and happens once or twice a year.

What this means for a hotel

For a hotel this is close to a rule rather than a tendency. Practically every future guest checks the property online before booking, and what they find there — the profile, the reviews, the answers to complaints — is the single largest input into their decision. A hotel that looks unconvincing at that moment loses the booking before anyone at the property knows it existed.

[Download the full study, published by Google](https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/_qs/documents/673/2011-winning-zmot-ebook_research-studies.pdf) →

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Source: Google / Shopper Sciences, “The Zero Moment of Truth Macro Study”, April 2011, and the accompanying ebook “Winning the Zero Moment of Truth” by Jim Lecinski. This document is a short summary prepared by Elutio; all figures are cited from the original publication, which remains the property of its publisher.