

The Barrier Wasn't the Product. It Was the Meaning.

oticon

ZMET® uncovered the unconscious world holding 80% of consumers back.

THE GAP

People don't avoid hearing aids because of vanity. They avoid them because of who they'd become.

Around 80% of hearing-impaired individuals refused to wear hearing aids, even when their doctors told them to. Oticon, a leading manufacturer of hearing devices, needed to understand why. So they came to us.

THE STRATEGIC PIVOT

The insight pointed to exactly one way forward.

Consumers said they would only adopt a hearing aid that could transform them simultaneously, on two dimensions:

Trapped in my world



Freedom to enter a new world

Flawed



Ideal

The word connecting both movements: **TRANSFORMATION**. That became the strategic foundation for everything Oticon did next.

They redesigned the meaning, not just the product.

Oticon developed the Delta line of hearing devices. Every decision (form, color, name, message) was built from the ZMET® insight outward.

The device was shaped like a delta: the mathematical symbol for transformation. It launched in bold, fashionable colorways, red, leopard print, patterns that invited attention rather than concealing the product. And it was repositioned from being a *hearing aid* to being a *hearing device*, a quiet but decisive move that reframed the category and reduced the stigma of the condition itself.

The campaign line: "Set yourself free."

THE DISCOVERY

What ZMET® (Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique) uncovered wasn't a preference. It was a world. People with hearing loss had built an internal world—safe, controlled, familiar—as a refuge from a hostile outer world where they feared mockery and exposure. A hearing aid didn't feel like a bridge to that world. It felt like a public announcement of everything they were trying to hide.

They weren't just hard of hearing. They were trapped. **The hearing aid, as the industry had always positioned it, was the lock, not the key.**

The Business Impact

40% reduction in cost of acquiring a new user

Best in Innovation

at the International Consumer Electronics Show



"The impact of ZMET has been very large... it has been a cornerstone in the development of our unique and very effective consumer communications strategy."

- Gordon Wilson
VP of Marketing, Oticon

ZALTMAN NOSTO