



Importance Of Zero Moment Of Truth (Zmot) In Customers' Journey: An Empirical Study

Anushree Joshi Faculty, Department of PDP, Graphic Era Hill University, Dehradun
Uttarakhand India.

Abstract

As the world became digital, the concept of shopping also changed with this digitization. The medium for shopping transformed and with this change people came to realize the power of social media, mouth of word and their preferences. The change was so drastic and impactful that it gave rise to different concept in subjects like marketing and consumer behavior. The main area, which emerged as an important part of customers' journey of buying, is Zero moment of truth. As it is proven that digitization greatly influences the buying process of consumer but Zero moment of truth decides whether to buy or not to buy the particular product of the brand. The buying process and purchase decision in this digitized world has completely changes the marketing practices of businesses. The traditional practices of enhancing the packaging and TV commercial have little influence on consumers mind. Now, the businesses use technological approach to advertise and market their product that can make a consumer buy their product.

Keyword: Importance of Zero Moment of Truth, ZMOT in Customers' Journey, Consumer Buying Behavior, Social Media Marketing, Moment of Truth.

Introduction

The Zero moment of truth is a whole process in which the consumer decides to buy a product or not to buy a product. In this whole process the consumer also decides what to buy from the particular brand when there are wide options available. The process starts by recognizing a problem. In is the first step in which the consumer realize the need of a particular product. The second step after this is searching for the information. When a consumer feels the need of the product then he searches for the best information about the product, which brand can fulfill the need, price comparison etc. This process impacts the buying decision of the consumer as in today's digital world single information is available at one click. While searching for the information, the consumer also searches for the best form the available alternatives. The best option decides the buying behavior of consumer. This process includes one more step called Post buying behavior. This step involves feeling like amusement while buying the product, satisfaction level, dissatisfaction, and acceptance. These steps when combined makes Zero moment of truth. In this world of internet ZMOT

holds a very important positions as it is newly introduced concept because today consumer prefer to buy the product before conducting a thorough research. In earlier days only two concepts are popular, FMOT which means First moment of truth and SMOT, Second moment of truth. First moment of truth is when consumer decides while shopping which brand to purchase and SMOT is when consumer realizes that whether the brand has delivered the result as promised (Löfgren, Witell, & Gustafsson, 2008 and Ertemel, Adnan Veysel & Köksal, Gizem, 2017).

Online shopping is the most helpful and practical method of purchasing goods. Aside from the hedonistic and emotional highs, internet shopping allows clients to fulfil any needs. The internet and online purchasing have reduced distances between people and enabled cross-border communication and commerce. The marketing environment cannot be separated from customer purchasing behavior. Consumers have three important roles in a purchase: buyer, user, and payer. The procedures clients take while making purchases of various goods and services in both offline and online markets are described. It can be difficult to comprehend and forecast customer purchase behaviour and decisions when they are made online. The consumer behavior while shopping also shows impulsive buying behavior. Which can is defined as the unplanned move or step taken while shopping. Whenever the consumer enters the mall, or shopping complex, he finds numerous products of brands that appeal him to buy them. When the consumer unintentionally buys the product without having planned then this type of behavior is referred as impulsive buying behavior. The consumer in such behavior does not search of the information about the product. Impulse purchasing describes sudden purchases made without any pre-planning, either to buy a certain product category or to meet a particular need. They outlined how shoppers experience impulsive purchase behaviour, which happens quickly and without much thought (Velusamy, Rangrajan, 2016 and Muruganatham, & Bhakat, 2013).

Literature Review

According to research, the whole set of consumer attitudes, intents, choices, and preferences that are connected to how consumers behave in the marketplace while making purchases of goods or services is referred to as consumer purchasing behavior. The initial step in a consumer's purchase behavior is need awareness. When a customer is aware of an unmet need or want, this occurs. The second step is information search, which gathers data relevant to the topic at hand. The assessment step of the consumer purchase behavior process is when information is assessed in light of the requirements, wants, and preferences of the customer. The decision to acquire or to select an appropriate solution comes next. Last but not the least, post-purchase evaluation lets the buyer determine whether their purchases genuinely fulfill their needs and goals. Zero moment of truth is very important to understand the consumer buying process. In today's world where most of the population prefers to buy the product online and searches for the product and other best alternative available, the whole process

should be understood. ZMOT starts at very point where consumer realizes the need of the product. For the marketing department or head, it becomes important to mention all the necessary information about the product that fulfills the need of the customer. The information about the product will decide the purchasing decision of the customer (Biçer, 2020 and Łysik, Łukasz & Kutera, Robert Machura, Piotr, 2014).).

A person seeks information from a number of sources, such as newspapers and magazines, shows, relatives and close companions, or experts, after recognizing a need for a product, which is the main stage in the purchase process. The next step is the analysis of alternatives, when the individual looks at the features of the same goods from many brands or the benefits he will get from buying the product from one brand over another. The actual purchase of the items takes place in the fourth step, and the post-buy assessment is the last. If a consumer likes a product, there is a strong possibility they'll buy it again or suggest it to someone else. The best way to analyze the product and its other alternatives is searching on internet or other digital medium. As every single information is available on internet maximum people relay on this information to make preferences and choose the best one. The online medium today not just provide the information of the product it also provides various benefits to the customer like price comparison, reviews about the product, answers the questions of the customer if any and also to make him buy the product various brands also offer best deals. It should be noted that the comparison factor is very important in consumer buying process and Zero moment of truth (Panwar, Anand, Ali, Singal, 2019).

According to research, ZMOT is mainly connected with online mediums as if search engines and therefore they have great impact on buying behavior of the consumer. Search engines in today's digital era do hold great importance and hence they are also important in decision making of the consumer. Here, it should be noted that the ZMOT is not only influenced by the search engines. Friends, family members or other person who provide information about the product to the customer are as important as the other online medium. The main approach of ZMOT over here is all these information providers seek for the attention from the consumer. Another importance of ZMOT is it takes place at real time. It is because almost every person is exposed to some digital platform that provides information to the consumer. This real time exposition triggers the stimulus in the consumer. This stimulus sometimes also results in impulsive buying. The reason for this impulsiveness can be the sales promotion techniques which encourages consumer to buy the product. This was more prevalent during the traditional buying practices because consumer mostly relied on television commercials or advertisements by the celebrity. It was easy to manipulate the consumer but the advent of online medium has distrusted this practice at some level. Today's consumer is more aware and rely on electronic word of mouth. The internet environment has the ability to share and retrieve brands experiences (De Los Santos, 2018 and Ertemel, & Başı, 2015).

In research it was found that the consumer buying process involves four types of moments of truth. The first and most important is Zero moment of Truth. It is that moment procedure by which a consumer chooses whether to purchase a thing. When there are several alternatives accessible, the consumer also decides on what to purchase from a certain brand during this entire process. Finding an issue is the first step in the process. This is the initial stage in the consumer's realization of the need for a certain product. After this, the next step is to look for the information. When a customer needs a product, he looks for the best information about it, including price comparison, which brand can meet his needs, and so on. Due to the consumer's easy access to a single piece of information in the modern digital environment, this process influences their purchasing choice. The other type of moment of truth is first moment of truth where consumer comes across the packaging, price and other vital information and this is the exact moment where consumer actually purchases the product. For the marketing person it is very important to keep this moment of truth for the consumer because it will grab the attention of the consumer and generate his willingness to buy the product and ultimately is this very moment, the purchase will happen. The third moment is second moment of truth. After purchasing the product when the consumer uses it, he actually realizes whether the product has satisfied the needs as shown or not. It is very important for the brand to provide the exact information as it will fulfill the need because it will harm the image of the product in other moment of truth. To avoid product misuse, the information on the package must be correct. It must also fit into storage spaces. Businesses must design packages with user-friendly service needs because there are no employees involved in the service consumption process. In other words, the package is meant to bridge the gap between production and consumption. The last moment of truth is Third moment of truth. It is point where the consumer shares his experiences about the product. Customers are influencing one another more and more through developing shared experiences and MOTs. In this digitized world where everyone is connected this moment of truth holds a very important place for the brands to maintain their reputation. Brands are attempting to harness these online consumer networks to spread e-WOM because of knowing the relevance and weight that potential buyers place on these trustworthy peer recommendations. The rise in popularity of social networking sites has encouraged brand participation on these platforms because of the chance for interaction and engagement with customers in social settings. Brands aim to interact with the much larger community of friends-of-customers and convince them to use their products in addition to engaging with their present customers (Singh, Narayan, Mantha, 2018 and Moran, Muzellec, & Nolan, 2014 and Kovvali, 2020).

Methodology

This study is descriptive in nature in which data is obtained from 225 respondents who are frequent buyer. In the above study people from different occupational background have been

covered. A checklist question was used to analyze and interpret the data. In a checklist question respondents choose “Yes” or “No” for all the questions.

Table 1. Importance of Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT) in Customers’ Journey

Sl. No.	Importance of Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT) in Customers’ Journey	Yes	%Yes	No	%No	Total
1	ZMOT influences purchase decision of the consumer	184	81.78	41	18.22	225
2	Consumer searches about the product online before buying	201	89.33	24	10.67	225
3	ZMOT helps brands to identify consumers' need	193	85.78	32	14.22	225
7	Promotional marketing tactic triggers unplanned buying	187	83.11	38	16.89	225
5	Consumer compares one product from other alternatives available before buying	191	84.89	34	15.11	225
6	Electronic word of mouth of mouth influences consumer buying decision	185	82.22	40	17.78	225
7	Consumer likes to review and comment the experience about the product	179	79.56	46	20.44	225
8	Packaging and information provided on the product influences buying decision of consumer	175	77.78	50	22.22	225

Table 1 show that 89.33% respondents agree that Consumer searches about the product online before buying, while 85.78% respondents agree that ZMOT helps brands to identify consumers' need. 84.89% respondents agree that Promotional Consumer compares one product from other alternatives available before buying while 83.11% respondents agree that Promotional marketing tactic triggers unplanned buying. 82.22% respondents agree that electronic word of mouth of mouth influences consumer buying decision while 81.78% respondents agree that ZMOT influences purchase decision of the consumer. 79.56% respondents agree that Consumer likes to review and comment the experience about the product while 77.78% respondents agree that Packaging and information provided on the product influences buying decision of consumer

Conclusion

The above study concludes that the internet has greatly influenced the purchasing behavior of the consumer. The traditional journey of buying a product is completely transformed buy the advent of online platforms. The traditional approach of buying involved television commercials and celebrity advertisement, but this technique of marketing has minimal

influence in the mind of the consumer. As the consumer has realized the potential of online medium and has also become aware about the needs and products that can fulfill the needs. The consumer when realizes the need of the product now searches for the information about the same and about the alternatives available. He compares the prices of the other brands and decides to buy the product that can fulfill his needs. This is called as Zero moment of truth where the consumer is not sure about his purchase. When the consumer comes across the brand the first thing that grabs the attention is packaging of the product. The packaging and the information written on the products makes the customer to buy it. When the customer buys the product, this is called as First moment of truth. When the customer uses the product and finds that whether the product has fulfilled the needs or not, this realization is Second moment of truth. When the customer shares the experiences with others via social media or other online medium it is called as third moment of truth. In this whose journey of buying, the customer mostly relies on social media, search engines or other digital platform that provide information. This process also influences the buying behavior of the consumer because sometime the Zero moment of truth gives stimulus to the consumer for buying the product due to some promotional marketing activity which can result in unplanned and unintentional buying.

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