


Chapter 11

Prospective Students’ ZMOT in ICT–Based International Universities: An Application to a Mexican HEI

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ABSTRACT

The zero moment of truth (ZMOT) is a concept related to marketing that is changing gradually the traditional strategy used to select a product or service offered in the market. This concept has gained popularity among consumers due to the internet, but ZMOT has been barely analyzed during the selection process of prospective students choosing an international HEI (higher education institution). The objective of this chapter is to reflect how the combination of ZMOT, FMOT (first moment of truth), and SMOT (second moment of truth) is a successful strategy for global universities based on digital marketing to attract prospective students. An educational procedure that can be followed by technology-driven international HEIs, and by universities aiming to attract prospective students. In this sense, the authors propose a brand-new concept entitled PSA (potential for student attraction) that they apply to two campuses (Guadalajara and Mexico City) of the Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico.

INTRODUCTION

Rooted in a social perspective, higher education is perceived not only as a process of personal identity but also of the place that will occupy people in society, regardless of their family of origin. Choosing the most appropriate higher education institution (HEI) is a relevant decision affecting social networks

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-6255-9.ch011

(Orellana et al., 2017) and socioeconomic wealth. In fact, the most advanced countries in the world tend to have the most efficient education systems on the planet, as educational efficiency is the degree of transfer and retention of quality information to students, what results in low school dropout rates.

The strengthening of education is given, to a large extent, not only by the amount and quality of knowledge acquired during the learning process, but also by the application of emotional intelligence in the knowledge transmission, as the latter determines the acquisition of competencies by students (Bisquerra, 2005; Cejudo, & López-Delgado, 2017; Wong, Wong, & Peng, 2010). Also, emotional intelligence determines the emotion regulation process (social sharing) (Bucich, & MacCann, 2019). As well as happens with mass customization (Aichner, 2012), prospective students follow a decision-making process based on a sort of multi-channel choice procedure, where they have the possibility of choosing among different HEIs using the integration of offline and online channels. Millennials or Y-Gen and centennials or Z-Gen mainly use digital circuits based on mobile technologies and social networks to decide, where the Zero Moment of Truth (ZMOT), defined as the previous research made on the Internet carried out by future consumers, shoppers, and/or students to gather quality information about the product or service that the individual wants to acquire or enjoy. The ZMOT is complemented with the FMOT (First Moment of Truth), defined when consumers buy the product or service they want, and the SMOT (Second Moment of Truth) determined by the post-service experience. At this respect, Wolny and Charoensuksai (2014) affirm that the combination of ZMOT, webrooming, and showrooming, define how digital-based multi-channel influences across different stages of decision making to determine the journey towards the student election of an HEI.

The intense competitive process between HEI worldwide has transformed the vision of institutions towards their students, who are no longer considered as merely passive, to become end customers who must receive a quality-based educational service with the best price-quality relationship. This change of perspective from being treated as a passive student to become a client is not always well understood in HEIs anchored in the past or located in very isolated regions. This resistance to change leads to the fact that, on many occasions, these HEIs can decay and even disappear.

Because of this process, HEIs are now competing in “glocalized” (think globally, act locally) markets, as students have been transformed into clients, while universities (private and public) are increasingly viewed as firms working in the education industry. The role played by private HEIs is increasingly remarkable, because the competition between them to survive is generating higher levels of educational quality and research in these organizations. Besides, more top excellence HEIs in teaching and research incentives their internationalization. A process that is especially intense in small and medium-sized countries, as Popescu and Helsen (2019) show for the Netherlands. In this nation, and regarding HEI's internationalization, 59 percent have a central-level internationalization plan, 17 percent are developing central-level internationalization policies, 15 percent do not have a separate central-level plan, and only 9 percent are not interested in developing an internationalization plan.

This process of snowballing internationalization is increasingly being complemented with experiential learning. In fact, developing practical knowledge about the industry makes acquainted students with their responsibilities in their profession, and improves students' understanding of industry expectations what benefits experiential learning (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2019). An additional benefit is that HEIs are drivers of socioeconomic change to diminish poverty by creating wealth through education, so achieving higher educational levels is one of the cornerstones to decrease poverty and corruption in emerging countries. Good quality education combined with experiential learning using technology and virtual communication is crucial to insert HEIs in the global educational market, as cross-cultural experiences

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