Robots, AI, and Virtual Influencers, Oh My! The Role of Anthropomorphism and Social Influences on Consumer Response to AI

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Abstract

"In the first presentation (Blame the Bot: Anthropomorphism and Anger in Customer-Chatbot Interactions), Cammy Crolic, Felipe Thomaz, Rhonda Hadi, and Andrew Stephen present four studies, including an analysis of a large real-world dataset from an international telecommunications company and three experiments that show when customers enter into a chatbot-led service interaction in an angry emotional state, chatbot anthropomorphism has a negative effect on customer satisfaction, overall firm evaluation, and subsequent purchase intentions. The effect is driven by expectancy violations of chatbot efficacy. Thus, it is important to consider the chatbot use context, particularly in problematic or complaint-driven customer service interactions. The second talk by Jana Holthöwer and Jenny van Doorn (This robot doesn't judge me: Service robots and the choice of embarrassing products) studies whether the negative feelings towards a robot can be attenuated in situations where the human is the source of social discomfort. In three studies, they show that consumers are more accepting of a robotic service provider when acquiring embarrassing products because they feel less judged by a robot than by a human, particularly when the robot is machine-like rather than anthropomorphic. The third paper (The Rise of Virtual Influencers: Better than Humans?), co-authored by Marina Leban, Antonia Erz, and Michael Haenlein, looks into differences in the effectiveness of human social media influencers versus virtual influencers, thereby advancing recent research on influencer marketing by considering the role of artificial intelligence in this area. More specifically, we measure human and virtual social media influencers in terms of size (micro-, meso- and macro-influencers), type of social media platform (Instagram, TikTok), and source credibility traits (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness). In the final paper, Donna Hoffmann and Tom Novak (Object-Centric Metaphor as a Mechanism for Understanding AI), propose using object-centric metaphors as a way to understand AI they go beyond human-centric interpretations. They argue that anthropomorphism undermines AI's impact on consumers and its larger role in the socio-material world. This is because anthropomorphizing AI's capacities obscures its underlying mechanisms and leads to consumer misunderstandings about its potential and threats. Using object-centric interpretations could render AI more transparent to consumers, lead to better calibrated understandings of AI's capacities, and more enabling experiences."

Keywords:

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