

Does Anthropomorphism in Chatbots Enhance Customers' Willingness to Pay? First Evidence from a Preliminary Study

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Abstract

Customer service chatbots are frequently anthropomorphized to compensate for the lack of interpersonal relations. Confirming Social Response Theory, existing research has shown that humanized agents may enhance customer experience. However, the effect of humanizing chatbots on economic outcomes has not been investigated yet. Drawing on the social psychological concept of warmth and the SERVQUAL model, we hypothesize that a humanized chatbot enhances customers' willingness to pay through perceived service empathy and service satisfaction. We conducted an initial experiment with n=320 participants who have read a conversation between a human and either a social or a technical chatbot. Results indicate that a humanized chatbot enhances service satisfaction through perceived warmth and service empathy thus providing first evidence for our hypothesis. An outlook is given on the follow-up main study to capture customers' willingness to pay, which will be presented at the conference.

Keywords: *service chatbots; willingness to pay; anthropomorphism*

Track: Services Marketing