

Designing Vulnerable Conversational Agents: The Impact of Trembling Vocal Cues on Empathic Concern and Prosocial Behavior

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Cite as:

EFTHYMIU FOTIOS, Hildebrand Christian, Hampton William (2022), Designing Vulnerable Conversational Agents: The Impact of Trembling Vocal Cues on Empathic Concern and Prosocial Behavior. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 51st, (107693)

Paper from the 51st Annual EMAC Conference, Budapest, May 24-27, 2022



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Abstract

The current work examines the effect of trembling vocal cues of a conversational agent on consumer perceptions of empathic concerns and prosocial behavior. The findings show that the trembling voice of the conversational agent increases its perceived psychological vulnerability and the experienced empathic concern of the listeners, which sequentially mediate the effect on consumers' donation behavior in the context of a charity advertising setting. These findings enhance our understanding of interactions between humans and increasingly anthropomorphic conversational agents and provide an opportunity for voice engineers and behavioral researchers to design conversational agents with subtle but distinct psychological attributions.

Keywords: *Conversational agent; psychological vulnerability; empathic concern*

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media