

# Understanding the enhanced social presence of female virtual conversational agents: A stereotype content model perspective

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## **Abstract**

In recent years, companies have increasingly integrated virtual conversational agents (VCAs) to interact with their customers. A significant number of these agents is female. This work aims to investigate the “why” of the prevalent role of female VCAs from a psychological perspective, drawing on social presence theory and the stereotype content model (SCM). To examine the influence of VCA’s gender on social presence (and trust) through warmth (sociability and morality) and competence, two studies were conducted. Both studies show an indirect effect of VCA’s gender (female) on social presence mediated by sociability, but not morality and competence, with consumer gender moderating the effect in Study 2 (verbal cues) but not in Study 1 (visual cues). Consumer context has no effect. This research demonstrates the applicability of the three-dimensional SCM in the context of human-machine communication and provides practical implications for marketers.

**Subject Areas:** *Consumer Behaviour, Consumer Services, Service Marketing*

**Track:** Service Marketing & Service Innovation