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Razumevanje poverenja potrošača u marketing zasnovan na veštačkoj inteligenciji: Kvalitativna analiza emocionalnih reakcija na chatbotove

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Abstract in Serbian: Veštačka inteligencija je aktivan deo marketinškog sveta i aplikacija, posebno za integraciju i komunikaciju sa kupcima. Veštačka inteligencija, koja doprinosi strategiji personalizovanog marketinga koju naglašava današnji marketinški svet i ubrzava komunikaciju, takođe se javlja kao problem koji utiče na poverenje i lojalnost potrošača i opštu prihvaćenost. Ova studija ispituje emocionalne pristupe i reakcije ljudi na chat podržan veštačkom inteligencijom, dok istovremeno istražuje kako proces komunikacije sa chatbotom utiče na formiranje poverenja. Tri različite emocije su se pojavile u okviru ove teme. Dok su brz odgovor i detekcija chat kutija pokretanih veštačkom inteligencijom povećali zadovoljstvo i poverenje, suviše automatizovani odgovori chat kutija i nedostatak emocija, u kombinaciji sa njihovim monotonim pristupom, stvorili su osećaj frustracije i anksioznosti. Štaviše, pokrenuta su i pitanja bezbednosti baze podataka u vezi sa zaštitom ličnih informacija. Jedna zajednička tačka koju su učesnici pomenuli bila je poverenje i zadovoljstvo koje im je pružila sposobnost chat kutija da reše zadatke bez ljudske intervencije. Međutim, njihova ograničena uslužna ponuda, gde je bila potrebna empatija, potkopala je poverenje i stvorila zabrinutost. Ovo postavlja dilemu da li su chat kutije dobro marketinško komunikacijsko sredstvo ili problem poverenja. Ova studija naglašava važnost poverenja, individualnosti i empatije u razvoju odnosa sa kupcima kroz komunikacijski proces uspostavljen marketinškim alatima pokrenutim veštačkom inteligencijom. Dok se sugerise da se negativni uticaji komunikacijskih alata pokretanih veštačkom inteligencijom mogu ublažiti inkorporiranjem više ljudskih karakteristika, kao što su prirodni jezik i prilagođavanja, takođe se raspravlja o preciznoj ulozi ovih aplikacija u komunikaciji unutar marketinškog sveta.

Ključne reči: poverenje kupaca, veštačka inteligencija, marketing, chatbot, digitalna komunikacija

Understanding Consumer Trust in AI – Enabled Marketing: A Qualitative Analysis of Emotional Reactions to Chatbots

Abstract in English: Artificial intelligence is an active part of marketing world and applications, especially for integrating and communicating with customers. Artificial intelligence, which contributes to the personalization marketing strategy emphasized by today's marketing world and accelerates communication, also appears as a problem that affects consumer trust and loyalty and general acceptance. This study examines people's emotional approaches and reactions to artificial intelligence- supported chat, while also examining how the communication process with Chatbot affects trust formation. Three distinct emotions emerged within this theme. While the rapid response and detection of AI- powered Chat boxes increased the satisfaction and trust, Chat boxes' overly automated responses and lack of emotion, combined with their monotonous approach, created feelings of frustration and anxiety. Furthermore, database security concerns about protecting personal information were also raised. One common point participants mentioned was the trust and satisfaction that Chat boxes' ability to solve tasks without human intervention gave them. However, their limited-service provision, where empathy was required, undermined trust and created concerns. This raises the dilemma of whether chat boxes are good marketing communication tool or a trust problem, this study highlights the importance of trust, individuality, and empathy in developing customer relationships through the communication process established by AI powered marketing tools. While it is suggested that the negative impacts of AI- powered communication tools can be mitigated by incorporating more human-like features, such as a more natural language and adjustments, it also discusses the precise role of these applications in communication within the marketing world.

Keywords: customer trust, artificial intelligence, marketing, chatbot, digital communication

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence is transforming the way companies communicate with their customers by providing them with a more personalized, faster, more effective and measurable form of communication. Chatbots, one of the most widely used AI communication robots, streamline communication between companies and their customers with instant responses, measurable solutions, and automated actions. (Chaturvedi et al., 2023) This also raises questions about the extent to which chatbots respond with human qualities, how empathetic they are, and how their lack of emotionality can leave a lasting impression on customers. While companies are leveraging the rapid communication and measurable support Chatbots offer and incorporating these points into their strategies, they are also seeking answers to these questions for more effective communication, amidst the dilemma of how trust-inspiring Chatbots are. Trust is the most crucial factor in marketing and customer communication. Therefore, understanding how trust can be increased when using AI-powered robots in the ever-changing world of customer communication driven by new technologies, is crucial. This study aims to better understand and grasp users' emotional responses to Chatbots and discuss the dilemma of whether Chatbots foster trust or distrust. (Hu et al., 2021) At this point this study is of a visionary nature designed to inspire future researchers in terms of bringing clarity to individuals' customer experience with Chatbots and emphasizing the positive and negative effects of marketing communication via Chatbots on customers.

2. Literature Review

Interpersonal communication is an essential concept that encompasses the most important characteristics of social interaction and understanding. (Araujo, 2018). From a social cognitive theory perspective, people's past attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors are shaped by and linked to their previous experiences, which lead them to form personal inferences (Ghen & Liu, 2004; Doney & Cannon, 1997). Therefore, individuals' perceptions of chatbots are influenced and interpreted through earlier encounters with similar technologies. (Balakrishnan & Dwivedi, 2021). If communication with AI systems is helpful, practical and trustworthy, people are more likely to use those chatbots frequently and develop positive feelings toward them. The more positive emotions users experience when interacting with chatbots, the more trust and loyalty they are likely to feel toward both AI tool and the company behind it. Such positive experiences also enhance social interactions between humans and AI. Research has shown that users who have pleasant experiences with chatbots are less likely to develop negative feelings toward them and are less inclined to blame them directly in the event of service failures. (Roden et al., 2017) Key areas to explore include the advantages and disadvantages of chatbot-assisted communication, the emotional responses associated with user experiences, areas for improvement, and the main factors shaping the chatbot- trust relationship.

In today's marketing environment, it is evident many brand- such as Coca-Cola, Gucci, Louis Vuitton- actively use chatbots to engage with customers and provide 24/7 service. This constant availability allows users to access company services without interruption and enables faster communication regarding issues and solutions. (Chung et al., 2020) This not only reduces response times, offering customers quicker and more convenient interactions, but also lowers financial costs by reducing the need for human support staff. One study estimated that chatbot usage in the United States could reduce company expenses by up to \$8 billion annually. (Ashfaq et al., 2020) However, this shift has also generated negative reactions among some users, including difficulties in establishing trust, a desire for human support, concerns about data protection, and a perceived lack of empathy. A loss of trust caused by various factors can lead to customer attrition, communication breakdowns, and the abandonment of products or AI tools. (Denecke et al., 2021) Research conducted by Meyer (2020) unmet customer needs significantly increase anxiety and stress, which in turn intensifies distrust toward chatbots. For example, research on automated chatbot phone calls in sales contexts found that chatbot-driven communication was significantly less effective at generating sales compared to human communication. This suggests that users strongly prefer human interaction, especially in purchasing and decision-making situations. To understand this phenomenon, it is important to examine the factors that influence both positive and negative sides of AI- mediated communication. (Luo et al., 2019).

Another study concluded that the use of emojis in chatbot communication can create more positive perception among users. Customers viewed chatbots that respond with emojis as warmer and more empathetic. However, the study also found that when a chatbot uses highly formal language, emojis may seem unnatural or inconsistent with the message. In other words. A chatbot's communication style must align with its language use, and emojis are effective only when they match the tone of the message. (Fadhil et al., 2018) Therefore, understanding how trust can be strengthened when using AI-powered systems in a rapidly evolving field of customer communication is

crucial. This study aims to better understand users' emotional responses to chatbots and to examine whether chatbots foster trust or distrust. (Hu et al., 2021)

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

In this study, qualitative research is conducted to explain how consumers experience and interpret trust in marketing communications established through artificial intelligence-supported Chatbots.

3.2. Data Collection Method

Data was collected through semi- structured, in-depth interviews with participants who had interacted with AI-powered chatbots for service, information retrieval, customer problem solving purposes in the last six months.

Interview topics are listed under the following headings:

- Emotional responses of users during interactions
- Differences between chatbot and human communication
- A look at the situations that increase and decrease trust
- Situations where empathy and warmth increase and decrease in chatbot conversations
- Perceptions and expectations of empathy and warmth in chatbot conversations

Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and consisted of video chats and face-to face conversations.

3.3. Sampling Strategy

A sample was created by selecting 15 participants from different age groups and genders, taking into account different internet usage habits, who had been involved in customer communication via chatbots in the last 6 months.

3.4. Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim as an in-depth question- and- answer session and the analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. This process included rereading the transcripts, assigning responses through coding, developing themes, examining each theme, and explaining the key points of each theme. NVivo was used for coding and theme section. The aim was to determine the emotional responses, communication, and empathy expectations of consumers who interacted with AI- powered chatbots, and to identify and explain their preferences and patterns that were prevalent when building trust.

4. Findings

The conclusion drawn from the qualitative findings is that there are a complex relationship and interaction between trust, emotional perception, and communication preferences and style in artificial intelligence-supported sharing communication.

4.1. The Multidimensional Concept of Trust

Participants identified that trust is influenced both human- centred and technology centred factors. In this context. Participants emphasized the following points regarding developing trust in chatbots

- A transparent discussion is necessary regarding how chatbot work,
- Accuracy and consistency of assessments are important.
- Perceptions can vary from person to person. Manipulation of chatbots will have different effects on everyone. These perceptions which require clarification regarding the manipulation of AI, should be addressed from a technological- technical and human- centered perspective, encompassing both physical, ethical and transparency processes, as stated in the research of Deneke in 2021, and it is directly proportional to how human-centered communication is presented.

4.2. Emotional Disconnections

Many interviews drew a distinction between objective and contextual issues. While chatbots were trusted for simple tasks and reportedly generated a high level of satisfaction, participants reported developing lack of comfort and trust with more subjective and complex questions. This was attributed to the lack of subjective perception of chatbot, its inability to fully capture empathetic human qualities, and its language use. The reactions encountered and expressed in the interviews were particularly related to the inability of chatbots to respond to cognitive and emotional responses. At this point, we see that emotional responses create a feeling of frustration and disappointment which is related to the feeling of being misunderstood and the feeling that the answer is given without any attention.

4.3. Language Styles and Empathetic Approach of Chatbots

While a warm and approachable tone of voice increases trust in AI-enabled marketing, a robotic and cold tone of voice damages the sense of trust, because this gives the participants the feeling that they are not talking to a real person. Participants stated that they felt their expectations were not met, their personal data was not protected and they even felt like they were being defrauded.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Trust is a crucial and often emphasized aspect of human communication, influencing not only the adoption of technological tools but also marketing communication strategies. Just as trust shapes every interaction with technology, it is essential for companies and manufacturers to understand how to strengthen it. Research shows that excessive trust in artificial intelligence-enabled by emerging technologies- can lead to machine dependency. Conversely, undermining trust through various factors can result in customer loss, communication breakdowns, and the abandonment of relevant products or AI tools. The relationship between AI and trust must therefore be considered not only from an ethical perspective but also from a technical one. Trust in AI involves legal and technical dimensions, including transparency of information about AI systems, their performance, and the methods used to evaluate them. AI separates itself from other technological tools through its ability to learn, synthesize diverse information, and generate increasingly autonomous approaches. Trust can be analyzed under the main categories: human centered, context centered and technology centered. These perspectives vary by individual, for example, a person with more adaptable trust tendencies may quickly adopt and easily trust AI-supported tools.

Trust in AI-powered chatbots depends heavily on communication transparency, the quality of responses, and the degree of empathy conveyed. Given the productivity, creativity and speed of AI-based tools- as well as their ability to perceive and address user needs- the question of how individuals approach AI-powered systems has become an important area of study. Research reveals two distinct user orientations: objective and subjective. Users tend to prefer AI-powered robots for conversations that involve objective information or routine tasks- such as making or cancelling reservations, or purchasing flight tickets. However, they express a need for human presence in more personalized or emotionally nuanced interactions, indicating a lack of trust in Chatbots for subjective conversations. From this perspective, offering transparent and accessible information increases trust in AI tools. At the same time, this research shows that the language and approach used by AI can be more manipulative for certain individuals, meaning the issue must be approached from both an objective and subjective standpoint.

Studies examining customer communication through chatbots have found that even when human-like qualities are added, individuals still tend to prefer human-based communication. Chatbot-driven communication was significantly less effective in generating sales than human communication. This suggests that users strongly favor human interaction, especially in purchasing and decision-making processes. To understand this, it is important to examine the factors influencing both positive and negative aspects of AI-mediated communication.

Warmth perception- how close, empathetic, and friendly a company or organization appears- is closely linked to the positive feelings experienced by customers and the trust that follows. Conversely, customers react negatively when their emotional or cognitive needs are not met. This research shows that when customers use technology to communicate with companies, if they feel they are wasting time, that their needs are unmet, or that they are not being understood; such experiences lead to emotions like disappointment and uncertainty, creating negative perceptions of the company and harming the effectiveness of customer communication. Customer needs remained unfulfilled, anxiety and stress increased significantly, which in turn heightened distrust toward chatbots.

Emojis used in chatbot communication can create a more positive perception among users. Customers found chatbots that respond with emojis to be warmer and more empathetic. However, the study also found that when a chatbot uses highly formal language, emojis can appear unnatural and inconsistent with the text. In the other words, a chatbot's communication style must align with its language use, and emojis are effective only when they complement the tone of the message.

Therefore, the results of this study suggest that when determining future marketing communication strategies, the use and adoption of the latest technology, as well as the emotional impact this trend has on customers and companies, and the impact of technologically- enhanced communication on people, should be examined. While it can be argued that the positive effects of AI- enhanced communication can be mitigated by a more natural language approach imbued with more human characteristics, it also emphasizes that providing quick and accurate answers to perceived consumer questions can increase trust and reduce consumer anxiety.

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