

Examining Customer Acceptance of Chatbots in B2B Customer Service: A Factorial Survey

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Abstract : Although chatbots are a widely known and established communication instrument in B2C customer services, B2B industries still hesitate to implement chatbots due to the uncertainty of customer acceptance. While many studies examine the chatbot acceptance of B2C consumers, few studies are focusing on the B2B sector, where the customer is represented by a buying center consisting of several stakeholders. This study investigates the challenges of chatbot acceptance in B2B industries compared to challenges of chatbot acceptance from current B2C literature by interviewing experts from German chatbot vendors. The results show many similarities between the customer requirements of B2B customers and B2C consumers. Still, due to several stakeholders involved in the buying center, the features of the chatbot users are more diverse but obfuscated at the same time. Using a factorial survey, this study further examines the customer acceptance of varying situations of B2B chatbot designs based on the chatbot variables transparency, fault tolerance, complexity of products, value of products, as well as transfer to live chat service employees. The findings show that all variables influence the propensity to use the chatbot. The results contribute to a better understanding of how firms in B2B industries can design chatbots to advance their customer service and enhance customer satisfaction.

Keywords : chatbots, technology acceptance, B2B customer service, customer satisfaction

Conference Title : ICCCM 2023 : International Conference on Customer Communications Management

Conference Location : Budapest, Hungary

Conference Dates : August 17-18, 2023