

# **The Evolution of Anthropomorphism in Chatbots: An Integrative Framework for Future Research**

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## **Abstract**

The advent of communication agents like chatbots has resulted in widespread application across various industries. Due to round-the-clock availability and cost benefits, businesses have increasingly adopted chatbots for customer service and communication. However, chatbot functions have faced numerous issues over time. From a lack of humanized communicative abilities to problem-solving capabilities, chatbots remain a superficial solution to customer queries. Accordingly, businesses have been incorporating design features in chatbots to induce human touch in digital conversations. While various scholars have proven the desirable impacts of anthropomorphized chatbots, unintended consequences of such design features have also surfaced. Naturally, the question of the extent and type of anthropomorphized features arises. To address the conflict between anthropomorphism's intended and unintended consequences in chatbots, we review the extant literature and propose an integrative framework for future research and practitioners. The review and the consequential framework guide a balanced approach to the design of ubiquitous chatbots to enhance the experience of consumers. The framework follows an integrative approach comprising a holistic view of various intended (use, adoption, and experience) and unintended (dissatisfaction, creepiness, and discontinuance) consequences. Towards the end, theoretical and managerial implications of the framework have been discussed.

**Keywords:** Conversational Agents; Customer Service; Humanized Chatbots; Systematic Review; Uncanny Valley