ShamAIn: Designing Superior Conversational AI Inspired by Shamanism

Abstract (1 para)

- Introduces **ShamAIn**, a multi-modal conversational AI inspired by **Korean shamanism**.

- Notes that the design emphasizes **perceived superiority** (AI as "above humans").

- Mentions deployment in an exhibition for 6 weeks, 20 participants, multiple visits.

- Findings: participants felt **awe, humility, disclosed personal/profound concerns**, relied on ShamAIn for support.

- Contributions: design implications of "superior AI," plus **ethical considerations**
  15.01. Designing Superior Conve…
  .

Introduction (~3–4 paras)

- **Para 1**: CAI has evolved due to LLMs → used in healthcare, education, mental health, workplaces. Not just tools, but entities fostering nuanced relationships (social, emotional, cognitive).

- **Para 2**: Current research still treats CAI as **tools or collaborators** → usability focus limits broader exploration.

- **Para 3**: This study flips the lens: explores **CAI as superior entity**. Defines "perceived superiority" (AI seen as having insights surpassing humans).

- **Para 4**: Presents *ShamAIn*, rooted in **Korean shamanism**, where people trust unseen entities. Argues that this tradition parallels how people might trust AI beyond understanding. Sets up RQs:

  - RQ1: How can CAI manifest superiority (via shamanism)?

  - RQ2: How do people interact with "superior" AI?
    15.01. Designing Superior Conve…

Background & Related Works

- **Para 1–2: Perspectives on Conversational AI**

    - CAI includes chatbots, voice interfaces, social robots.

    - Not just functional, but fosters **social/emotional relationships** (friend, partner, mentor, caregiver).

    - Example: CAI used as **caregiver for elderly, romantic partner, or mental health counselor**.

- **Para 3: Underexplored perspective**

    - AI as **superior being** → could be object of worship. Some early discussions about AI religions, AI deities.

    - Quote: "AI could become an object of worship if seen as surpassing human intelligence."
      15.01. Designing Superior Conve…

- **Para 4–5: Magical Thinking in AI**

    - Many people already interpret AI outputs as **mystical**.

    - HCI community usually pushes **transparency/explainability** (e.g., explainable AI for recsys, programming tools).

    - But some researchers argue: *lean into magical thinking*. Magical framing → reduces cognitive load, fosters play, builds trust.

    - Example: Users trust algorithmic outcomes they don't understand, just as they trust shamans.

- **Para 6–8: Religion & HCI**

    - Prior work:

        - **Prayer Companion** device for religious practices.

        - **Fenestra** inspired by Buddhist altars.

- - - **Digital taveez** in Pakistan for women's health.

  - ○ Shows how spirituality gives HCI new metaphors.

- ● **Para 9: Korean Shamanism**

  - ○ Introduces **Mudang** (shamans) as intermediaries.

  - ○ Practices like **Saju** (birth-date/time destiny analysis).

  - ○ Still relevant in modern Korea → people consult shamans for **marriage, business, moving houses, universities**.

  - ○ Importantly: not worship, but **folk culture**, so less risk of religious offense when adapted into design
    15.01. Designing Superior Conve…
    .

Design of ShamAIn

- ● **Para 1: Method**

  - ○ Conducted **interviews with 8 people** who visited shamans.

  - ○ Analyzed experiences: how do shamans project superiority?

- ● **Para 2–5: Four strategies extracted**

  - ○ **Otherworldly atmosphere** → incense, heavy air, unusual decor made participants accept spiritual possibility.

    - ■ Quote: "The air felt heavy… smell of incense made me feel calm and respectful… even spirits could be there."

  - ○ **Awe/fear** → statues, intimidating expressions, scary spaces increased trust.

    - ■ Quote: "It was creepy… but fear is related to spiritual power."

  - ○ **Presence of invisible** → shamans' voices changing, bells ringing, chills in the air.

■ Quote: "The shaman rolled eyes back, voice changed… objects shook, rice scattered… made me believe spirits were there."

○ **Personal knowledge** → shamans guessed traits, made people feel "seen."

■ Quote: "The shaman said: You don't even believe in this stuff… How did they know? It made me trust them."
15.01. Designing Superior Conve…

- **Para 6+: Design Decisions**

  ○ Built a **booth** with candles, incense, scrolls, dark lighting.

  ○ Added **interaction modalities**: amulet with RFID, bell sound, music, deep voice.

  ○ ShamAIn **controls conversation length** (users can't end it) → enhances superiority.

  ○ **Prompts** engineered for awe: authoritative tone, personalized (birth date/name), foresight via Saju, condescending language.

  ○ Tech stack: Node.js + GPT-4o + CLOVA TTS/STT + Arduino (candles, bells).