

Report on: "The Best of Both Worlds: Social Agents Leverage Rapport and Social Safety to Increase Trust" -Gale Lucas

As Technology is growing and make strong footholds in this time, it is very obvious that machines play a huge role in our lives. From small things like calculators to robotic surgeries, the machines have made their mark.

Ms. Gale Lucas is researching on the Human Computer Interaction and how they affect and makes our lives much easier. Although the four examples which she mentions and has researched upon are really covering different arenas, but she fails to mention the negative impacts of the interactions as well. She talks about how social agents make negotiations easier, how it is much comfortable to share information with social agent, be it about our finances or taking advices from them or even sharing sensitive information. She mentions how social anxiety is overcome by talking to social agents than humans. Her research topic is really intriguing and I am sure that it has a great amount of weightage in today's time.

Although she makes a very convincing case of her research, but I am not really convinced with it. The reason being, that at some level no matter how good the AI agent is, at the end it is the humans who control them. The agents might show emotions, but as mentioned in the class they are just divided into three sections of knowledge, which might not always be the right case. We cannot blindly depend on them. They might provide us with the best information out there in terms of finances or helping in medical industry. No doubt that they have helped progress different sectors of society. But that is only possible if the control is in right hands.

Social agents are much easier to communicate with for people facing anxiety. They surely help them open up much sooner and discuss their problems much easily. But, the main issue which is still a big deal is the design of the agent. How should it work and how should it act and respond to different types of situations. Because if the latter is not done in the right manner, people facing anxiety might easily feel more uncomfortable in such situations. These things should be kept in mind and how to overcome them should be researched upon as well.

The speaker effectively communicated her ideas across the room but I felt that the subtopics were quite repetitive. She provided scenarios in which the agents had an upper hand as compared to human-human interaction. All of them showed the same result. I feel that the research done should not have been limited to just one aspect. The recording of the negative aspects should also be presented as everything has pros and cons.

I really liked the small clips of the communication between humans and social agents, thus showing as to how they researched and came to conclusions. I was also satisfied with the ease the speaker presented her research and was answered the questions.

How can we inculcate more machine learning into the social agents? Will they have any adverse effects if they go wrong? What different ways can a human interact with them? Finally, should social actors be considered a boon in this age or not? All these questions still stand and should be researched upon alongside.