

This paper is a randomized field trial involving human and conversational AI agents (CAI) B2B sales process. Overall, I want to give the authors quite a bit of credit for coordinating such a large and complex field trial. The study involves a substantial revenue stream and the paper is generally well written, framed etc.

That being said, I have identified a number of issues with the paper.

Major Issues

Expectations vs Reality in Operationalization

I completely recognize the complexities of executing a study, but there are definitive differences between the current study and referenced ones which examine human-AI collaborations. When viewing the operationalization of AI human collaboration, I was underwhelmed by the sophistication of the treatment. I think it is valuable, but the overall framing of the work needs to rest more directly on individual perceptions of AI and willingness to engage with an AI agent in communications. This aspect of the operationalization are not made clear without a more deep reading of the methods. As a reader during the initial components of the paper I was imagining collaborations between agents and humans.

Such issues are important and some operationalizations work to make the AI agent more human or entity-like (Alexa/Siri). This can be potentially important as a way of understanding how companies should market agents for use in communications channels.

Main Hypotheses

The main hypotheses relate to the relative benefits of a human in eliciting interest from a B2B customer, with trust and signaling as the primary mediating mechanism.

Phrasing of hypotheses. It seems a challenge the way the current hypotheses are phrased. The agency of the actions seems to be on the agent, the human, or the team. However, what is being studied is really the customer perceptions/reactions much more sense after understanding that the work is drawing from the perspective of perceptions of communications messages. Consider changing the agency of the hypothesis such that it is more clear.

Mediating mechanisms and what is being tested. A challenge to me seems that the understanding of this relationship is not nuanced in its understanding of the presentation of the CIA in a technical vs user friendly way. Siri and Alexa each attempt to personify the interface. Companies like <https://x.ai> provide a very human like implementation and in scheduling work very well. It is understandable that a randomized field

However, different design components and mediating mechanisms could be examined via a designed lab experiment. Such multi-method approaches to research provide a great combination with a field experiment. A broader theoretical framework which could link properties of the agent to trusting interactions would be a much richer model. As really what one is measuring is communication perceptions it should be relatively straightforward to test.

Secondary Hypothesis

Again, the secondary model on information sharing made much more sense after understanding that the work is drawing from the perspective of perceptions of communications messages. I would have similar comments that the agency associated with the action should be more clearly linked to the customer than the agent. Individuals I believe would be more likely to share with an agent than other method.

Theoretical Background

Like the previous comments I feel there is a need to potentially consider theoretical backgrounds which may have a stronger link to the perceptions of individuals in an increasing automated and virtual fashion. Sales transitioning from face-2-face, to phone, to email, and to email + agent is a bit more of a continuum such that past work examining this transition could be relevant. While signaling theory provides some foundation, I feel like the work would benefit from a table and/or a figure which attempts to summarize what past and current work has done.

Figure 1

I found figure 1 did not help me to understand the actions being undertaken. I feel like there is more of an opportunity to indicate the messaging process here.

Minor Issues

Motivational Paragraph Writing

The motivational paragraph has some punctuation which is off. Please see sentences: *Particularly consequential is the potential impact of CAI on customer conversion, which refers to the probability of enticing customers to proceed to the next stage in the sales (purchase) funnel (Huang et al. 2019; Lambrecht et al. 2011) and thus, **ultimately on sales: Nowadays**, more than 20% of US adults and more than 80% of Generation Z utilize CAI for conversational purchases (Del Valle 2018). According to industry reports, conversational business-to-business (B2B) sales are particularly promising, and they are expected to grow significantly in the next years (**Salesforce 2020**): **For instance**, information and communication technology (ICT)-mediated B2B sales in the United States are predicted to surpass \$1.8 trillion in 2023 (Forrester 2019), more than triple the expected \$0.57 trillion in ICT-mediated business-to-consumer (B2C) sales for the same year and region (Statista 2020).*

I wish the authors the best.