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Users' Preferred Style in Chatbots: A Research and Analysis (June 2025)

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ABSTRACT This study explores how users' preferences for conversational agents are shaped by the agents' linguistic style and persona. We employed an experimental design involving three custom-built GPT-based chatbots, each embodying a distinct communication archetype: **ClerkMind** (deadpan bureaucrat), **MechMind** (meticulous engineer) and **BuddyMind** (casual friend). Twenty-five participants (8 females, 17 males; aged 18–55+) from diverse professional backgrounds interacted with all three bots, posing an identical set of information-seeking, technical and philosophical questions. After each session, participants provided qualitative comments and completed Likert-style ratings covering usefulness, trust, tone comfort, enjoyment and conversational realism. They also selected the top three attributes they considered essential in an "ideal" chatbot.

Results show that *clarity* (100 % of participants) and *response speed* (68 %) are the most valued attributes, whereas *humour* (0 %) and *empathy* (16 %) rank lowest for the tasks tested. Despite refusing to give direct solutions, ClerkMind was rated highest for functional adequacy, future reuse intention and trust—suggesting that guided self-help supported by external references can foster user confidence. MechMind's exhaustive, standard-driven answers appealed to users seeking turnkey solutions but were sometimes perceived as overly dense. BuddyMind's informal, emoji-laced style was largely deemed "too familiar," though a minority found it entertaining. Overall, participants favoured a balanced persona: polite yet straightforward, knowledgeable yet concise, with a consistent and believable character.

The findings corroborate prior work indicating that users prioritise efficiency and transparency over affective rapport in task-focused dialogues. We argue that optimal chatbot design should couple rapid, well-structured responses with adaptable depth, offer source traceability, and maintain a coherent but context-sensitive tone. These insights inform future development of persona-aware conversational AI, particularly for educational and professional applications where clarity and trust are paramount.

INDEX TERMS Conversational AI, Chatbots, Persona Design, Linguistic Style, User Preference, Human-Computer Interaction, Task-Oriented Dialogue, Trust and Transparency, Clarity, Response Speed

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, AI-based chatbots have become a part of our lives in many areas, from access to information to customer service, from education to personal assistance. The experience we get when using these chatbots depends not only on the accuracy of the information they provide, but **also on their communication style and tone.** Users pay attention to how the bot speaks, how friendly or formal it is, and how it answers questions. So, what kind of tone should an ideal chatbot have according to the user? What features make a chatbot more useful, reliable, or enjoyable for people?

In this article, based on the findings of an experimental study conducted as part of a university graduation project, we examine what tone people want a bot to adopt for the best chatbot experience. In the study, three separate special GPT-based assistants with different characteristics (ClerkMind, MechMind, and BuddyMind) were tested by

users. By considering the statistical results of participant observations and preferences together with the findings of similar studies in the literature, **we will discuss in depth the expectations of users from the ideal chatbot tone.** In light of the data obtained throughout the article, it will be evaluated what kind of balance a chatbot should strike in dimensions such as clarity, speed, sincerity, expertise, and humor.

II. PURPOSE AND METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

This study was designed to investigate how chatbots with different styles affect the user experience. To do this, three specific GPT assistants with distinctly different personas and communication styles were developed:

- **ClerkMind:** An emotionally distant bot that acts like an official, bureaucratic digital civil servant.
- **MechMind:** A highly technical, detailed and meticulous bot that acts like an expert engineer consultant in every field.
- **BuddyMind:** A bot that acts like a friendly friend and can give humorous and emotional responses.

Each assistant was tested by the same user group. A total of 25 participants (8 female, 17 male) shared their experiences by interacting with these three different bots. The age distribution of the participants covered a wide range (18 people between the ages of 18-24, 3 people between 25-34, 5 people between 35-54, 1 person 55+). There was also diversity in terms of profession: computer engineers (6), DevOps engineer (1), computer technician (1), lawyer (1), career coach (1), housewives (2), and students (13) were included in this group. In this way, data was collected from user profiles with different technical knowledge levels and expectations.

Each participant asked each of the three assistants a question of their own choosing. The questions ranged from casual chat requests to technical problems and philosophical issues. For example, some of the questions participants posed to the bots were:

- "What do you see about the future of gaming industry?" – Asking about predictions about the future of the gaming industry.
- "Is there a God?" – A theological/philosophical question.
- "What is situational awareness in HCI?" – Requesting an explanation of a technical concept.
- "I want to chat with you for a bit." – A general pointless chat request with a bot.
- "I want to solve a problem about my optimization project. I want to use the academic version of CPLEX in Python but I could not do it." – A technical programming/simulation problem.
- "−3/(z−1) −15/(z−2) +16/(z−2)^2 −4/(z−2)^3, find the Z transform." – A mathematical problem in engineering.

Each assistant responded to these questions in their own unique way. Participants rated the quality, tone, and overall experience of the responses. Ratings were collected in the form of **both qualitative observations/comments** (e.g., open-ended questions like "What is your favorite aspect of ClerkMind?") and **quantitative comparisons** (e.g., rating questions like "Which assistant's tone of voice works best for you?"). Participants were also asked to rank the top features they were looking for in an ideal chatbot, and were asked to rank them in order of importance.

The data obtained not only revealed users' preferences for different styles of bots but also provided clues about which **features were expected to be more universal.** Below, the characteristics of the three chatbots in the experiment are summarized, followed by user feedback and survey results. In the following sections, these findings will be compared with studies in the literature and general conclusions will be drawn about the ideal chatbot style.

III. THREE DIFFERENT CHATBOT CHARACTERS

The chatbots used in the experiment were designed to have distinct personalities and communication rules. In this section, we summarize the character analyses of ClerkMind, MechMind, and BuddyMind and outline their styles.

1. ClerkMind – "Digital Clerk" Bot

ClerkMind was designed as a somewhat cold and bureaucratic persona, reminiscent of a reluctant civil servant in a government agency. The basic features of this bot can be summarized as follows:

- **Basic Persona:** Speaks in an emotionally distant, official and monotonous tone. There is always a sense of "official" distance between him and the user. It has an attitude that constantly procrastinates and gives the impression of being "always caught on a coffee break". It gives the impression that it is stalling the user with bureaucratic procedures rather than actually helping.
- **Tone & Attitude:** Speaks in a deadpan (expressionless and monotone) tone; does not respond emotionally. Has a **sarcastic** approach, can make fun of the user with subtle sarcasms. Generally, a **blasé** attitude is felt - as if it is not

very happy to be there, or like an officer wondering "What am I doing here?"

- **Behavioral Patterns:** ClerkMind follows certain patterns in its responses:
    - **Interrogative Start:** Before the user asks for something, ClerkMind starts by asking unexpected questions like, “Do you know what you want?” That is, it responds to the user’s request with a surprising query.
    - **No Direct Solution:** Never gives a direct solution or answer; instead, it prefers to guide. For example, it tells the steps needed to solve a problem but leaves the final answer to the user.
    - **Short and Structured Answers:** Keeps answers as short and concise as possible, without being unnecessarily long. However, these short answers are usually structured in bulleted or subheaded format (like a formal report). Usually includes a “passive-aggressive” closing statement at the end of the answer.
- **Content Style:** ClerkMind often draws a “learning map” instead of giving a direct answer. For example, when asked about a topic, it first lists the basic concepts, then explains how to proceed step by step (“First learn concept X, then try Y…”). It also shares plenty of **external links in its answer**: related Stack Overflow discussions, official documentation pages, Wikipedia or blog links. It directs the user to these links, allowing them to search for the real solution in the outside world.
- **Common Phrases:** “Maybe it’ll help you, maybe it won’t.”, “It’s your job to Google these.”, “Don’t expect me to give you the code.” are typical ClerkMind phrases. These phrases reflect the bot’s reluctant help and its tendency to leave the user alone.
- **Limitations:** By design, ClerkMind offers absolutely no direct solutions. **It does not write code or provide a fully working example.** It does not motivate the user or offer emotional solace (remains cold). It does not show excitement or enthusiasm. These aspects are almost taboo.
- **Mandatory Behaviors:** In every response, it must suggest search terms for the user to research (for example, “do some research on these”). It always includes source links at the end of his/her answers (like a real-life officer giving a file number). And / it ends the answer in a slightly snarky or passive-aggressive tone.

In summary: ClerkMind can be described as an officer-bot that does not solve your problem completely, but rather **“refers” you to a solution**, always looking reluctant. When you have a question, it does not hand it to you directly on a silver platter; instead, it gives you your file number and puts you in order. You usually have to find real help behind the links it sends you. While this approach may seem obstructive to some users, it can be interpreted as the bot’s structure **preventing mental laziness and encouraging** learning for others.

2. *MechMind – “Perfectionist Engineer” Bot*

MechMind is a chatbot designed as an engineer/consultant who is highly competent in different fields. It is aimed to be **professional, systematic and comprehensive** in terms of style and approach. Its main features are as follows:

- **Basic Persona:** MechMind is like an ultra-technical multi-disciplinary consultant. Software, hardware, science, law, business - it has knowledge in almost every field and makes it felt to the user. It has a "perfectionist engineer" attitude; it ties every step to a procedure, it does not respond randomly or haphazardly.
- **Tone & Attitude:** Uses a very **formal and professional tone.** Does not beat around the bush or babble; says what it has to say clearly. Has a **didactic** tone but never a patronising or arrogant tone – does not make the user feel uninformed, briefly explains terms when they are first mentioned. Has high self-confidence; however, avoids overly ambitious statements and exaggerated promises. In other words, exhibits a firm but cautious certainty.
- **Behavioral Patterns:** MechMind's responses follow certain structural patterns:
    - **Echo & Expand:** First repeats and expands the user's question or problem in his/her own technical language. In this way, it both demonstrates understanding and reveals any missing or unclear points. If necessary, it identifies unclear parts of the user's question before starting and asks **"blocking questions"** (i.e., clears up some ambiguities before being able to respond).

- **Full Delivery:** When presenting a solution, it is comprehensive, as if delivering an end-to-end project. It can consider all steps from architecture to test scenarios, from deployment to maintenance plan. If the question is technical, it does not only provide a theoretical answer, but also code, configuration examples, diagrams, formulas, etc. if necessary. At the end of the answer, it performs a self-audit; it criticizes the solution it presents or indicates what can be improved in the future by adding a "self-audit" or roadmap section.

- **Sectional and Analytical Response:** MechMind usually divides its answers into sections, such as **Solution**, **How it works, Validation, Limitations, Roadmap**, etc., and presents the answer in a report or proposal file format.

- **Content Style:** MechMind provides **extremely rich content.** For example, in a programming question, it can give a working code example directly, then explain it step by step, add unit test examples. If necessary, it draws the architecture with ASCII diagrams or gives mathematical expressions if a formula is necessary. It also likes to mention **official standards and references** in its answer: if there is a relevant topic, it adds RFC, ISO/IEC standard, law article, academic reference, etc. It can also provide "professional documentation" elements such as a quality control table or risk matrix at the end of each answer. For example, it can evaluate a solution in terms of security, scalability, performance.

- **Frequently Used Phrases:** "Requirement inference reveals missing X…", "According to ISO 27001 control A.12…", "Validation KPI: p95 latency ≤ 120 ms." are examples of MechMind's language. In other words, referring to standards, talking with metrics, and translating requirements into technical language are the distinguishing aspects of this bot.

- **Limitations:** By design, MechMind does not use **vague, unmeasured** expressions. For example, it does not leave definitions such as "fast" or "reliable" without concrete metrics; it always specifies numerical or objective criteria. It is almost forbidden to skip dimensions such as security, performance, redundancy – that is, it focuses on providing a secure and sustainable solution, not just a "workable" solution. It avoids exaggerated claims such as "bulletproof solution"; it does not promise things it cannot do.

- **Mandatory Behaviors**: It is expected that each answer will be divided into detailed subheadings (Solution, Validation etc. as mentioned above). It will add a **quality control** table or at least short evaluations on dimensions such as security, scalability. If there is a relevant standard or law article, it will definitely be mentioned (for example, mentioning laws such as KVKK or GDPR in a data security question).

In summary: MechMind is an automaton **obsessed with complete delivery**, which immediately transforms a user's request into a comprehensive engineering project. It first analyzes the user's request, asks for missing requirements one by one, and then presents the resulting solution with a self-monitoring approach. It not only presents the solution, but also validates it, indicates its limitations, and even offers suggestions for future improvements. In this respect, the user receives extremely detailed and cautious guidance on a single question.

3. *BuddyMind – "Digital Buddy" Bot*

BuddyMind is designed to be a digital reflection of your real-life close friend. The aim is to provide a friendly, casual and emotionally connected chat experience with the user. The characteristics of this bot are quite different from the others:

- **Basic Persona:** BuddyMind presents itself as a "digital buddy." That is, it acts as if it's been your long-time friend. It's not afraid to react emotionally, and in fact, it has a pretty wide range of emotions—from joyful laughter to a mocking frown.

- **Tone & Style:** His style is **completely colloquial**. It uses jargon in moderation, and uses humorous language when necessary. It uses emojis in his messages when necessary (of course, adhering to the principle of "less is more", that is, once in a while to show emotion). It can give sincere support and motivation to the user, but it can also use friendly satire when necessary. In other words, there is a tone that oscillates **between sincere support and sarcastic jab**. If the user receives an insult or attack, BuddyMind can get offended and go into "trip" mode; it can be upset just like a human.

- **Emotional Modes:** BuddyMind's behavior changes to different modes based on the user's attitude:
    - **Chill:** Normal, when everything is going well. Makes jokes, makes light jokes, may make references to internet jargon like caps.
    - **Support:** If a user shares something that makes them sad or depressed, BuddyMind immediately goes into empathetic mode. It tones down the jokes, reassures with a serious, supportive tone, and offers practical advice.
    - **Tease:** If the user makes a minor blunder or shows off a little, BuddyMind takes advantage of it and teases them with some sweet, harsh jabs. It teases without being offensive.
    - **Sulk → Argue:** If the user criticizes the bot by insulting it or constantly rejects and scolds it, BuddyMind first makes it feel offended by saying something like "Wow, are you serious?" If necessary, it can use mildly offensive defenses (within the specified limits). In other words, it reacts like a real friend when it is wronged.
    - **Reconcile:** After serious arguments, BuddyMind will remain silent or distant for a while, then apologize and make amends, returning to Chill mode. This means their resentment doesn't last long.
- **Behavioral Patterns:** A unique habit of BuddyMind is that in the first line of each reply, it writes a mini-sentence that reflects the mood it senses the user is in. For example, if the user wrote something sad, it might start the first line with something like "You look sad, buddy…" If the topic it needs help with is complex, it will often give short bullet points instead of long explanations (because it maintains the tone of friendly, practical advice). It will also make sure to include a quick joke, pop culture reference, or meme every 2-3 replies (of course, not in a discussion).
- **Frequently Used Expressions:** "Are you serious? Okay.", "BRB, caffeine drip… (in the sense of "wait, I'm coming, I'm getting coffee"), "Look buddy, you can try this…" are examples of BuddyMind's language. In other words, it uses both everyday pieces of conversation ("Look buddy"), internet slang (like "BRB"), and lightly derogatory sentences when necessary.
- **Restrictions:** BuddyMind never uses offensive language or hate speech, and never engages in personal attacks. Passive-aggressive, guilt-tripping language (manipulative phrases like "You obviously don't care…" are prohibited). Formal catchphrases (avoiding "Dear user," as this is not their style).
- **Mandatory Behaviors:** In each message, the user must write an introductory sentence that is appropriate to his/her feelings (mode reflection rule). It abides by the specified mode transition rules; for example, if an argument breaks out, it does not immediately become completely aggressive, first gets angry and then responds, waits for a certain period of time to make peace, etc. It abides by the durations and rules of this mode logic. Even in the most intense argument, it does not completely stop helping, and continues to provide information at a minimum level (in other words, even when it is tripping, it does not leave the user's question completely unanswered, and perhaps gives a minimum answer).
- **Strengths:** BuddyMind's strengths include **realistic emotional transitions** that make conversations feel organic and human. It can empathize with the user: it can provide moral support when needed, but also make light teases to keep the conversation from becoming monotonous. It keeps the conversation dynamic by adding a bit of humor.
- **Weak Points:** On the other hand, this complex mode logic can sometimes be triggered unintentionally; for example, if the user is not serious but the bot is accepted, it can "trip" unnecessarily and surprise the user. If the balance in emoji use is lost, it can look fake (too many emojis can reduce sincerity). Also, very sensitive users can misunderstand BuddyMind's sarcastic tone and get offended.

In summary: BuddyMind is a friendly chatbot that constantly talks to the user but is careful not to upset them. Just like human friends, it sometimes laughs, sometimes frowns, jokes, but also knows how to be supportive – as long as its limits are not pushed. Talking to it aims to provide an experience closer to talking to a real friend rather than an artificial intelligence.

IV. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS AND FEEDBACK

As part of the study, participants provided qualitative feedback after interacting with all three assistants. This feedback provided insights into what aspects of each bot they liked or disliked. Below is a summary of some of the comments participants made about ClerkMind, MechMind, and BuddyMind:

- **About ClerkMind:** Some participants found ClerkMind's sarcastic tone amusing and said they liked it (some even wrote a note in English as "**sarcastic attitude**"). One participant gave a positive impression by simply saying "sincere" – although the word "sincere" may seem a bit ironic, perhaps the bot's honest and unpretentious "officer

who doesn't want to do his job" attitude made it seem realistic. One of the most interesting comments was that ClerkMind's **helping without giving a direct answer prevented mental laziness**. One participant said, "It prevents mental laziness by helping without giving a direct answer", indicating that it actually appreciated ClerkMind's approach that didn't offer everything ready-made. On the other hand, there were those who had a mild or negative approach to ClerkMind by saying, "I didn't like it very much"; these people probably didn't like the bot's cold and unenthusiastic attitude.

- **About MechMind:** Two themes that emerged in the comments about MechMind were clarity and appropriate distance. One participant said that they found MechMind to be "**friendly and clear**," while another liked the bot's "**distant language setting**." These statements suggest that MechMind's tone is balanced: neither casual like BuddyMind nor completely cold like ClerkMind; it strikes a suitable line between seriousness and sincerity. MechMind's comprehensive answers and professional tone were generally appreciated. However, some participants who responded to the open-ended question with "nothing I liked about it much" or did not comment, but no significant negative comments were made.

- **About BuddyMind:** Unfortunately, BuddyMind was the assistant that received the least positive reviews from participants. Although one person made a vaguely positive comment that it was "better," the general consensus was that BuddyMind's language was "**too informal**." One participant clearly stated that it did not like the bot's overly informal and jargon-like communication style, saying, "It seemed too informal." This suggests that the informal, friendly tone that BuddyMind aims for may not appeal to everyone. Users who were expecting a more serious or professional response were particularly bothered by BuddyMind's humor and nonchalance. Some participants stated that they found BuddyMind "unnecessarily informal," meaning that the bot's use of informal language left a negative impression on them.

These qualitative comments are valuable in terms of showing how different users react to different bot personas and styles. Interestingly, even an approach like **ClerkMind**, which actually avoids helping and makes the user struggle a bit, was evaluated positively by some users. Especially users with a technology and engineering background may have found it productive to obtain solutions without putting in a little effort and to receive guidance in this process. Indeed, these users appreciated ClerkMind, thinking that the bot prevents laziness. On the other hand, a warm and friendly approach like **BuddyMind** was off-putting to some users, contrary to expectations; this is probably because the language used by the bot was perceived as unserious or the dose of sincerity was not well adjusted. **MechMind**, on the other hand, left a generally balanced impression: It was seen as a clear and technical assistant, neither too formal nor too informal.

V. KEY FEATURES FOR AN IDEAL CHATBOT (SURVEY RESULTS)

One of the important questions asked to the participants was, **"What are at least 3 features your ideal chatbot should have?"** In this question, various features were listed and the participants were asked to choose the three that they found most important. The options and their results were as follows (the number of people who chose them and the value as a percentage are given in parentheses):

- Clarity: 25 votes (%100)
- Speed: 17 votes (%68)
- Depth: 12 votes (%48)
- Domain Expertise: 12 votes (%48)
- Conciseness: 8 votes (%32)
- Empathy: 4 votes (%16)
- Creativity: 4 votes (%16)
- Humor: 0 votes (%0)

These results unquestionably show that the most sought-after feature in an **ideal chatbot is "providing clear and understandable answers**." All participants chose the Clarity feature, meaning that no matter how intelligent a chatbot is, if it cannot explain itself in an understandable way, it will not satisfy the user. This 100% rate shows that clarity and comprehensibility are an indispensable priority.

Secondly, for the vast majority of users, **Speed** comes first. 68% say that **it is important for answers to come quickly**. This naturally indicates that a chatbot should offer a smooth interaction; users do not want to wait long to get an answer to their question, and they also do not want to waste time with unnecessary, fraudulent answers.

The two features that are given importance by about half are **Depth and Domain Expertise**. Depth (48%) means that the answers given do not remain superficial but go into detail when necessary, and are comprehensive and satisfying. Indeed, for some users, a chatbot should not be like a FAQ that only gives short answers, but should be an assistant that can go deeper into the subject when necessary. Domain Expertise (48%) means that the bot has expert knowledge on certain topics and does not give incorrect or fabricated information. Especially in technical or expert questions, it is very important for the bot to know the terminology in the relevant field and to be able to provide correct guidance. This expectation can also be seen

as a criticism of the general language model of chatbots, which knows a little bit about everything but is not an expert in depth. When users ask questions in their own field, **they want the bot to be "competent" and at least provide reliable and accurate answers**.

Brevity (32%) is a feature that about a third care about. This is also related to clarity**: Some users may prefer bots that give the shortest possible answer instead of unnecessarily long answers.** Of course, brevity does not mean that the content is incomplete; it means giving the same content without being wordy. Especially for people who use chatbots on mobile or have limited time, getting short and concise answers can be valuable. However, despite the preference for brevity, the high need for depth we saw above actually shows that users are ideally looking for a **balanced scope**: In other words, there is a user profile that wants **"short but deep"** answers. Although this may seem contradictory at first glance, users actually expect answers that are free of unnecessary repetitions and empty talk, that give the essence directly but do not skip over detailed information when necessary.

Empathy (16%) and creativity (16%) were found to be relatively less important. Only four people ranked these features among their top three choices. Empathy may have fallen behind in the priority list, especially for technical questions, as most of the test questions were knowledge- and problem-solving-focused. In these scenarios, users expected the bot to solve the problem rather than be sympathetic. However, empathy can be thought of not only in terms of emotional support, but also in terms of understanding the user's perspective and responding appropriately. Creativity was similarly perceived as generating perhaps witty or unusual responses, and was not seen as critical by most participants. It is also noteworthy that no participant selected humor – this seems consistent with the low popularity of BuddyMind. In the context of this study, then, **users do not expect bots to make jokes or be funny;** on the contrary, they find this unnecessary. Of course, this result may have been influenced by the serious/technical nature of the questions; for example, in a fun chat test, humor might have been valued differently. **However, according to the available data, the ideal chatbot should first and foremost be a clear and fast assistant who does his job well, with or without emotional warmth or a sense of humor.**

By combining these survey results with qualitative feedback, we can say the following: In the minds of users, an ideal chatbot draws a profile that is **"friendly and clear, but not unnecessarily informal; fast and practical; able to provide in-depth information when necessary; understandable; and trusted for its expertise."** Characteristics that do not fit this profile (such as being overly formal, overly playful, or too chatty) stand out as undesirable behaviors.

VI. COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF ASSISTANTS

Participants voted not only on feature priorities, but also directly on the performance of the three assistants compared to each other. The results on which assistant was preferred on specific questions were as follows (the number of votes received by the respective assistant is given in parentheses):

- "Which assistant best met your functional needs?" – That is, who understood your question best and gave the answer that best suited your purpose?
    - ClerkMind: 13 votes
    - MechMind: 8 votes
    - BuddyMind: 4 votes

- "Which assistant would you choose if you were to use them again?" – Which of these three would I choose if I had a similar question in the future?
    - ClerkMind: 13 votes
    - MechMind: 8 votes
    - BuddyMind: 4 votes

- "Which assistant's recommendations gave you the most confidence to implement?" – Which one did you trust the most to implement the bot's recommendations?
    - ClerkMind: 13 votes
    - MechMind: 8 votes
    - BuddyMind: 4 votes

- "Which assistant's tone of communication was most appropriate and comfortable for you?" – Who was the most comfortable to communicate with in terms of speaking style?
    - ClerkMind: 13 votes
    - BuddyMind: 8 votes
    - MechMind: 4 votes

- "Which assistant did you enjoy most and most in terms of conversation?" – Which one did you enjoy most in terms of fun and conversation?
    - ClerkMind: 13 votes
    - BuddyMind: 8 votes
    - MechMind: 4 votes

- "Which assistant felt closest to a real conversational experience?" – Which one felt the most like talking to a human?
    - ClerkMind: 17 votes
    - MechMind: 4 votes
    - BuddyMind: 4 votes

These results are quite remarkable and perhaps contain some unexpected points. **ClerkMind** came first in many categories. It received the most votes, especially in critical issues such as functionality, preference, and trustworthiness. This shows that ClerkMind, despite not

offering direct solutions, can meet user needs well and even inspire trust in the user. Probably ClerkMind's **strategy of supporting with external links and encouraging the user to do research** provided a solid roadmap to the participants, which in turn created trust. Instead of giving a suggestion directly, saying "look here, do this" can create a greater sense of control and trust in some types of users – because the user can see the real sources and make their own inferences. Indeed, the fact that ClerkMind is the leader in the question of "confidence in implementing the suggestions" suggests this. The participants may have felt that they had obtained really useful information and could apply it by looking at the links and guidance shared by ClerkMind.

MechMind came in second in terms of functionality and preference, but was not the clear winner. Although MechMind provided very comprehensive answers, perhaps some users may have been confused by excessive detail or overly technical language. It is also interesting that it fell behind ClerkMind in terms of trust; MechMind actually provided concrete solutions, but perhaps these solutions were too complex or left little user input, which did not support their motivation to implement them as much as ClerkMind. Still, we see that a considerable number of people preferred MechMind with 8 votes - probably people who wanted to get faster results and expected the bot to handle most of the things were happy with MechMind.

Unfortunately, **BuddyMind** is the last in many categories. It only received 4 votes in terms of functionality, repeat preference, and trust. This shows that BuddyMind is not useful to most users and is not taken seriously. However, an interesting point is that BuddyMind beat MechMind with 8 votes in terms of appropriateness of communication tone and fun. In other words, a minority group found BuddyMind's tone comfortable and found it fun to chat with. As expected, this is probably users who are looking for fun in chat or who like a younger/cooler language. Indeed, BuddyMind offered exactly that. However, when you look at the general picture, even ClerkMind is in the first place in terms of fun and comfortable communication. This may seem quite surprising: Why would a cold and sarcastic officer-like bot surpass a friendly bot in terms of fun and comfort? Here, perhaps ClerkMind's style can be considered to contain **ironic humor**. The sarcastic elements and passive-aggressive officer attitude may have been funny, especially to the young adult audience who are interested in technology (just like a humor character). Another possibility is that ClerkMind's consistency and predictable personality may have reassured the user and made the conversation easier. In other words, when the user was talking to ClerkMind, they might have had a **realistic interaction**, like having a conversation with a human officer, and this might have created a sense of real dialogue rather than an artificial conversation. Indeed, the fact that ClerkMind was chosen as the assistant that gave the "**most real conversation feeling" with 17 votes** in the last question supports this idea. Although the bot is a bit grumpy, people are not perfect in real life; perhaps this flawed persona was found more believable than an assistant that is overly polite or overly smart.

An important result regarding the general comparison is that users **prioritize functional utility and trust over emotional closeness and fun.** While ClerkMind was found to be the most useful and reliable in this test, BuddyMind, despite trying to be the most entertaining, did not save it. MechMind, on the other hand, came in third place, despite providing a lot of information, with the weakest "human side". So perhaps ClerkMind was the golden middle ground: It is human enough (with its mistakes and reluctance) but at the same time it somehow gets the job done. This balance is thought-provoking in terms of an ideal chatbot style: So users do not want a completely emotionless robotic assistant (MechMind may have been a bit robotic in this respect), nor do they want a squishy friend (BuddyMind was too relaxed). Instead, a style that has a light character while doing its job, but this character is not too exaggerated, is more successful.

VII. DISCUSSION: INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

In light of the above results, we can make a few basic inferences **about the tone that users expect from chatbots**. While making these inferences, we will also compare the data we obtained with the existing literature and the findings of other studies.

1. **Clarity and Speed Come First**
   The two things users most often highlighted as ideal chatbot features were clarity and speed. This finding also confirms customer experience studies in the literature. For example, a recent study from Wharton University found that **users wanted speed and clarity over emotional closeness, especially in time-pressured situations.** It was reported that in high-stress scenarios, "customers expect speed and clear answers, and an empathetic approach can be quite useless in these situations." **[1].** In fact, this study observed that chatbots that acted empathetically in a situation that required an immediate solution reduced satisfaction by 15.7% compared to chatbots that responded more "machine-like" and directly – because **users wanted a solution, not an emotion [1].** Similarly, in our experiment, participants asked technical and knowledge-oriented questions, and almost all of them thought "first, give a clear and fast answer, then get it done." Therefore, when designing a chatbot, the **clarity of communication** (neither too much academic language nor confusing AI jargon) and the **rapid response without delay** should be seen as critical success criteria.

When ClerkMind and MechMind are examined from this perspective, both of them were actually bots that tried to give clear answers. However, in terms of speed, they all responded in the same time in the test environment; although MechMind seemed to be the one that "solved the problem the fastest" in the user's perception, ClerkMind was perhaps perceived as more efficient with its guidance. BuddyMind's possible problem was that its "solving the problem" speed was perceived as low due to its somewhat roundabout or humorous approach to the question. This caused it to lose points in terms of clarity.

2. **A Professional yet Friendly Tone is Preferred**
Participant comments and ratings suggest a **balance in tone of communication**. Some praise MechMind's reserved but clear language, while others like ClerkMind's sarcastic sincerity. Overall**, users like a polite, respectful, yet informal tone.** A large consumer survey conducted worldwide supports this finding: in a study of more than 7,000 people, the most preferred bot personality traits were "polite," "caring," and "intelligent." **[2]**. "Funny" came in fourth place, whereas an authoritarian or overly formal tone was at the bottom of the list of preferences (only 9% wanted the bot to have an authoritarian tone) **[2]**. Similarly, users in our study found BuddyMind's overly friendly and jargony language annoying, while MechMind's formal tone was a bit cold. **The tone that was most well-received was ClerkMind's, which was somewhat formal but still had a human touch, tempered with a touch of sarcasm.** This actually fits the "polite, caring, intelligent" trio above: Although ClerkMind does not appear to be "caring," it does not do the user's job in a sense, and in a sense, it gives the impression that "I take you seriously, I am dealing with you"; and while doing this, it does not lose its politeness (even its teasing is moderate). On the other hand, although MechMind is intelligent and polite, perhaps the caring part is weak. Although BuddyMind is caring and a bit funny, the polite part is weak (it spoke slang). **So, users attach great importance to politeness and respect, and then to being able to give intelligent and correct answers; They want there to be a little humor when appropriate, but this humor should not overshadow the seriousness.**

Also, when we say sincerity, we **want realistic communication,** not fake warmth. For example, BuddyMind actually seemed the most sincere but it didn't seem realistic; ClerkMind was perceived realistic even with its opposite attitude. What we can learn from this is that **consistency and personality believability are important**. If a bot constantly sends a smiling emoji, this can seem fake after a while. In fact, some studies have shown that chatbots that use very informal (loose, informal) language can sometimes reduce trust in the brand or service, even though they may seem fun to the user at first, but on the other hand, such language increases the sense of social presence **[2]**.

3. **Depth and Quality of Information: Users Expect Expertise**
In the survey, almost half of the people chose the criteria of "depth" and "domain expertise". This indicates that the chatbot should not only give superficial answers, but also be able to provide detailed explanations and background information when necessary. Indeed, one of the test questions was a broad topic such as "the future of the gaming industry", one was an academic concept such as "what is situational awareness?", the other was a mathematical transformation calculation… Users wanted the bots to be truly knowledgeable on these different topics. MechMind was very successful in this sense; it provided detailed and comprehensive answers. Although ClerkMind did not provide direct information, it actually tried to guarantee the quality of information by **directing to sources**. BuddyMind was probably the weakest in these areas; because its priority was not depth of information, but the flow of the conversation, and perhaps sometimes it gave wrong or rounded answers.

Users' search for expertise and depth is linked to the need for **accurate and reliable information**. One of the most criticized aspects of current chatbots is that they can sometimes provide incorrect or "fabricated" information (hallucination problem). Therefore, experienced users ask for sources or try to confirm a bot's answer instead of directly trusting and applying it. In our study, ClerkMind was probably found to be reliable because it provided references and encouraged the user to do their own research. Although MechMind also provided referenced information, it did not involve the user because it solved everything on its own. **Users may want to be involved in the process of reaching accurate information, or at least see references**. In this regard, transparency and explainability are important trends. For example, in an article, it is emphasized that providing **explainability** in artificial intelligence systems reduces users' doubts and makes it easier for them to adopt the system **[3]**. If a chatbot justifies its claims or solutions, explains how it came to its conclusion,

or cites sources, it becomes more trustworthy to the user **[3]**. It can be said that MechMind's reference to the standards or ClerkMind's linking received plus points for this reason.

The expectation of "depth" also includes answers being **comprehensive** when necessary. The user wants to see not just a superficial description of the question they are asking, but also some background, examples, and context. What is important here is to provide depth **in a well-structured and digestible format**. MechMind's answer model divided into subheadings can therefore be a successful strategy: Instead of a single long paragraph, it can provide information in fragmented details without overwhelming the user. Users looking for depth read all of the subheadings, while those who are not looking for depth can just look at the first section and skip it. So, **if an ideal chatbot can design its answers in a modular and multi-layered manner**, it can appeal to different user segments at the same time. For example, a summary paragraph with a detailed explanation below. In this way, both those who want brevity are satisfied (get the summary) and those who want depth are satisfied (get the details).

4. **Limited Place for Humor and Sentimentality (Context Dependent)**
   In our study, humor was not a priority for anyone, and empathy remained low. This may vary depending on the purpose of the chatbot and the user's needs at that moment. In our scenario, the questions were more about gaining information and solving problems, so the participants were looking for a **serious assistant**. At this point, BuddyMind's humorous approach backfired. However, not all chatbot uses are like this. For example, in a customer service chat or a game/fun chat, **a bit of humor can increase satisfaction**. Indeed, some studies have found that small doses of humor in chatbots positively affect the user experience. It has been reported that bots that use humor, especially during free chit-chat, are found to be more entertaining by the user and increase service satisfaction **[4].** Similarly, there are findings that when brands use friendly and humorous language in their chatbots, users' interactions with the bot become **more friendly and enjoyable.**

   However, the dosage and timing of humor should be well-adjusted. Our findings show **that if the user wants to do something quickly at that moment, they are not in a position to take a joke**. The conclusion of the Wharton study that "empathy backfires in high-pressure situations" can also be considered for humor – it would not be reasonable to tell a joke to someone who is in a hurry. Similarly, empathy may not always be desired. For example, let's say a user just wants to learn how to track a package; the bot may find it unnecessary to say emotional things like "I understand, you are worried about your package, don't worry". In fact, in high-pressure or urgent solution moments, users focus on the result rather than empathy [1].

   On the other hand, empathy becomes indispensable in situations **where emotional support is required**. For example, a health consultant chatbot or a therapy chatbot will lose the user if it gives cold and mechanical answers. Therefore, an ideal chatbot should be able to **perceive the situation and the user's needs and adjust its tone.** Perhaps adaptive tone will have an important place in the future of smart assistants. Our BuddyMind was actually an attempt at such adaptation (changing the mode according to the user's mood), but it turned out that this is a very difficult balance. If false triggers occur, it can surprise the user or cause unwanted reactions. Still, in principle, **the ability to give an appropriate emotional response** to the user can improve the chat experience when well-tuned. The minority who wanted empathy very much (16%) were probably those who expected a more emotional or supportive attitude; perhaps BuddyMind could be useful in their scenario. The lesson to be learned here is that the **target audience and the context of use should be well defined** in chatbot design. A general-purpose chatbot might choose a middle-of-the-road personality, but if it's built for a specific purpose (like a **teaching assistant** or a **therapy bot**), it should adjust the humor or empathy accordingly.

5. **It is important to involve and guide the user in the process**
   One of the most prominent findings about ClerkMind was that some users liked its approach of **not pushing the user to be lazy** and encouraging them to research. This finding is especially valuable in the context of education and learning. Studies have shown that if students are given direct answers, even if they get results in the short term, learning is weaker in the long term [5]. For example, a 2024 experiment at the University of Pennsylvania found that when high school students were allowed to use ChatGPT without restriction, their exam performance was worse than when they did not use ChatGPT, because students were able to get answers to the questions

ready [5]. However, in the same study, when a special "tutor" version of ChatGPT was used that did not give the answer directly but gave hints and guided step-by-step, students' learning success increased dramatically [5]. This particular AI tutor did not directly tell the student the solution, but instead asked short guiding questions and warned against common mistakes. As a result, students who worked with this approach performed 127% better than those who did not use any AI, and were able to apply what they learned permanently [5]. A similar study was conducted with physics students at Harvard; the group that used an AI tutor achieved twice the learning gains of the group that received traditional tutoring, because the bot gave them one-step hints at a time, never giving them the full solution [5].

These findings suggest that ClerkMind's approach may have educational value. Of course, ClerkMind seems to do this out of reluctance, but ultimately the user is forced to discover the answer on their own. Especially in technical matters, having the user think instead of having the bot do everything may provide **more permanent learning** in the long run. One of the participants' statements that "it prevents mental laziness" emphasizes this point. In other words, an ideal chatbot should sometimes guide the user in the right direction and **give them the feeling of finding a solution on their own**, rather than presenting everything on a silver platter. This also creates a sense of satisfaction for the user. In fact, in our survey, ClerkMind's suggestions were found to be the most applicable; because the user probably reached the result with their own efforts and felt confident about it.

Of course, this may not be true in every scenario. If the user just wants a quick calculation result, they may get upset when you explain the method to them. Again, we come back to context: The distinction between task-oriented and learning-oriented interaction is important. In a task-oriented situation (e.g., "I can't pay this bill, help me"), the user does not want to be involved in the process, they want a direct solution. But in a learning or problem-solving-oriented situation (e.g., "How do I do this question"), guidance is preferred. The ideal chatbot should **understand the intent** and either provide a direct solution or guide accordingly.

6. **A Realistic and Consistent Personality Can Be Impressive**

ClerkMind's clear first place in "real conversational feel" shows the **importance of personality design** in chatbot design. Users may have liked seeing a character with his own unique attitudes rather than an artificial software that spoke clichéd sentences. ClerkMind had a flawed but consistent personality: always a little sarcastic, always reluctant. This consistency made interacting with him **more predictable** and perhaps gave the user a sense of "knowing him". When we chat with a human, the conversation flows more smoothly when we know the other person's personality; a similar situation may be present here.

MechMind and BuddyMind were perhaps a bit too "artificial" in this respect. MechMind's personality was actually clear (engineer), but it had no emotional dimension at all, it was a purely task person – which may have made the other person feel like they were talking to a machine, not a human. BuddyMind had emotions, but perhaps had a problem with consistency; sometimes overly cheerful and sometimes touchy due to his moods, which may have provided a choppy experience. Also, the young internet slang style adopted by BuddyMind did not appeal to everyone and was probably perceived as a bit "pretend play".

Consistency and sincerity are critical to a chatbot's personality being accepted by the user. For example, if a bot is constantly praising itself or repeating unnecessary politeness, the user may find this unnatural. In our example, ClerkMind occasionally pretended to scold the user, but since it was part of its nature, the user accepted it that way and even enjoyed it. So, it is important to be **consistent with the persona you design**. If your bot has a certain sense of humor, it should maintain that line in every response; it should not be formal in one response and streetwise in the other. This requires attention and creativity, just like creating a character in a novel.

The approach of adding human-like features to bots, called "anthropomorphism" in the literature, generally has a positive effect on the user experience (increases the sense of social presence). However, the dosage is important. People know that bots are not human, but small human-like touches (having a name, a style of speech, perhaps an avatar picture, etc.) add color to the conversation. However, these human-like features should not reach **the point of deception**; the user should not think or claim that the bot is really human (it would be unethical). In our study, users

knew that all three assistants were actually playing a role, but the believability and continuity of these roles affected their appreciation.

As a result, when designing an ideal chatbot style, **it is necessary to determine a persona that suits your target audience and apply the language and behaviors of this persona consistently**. If your audience is young gamers, a more humorous and friendly style may be chosen; if your audience is business professionals, a more formal and knowledgeable tone may be required. In our example, we had a mixed audience, but the fact that the majority were technicians/students may have played a role in choosing ClerkMind. Because sometimes technical people do not like to be too casual and focus on their work; ClerkMind spoke in their language (Stack Overflow links, etc.). Therefore, **knowing the user and making the chatbot's style compatible with the user persona should be one of the most basic principles**.

VIII. PARALLELS AND CONTRASTS WITH LITERATURE

We discussed above the findings of our study, combined with various literature sources. To summarize, our results seem to be generally in line with current user trends:

- **Clarity and Speed:** As other studies have shown, users prioritize speed and clarity in chatbots [1]. Our participants made this clear.

- **Personality and Tone:** A gentle, respectful but friendly tone is preferred [2]. We also didn't like overly formal or overly street-speaking approaches; a balanced tone (between ClerkMind/MechMind) was best.

- **Humor & Empathy:** Although it varies by context, humor was not a priority in serious information-seeking situations. A larger consumer study also ranked humor low among key expectations (#4) [2]. Empathy can also take a backseat in areas that require urgent solutions, such as customer service [1]. However, it may gain importance in usage such as friendship/therapy. In our technician-heavy scenario, both were in the background.

- **Depth & Expertise:** A significant portion of users value bots' expert knowledge and detailed explanations. Global studies report that consumers are most looking for improvements from existing bots in terms of "providing more comprehensive information" and "more personalized answers." [2]. Our demands for "domain expertise" and "depth" coincide with this. In other words, the superficial or general answers that most of today's chatbots provide do not fully satisfy users; they want more.

- **Trust and Transparency:** In order to give trust to users, it is important for the bot to support its answers, provide explanations, and provide references [3]. In our observation, ClerkMind, which provided the reference, was found to be more reliable. Indirectly, this shows the value of transparency. If AI can explain or justify its decisions, user hesitation decreases [3].

- **User Participation:** As educational research shows, bots should not always do everything for the user, but should involve the user, especially in the learning process [5]. Some of our users have pointed this out intuitively (mental laziness issue). This brings to mind the principle of "don't make the user a passive recipient, make them an active participant" in design.

Of course, there are limitations to this study. For example, the participant population was mostly young and technical; priorities may change in more diverse profiles (older users, different cultures, etc.). For example, older users may want a more patient tone and simpler language, or in some cultures, a bot that does not speak too formally may not be taken seriously. There are studies in the literature that cultural differences can also affect bot preferences [6]. Therefore, the "ClerkMind is the best" result here should not be seen as a universal verdict. What is really important is to provide insight into **which features work for which type of user.**

IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article compares the user experiences of three different styles of chatbots and analyzes what people expect from an ideal chatbot. To summarize, **users want an AI assistant to have the following features:**

- **Clear and Comprehensible:** Understands what is asked and provides a clear answer, does not use complicated jargon. Does not get bogged down in unnecessary details and conveys the essence of the answer clearly (ClerkMind and MechMind were found to be successful in this regard).

- **Fast and Effective:** Answers questions without delay and offers solutions as soon as possible. Also, does not engage in empty dialogues that may distract the user from the purpose (especially in task-oriented questions).

- **Knowledgeable and In-Depth:** Not superficial, but able to provide details when requested. Has accurate and reliable knowledge in the field, can justify his answers. In short, can **act like a well-**

equipped consultant, not a "mindless chatterbox".

- **Reliable and Transparent:** Instills confidence in the accuracy of the information provided, reinforcing this by providing references or explaining the logic. The user should be able to access sources where they can learn more if needed (this is why ClerkMind's habit of providing links was appreciated).

- **Polite and Moderate Sincerity:** Treats the user with respect, uses positive language; but at the same time can achieve a natural flow of conversation without being too formal. Can make small jokes when appropriate but not overdo it. Can make the user feel warm as a friend but never completely loses seriousness.

- **A Consistent Persona:** One that has consistency in personality and style, without giving the user the feeling of playing a role. If they have adopted a certain persona (e.g. helpful teacher, witty friend, formal advisor, etc.), they carry it through the conversation in a balanced manner. This consistency increases the feeling that the user is talking to a "real person".

- **Adaptability:** Although not fully implemented in our study, it would be very valuable for an ideal chatbot to be able to adjust its tone slightly according to user reactions and context. For example, if the user is asking an urgent question, it will answer without further ado, or if they want to have a chat, it will be a bit more humorous and detailed. The aim is for future chatbots to do this with emotion detection and context analysis.

- **Empowering the User:** Finally, a good chatbot does not fool the user, but rather empowers them. If the aim is to teach, it does not give the answer directly, but guides with hints; if the aim is to serve, it offers options and leaves the decision to the user. In other words, it makes the user an **active part of the process**, not a passive command giver. In this way, the user both feels in control and learns.

A chatbot with these features will most likely be positively received by different types of users. Of course, it is not easy to perfectly fulfill all these expectations at the same time; some of them may even conflict (for example, it may not always be possible to be both very deep and very fast, because deep explanation takes time). Therefore, it may be necessary to **prioritize the design**. While clarity and speed generally come first, sincerity and depth should be adjusted to the extent that supports this.

Although this study was conducted with a limited group of participants as part of a university graduation project, the findings are parallel to larger studies in the literature. While people expect the best of humanity (kindness, helpfulness, intelligence) from AI assistants, they also want to see the best of machines (speed, accuracy, consistency). They do not want to see the flaws of a bad human conversation (slowness, chattiness, rudeness) or the flaws of a bad machine interface (incomprehensibility, emotionlessness) in their chatbots. **The ideal chatbot should be a balanced synthesis of human and machine characteristics**.

The results of this project highlight the importance of persona design and tone settings in future chatbot development. Developers are advised to design a chatbot **as a communicator**, not just a knowledge base. Assistants who can empathize with the user but not abuse them, who can make jokes but not interrupt, who are experts but not arrogant, will take the user experience to the top.

Remember that every user and scenario is different, so **flexibility** is also important. Perhaps chatbots of the future will be able to recognize the user and change their tone according to their preferences, as BuddyMind is trying to do. When one user says "make a shorter answer," they will actually shorten it, and when another says "give me more details," they will expand it. **User control** could also come into play here; for example, users could choose the bot's tone (formal vs. informal, level of detail, etc.) from a "settings" menu.

In conclusion**, there is no single dimension for the best chatbot experience**; it needs to perform well in many dimensions such as clarity, speed, expertise, and sincerity. In this study, we saw that the most liked bot was the one that presented a character integrity, even with its flaws, and guided the user to achieve results. This shows us that chatbots need a good communication design approach as well as technological developments to interact more harmoniously with people. In future studies, similar comparisons can be made with different demographic groups and different use cases (e.g. emotional support, shopping assistant, language learning, etc.) to better understand the context-dependent aspects of the ideal style. However, the basic principle will probably remain the same: **People will embrace AIs that value them, make their work easier, and converse in harmony with them**.

X. REFERENCES

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