

AI in the Afterlife: A Behavioral Study of Consumer Adoption of Deceased-Replica Chatbots

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Abstract:

As artificial intelligence continues to permeate emotionally sensitive domains, one emerging use case is that of deceased-replica chatbots or chatbots that use AI and other advanced technologies to construct conversational agents that replicate elements of the personalities of someone who has died. This study produces insights relating to the behavioral drivers of consumer adoption of these technologies, specifically focusing on emotional fit, persona perception, and perceived usefulness. Building on the precepts of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Computers Are Social Actors (CASA) paradigm, this study employed semi-structured interviews and chatbot simulation testing to develop a post-hoc DEMATEL to determine the most important adoption factors. The findings of the study show that emotional resonance and perceived authenticity were more than functionally related attributes in standard technology acceptance frameworks as determinants of user behavior. While there was some ethical ambivalence, participants expressed strong, emotive engagement with the chatbot and adoption where the chatbot remained consistent with their expectations of the deceased's personality. These findings make a contribution to consumer behavior theory in emotionally charged AI domains and also have consequences for designers, digital memorial platforms, and policymakers in this emerging dimension.

Keywords:

Consumer behavior, Human-AI interaction, Technology adoption.