

Let the Robots Be Robots – The Results of the Survey on Service Robots Media Richness Perception

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Abstract

Theoretical background: The article refers mainly to the media richness theory (MRT) that can be very useful in explaining the channel/touchpoint choices made by consumers. MRT states that every communication medium has its own richness of the information processed. The richer the medium is, the more components of the media richness it incorporates: immediate feedback, the communication channels utilised, language variety, and personal focus. Purpose: The aim of the paper is to introduce the service robot as a new touchpoint in service process with its own level of perceived media richness and with an important advantage over human contact such as not being a human. Methods: The article presents the results of a survey carried out at the end of 2022, in Poland. The research sample was 439 people. Results: Service robot as the touchpoint has its own perceived media richness; vital benefit of communication with the service robot is the lack of the need to enter into/build personal relationships that generates specific emotional costs; during the service process consumers want to know if they are interacting with a robot or with a human. Findings and implications: For an effective communication with the service robot it is important to clearly inform customers about the type of touchpoint (human vs robot). Service provider should understand when and why service robots can be the recommended solution. Service robots should not be instead of service staff but rather next to it (depends of the task).

Keywords: service robots, touch points, perceived media richness, communication process, media richness theory, customer perception