More than FAQ! Chatbot Taxonomy for Business-to-Business Customer Services

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Abstract. Chatbots are becoming increasingly important in the customer service sector due to their service automation, cost saving opportunities and broad customer satisfaction. Similarly, in the business-to-business (B2B) sector, more and more companies use chatbots on their websites and social media channels, to establish sales team contact, to provide information about their products and services or to help customers with their requests and claims. Customer relations in the B2B environment are especially characterized by a high level of personal contact service and support through expert explanations due to the complexity of the products and service offerings. In order to support these efforts, chatbots can be used to assist buying centers along the purchase decision process. However, B2B chatbots have so far only been marginally addressed in the scientific human-computer interaction and information systems literature. To provide both researchers and practitioners with knowledge about the characteristics and archetypal patterns of chatbots currently existing in B2B customer services, we develop and discuss a 17-dimensional chatbot taxonomy for B2B customer services based on Nickerson et al. [1]. By classifying 40 chatbots in a cluster analysis, this study has identified three archetypal structures prevailing in B2B customer service chatbot usage.

Keywords: Chatbot Taxonomy, Business-to-Business, Customer Services.

1   Introduction

Especially in B2B segments, customer care is seen as an essential part of any business service or product commercialization, while often being one of the most resource-intensive units within a business [2–4]. Customer service priorities are driven by the expectation of a simple and fast service, which must be as personalized and individualized as possible [2]. To remain competitive, organizations are currently investing heavily in digital and innovative self-service customer care solutions [3, 5]. In this context, chatbots offer enormous savings potential in customer care effort and costs through service automation [3]. In recent years, due to the further development of natural language processing and machine learning, chatbots are being increasingly used in application areas within the customer service sector, such as claim diagnosis or replacement provision