

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WITH SERVICE ROBOTS: THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL EMPATHY



What is the context?

- Customers increasingly interact with service robots (chatbots, voice assistants, robots)(Davenport et al. 2020)

\$32.60 Billion
Service Robots World Market 2030
(Forbes 2022)

18.9%
Market Annual Growth
(Forbes 2022)

85%
Customer interactions involve service robots
(Schneider 2017)

Why is it important?

- Service robots can **undermine customer experience** due to their perceived lack of socio-emotional responses (Puntoni et al. 2021)
- Customer experience = **competitive advantage** (Lemon & Verhoef 2016)
- Companies are interested to know **how to design and incorporate service robots** in their services (Forbes 2021)
- Service robots are now capable of **expressing empathy** during customer interactions (Liu-Thompkins et al. 2022)
 - ex: "Sorry to hear that you didn't get your online ticket 😞"
- Empathy = **crucial element** of customer interactions (Wieseke et al. 2012)

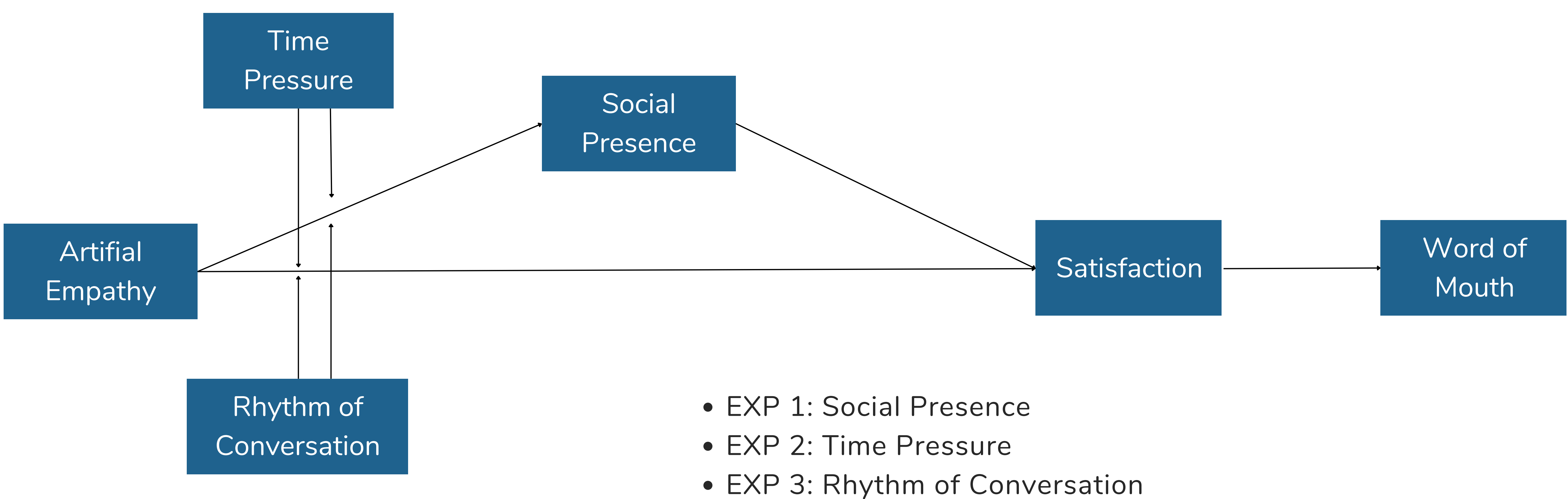
Why is it interesting?

- Literature suffers from **three main limitations**:
 - The **rational perspective** is still dominant, leaving underexplored the role of the social dimension during these customer interactions
 - It focuses **on techno-centered outcomes** (ex: intention to use the service robots) instead of customer outcomes (ex: satisfaction)
 - Early works on artificial empathy in customer interactions found **conflicting results** (positive, negative, no effect)
- Top priority** in Service Research (Ostrom et al. 2021)

What is the goal?

- We aim to better understand:
(1) **To what extent** (2) **how** and (3) **when** artificial empathy impacts the social customer experience and outcome

How will it be done?



How will it contribute?

- To literature: new insights to the fields of Customer Experience and Frontline Service Research
- To practitioners: new insights to better design and incorporate service robots to enhance customer experience

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