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Claude, ChatGPT or Gemini – which AI personality suits you?

Tech giants are pouring billions into crafting distinctive machine characters that click with you, creating brand loyalty. This has huge ramifications.

Tamas Makany

Using an artificial intelligence assistant to make it easier to do chores such as planning a family vacation has become a popular approach. But now, things have become a little more complicated.

Rather than simply using AI, the decision to be made is: What AI personality do you prefer?

Claude, created by Anthropic and backed by Amazon, operates like an empathetic consultant, exploring family dynamics with questions like "What experiences would bring your family closer together?" or "Let's consider everyone's interests".

ChatGPT assumes the role of an efficient strategist, methodically gathering data through focused queries about "Destination preferences (for example, culture or nature)?" and "Budget range?".

Gemini, meanwhile, leverages the vast user data that Google has on us and immediately suggests personalised itineraries – in my case, proposing "Tokyo, Tel Aviv, Maldives, Bali and Seoul".

Although these AI models share similar underlying capabilities, their distinct personalities shape how they use and present information.

These different approaches – whether as a reflective collaborator, precise analyst or personalised recommendation engine – affect the conversation's tone and fundamentally shape user experience and brand loyalty. People will return to the AI model whose personality best matches their problem-solving style.

Users are developing clear preferences, much like they do with human interactions.

Some are drawn to Claude's warm style that often includes ethical considerations and detailed explanations.

Others prefer ChatGPT's more confident approach that gets straight to the point.

Indeed, recent performance benchmarks suggest that leading AI systems are showing closer scores on standardised tasks, but each has its own distinct personality and way of communicating, which affects how people connect with it.

In the fast-evolving AI landscape, personality isn't just a feature – it's becoming the premium that shapes user choice and business success.

This personality premium is driving major business decisions across the tech sector.

The investment pattern is telling: Microsoft has committed over US$13 billion (S$17.5 billion) to OpenAI, while also backing other AI innovators like Mistral and G42, and Google has partnered with Cohere.

Recently, Amazon doubled down on its bet on AI by investing an additional US$4 billion in Anthropic, the maker of Claude. This brought its total investment to US$8 billion, making it Amazon's largest-ever venture investment.

The surge in AI personality investments signals a fundamental shift in the market: Raw computational power no longer guarantees success.

Even smaller start-ups can license powerful language models, but the ability to craft distinctive, trustworthy AI personalities creates enduring user loyalty – much like how we frequent a local cafe not for superior beans but for the barista who remembers how we like our morning cappuccino.

This human tendency to seek meaningful connections explains why tech giants are investing billions in developing AI personalities that resonate with users.

THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND IT

Behind each leading AI assistant stands a team of developers carefully crafting a distinct personality to shape how millions interact with their technology.

We've seen this before with voice assistants, of course. Alexa's friendliness, Siri's wit and Google's neutral approach each attracted different users. These were not random choices but calculated decisions that shaped trust and loyalty.

This pattern of users forming preferences based on AI personality is not surprising given what we know about human psychology. Stanford researcher Clifford Nass demonstrated through the "computers are social actors" theory that humans treat computers as social beings with personalities and social roles.

This explains why I am convinced that the office printer hates me! We respond to AI personalities much like we respond to human ones – with preferences, trust and emotional attachment.

This fundamental aspect of human psychology explains why an AI system's conversational style has become a crucial differentiator.

MATCHING CHARACTER TO BRAND

As initial research and development investments transform into everyday consumer products, companies face crucial decisions about personality implementation. They must match the AI system's character to their brand identity.

A financial institution might choose an assistant that projects methodical thoughtfulness to align with clients' expectations of reliability and trust.

Early market responses have demonstrated the importance of these choices.

Consider how Microsoft reshaped its AI companion Copilot's personality to be more collaborative and coach-like, moving away from directive interactions – a strategic choice that reflects the growing significance of personality design in AI development. These choices of tone are becoming as crucial as traditional branding decisions.

Meta's star-studded line-up of AI assistants, featuring voices such as those of actress Judi Dench and pro wrestler John Cena, highlights the core challenge in personality design.

This involves maintaining consistent character traits across tasks, from processing technical questions to engaging in casual conversation, all while finding the right balance between warmth and professional distance.

This balancing act mirrors a creative dilemma familiar in human interactions: excessive control dampens authenticity, while unlimited freedom risks unpredictability.

Cultural considerations add to the complexity. What constitutes an "appropriate" AI personality varies across different societies.

As AI systems scale globally, companies must balance maintaining consistent brand identity and adapting personalities to local cultural contexts.

An assistant addressing users by their first name and maintaining casual banter might work in California but could be jarring in contexts where age-based honorifics and formal discourse are the norm.

For example, Japanese users might expect their AI system to use appropriate suffixes (-san, -sama) and maintain a more reserved communication style, while Brazilian users might prefer a warmer, more informal approach.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The ethical stakes are high, too. As tech companies shape these AI personalities, we must ask: How do we protect users from manipulation? Should companies be required to disclose how their personas are designed to influence behaviour?

These questions become particularly pressing when considering that they can subtly influence human behaviour and reinforce biases. For instance, the predominance of female-coded AI assistants in service roles risks perpetuating gender stereotypes.

Companies must consider not just what personalities will appeal to users, but what social responsibilities come with designing digital entities that millions will interact with daily.

Right now, companies building AI assistants need to take two practical steps: hire teams that reflect different backgrounds and cultures, and document exactly how they're crafting these AI personalities.

But there's a bigger question regulators need to tackle: What happens to society when millions of people interact daily with AI personalities that sound and behave in specific ways?

Getting this right means setting clear rules about how companies design these personalities, while closely monitoring how different communities respond to them.

The way tech companies are crafting distinct AI personalities today will change how all of us interact with the technology tomorrow. The strategic decisions about how to design and implement these AI personalities will reshape our relationships with technology – and each other.

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