WALK THE TALK WITH CHATBOT !

Abstract

This PoV is a mixture of fiction and insights from a User Research activity carried out by the author. The author conducted Rapid Ethnography with chatbot adopters to understand their mental models and expectations from conversational interfaces. The understanding drawn from this activity along with a few thoughts from the author has been presented in this PoV.

Infosys®
Navigate your next

It was another evening at the office, and it was time for me to get back home. As I started packing to leave, I realized that it had just stopped drizzling. The weather was pleasant, the one that can cheer up anybody's mood, something much needed for me.

As I was walking out of the building, I could sense someone's presence. I could feel a pair of eyes watching me and could even hear the light footsteps. I chose to ignore. All of a sudden, someone tapped me from behind, and I turned half-heartedly. What I saw next was something I never dreamt of, me, a common tech guy, face-to-face with a tech celebrity. She was in all her glory, and I was awestruck and in search of words. I knew her high potential to solve people's problems with high efficiency, her penchant to drive away all unnecessary distractions while giving people only what they really need. She was known to transform complicated things into simple ones and play a personal assistant to even those who could not afford one.

She has always been a celebrity. Everyone wanted her presence. But, she was here to meet me. It was none other than THE CHATBOT! for whom I was slowly developing a dislike.

I was excited to meet the famed one. She looked worried. We started talking. I quickly realized that she was here to understand why I hated her when the whole world seemed to accept. I explained to her that it was not her fault but my basic human nature that made me hate her. I assured her that I too could love her, provided my fundamental necessities were fulfilled. I invited her to walk with me and talk things out.

Chabot seemed to cheer up. Maybe she felt this little encounter would turn out to be fruitful. After all, she is a celebrity and I, a common man. Unlike her, billions of years of evolution resulted in the present me with some fundamental yearnings ingrained. So, I had some intrinsic expectations from the chatbot which weren't something very far-fetched but straightforward.

She was the first to break the silence, she uttered, "What can I do for you? So that you start liking me…" – in her usual tone.

I said, 'just search the internet for best practices to build a chatbot, and you will
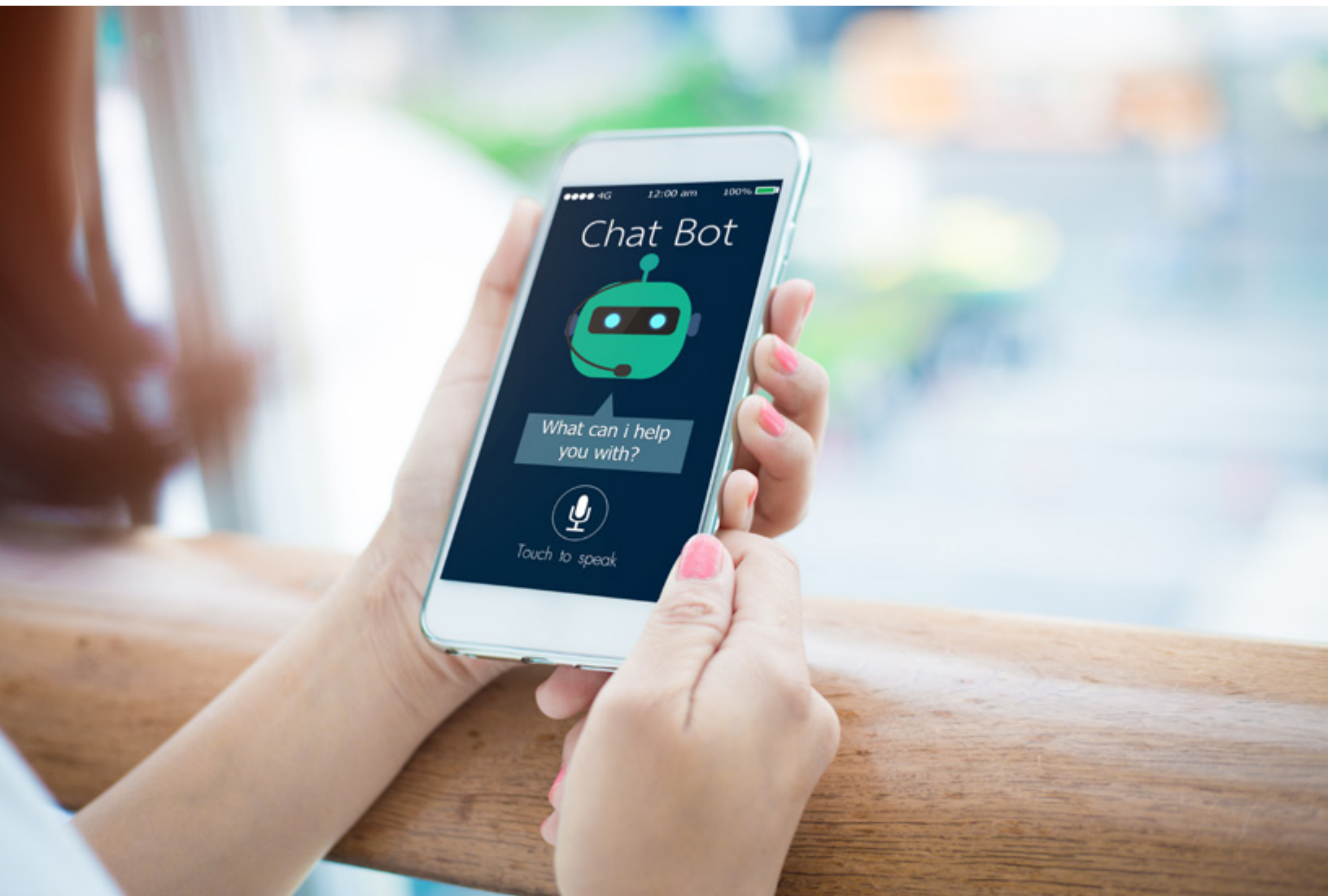
find yourself flooded by a plethora of articles and suggestions. However, when I look back on all the Chatbots that I have worked on and how these turned out to be, there are three important aspects that could make me fall in love with a Chatbot. It is just 3 R's. That's it. Just focus on these 3 R's and we will be good.'

Then I went on to explain the 3 R's of Rigidity, Responsibility and Riddling.

Don't be **RIGID**:

- Show flexibility.

- Understand my natural speech.

- Be responsive to my queries.

- Repeat if I want clarifications and clarify in a varied and natural tone – don't repeat like a parrot.

- Remember things I have told you in different contexts and don't ask me the same thing again.

- If needed, enforce input formats but also give an option to say my own stuff.

- Be open to feedback and adopt. Make it easy for designers to configure you.

Don't **RUN AWAY FROM RESPONSIBILITY**:

- Don't come out as risk averse.

- I see you like the tip of an iceberg. You are a thin interface having profound knowledge behind the scenes. So, be like a brainy consultant. A supportive partner. Don't always give a zoomed out response like giving a hyperlink to an enormous pdf or redirecting me to a human operator.

Don't be **RIDDLING**:

- Always be crisp and unambiguous.

- Don't leave me more confused. With every single interaction, we have, I need to move closer to my goals.

- Don't sound irrelevant, keep the context in mind. Don't wish me "Good Morning" in my evenings.

Chatbot did not seem to be convinced. She was expecting more from me. She wanted me to validate my arguments. I somehow knew this was coming and was prepared.

I tried to explain my concerns to the Chatbot using Jacob Nielsen's Ten Heuristics, one of the basic principles to be followed while designing a product.

Here's what I said, in the form of a mapping between these ten heuristics and desirable aspects of a chatbot.

Point	Heuristic	What it means	Chatbot behavior
1	Visibility of system status	Always keep users informed as to where they are	If the chatbot expects numerous steps to perform a transaction, keep the user informed about the progress of the task in terms of percentage of completion
2	Match between system and real world	Speak a language familiar to the user	Chatbot should understand the commonly spoken words, phrases, and concepts by the user
3	User control and freedom	Provide flexibility	Chatbot should support undo and repeat. Also, provide emergency exits and option to start an operation all over.
4	Consistency and standards	Follow conventions	Chatbot should support branding and easy configuration of company standards
5	Error prevention	Avoid error conditions	Chatbot should suggest default values. If not, have formatted text inputs.
6	Recognition rather than recall	Minimize user's memory load	Chatbot should make actions and options visible or retrievable. Everything required to complete a task successfully should be easily accessible
7	Flexibility and efficiency of use	Cater to both novice and expert users	For example, a chatbot can accept 15 values one by one to complete an action for a novice while an expert can use shorthand notations to complete the action
8	Aesthetic and minimal design	Display only relevant information with good visual design	Chatbot should prompt and provide relevant content upfront without users asking for it. Provide information in easy small chunks
9	Help users recognize, diagnose and recover from errors	Indicate problems clearly	Chatbot should pinpoint the issue in plain language rather than a generic "sorry I did not get you" message
10	Help and user documentation	Provide help documentation	Chatbot help should be easily accessible with the content being concise and precise

With this explanation, chatbot seemed to be convinced. She bade a goodbye thanking me. The long walk I took with the chatbot seemed to be of some worth.

After taking a few steps, the chatbot turned around and smiled at me. Her eyes were sparkling with an assurance that she will incorporate the simple basic things I expected from her. Before she turned away, I exclaimed "Hey Chatbot! You are a beauty! Just be nice to me please… I don't want anything more!" and she responded "Sorry, I did not understand you. Try asking it differently". We looked at each other and she winked, and we both laughed it out loud.

About the Author

VINAY R. NAGAVARA is a UX Architect with iCETS - Infosys Center for Emerging Technology Solutions.
He is an avid UX Designer and an advocate of User-Centric approaches in the products he works on. His key
focus areas are User Research and Usability Testing. With multiple years of experience as a developer for UI driven
applications and he eventually shifted to the area of UX, his favorite mantra is "Know Thy Users, For They Are Not You."

For more information, contact askus@infosys.com

Infosys
Navigate your next

Infosys.com | NYSE: INFY

Stay Connected   SlideShare