

Human vs. Machine: The Air Canada Chatbot Lawsuit and Its Implications for AI in Customer Service



Source: Unsplash (2020)

Background

Over the past decade, service industries have increasingly turned to artificial intelligence, particularly chatbots, as a means to enhance customer service and streamline operations. These virtual assistants are designed to handle a wide range of inquiries—from booking to after-sales support. While the integration of chatbots offers significant advantages, the following case of Air Canada raises concerns about their reliability.

Jake Moffatt, a passenger who visited Air Canada’s website to book a flight for his grandmother’s funeral in 2022, was promised a discount by the airline’s customer service chatbot that he never received (BBC, 2024). While browsing the airline’s website, Moffatt asked the chatbot about bereavement fares, which many airlines offer to support passengers who must travel in the event of a family member’s death (Pinsent Masons, 2024). He was then informed by the chatbot that passengers who “need to travel immediately or have already travelled” could submit their ticket for a reduced bereavement fare within 90 days of the ticket’s issue, along with a link to the airline’s Bereavement Fares Policy page (Forbes, 2024). With this confirmation, Moffatt booked his ticket and submitted an application for a bereavement refund after he finished travelling, only to find it declined, as the airline does not consider bereavement requests after travel has been completed (Pinsent Masons, 2024). As the airline refused to engage in further discussion regarding the terms of the bereavement refund, Moffatt decided to take the matter to court.

Challenges

Two years later, Air Canada was held liable by the British Columbia Civil Resolution Tribunal, which ruled the airline must pay US\$812.02 in court fees and damages to the grieving passenger (BBC, 2024). In its argument, the airline claimed it should not be held liable for information provided by one of its agents or representatives, and that the customer would have had the correct information regarding the airline’s policy with the link provided by the chatbot. This argument was overruled by the court (Pinsent Masons, 2024). While it is evident that AI is vulnerable to hallucinations—where it generates false information—the Air Canada case sets

a precedent for companies increasingly relying on AI and chatbots for customer interactions: they are liable for what their technology says and responsible for ensuring the accuracy of information generated.

Furthermore, authorities warn that despite their ability to resolve basic customer inquiries, the effectiveness of chatbots declines as problems become more complex (Forbes, 2024). While it is expected that the accuracy of chatbots will improve over time, travellers are advised to seek help from a human customer service agent for complicated or highly-contextualized inquiries (BBC, 2024).

Discussion Questions

1. Should Air Canada take full responsibility for the misinformation provided by its chatbot, or do customers also have a responsibility to fact-check the information they receive? Why or why not?
2. Apart from fact-checking the information they receive, what else can customers do to protect themselves from potentially wrong information or AI “hallucinations”?
3. How can airlines improve their chatbot technologies to minimize errors and enhance customer service?
4. How might advances in AI technology change the future of customer service?

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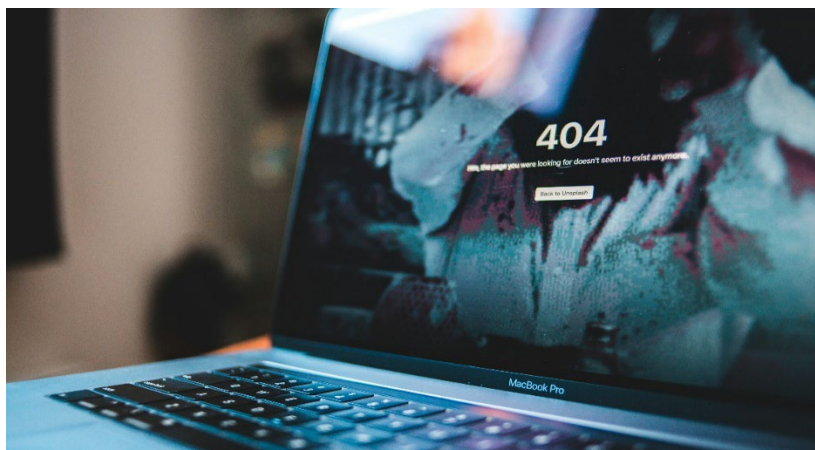
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Keywords

- Airline
- AI chatbots
- Customer service
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- AI-generated information
- Legal precedent

人机之争：加拿大航空聊天机器人诉讼案及其对客服领域 AI 应用的启示



Source: Unsplash (2020)

背景

过去十年间，服务业日益倾向于采用人工智能，特别是聊天机器人，作为提升客户服务和简化运营的手段。这些虚拟助手被设计用来处理从预订到售后支持的各种咨询。尽管聊天机器人的集成带来了显著优势，但接下来这个关于加拿大航空的案例引发了对其可靠性的担忧。

乘客杰克·莫法特于 2022 年为参加祖母的葬礼访问加拿大航空网站预订航班时，该航空公司的客服聊天机器人承诺给予其折扣，但他最终并未收到这笔折扣（BBC，2024）。在浏览航空公司网站时，莫法特向聊天机器人咨询了关于许多航司为因家庭成员去世而必须旅行的乘客所提供的“丧亲票价”（Pinsent Masons，2024）。聊天机器人随后告知他，“需要立即旅行或已经旅行”的乘客可以在机票开具后 90 天内提交机票申请降低的丧亲票价，并附上了航空公司丧亲票价政策页面的链接（Forbes，2024）。得到此确认后，莫法特预订了机票并在旅行结束后提交了丧亲退款申请，结果发现申请被拒绝，因为该航空公司不考虑旅行完成后提交的丧亲退款请求（Pinsent Masons，2024）。由于航空公司拒绝就丧亲退款条款进行进一步讨论，莫法特决定将此事诉诸法庭。

挑战

两年后，加拿大航空被不列颠哥伦比亚省民事解决法庭判定负有责任，裁决该航空公司必须向这位悲伤的乘客支付 812.02 美元的法庭费用和损害赔偿金（BBC，2024）。航空公司辩称，其不应为其代理人或代表提供的信息承担责任，并且客户本可以通过聊天机器人提供的链接获得关于航空公司政策的正确信息。法庭驳回了这一论点（Pinsent Masons，2024）。尽管很明显人工智能容易产生“幻觉”——即生成虚假

信息——但加拿大航空的案例为日益依赖人工智能和聊天机器人进行客户互动的公司树立了一个先例：它们必须对其技术所言负责，并有责任确保所生成信息的准确性。

此外，有关机构警告称，尽管聊天机器人有能力解决基本的客户咨询，但随着问题变得更加复杂，其有效性会下降（Forbes, 2024）。虽然预计聊天机器人的准确性会随着时间的推移而提高，但仍建议旅客针对复杂或高度情境化的咨询寻求人工客服代理的帮助（BBC, 2024）。

讨论问题

1. 加拿大航空是否应该为其聊天机器人提供的错误信息承担全部责任？或者客户也有责任核实所收到的信息？为什么？
2. 除了核实收到的信息外，客户还可以做些什么来保护自己免受潜在错误信息或AI“幻觉”的影响？
3. 航空公司应如何改进其聊天机器人技术以减少错误并提升客户服务？
4. AI技术的进步可能会如何改变客户服务的未来？

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关键词

- 航空公司
- AI 聊天机器人
- 客户服务
- 人工智能 (AI)
- AI 生成的信息
- 法律先例

人機之爭：加拿大航空聊天機器人訴訟案及其對客服領域 AI 應用的啟示



Source: Unsplash (2020)

背景

過去十年間，服務業日益傾向於採用人工智慧，特別是聊天機器人，作為提升客戶服務和簡化營運的手段。這些虛擬助手被設計用來處理從預訂到售後支援的各種諮詢。儘管聊天機器人的整合帶來了顯著優勢，但接下來這個關於加拿大航空的案例引發了對其可靠性的擔憂。

乘客傑克·莫法特於 2022 年為參加祖母的葬禮訪問加拿大航空網站預訂航班時，該航空公司的客服聊天機器人承諾給予其折扣，但他最終並未收到這筆折扣（BBC，2024）。在瀏覽航空公司網站時，莫法特向聊天機器人諮詢了關於許多航空公司為因家庭成員去世而必須旅行的乘客所提供的“喪親票價”（Pinsent Masons，2024）。聊天機器人隨後告知他，“需要立即旅行或已經旅行”的乘客可以在機票開具後 90 天內提交機票申請降低的喪親票價，並附上了航空公司喪親票價政策頁面的連結（Forbes，2024）。得到此確認後，莫法特預訂了機票並在旅行結束後提交了喪親退款申請，結果發現申請被拒絕，因為該航空公司不考慮旅行完成後提交的喪親退款請求（Pinsent Masons，2024）。由於航空公司拒絕就喪親退款條款進行進一步討論，莫法特決定將此事訴諸法庭。

挑戰

兩年後，加拿大航空被不列顛哥倫比亞省民事解決法庭判定負有責任，裁決該航空公司必須向這位悲傷的乘客支付 812.02 美元的法庭費用和損害賠償金（BBC，2024）。航空公司辯稱，其不應為其代理人或代表提供的資訊承擔責任，並且客戶本可以透過聊天機器人提供的連結獲得關於航空公司政策的正確資訊。法庭駁回了這一論點（Pinsent Masons，2024）。儘管很明顯人工智慧容易產生“幻覺”——即生成虛假資訊——但加拿大航空的案例為日益依賴人工智慧和聊天機器人進行客戶互動的公司樹立了一個先例：它們必須對其技術所言負責，並有責任確保所生成資訊的準確性。

此外，有關機構警告稱，儘管聊天機器人有能力解決基本的客戶諮詢，但隨著問題變得更加複雜，其有效性會下降（Forbes, 2024）。雖然預計聊天機器人的準確性會隨著時間的推移而提高，但仍建議旅客針對複雜或高度情境化的諮詢尋求人工客服代理的幫助（BBC, 2024）。

討論問題

1. 加拿大航空是否應該為其聊天機器人提供的錯誤資訊承擔全部責任？或者客戶也有責任核實所收到的資訊？為什麼？
2. 除了核實收到的資訊外，客戶還可以做些什麼來保護自己免受潛在錯誤資訊或 AI "幻覺"的影響？
3. 航空公司應如何改進其聊天機器人技術以減少錯誤並提升客戶服務？
4. AI 技術的進步可能會如何改變客戶服務的未來？

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