



The change in user and IT dynamics: Blogs as IT-enabled virtual self-presentation[☆]

Jinyoung Min^{*}, Heeseok Lee

Business School, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, 207-43, Cheongryangri-dong, Dongdaemoon-gu, Seoul 130-012, South Korea

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 9 August 2011

Keywords:

Self-presentation theory
Self-concept
Virtual self-presentation
IT artifacts
Blogs

ABSTRACT

Using the blogosphere as an enabling IT environment, this paper investigates how self-concept influences virtual self-presentation behavior and the use of IT artifacts. Self-presentation theory is adapted from the social psychology literature to develop a theoretical research model of virtual self-presentation. We tested the research model and hypotheses with data collected from 312 bloggers. Structural equation analysis of this data reveals a nomological net of self-concept leading to IT-enabled virtual self-presentation and the use of IT artifacts. Our findings provide a new perspective of users as heterogeneous individuals who have various self-concepts that change the sequence and dynamics among users, IT artifacts, and tasks. In contrast to traditional systems, in the social context of virtual self-presentation, users are the primary and essential drivers who determine vaguely defined tasks and systems.

© 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Users in the traditional context are understood as individuals who use information technology (IT) for the sole purpose of achieving tasks (Davis, 1989; Melville, Kraemer, & Gurbaxani, 2004). In this context, regardless of whether IT systems are used for utilitarian or hedonic tasks, users have been considered homogeneous in their preferences (Van der Heijden, 2004). Under this homogeneous user conception, users are allowed to use IT only in a prescribed way to perform given tasks. However, various types of IT began to endow users with a central role for deploying activities in IT. In these IT activities, users' self-concept is highly reflected in the main activities supported by these systems. Self-concept, which refers to the understanding of the existence and properties of a separate self and its characteristics (Harter, 1983), is, in short, a person's perception of who she is and drives the person's behavior (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992).

This leads to new questions that need to be answered. Do these users whose self-concepts are reflected in their activities in IT have the same preference structure in using IT? Do they have the same and only one purpose for using IT? Can we predict their behaviors based on simple utilitarian or hedonic values? Self-concept is different from a person to person: a person's own perception of who she is cannot be the same among different individuals. Users, therefore, have different drivers to use IT based on their different self-concepts and should not be understood as homogeneous peo-

ple having an identical preference in using IT. Lamb and Kling (2003) pointed out that the socially thin user construct used in IT research limits our understanding of user behavior in complex social contexts. They suggested that users should not be understood as homogeneous individuals with fixed preferences. When users are understood as homogeneous individuals, technology specifics are overestimated while the social context of usage is underestimated. We live in an era in which an individual's influence on society through IT is magnified more than ever. With the traditional user concept based on a limited understanding of individual psychology and varying subsequent behavior, we will never fully understand the underlying dynamics of these phenomena.

In order to better understand user concept and subsequent behavior regarding IT use, we suggest embracing user's self-concept in the social context of self-presentation. Self-presentation is conveying one's self-concept to others by various means according to situational demands (Goffman, 1959). In IT in particular, we call this self-presentation behavior 'virtual self-presentation.' In physical reality, self-presentation can take various forms. In the case of face-to-face meetings, verbal and facial expressions, and gestures are options. Other presentation cues are somewhat subtle, for example, like wearing a t-shirt supporting a particular football team or owning a cup with a college logo on it. However, in the context of virtual self-presentation, presenting herself happens through virtual means. For example, instead of wearing certain product, only writing about it in a blog can provide a certain identity cue about her (Schau & Gilly, 2003).

Along with self-concept, IT artifacts can be the key component of the dynamics of virtual self-presentation, since IT is the medium through which users present themselves. Therefore, IT artifacts are more likely to play a role in revealing a user's self-concept and can be employed by how it is tailored to virtual self-presentation

[☆] This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant funded by the Korean Government [NRF-2011-358-B00012].

^{*} Corresponding author. Tel.: +82 10 9349 4928; fax: +82 2 958 3604.

E-mail addresses: saharamin@business.kaist.edu (J. Min), hsl@business.kaist.ac.kr (H. Lee).

(Ma & Agarwal, 2007). This leads us to the critical research question of how the enriched user concept is linked to subsequent user behavior through IT. More specifically our research questions are as follows: (1) How does the user's self-concept in cyberspace affect the subsequent use of IT artifacts and virtual self-presentation? (2) How does this subsequent use of IT artifacts affect virtual self-presentation?

To answer these questions, this paper investigates how self-concept influences IT-enabled behavior by using the blogosphere as the target technology of our study. Blogosphere is designed to endow the user with an ownership (Karger & Quan, 2005), and thus becomes a good representation of the IT which reflects the user's self. Besides, it provides users a rich space to control how they present themselves through blog postings.

Self-presentation theory (Baumeister, 1982; Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990) serves as our theoretical basis. Since each blogger's world is built upon information in the form of blog postings which tend to show who they are, what they think, what they like, what they have and so on, all these blog postings can be considered as the virtual form of self-presentation.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. We first provide the background for our research, and then develop the hypotheses and research model. Empirical findings and discussion follow. We conclude the paper with theoretical and practical implications.

2. Theoretical background: blogs as a space for virtual self-presentation

2.1. Self-presentation theory

Self-presentation theory is widely used in social psychology to study how people present themselves in a variety of ways, tailoring the images they convey to others and varying their self-presentations according to situational demands (Goffman, 1959). Self-presentation is fundamentally a way of communicating images to others (Baumeister, 1982; Goffman, 1959; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). It is also called impression management, which emphasizes people's attempts to control how the self is presented (Schlenker, 1980). Self-presentation includes not only a simple description of personal characteristics but also all behaviors of managing impressions including attitudes, modes, roles, status, physical states, interests, and beliefs (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). In other words, self-presentation builds a "face" that refers to not only who we actually are but also who we want others to think we are (Goffman, 1959). Failing to self-presentation means conveying undesired self-images to others, leading to decreased self-esteem and increased negative emotional responses such as distress and even depression (Burke & Stets, 1999). On the other hand, a successful self-presentation leads to the enhancement of the self (Swann, 1987).

Self-presentation is deeply related with self-concept. People engage in self-presentation to regulate their self-esteem (Schneider, 1969), to fill the gap between desired and current self-images (Leary & Kowalski, 1990), to construct their best self in the public view (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Schlenker, 1980), and to create their identities (Baumeister, 1982; Gollwitzer, 1986). This implies that self-presentation is not only about impression management for an audience, but also about controlling one's impression of oneself (Greenwald & Breckler, 1985). The images people associate with their self-presentation correspond with how they see themselves (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Schlenker, 1980), suggesting that self-concept is a primary determinant of self-presentation. It indicates that self-presentation is intertwined with how people perceive themselves, that is, their self-concept.

Again, self-concept refers to the understanding of the existence and properties of a separate self and its characteristics (Harter,

1983). Using self-concept, individuals define themselves and regulate their behaviors (Niedenthal & Beike, 1997). Self-concept can be understood as "the totality of an individual's thought and feelings having reference to himself as an object" (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 7) and "a vague but vitally felt idea of what I am like in my best moments, of what I am striving toward and have some encouragement to believe I can achieve, or of what I can do when the situation supplies incentives for unqualified effort" (Turner, 1968, p. 98). Self-concept is constructed by various things such as one's experience, interpretations of one's environment, and evaluations by significant others (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). In physical reality, it is difficult to present self-concept in the exact way she intends while it is easier in cyberspace since she can choose what aspect of self-concept to focus on and have more control on its presentation. For example, the blogger can focus more on one of the aspects of self-concept while presenting the whole self-concept in a blogosphere. This is why it is particularly interesting to study how self-concept is presented through virtual self-presentation in cyberspace.

2.2. Blog as a space for virtual self-presentation

A blog, short for weblog, is a frequently modified web page in which dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence (Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2004). The blogosphere provides various features such as online journals, links to a particular post, archives of postings, trackbacks, blogrolls, and connections to other bloggers.

From the view of IT as a task achieving tool, blogs have been understood as the extension of information management tools such as online publishing media (Gomez, 2005; Johnson & Kaye, 2009; Rosenbloom, 2004), information source (Lu & Hsiao, 2007), and learning tool (Hall & Davison, 2007; Kim, 2008). The informational value of blogs is great, particularly when considering its openness to a network of mass audiences and the voluntary production of huge amounts of information. However, antecedents solely based on the informational value or knowledge sharing aspects of blogs do not adequately explain blog use. For example, feedback, which is defined as advice, criticism, or information about the goodness or usefulness of something or somebody's work does not affect the intention to continue updating blogs (Lu & Hsiao, 2007). In fact, perceived usefulness, expected reciprocal benefit, trust, and expected relationships, which are well known antecedents of knowledge sharing, do not affect attitudes toward using blogs (Hsu & Lin, 2008). Predictors of blog usage are instead antecedents related to the user's self. Examples are personal outcome expectation, which is the expectation of rewards by changing one's image (Lu & Hsiao, 2007), benefit to self such as understanding themselves better (Miura & Yamashita, 2007), and self expression (Kaye, 2005). The blog literature supports that the simple homogeneous user conception based on a utilitarian value does not explain the users' behaviors well. Therefore, a greater understanding of the different dynamics behind blog use should be gained by focusing on its users. It is more the case because the feeling of ownership is designed as a part of the blogging experience (Karger & Quan, 2005).

Unlike IT users of the past, bloggers find blogs as a place to document one's life, provide commentary and opinions, express deeply felt emotions, articulate ideas through writing and forming, as well as maintain community forums (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004). In addition, blogs become personal journals (Lenhart & Fox, 2006), stress-relieving tools (Baker & Moore, 2008), and means to obtain emotional support (Baker & Moore, 2008; Chung & Kim, 2008; Ko & Kuo, 2009). Through these blogging activities, people present themselves in blogs (Sanderson, 2008). Their activities can be described in different words such as

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات