

# YES, IT IS ME: EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO SELF- PRESENTING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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## Abstract

As information technology (IT) continues to permeate everyday life experiences, it is no longer simply a tool to improve task performance; people use technology to present themselves and fulfill their inner desires. Yet, there are few studies examining this new aspect of information technology.

To fill this gap in the literature, we propose the concept of self-presenting IT, a class of information technology whose primary purpose is to present users' self-image, either actual or possible. We consider two examples of self-presenting IT: blogs and social network sites (SNS). We propose that actual and possible self-presentations can be either strategic or expressive and further argue that strategic self-presentation appeals to a cognitive assessment of technology, while expressive self-presentation appeals to an affective process. Finally, we argue that people are more likely to use SNS for actual self-presentations and blogs for possible self-presentations.

We test our theory using the data collected from 321 bloggers and 299 SNS users. Our findings reveal the separate roles of actual and possible self-presentation with blogs and SNS in influencing perceived usefulness and emotional attachment to IT. However, contrary to our expectation, perceived usefulness for self-presentation in isolation does not have a direct impact on a user's commitment to IT. Our results show simply improving perceived usefulness is not enough to sustain the use of self-presenting IT – we must make sure that individuals are emotionally attached to IT to in order to strengthen their commitment to the technology.

*Keywords: self-presenting IT, actual self, possible self, blog, and social network sites*

## INTRODUCTION

*“People are able to fall in love with the artificial worlds that they have created or that have been built for them by others. People are able to see themselves in the computer. The machine can seem a second self (p.30).” (Turkle 1995)*

The last decade has seen an impressive body of research on the use of information technology (IT). One important thrust of past research has been to identify antecedents of technology adoption and use for the primary purpose of improving users' task performance, typically in an organizational setting. Increasingly, however, information technology is being used within the context of everyday life without specific task-related goals (Yoo 2010). For example, people use popular online social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook and Twitter to project certain positive self-images to others. Or in some cases, people use these media to express their own dreams, ideals and fantasies that they cannot pursue otherwise. In many cases, these are non-task-related activities. Similarly, while there are many professional blogs that provide commentaries on current events and technology, many individual blogs are established simply to capture and express the bloggers' personal story. In these cases, something other than task performance seems to draw users to the technology. From personal homepages to blogs, and from SNS to online dating sites, information technology is increasingly used to project users' self-images, whether they are grounded in reality or not. In this paper, we name this type of information technology as self-presenting IT. It refers to a class of information technology whose primary purpose is to project users' image of who they are in either the actual or the ideal sense.

The departure point of this study is that, as the relationship between users and information technology changes following the emergence of self-presenting IT, the way users perceive the technology is likely to change as well. Thus, this paper addresses the following questions: (1) How does the presentation of self-image using self-presenting IT influence one's reactions toward the technology? (2) Do actual and ideal self-presentation elicit

different reactions? And, (3) do these reactions to self-presentation contribute to users' commitment to the self-presenting IT? To answer these questions, we study users of the most popular blog hosting service and SNS in Korea as the two main examples of self-presenting IT. We conducted a survey with 321 bloggers and 299 SNS users.

In what follows, we first provide the background for our research. We then develop our research model drawing on the self-verification theory (Cooley 1902; Mead 1934; Swann 1987; Swann and Read 1981), followed by a detailed description of our study design. We then present the empirical findings and discussion. We conclude the paper with the theoretical and practical implications.

### **BACKGROUND: SELF-PRESENTING IT**

Almost 50 years ago, Goffman (1959) observed how people construct and project their desired self-image on the “front stage” of everyday face-to-face interactions. Now our everyday life is intertwined with a multitude of tools such as Blackberry, Facebook, blogs and Twitter. The front stage where we “act” now reaches a global audience which follows us through self-presenting technologies. Blogs and SNS such as Facebook and Twitter are two self-presenting IT technologies that expand our front stage in time and space.

A blog, short for *weblog*, is a frequently modified web page in which dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence (Herring et al. 2004). Over time, a blog includes new technical features such as archival, RSS (Real Simple Syndication) feed, trackback, tags and blogrolls. Furthermore, sites like Technocrati serve as blog aggregators where blogs and posts to blogs are continuously collected and categorized. SNS are web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; (2) establish a list of other users with whom they share a connection; and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison 2007).

SNS offers functions such as updating status, direct messaging, photo and video sharing, event invitation and archiving and maintaining user profiles that contain personal information such as photographs, biographic information and individual interests. Many SNS also provide a blog-like, on-line publication function.

Recent research on blogs and SNS suggests the use of self-presenting IT is quite different from more conventional information technology that is more task-centric. For example, the users of self-presenting IT use the technology to present themselves to others. They project their self-image using blog postings (Blood 2002; Herring et al. 2004; Miura and Yamashita 2004) or SNS profiles and status updates (DiMicco and Millen 2007). Furthermore, users of self-presenting IT become aware of the presence of their audience through the identity cues that they leave on their site (Tufekci 2008; Viegas 2005). The audience communicates their feedback on self-presentation using the technology (Miura and Yamashita 2004; Viegas 2005) and users tailor their self-presentation based on these cues (DiMicco and Millen 2007).

Past studies also show that the use of self-presenting IT has a positive effect on one's self-image. For example, Ellison et al (2007) showed that the use of Facebook was related to the expansion of social capital among members of a previously inhabited community. Walther et al (2008) report that among Facebook users, the attractiveness of the profile owner's friends enhances the owner's attractiveness. On the other hand, Tong et al. (2008) found an inverse-U shape relationship between the number of friends and the attractiveness of the profile owner.

Few studies have examined factors that influence the use of self-presenting IT. For example, Hsu and Lin (2008) found that user attitude, ease of use, enjoyment, altruism and reputation are important antecedents for blog use. Similarly, Lu and Hsiao (2007) explored behavioral motivations underlying the individuals' intention to continue to use blogs. They

found that personal outcome expectations have a strong direct effect on their intention to continue to blog. They also found that the subjective norm has an indirect effect on intention via self-efficacy and personal outcome expectations. However, these studies did not distinguish self-presenting IT from other task-centric technologies and use existing theoretical frameworks that have been built upon the implicit assumption that information technology has task-oriented utilitarian purposes, such as knowledge sharing and information archiving, for specific tasks in an organizational setting. However, as more descriptive studies of the use of self-presenting IT have shown, the primary purpose of self-presenting IT is not task-related. Instead, their use is related to a fundamental and mundane part of everyday life through self-presentation (Goffman 1959). Therefore, we need a new theoretical model that explicitly considers self-presentation as the primary purpose of the technology.

## **THEORY**

Shakespeare once wrote, “All the world is a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” Goffman (1959) notes that the presentation of self is indeed a crucial element in everyday social interactions. Using a drama metaphor, Goffman notes that individuals use verbal and non-verbal communication to put forward a certain self-image that they want others to see, shifting through multiple roles. Giddens (1984) note that skillful presentations of self to others with mutual reflexive monitoring of actions, which he refers to as *encounters*, are the “guiding thread of social interactions” (p. 72). In Goffman’s original work, the presentation of self “is anchored in the spatiality of the body, in orientation to others and to the experiencing of self,” (Giddens 1984, p. 64). Therefore, physical space has always played an important role in self-presentation.

As individuals spend increasingly large chunks of time on-line, however, much of their social interactions are taking place in online worlds. Just as a job seeker is projecting

certain positive self-images (being competent, task-focused and collaborative, for example) in face-to-face interviews, she might also craft her LinkedIn page to highlight her education background and job accomplishments. The same person, however, might project a self-image of being fun and sociable on her MySpace page.

Past research on self-presentation suggests that people have more than one public self that they display on the front stage region. For example, Higgins et al. (1987) distinguished between the *actual*, *ideal*, and *ought* selves: the actual self is the representation of the qualities that one actually expresses to others presently; the ideal self the representation of the qualities that one strives to possess; and the ought self the representation of the qualities that one feels obligated to have. Similarly, Markus and Nuriis (1986) note the presence of “possible selves,” which represents the ideal selves that we would like to become as well as the selves that we are afraid of becoming. Positive possible selves might include the successful self, the rich self, the beautiful self, and the loved and admired self; dreaded possible selves could include the lonely self, the depressed self, the incompetent self, the alcoholic self, or the unemployed self. Drawing on these studies, we focus on the use of IT for the public display of the *actual self* and the *possible self*.

Individuals are using self-presenting IT to construct and project both actual and possible selves. The basic departure point of our theoretical model is that when people engage in social interactions with others in an on-line space using self-presenting IT, they evaluate the technology cognitively and affectively based on their belief in how successful they are in self-presenting the image they want to project to others. We further argue that different self-presenting IT has different impacts in presenting different public selves.

### **Presentation of the Actual Self**

The act of presenting one’s self to others is a routine and essential aspect of social interactions (Rafael and Harness 2002). An important aspect of self-presentation is to create a

particular impression of one's present self to a particular audience for the purpose of influencing and gaining rewards from them (Schlenker 1980). This *strategic* self-presentation is not necessarily deceptive, yet does entail a manipulative quality in order to accomplish certain goals (Baumeister, 1982). As individuals spend more time online, they need a technology-mediated means to express their current self-image to others. Self-presenting IT becomes a tool for the public display of the actual self to others.

Choosing a useful tool is an important starting point for self-presentation. Goffman (1959) notes that individuals manage settings, clothing, words and nonverbal actions in order to project a particular impression to others. An effective tool for self-presentation should be under the individual's control and evoke desired responses from others (Higgins 1987). In this sense, the material characteristics of self-presenting IT, such as the absence of visual cues, the lack of physical constraints and the increased controllability of the visual image, can improve an individual's ability to control the public self-image. Furthermore, the ability to support strategic actual self-presentation is likely to appeal to the cognitive side of users' evaluation of technology as it pertains to the calculative means-goal relationship. For example, in the offline world, one projects a certain public self-image by using certain products or brands that signal social status, personality or tastes. However, in an online world, one can engineer a similar effect by merely posting textual descriptions or photographs of the same product (Schau and Gilly 2003). Therefore, when individuals are able to effectively project the image of the actual self that they want to present using IT, they are likely to perceive it as more useful. Thus, we hypothesize:

H1a: Actual self-presentation using a self-presenting IT has a positive effect on the perceived usefulness of the tool.

Self-presentation can be also *expressive*. Expressive self-presentation is to claim a desired identity for the self (Baumeister 1982, Schlenker, 1980). Unlike strategic self-

presentation, expressive self-presentation is based more on the individual's own standards and values than on the audience. An act of expressive self-presentation often requires others' feedback in order to gain self-verification (Swann et al. 1987). After all, one cannot really be a great mom or a genius unless they are recognized by others as such.

Past research shows that individuals develop positive emotional reactions when their self-image is verified (Burke and Stets 1999; Swann et al. 1994). In the context of an online community, Ma and Agarwal (2007) found that verification of one's own actual self leads to higher satisfaction. As such, expressive actual self-presentation is likely to appeal to the affective side of users' evaluation of technology. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1b: Actual self-presentation using a self-presenting IT has a positive effect on the emotional attachment to the tool.

### **Presentation of the Possible Self**

Unlike the actual self, one's possible self is not necessarily grounded in one's current reality. Instead, it is based on one's significant hopes, fears and fantasies (Markus and Nuris, 1986). While an individual is free to create any type of possible self, they derive from representations of the self in the past and are influenced by sociocultural and historical contexts. For example, after the 2010 World Cup final match, many young boys around the world no doubt created possible selves in the image of Andrés Iniesta, the Spanish midfielder who made the decisive goal against the Netherlands just four minutes before the end of the game.

Possible selves serve two important cognitive roles (Markus and Nuris 1986). First, they function as an incentive for future behaviors. Self-recognition of what might be possible for a person to achieve in the future motivates a particular set of behaviors that are in line with the particular possible self that they want to become. Possible selves provide a direction, and impetus for action, change and development. Second, possible selves also function as an



interpretive context for the actual self. A student with a possible self of a lawyer, for example, will interpret a grade of A in Latin Language as being more meaningful than others without such a possible self. Taken together, the self-presentation of possible selves plays an instrumental role in maintaining one's wellbeing in social interactions.

Past research on human-computer interactions suggests that individuals often use online worlds to create positive possible selves in a way that would not be possible in the physical environment. For example, users of online dating sites create avatar that are more attractive than their actual physical selves (Vasalou and Joinson 2009). Some homepage creators believe they can build self-images that are more positive than they actually are (Sherman et al. 2001). Characteristics of online worlds such as anonymity and flexibility that make it easier for people to present these possible selves representing their dreams, hopes, desires and fantasies. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H2a: Possible self-presentation using a self-presenting IT has a positive effect on the perceived usefulness of the tool.

Past studies on possible selves and self-verification show that possible self-presentation also has an affective impact on individuals. Higgins et al. (1997; Shah and Higgins 2001) found that when subtly induced to think about how they might approximate their ideal possible selves, people show an elevated cheerful affect. Therefore, constructing positive possible selves using blogs or SNS can provide a positive affective response to the individuals. Thus, we hypothesize:

H4b: Possible self-presentation using a self-presenting IT has a positive effect on the emotional attachment to the tool.

### **Role of the Characteristics of Self-Presenting IT**

Although both blogs and SNS are self-presenting IT, they have different material characteristics that are likely to influence the self-presentation process in an online world.

Most blogs are open to the public. Therefore, when individuals post on blogs, they do not necessarily know who is in the audience (Viegas 2005). While some visitors might leave their comments, by and large, blogs tend to be an one-way communication medium for the authors. To the contrary, users of SNS begin their use by connecting with acquaintances from the offline world and these acquaintances remain a visible audience at the site (DiMicco and Millen 2007). Furthermore, most SNS users share with visitors a significant amount of personal information such as personal photos, educational background, job, age, contact information, and relationship partner (Gross and Acquisti 2005).

Given these differences between the two media, we expect that presentation of the actual self is likely to be more salient among SNS users, while that of possible selves is likely to be more prominent among blog users. In SNS environments, individuals might be reluctant to project their possible selves as they might worry that their close acquaintances might see them as embellishments, exaggerations or even deceptions of who they really are. Therefore, individuals might feel safer to pursue possible future images that may not look realistic at the moment using blogs. At the same time, they might feel reluctant to share their actual self with unknown visitors to their blogs. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H3a: The impact of actual self-presentation by self-presenting IT is greater in SNS than in blogs.

H3b: The impact of possible self-presentation by self-presenting IT is greater in blogs than in SNS.

### **Commitment to Use Self-Presenting IT**

Finally, in determining the users' decision to use self-presenting IT, we argue that self-presentation's cognitive and expressive roles determine the two basic antecedents of user commitment to IT. Usefulness of IT for self-presentation, which is influenced through the cognitive, is the antecedent of continuous IT use (Davis et al. 1989). Furthermore, Swann

(1987) notes that people tend to enforce the use of the tool that helps them perform effective self-presentation. Therefore, the use of self-presenting IT is not defined as a single or even repeated use, but rather as a commitment to IT that refers to a long-term willingness to use the current IT in the presence of other alternatives. Therefore, we posit:

H4: The perceived usefulness of self-presenting IT has a positive effect on the commitment to IT.

Past research suggests that when emotionally attached, people tend to be strongly committed to pursuing their goals (Cox and Blount 2000). For example, emotional attachment is found to be the only significant antecedent that predicts the willingness to pay a price premium as compared with satisfaction or brand loyalty (Thomson et al. 2005).

Commitment requires one's willingness to stay in the relationship. Formation of this relational bond is associated with positive emotions (Baumeister and Leary 1995). Thus, when one is emotionally attached to a certain person or object, he or she is more likely to sustain the relationship (Burke and Stets 1999; Swann et al. 1994). Past research on IT use also provides a similar insight. For example, Compeau et al. (1999) found that users' affect influences IT use (Compeau et al. 1999); similarly, Kim et al. (2007) found that users' feelings are an antecedent of IT continuance (Kim et al. 2007). Therefore, we hypothesize:

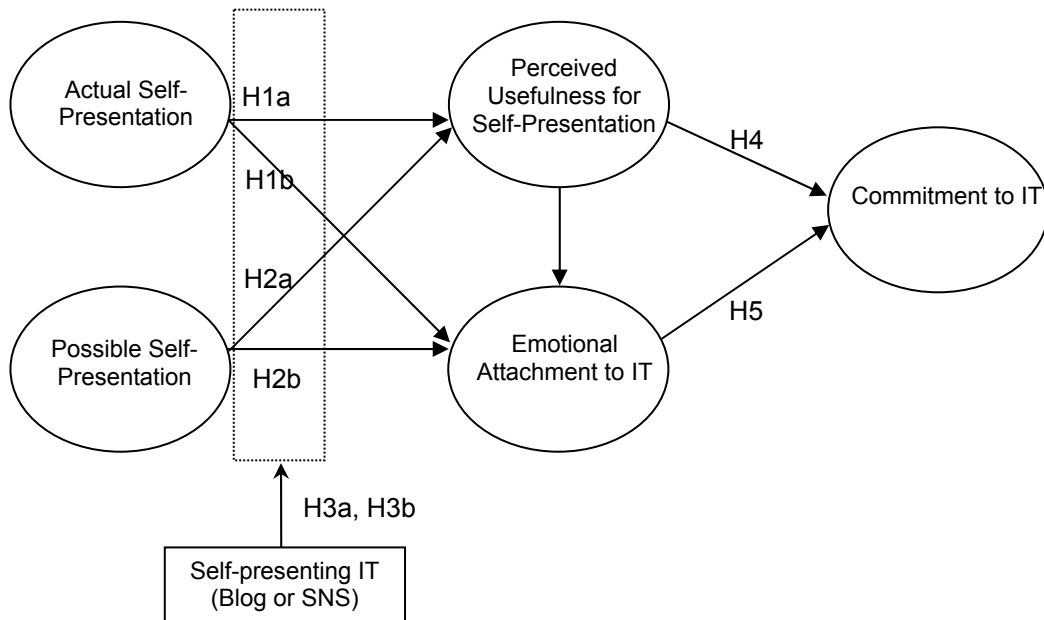
H5: The emotional attachment to self-presenting IT has a positive effect on the user's commitment to IT.

Finally, a user's cognition and affect are highly interdependent (Storbeck and Clore 2007). Ajzen and Fishbein (1975) note that affect follows cognition. Compeau et al. (1999) show that performance expectations that are formed prior to the initial use of IT influence affect (Compeau et al. 1999). Similarly, cognitive trust comes before emotional trust (Komiak and Benbasat 2006) and affective trust (Stewart and Gosain 2006), and cognitive reaction influences affective reaction (Parboteeah et al. 2009). Based on these prior studies, we

hypothesize:

H6: The perceived usefulness of self-presenting IT has a positive effect on the user's emotional attachment to self-presenting IT.

Figure 1 shows the summary of our research model.



**Figure 1. Research Model**

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Measurements

We conducted a survey to test the research model. Our research model consists of five constructs. Actual and possible self-presentations were measured following the Twenty Statements Test (TST) (Kuhn and McPartland 1954). For the actual self-presentation, we asked respondents to answer the question “In blogs (or SNS), who am I?” We then asked them to indicate how well the blog (or SNS) presents the image on a seven-point Likert scale. This process was repeated five times. Each answer on the Likert scale became an item for the actual self-presentation construct. We followed a similar procedure for possible self-presentation with the question of “What is the ideal me that I want to present in blogs (or

SNS)?” We used a seven-point Likert scale to indicate how well the blog (or SNS) presents the image. This process was also repeated five times. While the original TST repeats the question 20 times, following Ma and Agarwal (2007), we repeated the question five times to minimize subject fatigue.

We modified the perceived usefulness measure developed by Davis (1989) to specifically address for self-presentation. We used the measure developed by Thomson et al. (2005) for emotional attachment. Finally, we measured the commitment to self-presenting IT by adopting the measure developed by Johnson and Rusbult (1989) who developed it to assess the human relationship. For all measures, we used a seven-point Likert scale with responses that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The appendix shows the actual measures we used and their original sources.

### **Data Collection**

We collected our data through two separate cross-sectional surveys of blogs and SNS users. We gathered data from users of Naver ([blog.naver.com](http://blog.naver.com)) for blogs, and from users of Cyworld ([www.cyworld.com](http://www.cyworld.com)) for SNS. More than 50% of blog users in Korea use Naver (KISDI, 2008). Cyworld has over 21 million users for its SNS service (Gupta and Han 2008).

To ensure that participants are active bloggers, we chose our sample from the pool of “Power Blogs” and those who are randomly listed on Naver’s introduction page. “Power Blogs” are the most active blogs among Naver’s 15 million blogs in terms of activity, popularity and recognition. We sent an online message containing short explanations of our research with a link to the online questionnaire to both Power Bloggers and to regular bloggers. In this way, online questionnaires were sent to 1,331 bloggers (742 Power Blogs and 589 regular blogs); 321 bloggers responded (193 Power Blogs and 128 regular blogs with the combined response rate of 24.1%). A t-test showed that there was no significant

difference between Power Blogs and regular blogs among the variables we used in the study. The respondents were given 20 silver coins that can be used in Naver blogs for purchasing items such as music (one silver coin corresponds to roughly 10 U.S. cents).

We recruited Cyworld users from 473 college students who operated under the administration of a classroom instructor. Ninety-six percent of all Koreans in their 20s use Cyworld, forming the majority of Cyworld users (Moon 2005). For their participation, respondents were given 10 acorns, Cyworld cyber money (one acorn corresponds to roughly 10 U.S. cents). Unlike Naver, there was no announced index of active users in Cyworld. Therefore, we removed users with fewer than six months of usage to ensure users had enough experience. This resulted in 299 Cyworld users for our analysis. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

**Table 1. Demographic Data of Respondents**

Item	Category	Frequency (Percentage)	
		Blog	SNS
Gender	Male	137(42.68%)	186(62.21%)
	Female	184(57.32%)	113(37.79%)
Age	Less than 20 years	33(10.28%)	108(33.12%)
	20 - 29 years	121(37.69%)	188(62.88%)
	30 - 39 years	111(34.58%)	3(1.00%)
	40 - 49 years	44(13.71%)	N/A
	50 - 59 years	9(2.80%)	N/A
	Equal to or more than 60 years	3(0.93%)	N/A
Average time of usage per day	Less than 30 minutes	112(34.89%)	222(74.25%)
	30 minutes - 1 hour	48(14.95%)	34(11.37%)
	1 - 2 hours	77(23.99%)	37(12.37%)
	2 - 3 hours	50(15.58%)	4(1.34%)
	3 - 4 hours	12(3.74%)	N/A
	4 - 5 hours	6(1.87%)	1(0.33%)
	Equal to or more than 5 hours	16(4.98%)	1(0.33%)
Average usage period	Less than 1 year	3(0.93%)	4(1.34%)
	1 - 3 years	111(34.58%)	78(26.09%)
	3 - 5 years	161(50.16%)	139(46.49%)
	More than 5 years	46(14.33%)	78(26.09%)

Average number of updates per week	Less than 1 time	3(0.93%)	56(18.73%)
	1 - 5 times	187(58.26%)	224(74.92%)
	5 - 8 times	76(23.68%)	11(3.68%)
	Equal to or more than 8 times	55(17.13%)	8(2.68%)

## RESULTS

We used AMOS, a covariance-based structural equation modeling tool (Arbuckle 1994), for testing the measurement and structural models. AMOS is appropriate for testing a theory-based model with the assessment of unidimensionality and alternative measurement models (Arbuckle and Wothke 1999; Byrne 2001).

### Measurement Model

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics. We first examined if the users of blogs and SNS were different with respect to the key constructs using a series of t-tests. The results show that they were statistically different ( $p < 0.001$ ). This supports our assumption that although both blogs and SNS are self-presenting IT, users use them differently. Therefore, we tested the measurement and structural models separately for each group of users.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics**

Construct	Blog		SNS	
	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.
Actual self-presentation	5.733	1.043	4.874	1.332
Possible self-presentation	5.294	1.287	4.367	1.570
Perceived usefulness for self-presentation	5.959	1.014	4.835	1.276
Emotional attachment to IT	5.735	1.227	4.038	1.390
Commitment to IT	6.031	1.233	4.961	1.412

In order to ensure the proper psychometric properties of the scales we used, we conducted both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. We conducted an exploratory factor analysis with a Varimax rotation. The results of our analysis suggest two items of commitment measure show high cross-loading scores. Those two items were dropped for remaining analyses. The results also suggest that the first three items for each of the actual

and possible self-presentations should be used for further analysis. Table 3 shows the factor-loading and cross-loading scores for the variables that were used for our final analysis.

**Table 3. Factor loading and cross-loading scores**

Item	Actual self-verification (ASV)		Ideal self-verification (ISV)		Perceived usefulness for self-presentation (PUS)		Emotional attachment to IT (EAT)		Commitment to IT (CMT)	
	Blog	SNS	Blog	SNS	Blog	SNS	Blog	SNS	Blog	SNS
ASV1	0.517	0.738	0.406	0.079	0.194	0.164	0.094	0.164	0.108	-0.135
ASV2	0.800	0.735	0.151	0.215	0.103	0.105	0.081	0.050	0.092	0.196
ASV3	0.780	0.711	0.171	0.214	0.035	0.068	0.128	0.063	-0.018	0.057
ISV1	0.103	0.054	0.843	0.799	0.048	0.087	0.084	0.172	0.013	0.054
ISV2	0.175	0.337	0.756	0.696	0.072	0.140	0.216	0.122	-0.038	-0.028
ISV3	0.277	0.244	0.558	0.773	0.074	0.117	0.196	0.126	0.104	0.086
PUS1	0.098	0.176	0.057	0.188	0.901	0.759	0.205	0.361	0.086	0.035
PUS2	0.110	0.100	0.040	0.175	0.819	0.767	0.252	0.325	0.045	0.029
PUS3	0.057	0.108	0.057	0.055	0.874	0.853	0.269	0.296	0.094	0.137
PUS4	0.065	0.098	0.129	0.104	0.797	0.779	0.278	0.298	0.138	0.120
EAT1	0.093	0.157	0.143	0.028	0.225	0.213	0.771	0.785	0.274	0.208
EAT2	0.079	0.071	0.083	0.092	0.091	0.165	0.795	0.824	0.139	0.039
EAT3	0.158	-0.007	-0.048	0.166	0.138	0.145	0.748	0.806	0.099	0.071
EAT4	0.056	0.039	0.020	0.140	0.175	0.341	0.733	0.639	0.276	0.224
EAT5	0.003	0.072	0.128	0.077	0.189	0.194	0.793	0.793	0.229	0.273
EAT6	0.052	0.072	0.071	0.103	0.137	0.263	0.852	0.748	0.049	0.204
EAT7	0.143	0.130	0.117	0.181	0.172	0.239	0.811	0.692	-0.024	0.128
EAT8	0.022	0.057	0.238	0.091	0.280	0.193	0.725	0.789	0.140	0.081
EAT9	0.075	0.080	0.160	0.036	0.254	0.258	0.747	0.716	0.193	0.166
EAT10	0.052	0.084	0.216	0.061	0.143	0.141	0.798	0.781	0.028	0.126
CMT1	0.071	-0.053	0.151	0.058	0.075	-0.009	0.149	0.263	0.795	0.782
CMT2	-0.037	0.093	0.087	0.131	0.097	0.154	0.209	0.324	0.816	0.775
CMT3	0.102	0.131	-0.161	-0.101	0.086	0.383	0.190	0.175	0.452	0.464

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis with the remaining items. As shown in Table 4, the goodness of fit indices of the confirmatory factor analysis confirm the convergent and discriminant validity of the measures.

**Table 4. Goodness of Fit Indices of the CFA**

Group	Chi-square	d.f.	Chi-square/d.f.	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Blog	363.701	208	1.749	0.910	0.881	0.922	0.965	0.048
SNS	390.706	208	1.878	0.900	0.867	0.907	0.954	0.054

We examined the reliability of the measures using Fornell and Larcker's (1981)



composite reliability. As shown in Table 5, all constructs achieved scores well above the desirable level of 0.70 for both blogs and SNS (Bagozzi and Yi 1998). We then calculated AVE (Average Variance Extracted) to examine the convergent validity of the measures. For both blogs and SNS, all constructs showed an AVE greater than 0.5, showing an acceptable level of convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Finally, in order to examine discriminant validity, we calculated the square root of each construct's AVE. For all constructs, the square roots of the AVE were greater than the correlations with other constructs, indicating a satisfactory level of discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). These results are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Correlations and AVE of Constructs**

**Blogs**

Construct	Composite reliability	ASV	ISV	PUS	EAT	CMT
Actual self-verification (ASV)	0.814	0.770				
Ideal self-verification (ISV)	0.830	0.686***	0.788			
Perceived usefulness for self-presentation (PUS)	0.943	0.354***	0.272***	0.898		
Emotional attachment to IT (EAT)	0.954	0.382***	0.427***	0.535***	0.822	
Commitment to IT (CMT)	0.785	0.249**	0.222**	0.329***	0.526***	0.746

**SNS**

Construct	Composite reliability	ASV	ISV	PUS	EAT	CMT
Actual self-verification (ASV)	0.813	0.769				
Ideal self-verification (ISV)	0.855	0.692***	0.815			
Perceived usefulness for self-presentation (PUS)	0.934	0.439***	0.415***	0.882		
Emotional attachment to IT (EAT)	0.951	0.341***	0.395***	0.664***	0.813	
Commitment to IT (CMT)	0.806	0.288**	0.305***	0.459***	0.625***	0.765

**Note:** The shaded numbers of the diagonal are the square root of the variance shared between the constructs and their measures. Off-diagonal elements are correlations among constructs.

Finally, we examined the possible presence of common method variance in two different ways. We first conducted Harman’s single factor test to examine the possible presence of common method variance. If common method variance does exist, either a single factor will emerge or one general factor will account for the majority of the covariance among measures (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The poor model fit shown in Table 6 suggests that there is no common method variance. We also ran a confirmatory factor model with a common method latent variable and theoretical constructs (Liang et al. 2007). We used PLS for this test as this model causes an identification problem in AMOS. The results did not change.

**Table 6. Harmon’s Single Factor Test - Goodness of Fit Indices**

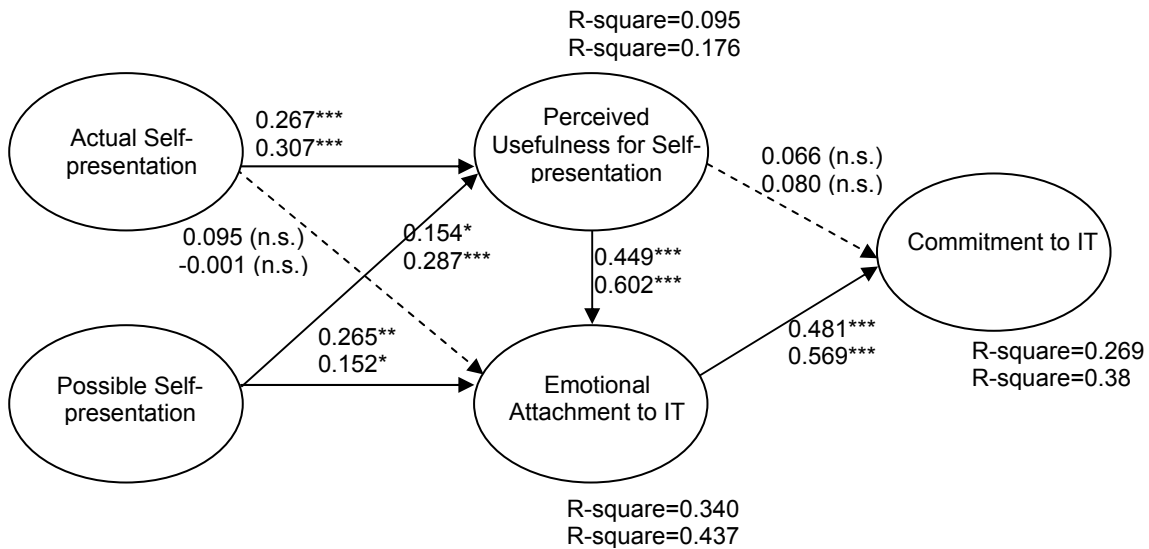
Group	Chi-square	d.f.	Chi-square/d.f.	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Blog	1705.500	230	7.415	0.643	0.572	0.636	0.667	0.142
SNS	1329.908	230	5.782	0.670	0.603	0.685	0.723	0.127

### Hypothesis Testing

We tested our model as shown in Figure 1 using a structural equation modeling approach (see Figure 2). Table 7 shows the goodness of fit indices of the structural model. Since different types of indices have their own advantages and disadvantages, multiple indices of differing types should be included (Hair et al. 2005). In our model fit, although the GFI is slightly below the recommended level 0.9, other indices are satisfactory (Hair et al. 2005; Hartwick and Barki 1994; Segars and Grover 1993), indicating our structural model is acceptable.

**Table 7. Goodness of Fit Indices of the Structural Model**

Group	Chi-square	d.f.	Chi-square/d.f.	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Blog	443.496	211	2.102	0.895	0.863	0.905	0.948	0.059
SNS	472.887	211	2.241	0.882	0.846	0.888	0.934	0.065
Recommended value			<=3.0	>=0.90	>=0.80	>=0.90	>=0.92	<=0.07



Above digits indicate coefficients for blog  
 Below digits indicate coefficients for SNS  
 \* significant at  $p < 0.05$ .  
 \*\* significant at  $p < 0.01$ .  
 \*\*\* significant at  $p < 0.001$ .

**Figure 2. Results of Structural Model Test**

The results show that actual self-presentation using blogs and SNS has a positive impact on perceived usefulness, supporting H1a. However, actual self-presentation does not have a significant impact on emotional attachment to the technology. Therefore, H1b is not supported. Our results further show that possible self-presentation using blogs and SNS has a significant impact on the perceived usefulness of the technology (H2a) as well as emotional attachment to the technology (H2b).

To test H3a and H3b, we conducted three unpaired t-tests, comparing the path coefficients of the model for blogs and SNS (Yoo and Alavi 2001). We predicted that the impact of actual self-presentation will be greater in SNS than blogs (H3a), while their impact will be reversed for possible self-presentation (H3b). As expected, the impact of actual self-presentation on the perceived usefulness of self-presenting IT is significantly greater among SNS users than blog users ( $t = 5.413, p < 0.001$ ), supporting H3a. Also as expected, the impact of possible self-presentation on emotional attachment to self-presenting IT is significantly greater among blog users than SNS users ( $t = 18.49, p < 0.001$ ). Contrary to our

expectation, however, the impact of possible self-presentation on the perceived usefulness of self-presenting IT is significantly greater among SNS users than blog users ( $t = 18.915, p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, H3b is partially supported.

Our results further show that the perceived usefulness of self-presenting IT has no significant impact on the commitment to use neither blogs nor SNS, rejecting H4. As expected, emotional attachment to IT has significant impact on the commitment to use both blogs and SNS, supporting H5. Finally, as expected, the perceived usefulness of IT has a significant impact on emotional attachment to self-presenting IT, for both blogs and SNS, supporting H6.

## **DISCUSSION**

Information technology is increasingly used in everyday social interactions. People keep their blogs to record the growth of their kids, to capture the memory of a vacation, or to share their thoughts on current events. Others use SNS to send photos to friends and family or share their thoughts or emotions with others throughout the day using their status update. Such use of technology exhibits a significant departure from the use of technology for work purposes. One particular purpose for using information technology in everyday life is to present self-image. The goal of this paper was to propose a theory of self-presenting IT use and test the theory. In particular, we propose a theoretical model that focuses on the role of the cognitive and affective assessments of actual and possible self-presentation using blogs and SNS, and their impact on users' commitment to the technology.

Overall, the findings render strong empirical support for the proposed theoretical model. Our findings show that when presenting their actual self, users evaluate blogs and SNS cognitively based on their perceived usefulness. On the other hand, when presenting their possible self-image, users evaluate blogs and SNS both cognitively and emotionally. This suggests that the presentation of the current actual self has more strategic and

instrumental roles, while the presentation of the possible self has both strategic and expressive roles. One possible explanation for such a gap is that users may not be satisfied with their actual self-image. Therefore, although effectively presenting their actual image might be useful, it does not bring any emotional satisfaction. However, imagining and presenting a possible future self may bring emotional satisfaction, causing emotional attachment to the self-presenting IT.

Another important finding is that the material characteristics of self-presenting IT have a significant impact on self-presentation. Blog users tend to think that they can remain anonymous (Qian and Scott 2007), while SNS users consider SNS a non-anonymous place (Zhao et al. 2008). We originally theorized that the anonymity of the blog would amplify the impact of possible self-presentation as the users would be less concerned about how realistic their possible selves are. Further, the closed nature of SNS would make the actual presentation more important among users. However, our results seem to suggest that it is not the presentation of actual vs. possible selves, but rather the presentation of the strategic vs. expressive self that is influenced by the material characteristics of the technology. That is, individuals present their actual and possible selves to close friends and family members who are in their social network in order to *express* their identity and gain verification from them. On other hand, individuals use blogs in order to create a certain public self-image, both current and possible. For example, many PowerBlogs are dedicated to a particular topic, such as cooking, sports, politics, and music. Through blogs, users might want to project a certain desirable image (such as a housewife who is interested in cooking or a sports enthusiast who is interested in professional baseball games) and continue to improve the possible image in the future. Future research needs to further explore how individuals use different material characteristics of self-presenting technologies. In particular, new technologies such as Twitter provide very different material features, such as real-time updates, location disclosure and

one-way broadcasting to a group of follows. More careful theorization is needed on how these and other possible features enable and constrain different forms of self-presentations in different social contexts.

Finally, our findings suggest that perceived usefulness does not have a direct impact on a user's commitment to use self-presenting IT. Instead, its impact is fully mediated by an emotional attachment to self-presenting IT, which has a direct impact on users' commitment to the technology. Furthermore, our results show that the emotional attachment explains 26.9% of the variance of blog commitment and 38.9% of SNS commitment. The relative importance of the affective variable over the cognitive variable in determining self-presenting IT use is a clear break from the past IS research that emphasized the role of cognitive variables such as perceived usefulness, ease of use and relative advantage (Davis et al 1989, Karahanna et al. 2002). Of course, scholars have noted the role of non-cognitive variables in technology use such as affect (Compeau et al. 1999), enjoyment (Venkatesh 2000), playfulness (Hackbarth et al. 2003; Venkatesh 2000), and anxiety (Compeau et al. 1999; Thatcher and Perrewé 2002; Venkatesh 2000). However, these variables were used primarily to provide additional explanations after the impact of cognitive-based variables had been considered. In fact, a content analysis of 242 sample articles of IT-related journals shows that only 5% cover affective issues as a major theme (Julien et al. 2005).

Increasingly, the role of emotion and affective variables in technology has been recognized in the literature. For example, Tractinsky et al. (2000) argues that the affective quality of user interface design has a positive effect on IT use. In the domain of online shopping, Koufaris (2002) reports that emotional reactions such as shopping enjoyment are as important as perceived usefulness in predicting the intention to return to the site (Koufaris 2002). Kim et al. (2007) report that feeling (i.e., pleasure and arousal) and thinking (i.e., usefulness) have a effect on IT continuance intention.

Our study adds to this growing body of literature which recognizes the important role of affect-based variables in IT use. In particular, our study shows that emotional attachment to the technology is an important variable for the commitment to use self-presenting IT such as blogs and SNS.

### **Limitations**

The study suffers from several limitations. First, the SNS users are drawn from a sample of university students who are taking the same class. Therefore, their response to SNS might reflect idiosyncratic characteristics they share that result from unique social relationships and peer pressure. However, as noted earlier, the majority of Cyworld users share the same biographic characteristics of our sample. Furthermore, the majority of the boundaries of social networks of users who participated in our study go beyond the students in the class. Therefore, we believe the threat to the external validity due to our sample is minimum.

Second, we did not consider if self-presentation was indeed the primary goal in their use of blogs and SNS. Certainly users use blogs and SNS for various purposes including traditional task performance, knowledge sharing and information archiving. Therefore, their assessment of these tools does not focus exclusively on the aspect of self-presentation. However, the strong results of our analysis suggest that even if users demonstrate a mixed use of these tools (in part for task performance and in part for self-presentation), the impact of self-presentation was still evident. Future research can examine the actual use of the tools to determine the degree to which users utilize these tools for self-presentation purposes.

### **Implication for Practice**

Our study provides several pragmatic suggestions for firms that design and provide self-presenting IT. Our findings suggest that these firms must consider two different forms of self-presentation, actual and possible, as well as two different purposes of self-presentation,

strategic and expressive, in designing their systems. Furthermore, these firms must provide a number of different design features that allow users to construct and project their actual and possible selves.

Users' ability to express their possible selves is a key variable that drives their emotional attachment to the self-presenting IT. This suggests that designers of self-presenting IT must explicitly consider not only the current self, but future selves. It might require different solicitation techniques. Furthermore, as possible selves might be less fixed and more malleable over time, designers of self-presenting IT must consider how to respond to the continuing evolution of users' possible selves.

Our study also suggests that material features of self-presenting IT such as anonymity and the nature of the social network influence the way users react to the technology. This will become even more important as users face a steadily growing number of choices in self-presenting IT. Before implementing certain features, therefore, designers of self-presenting IT must carefully consider their implication for users' expectations and their experience in self-presentation. Recently, many users left Facebook as the company changed some of its privacy features. Most of these individuals were concerned about their ability to control what information will be shared with whom. Our study suggests that this was not simply an issue of privacy and security, but an issue that is intimately related to users' perceived ability to control their public image as it is portrayed in Facebook. Given that our study suggests that users choose different tools for different kinds of self-presentation, changes in the features of self-presenting IT might inadvertently change the nature of self-presentation. For example, the aforementioned certain changes to Facebook's privacy setting might have led to the exposure of certain self-images, which were meant to be shared with a user's close friends, to a much larger public audience for whom users might want to project a much more strategically-constructed self.



## **Implication for Theory**

Our study offers several important implications for theory. First, it provides a new perspective on IT as a self-presentation tool in everyday social interactions. In that sense, IT might bear a resemblance to fashion, to our personal accessories, and other mundane artifacts that we use in our daily experiences. Future IS research needs a much richer vocabulary to describe IT as a self-presentation tool rather than a task-performance tool (Yoo 2010). Such a view might help IS scholars investigate new kinds of IT artifacts such as the iPhone or iPod that are being considered more like a fashion accessory than computer and communication technology.

Second, self-presentation is closely related to self-verification. In our study, we conceptualized self-presenting IT as a tool to present self-images to others. However, users gain self-verification in that process. It is not clear, however, if users make a distinction between self-verification from others or self-verification from the tool. Past research on computer-mediated research shows that people often forget others 'behind' the technology when they communicate through computers (Sproull and Kiesler 1986). Therefore, it is also quite likely that users might begin to treat IT itself as an actor that provides self-verification. The work by Ihde (1990) suggests an alterity relationship between technology and users. In an alterity relationship, users treat technology as the other. This relationship underpins the personification and anthropomorphism of technology. Furthermore, such theorization of IT can provide a useful theoretical avenue for studying recent phenomenon surrounding virtual reality tools such as Second Life. How and why users create certain characters in such a virtual space can be explored by theorizing the space is a self-presenting IT.

Third, our study shows the importance of the affective dimension in self-presenting IT use. This line of inquiry needs to be further expanded. We only included emotional attachment to IT. Certainly there are other affect-based variables that must be considered in

the context of self-presenting IT use. Furthermore, we only identified possible self-presentation and perceived usefulness as two antecedents of emotional attachment of IT. However, we are certain that there are other antecedents to affect-based variables that one must consider.

Finally, we only considered blogs and SNS as two types of self-presenting IT. However, as we noted earlier, there are many other IT-based tools and products that are being used for self-presentation. Twitter and mobile phones are clearly two candidates that provide very different materiality such as real-time connectivity and location-based information. Future scholars must consider not just different types of self-presenting IT, but the specific material features that they afford in order to build a richer understanding of self-presenting IT. Furthermore, as information technology is increasingly embedded into other traditionally non-IT artifacts such as cars, clothes and furniture, the ways individuals use those artifacts in self-presentation are also likely to change. For example, when an individual purchases a car, electronic features might be more important than the engine's horsepower in projecting a certain self-image. Theorizing different material characteristics of self-presenting IT will allow us to begin to study such new phenomenon.

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## Appendix: Measurement Items

Actual self-verification (based on and Kuhn and McPartland (1954) and Ma and Agarwal (2007))	
ASV	<p>Below are five fill-in-the-blank areas for you to answer the question “In this blogosphere (or Cyworld), <u>Who am I?</u>” Freely type in an answer next to the numbered item and make each answer different (e.g., smart, happy, free, good friend, nice son, someone’s girlfriend, traveler, student, photographer, etc.). Answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself, not to somebody else. Write the answers in the order that they occur to you. There are no right or wrong answers.</p> <p>In this blogosphere (or Cyworld), I am _____.</p> <p>Please indicate how well the blog (or Cyworld) presents the image you just wrote.</p> <p>(Writing self-view and indication is repeated five times for ASV1~ASV5) Scale: Not at all→Very much (1-7 scale).</p>
Ideal self-verification (based on and Kuhn and McPartland (1954) and Ma and Agarwal (2007))	
ISV	<p>Below are five fill-in-the-blank areas for you to answer the question “In this blogosphere (or Cyworld), <u>What is ideal me that I want to present?</u>” Freely type in an answer next to the numbered item and make each answer different (e.g., smart, happy, free, good friend, nice son, someone’s girlfriend, traveler, student, photographer, etc.). Answer as if you were giving the answers to yourself, not to somebody else. Write the answers in the order that they occur to you. There are no right or wrong answers.</p> <p>In this blogosphere (or Cyworld), I want to be _____.</p> <p>Please indicate how well the blog (or Cyworld) presents the image you just wrote.</p> <p>(Writing self-view and indication is repeated five times for ISV1~ISV5) Scale: Not at all→Very much (1-7 scale).</p>
Perceived usefulness of self-verifying IT for self-presentation (based on Davis (1989))	
PUS1	Using the ----- improves my performance in presenting myself
PUS2	Using the ----- increases my productivity in presenting myself
PUS3	Using the ----- enhances my effectiveness in presenting myself
PUS4	Using the ----- is useful in presenting myself
Emotional attachment to self-verifying IT (based on Thomson et al. (2005))	
EAT1	I feel affectionate toward -----
EAT2	I feel love toward -----
EAT3	I feel peaceful toward -----
EAT4	I feel friendly toward -----
EAT5	I feel attached to -----
EAT6	I feel bonded to -----
EAT7	I feel connected to -----
EAT8	I feel passionate with -----
EAT9	I feel delighted with -----
EAT10	I feel captivated with -----
Commitment to IT (based on Johnson and Rusbult (1989))	
CMT1	I am likely to end my use of ----- in near future
CMT2	I expect my use of ----- continue long
CMT3	If I change from ----- to another, the alternative should be very attractive
CMT4*	I am attached to -----
CMT5*	I am committed to use of -----

----- was filled with blog or Cyworld depending on the type of IT respondents use  
Last two items of actual and ideal self-verification were dropped from confirmatory factor analysis

\* Item dropped from confirmatory factor analysis.