

Association for Information Systems

AIS Electronic Library (AISeL)

SAIS 2022 Proceedings

Southern (SAIS)

4-1-2022

FORMATION OF IT IDENTITY: INSIGHTS FROM SELF-EXPANSION AND SELF-EXTENSION THEORIES

JIGNYA PATEL

Florida Institute of Technology / University of Memphis, jpatel@fit.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aisel.aisnet.org/sais2022>

Recommended Citation

PATEL, JIGNYA, "FORMATION OF IT IDENTITY: INSIGHTS FROM SELF-EXPANSION AND SELF-EXTENSION THEORIES" (2022). *SAIS 2022 Proceedings*. 40.

<https://aisel.aisnet.org/sais2022/40>

This material is brought to you by the Southern (SAIS) at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in SAIS 2022 Proceedings by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.

FORMATION OF IT IDENTITY: INSIGHTS FROM SELF-EXPANSION AND SELF-EXTENSION THEORIES

Jignya Patel

Florida Institute of Technology

jpatel@fit.edu

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Ubiquitous use of information technology (IT) today has led to the blurring of boundaries between IT and the individual's sense of self. Literature has termed this phenomenon as the development of positive IT identity and is defined as the extent to which an individual views use of an IT as integral to his or her sense of self. It is a cognitive assessment of the degree of overlap between the self and a target IT and is reflected in feelings of connectedness with an IT, enthusiasm with an IT, and a sense of reliance upon an IT.

Positive IT identity has been shown to not only explain positive information systems (IS) outcomes such as extended IT use, exploratory IT use, cyber security compliance behaviors, happiness and life satisfaction of IT users, and coworker support, but also negative outcomes such as perceived difficulty in time management and self-regulative capabilities. Despite this corpus of research, the extant literature does not describe *how* people develop IT identity. Preliminary conceptualization on IT identity formation has cited two theoretical frameworks interchangeably for the development of IT identity – self expansion and self-extension. The perspective on self-expansion dictates that individuals have an innate need to expand the meanings attached to their self-concept and one way this need can be fulfilled is by incorporating the capabilities afforded by material objects into their individual self-concepts. The perspective on self-extension dictates that external objects become part of one's self concept when one is able to exercise power or control over the object. The greater this control, the more closely integrated with self the object becomes. In either case, the end product is the same – the inclusion of IT into an individual's self-concept i.e. formation of an IT identity. While these frameworks are commonly cited in prior IS literature, the underlying psychological mechanisms through which these perspectives lead to the formation of IT identity are largely missing. The lack of theoretical and empirical work in this area has not only led to these frameworks as being cited interchangeably, but also an ambiguity in understanding which framework is operating in the formation of IT identity. Is it self-expansion or self-extension, or perhaps, both!

Understanding how individuals develop positive IT identity is important for at least two reasons. First, given that IT identity is primarily a personal construction, explicating the psychological processes underlying IT identity formation can unravel how individuals *experience* IT during their interaction with it. Such an understanding can be important to user experience researchers and designers in developing feature set that create deep meaningful experiences that individuals can identify with, potentially creating long-lasting loyal usage of IT. Second, such an understanding can provide insight into the motivational principles individuals use to construct IT identity. This can be useful information for managers wanting to change post adoption resistance behaviors. For example, it is likely that people displaying resistive behaviors with new organizational IT are doing so as a result of being unable to positively identify with new IT. In such a case, managers can design interventions to stimulate the self-expansion or/and self-extension processes that create positive identification with new IT, thus reducing setbacks and losses during new IT implementation.

Given the research gap and the importance of the topic, the primary question addressed by this study is *how does IT identity develop?* To answer this question, the study draws on both theories from the marketing literature to demonstrate that they are indeed distinct strategies triggering different motivational states. While self-expansion motivates the development of emotional attachment to IT, self-extension primarily motivates the development of psychological ownership of IT. It is through these two motivational states that individuals are able to positively identify with IT.

Keywords

Positive IT Identity, Self-Extension, Self-Expansion, Emotional Attachment, Psychological Ownership