Extended Self in a Digital World

Abstract

The extended self was proposed in 1988. Since it was formulated many technological changes have dramatically affected the way we consume, present ourselves, and communicate. This conceptual update seeks to revitalize the concept, incorporate the impacts of digitization, and provide an understanding of consumer sense of self in today’s technological environment. It is necessarily a work in progress, for the digital environment and our behavior within it continue to evolve. But some important changes are already clear. I consider five changes with digital consumption that impact the nature of self and the nature of possessions. Needed modifications and additions to the extended self are outlined and directions for future research are suggested. The digital world opens a host of new means for self extension using many new consumption objects to reach a vastly broader audience. Even though this calls for certain reformulations, the basic concept of the extended self remains vital.