

(8) Constructing Presence: Towards a two-level model of the formation of Spatial Presence experiences

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Abstract

Contemporary Presence research is in demand of a commonly accepted theoretical framework for theorizing and empirical studies. Therefore, we introduce a conceptual model of Spatial Presence (Vorderer, Wirth, Saari, Gouveia, Biocca, Jäncke, Böcking, Hartmann, Klimmt, Schramm, Laarni, Ravaja, Gouveia, Ribeiro, Sacau, Baumgartner, & Jäncke, 2003). The model regards Spatial Presence as state that is affected both by internal and external (media) factors. It is organized in two levels of processes that are involved in the emergence of Presence:

The first level refers to the formation of a spatial situation model (SSM). It is a mental model of the perceived spatial (media) environment. The formation of the SSM depends on the spatial cues provided by the media product as well as the users' spatial knowledge structures, motivational state and their resulting attentional focus.

On the model's second level, the transition from the mere existence of an SSM towards the actual state of Presence is facilitated through the (successful) test of a perceptual hypothesis. The hypothesis states that the mediated environment is the "primary ego-reference frame". If it is confirmed, users assign their self-location and perceived possible actions to the mediated environment (i. e., they feel Presence). Various media attributes and user characteristics influence this transition to the state of Presence.

Vorderer, P, Wirth, W., Saari, T., Gouveia, F. R., Biocca, F., Jäncke, F., Böcking, S., Hartmann, T., Klimmt, C., Schramm, H., Laarni, J., Ravaja, N., Gouveia, L. B., Rebeiro, N., Sacau, A., Baumgartner, T. & Jäncke, P. (2003). *Constructing Presence: Towards a two-level model of the formation of Spatial Presence*. Unpublished report to the European Community, Project Presence: MEC (IST-2001-37661). Hannover, Munich, Helsinki, Porto, Zurich.