Telepresence is generally defined as the feeling that a mediated content is real and the viewer experiences it as if he or she were present in mediated world (Hartmann, Klimmt, Vorderer, 2009, p.138). Research shows that media entertainment and telepresence are highly correlated, however defining the exact relationship between them is an obstructive task. Therefore, research defines phenomena of telepresence and attempts to find the links or underlying factors between them and entertainment.

Telepresence in mediated environments can induce the feeling of spatial presence and social presence. The first phenomenon is defined as the feeling of being physically present in the mediated environment, acting in it, and is influenced by the nature and interactivity of the mediated environment. Likewise, social presence is the extended feeling of being together and interacting with other social beings that are only present in the mediated environment (Hartmann, Klimmt, Vorderer, 2009. P.138). In addition to the above phenomena, feelings of presence can be also induced by non-mediated environments. Mediated content can cause sensations of involvement, transportation and flow which are similar to sensations of spatial and social presence but distinctive in the way they are experienced or the factors they are influenced by. Thus, presence can be triggered either automatically, due to the nature and realness of the mediated environment, or voluntarily, due to the meaningfulness and naturalness of the mediated
content. Moreover, as the immersive capabilities of media improve, suppressing the sensation of presence becomes impossible as mediated products resemble real and natural worlds.

Researchers argue that presence and entertainment are highly interrelated and the former is a prerequisite for the latter and vice versa. Viewers need to believe in the mediated world to feel involved and entertained. Therefore, presence can enhance a feeling of entertainment or vice versa. What that means is that both phenomena are influenced and induced by the same factors. For that reason, researchers have discerned some factors that illuminate the relationship between telepresence and entertainment. The first has to do with “Automatic natural perceptions” that viewers experience during a mediated experience. In order to trigger a sense of presence, the mediated product has to depict natural cues accurately, resembling real-life, even when the media offering is fictional. In addition to this, when natural cues and stimuli are presented in a media product, sensations of entertainment can be induced to the viewer, as his/her mediated experience is relevant to his/her real life experiences. In cases where the mediated experience is evidently fake, the sensation of presence is interrupted along with the sensation of entertainment (Hartmann, Klimmt, Vorderer, 2009, p.144). In addition to the above, a second factor that induces both presence and entertainment sensations is “Attention allocation and interest”. The viewers’ willingness to focus their attention on a media product because they find it interesting, can evoke the sensation of presence, since viewers are absorbed by the media product. Accordingly, a sensation of entertainment is also evoked, since reducing attention would mean losing important aspects of the media product and therefore reducing the feeling of entertainment (Hartmann, Klimmt, Vorderer, 2009, p.145) Another factor underlying presence and entertainment is “Escapism”. Audiences might use media offerings that imitate real life stimuli in order to be “transported” into them and “absorbed” by them. By experiencing the phenomenon
of telepresence, audiences can escape from their real-world problems and act in a different world, where they are experiencing pleasant feelings. In addition to this, by “escaping” into a mediated world, audiences will most of the times feel entertained, not only due to the absence of negative feelings but also due to the mediated world itself (Hartmann, Klimmt, Vorderer, 2009, p.146). “Suspension of disbelief” is a fourth factor that leads to presence and entertainment in the media world. As media products become more accurate in their display of natural cues and stimuli and as the technology allows mediated worlds to look realistic, viewers become less critical of the media offerings and are willing to suspend critical thoughts and any disbelief they have for the offering itself. Therefore, presence can be evoked in and maintained by viewers who feel involved with the media offering. Moreover, since viewers are experiencing telepresence, they believe in the reality the media product presents and they are experiencing real life emotions, which means that they can feel entertained (Hartmann, Klimmt, Vorderer, 2009, p.147). Finally, “Arousal” is another factor that links entertainment with presence. Feelings of arousal can challenge viewers and motivate them to experience sensations of presence. Also, feelings of arousal can induce feelings of entertainment when the media product is distressing but has a good ending, which creates the sensation of entertainment (Hartmann, Klimmt, Vorderer, 2009, p.148).

A different stream of research argues that the above factors may be embedded in the relationship between Presence and Entertainment. More specifically, there are two approaches, one arguing that presence cultivates entertainment and one supporting the exact opposite. The first approach argues, that as audiences feel more present and involved, factors that lead to entertainment are triggered, leading to sensations of entertainment. However, what is interesting is that when users are deep into the presence experience, they might have to calibrate telepresence in order to
maintain their entertainment levels. On the other hand, the second approach supports that entertainment precedes presence, meaning that if users feel entertainment they will proceed to maintain that feeling by getting involved with the media offering. They will focus their attention on it, they will “dive” into the apparent reality it offers and they will easily suspend disbelief, therefore triggering sensations of presence.

In conclusion, it is generally accepted that media entertainment and presence are interrelated and exist within each other, however defining the exact causal relationships between them is burdensome, as there are other factors affecting both phenomena. Also, the nature of both phenomena complicates the task of studying them as they deal with human subjects and depend on old and emerging technologies that continuously evolve and alter.