

# IMPACT OF TELEPRESENCE OF HOTEL WEBSITES ON BEHAVIORAL INTENTION OF INDIAN CONSUMERS

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**Abstract---** *Hotel industry and booking of the same are experience products where customers have to judge the services of hotel through its website. Hence, hotel website becomes an essential to book and use it according to user's usage. The purpose of this research is to discern the background of telepresence by examining variables such as sensory, emotional and cognitive attributes. In addition this research is also an attempt to measure the impacts of telepresence on behavioral intentions of customers regarding hotel websites. Theoretical framework to measure the impact of telepresence on the behavioral intention of the customers has been developed and data have been collected through online survey. Multiple regression technique has used to analyze the data. Finding established that telepresence leads to positive behavioral intention among customers. However sensory attributes found insignificant in forming positive behavioral intention. Telepresence plays a prominent role in encouraging and upholding consumer usage of hotel's website and also play a catalyst role in information searching and decision making.*

**Keywords---** *Telepresence, behavioral intention, framework*

## I INTRODUCTION

Adoption of technology and innovation has changed ways to bring new avenues of marketing communications between the companies and their customers. (Rodriguez and Martinez, 2014). With the help of these communications hotel companies facilitate customers to make best use of their experience in the online settings whether it is direct and indirect interactions between customer and the companies. Direct experience can be made from direct interactions between customer to the hotel and indirect ones from the interactions made through with the help of mediators like these websites (Li et. at. 2001). With the help of these indirect experiences customers build an expectation regarding service quality to be provided by the hotel as directed in their websites.

In order to build and motivate this indirect experience, telepresence should be encouraged among hotel websites. Telepresence means the virtual interaction with any stimulus in the world from one's own physical location. It facilitates the user to provide a virtual platform in absorbing, teleoperate, influence or manage the various events or tasks it wishes for according to its decisions. Website quality is an important attributes and stimulus in the context of hotel websites (Bai et al., 2008) which impacts consumer psychological flow of information (Webster et al., 1993). Telepresence explains representation through computer internet oriented system which motivates the customers to use these hotel websites. Being service industry there is always a risk

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quotient involved in availing and booking all these hotel websites prior to checking it beforehand. As hotel website are experience products and not search products such as Cars, which have definite specified features which can be tested before usage or purchase. Where as in order to judge the services of hotel website it becomes an essential to book and use it according to user's usage. However telepresence shows that with the help of telepresence and various factors such as photos, videos, animations etc an expectation can be easily created in the mind of customers influencing their decision and behavioral intention regarding future usage and thus minimizing the risk quotient.

Thus in order to minimize the risk involved a proper communication to elaborate various distinguished services and features need to be channelized between these hotel websites and the customers. This hotel website form of information is more attractive, more interactive and more informative where customer may easily retrieve their specific information (Hyun and O'Keefe, 2012). Higher level of telepresence in consumers tends to have more detailed knowledge of the product and vivid fantasies regarding their choices and behavioral intention. The offline informative mediums such as magazines, newspapers etc are supposed to be less effective and little or absolutely no interactive facility in order to solve for various queries to be asked by the customer to the hotel websites. Shih (1998) recommended that interactive property of telepresence motivates consumers to engage, connect and attach with the hotel website and also helps in forming positive image of that platform and brand of the hotel as well..

In order to study the attitude of customers towards a particular hotel brand due to presence of any particular variable thus anticipating their behavioral intentions. Thus this research is an attempt to discern the background of telepresence by examining variables such as sensory, emotional and cognitive attributes. In addition this study also measure the impacts of telepresence on behavioral intentions of customers regarding hotel websites.

## **II Literature Review**

### **Telepresence**

Telepresence can be defined as to "the sense of being present in the remote environment" (Steuer, 1992, p.75). The eventuality of the virtual presence of anything over its exact physical location stands for the term Telepresence (Mair, 1997). However much more simple than the concept of teleconferencing as it tries to enable its users to experience engaged in the virtual situation and to be in a position to maneuver the things according to its choices. Ives and Junglas (2008) predicted at that time that in coming year virtual environment will become a major, if not dominant platform for all kind of exquisite business operations and opportunities. And now when we see the presence of cybershopping at this level it can be inferred that his saying was true. Telepresence leads to satisfaction among existing customers and attraction among potentials due to its immersing experience which can certainly maximize the customer base and the market coverage of the company. According to (Klein, 2003) telepresence empowers customers to take part in behavior that are more rapidly to involvement among the related goods or services which can augment customers' attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Potential customers' experience and interact with the different websites and resolute the different level of interactions with these websites. For example, customers' telepresence might be deterred with respect to their interactions level with the website (Lee, 2018).

Website attributes that affect customers experience on telepresence. Customer experience is a prominent aim for various firms (Johnston & Kong, 2011) and it is composite phenomenon which will be a sign of all interactions of customers with the firm (Gentile et al., 2007). All the direct and indirect experiences of any customer subject to the various advertisements, publicities, magazines, television, radio etc. However neither of them is any less important while creating perception regarding quality and quantity of services provided by these hotel websites. But discussing about presence and benefits of telepresence, indirect experience can be easily created with the use of various advertisements skills when customers surf through websites of hotel. These experiences play a vital role in influencing their decision making skills of customers. Song et al. (2007) recognized customers during their browsing with website might experience telepresence. Intriguing features like presence of blogging motivations, for information seeking and entertainment influence positively the telepresence of hotel websites.

Customers' attitude, their behavioral intention and purchasing behavior gets persuaded by the degree of fidelity present on the hotel websites (Klein, 2003). According to Shobeiri et al., (2014), addition of captivating contents or various messages on a hotel website enables the customers to take their decisions futuristically and make direct or indirect understandings. Thus it was concluded that these website features play a noteworthy role to foster customer's telepresence and simultaneously their behavioral intention.

These various experiences of customers can become a competition edge for the company by satisfying various attributes of telepresence of customers which are Sensory, Cognitive and Affective needs (Wong and Wan, 2013). In order to understand customer experience in a full-fledged manner it was decided important to scrutinize sensory perceptions, cognitive beliefs, feelings, emotions, creativity, reasoning skills, and social beliefs. There are five different types of customer's experience explained by Schmitt (1999) and they are sense, feel, think, act, and relate. For creating a well balanced understanding of customer telepresence it was observed to look out for sensory features among customer. But not only sensory plays an important role, cognitive beliefs also directs and influences customer's behavioral pattern, attitude and the decision making skills.

Hence in order to study the customers experience regarding telepresence we will study various variables further in our study which is:-

- Sensory Attributes
- Cognitive Attributes
- Emotional Attributes

#### **Sensory attributes**

Various characteristics of websites which result in engagement of customer's senses due to presence of various attractive features is sensory attribute (Schmitt, 2010). These sensory attributes of customers are utilized by the hotel companies for promotion of their services. Sensory attributes consist of various features of humans such as see, smell, feel, taste and hearing. However hotel services being a service industry the only sensory attribute which can be used in this context is to see and to feel. The significance of sensory attributes was reflected widely after the sensory marketing model, a rising trend which explained the effects of sensory attributes over various service marketing products (Corrado and Hulten, 2010). All the customers require information related to the services which they are going to avail in future. (Hyun and O'Keefe, 2012), therefore the sensory stimuli can be used in promotion of services and influencing customers buying decision making.

Inclusion of stories, photos, virtual tours of hotels and their features on the hotel website can result in stimulation of purchasing intention of customers. Hotel atmospherics could be illustrated with sensory metaphors, such as wall color, wall texture, parking, temperature, smell, design, waiting area, swimming pool and bedding fabric is a good example of sensory attributes stimulation.

### **Cognitive attributes**

Cognitive attributes refers to those attributes that describes utilitarian characteristics of hotel websites (Mahfouz et al., 2008). These cognitive characteristics were related to the thinking knowledge of the customers using those websites that elucidated convergent/logical and divergent/illogical judgment (Schmitt, 1999). The cognitive thinking of customers affects their decision making and persuades them to make a worthy decision in account of the hotel website. They decide by seeing the utilitarian facilities which are provided by the hotel companies on their websites and thus take their decisions. The effects of customers' cognition on their behaviors were supported by the cognitive behavioral learning model (Mahoney, 1977). The functional features are covered under this head which informs customers regarding the hotel and their services being provided. Some of them include features of hotels, room rate, company history etc.

### **Emotional attributes**

Users' emotional rejoinders in the virtual platforms of hotel websites were supported by emotional attributes (Mahfouz et al., 2008). These attribute empowers customer's emotions and try to gain a beneficial situation for the company. Customers are motivated to make their decisions based on emotional features which are shown on the hotel websites with the help of animation, endorsement etc. Cohen et al.'s (2014) explained emotional attributes in online presence as attributes of website that generated emotions and feeling of the customers. Consumer's emotional responses played noteworthy contribution in the context of new product and service evaluation because of their significant influence on behavioral intentions of customers (Kim and Perdue, 2013). Emotional attributes suggest us that it might lead to a sense of emotional arousal among its customers at the time of exploring some beautiful hotel, their world class services and joyful events on the website. These attributes will lead to attraction in the mind of customers towards the respective hotel websites.

Thus this study suggests a positive relationship among the antecedents of telepresence that are sensory, cognitive and emotional attributes.

A very low level of telepresence was expected when the service quality related to the hotel were described in a simple manner on their websites. Whereas a rich experience explaining various features of hotels with the help of photos, videos, animations etc. create an immense impact on the mind of customers proving improved telepresence of the websites as a positive addition for the customers. According to (Kim and Perdue, 2013) these sensory attributes amounts to a positive influence over customers choice of behavior and their decision in selection of any particular hotel in addition of customers' transportation experience toward the hotel's websites (Shen et al., 2016) and an amplified telepresence (Mahfouz et al, 2008). Thus our first hypothesis can be proposed as:

*H1: There is a significant positive impact of Sensory attributes on hotel's telepresence*

Exposure of customers' to the hotel websites with the help of attractive features which create an emotional attachment, positive emotions led them to creation of a likeliness towards experiencing telepresence for their hotel know-how. Customers find it simple to envisage their prospect use behavior if a flavor of emotional

attributes in attached to their minds. These emotional characteristics of the consumption knowledge for future reference will process an influence over their decision making processes (Venkatesh et. al. 2000), satisfaction (Mano and Oliver, 1993) and their behavior while making choices (Kim and Perdue, 2013). Based on above studies conducted, a positive relationship can be established between emotional characteristics on the hotel's websites and customers' telepresence. Thus, our next hypothesis:

*H2: There is significant positive impact of Emotional attributes on customers' telepresence in the context of the hotel's websites.*

One of the prominent factors of analyzing customers' behavior is Cognition (Kim and Perdue, 2013). These cognitive attributes stimulate the customers imagination and thinking to foresee future consumption creating experience of telepresence by trying to answer their curiosity. Thus it creates positive sense of relationship between the cognitive attributes of the hotel websites and telepresence. Hence hypothesis proposed will be:-

*H3: There is a significant positive impact of Cognitive attributes on customers' telepresence in the context of the hotel's websites.*

Past researches have argued the significant influence of quality of the website on customer's satisfaction and further purchase intentions (Bai et al., 2008; Chen and Cheng, 2009; Ali, 2016). When this purchase intention gets combined with future intentions it becomes behavior intentions. According to (Orbell et al., 1997) this future anticipated future behavior is referred as behavioral intentions. When hotel websites included attractive features and services, it attributed a higher level of telepresence lead to greater willingness to purchase from the particular website (Choi et al. 2004; Gabisch, 2011). Seeing the relationship following hypothesis can be prepared.

*H4: There is significant positive impact of Telepresence on the hotel's website on customers' behavioral intentions.*

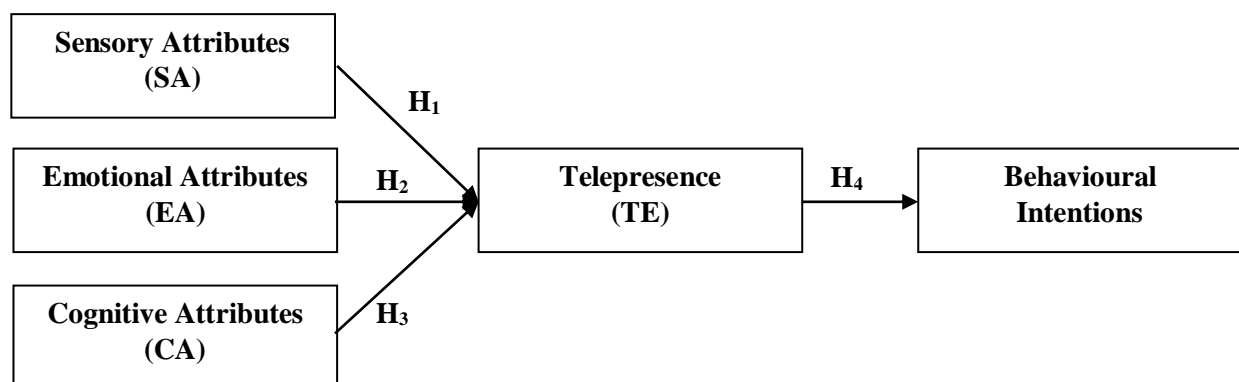


Figure 1: Conceptual framework to measure the impacts of telepresence on the behavioral intention of customer

### III Research Methodology

A research framework was designed to test the above hypothesized relationships. To fulfill the rationale, the study is being performed using a conceptual framework to measure the impact of telepresence on the behavioral intention of the customers. This study has been conducted by the researcher in order to gain insights about the impacts of telepresence of hotel websites on behavioral intentions of Indian customers. It presents a theoretical

contribution to construct a better understanding regarding telepresence of hotel websites and various factors which in turn influence it to create perceptions in mind of customers. The factors taken in consideration were:-

- (a) Sensory attributes
- (b) Emotional attributes and
- (c) Cognitive attributes

An online survey was conducted for data collection. Using the convenience sampling, this survey was sent to students of university over age of 20 in nearby areas and to working personnel. Among this consumer group, there were participants (a) who have browsed hotel websites to plan for their trips and (b) those who booked the hotel via virtual channels within last six months.

The questionnaire contained of 21 questions inclusive of 7 demographic based questions and 15 of them regarding the variables included in study to fulfill the objectives. 312 respondents were included in the survey whose responses were considered valid to analyze the data further after checking their reliability index. As shown in table 1.

Defined scales were taken into consideration to evaluate the proposed constructs, ensure validity and reliability of the measures. All measurement items were operationalized on a 5-point Likert Scale where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree. Scale items of sensory, cognitive and emotional attributes have been taken from Schmitt (1999) and Mahfouz et al.'s (2008) research studies.

For measuring the impacts of first three variables SA, EA and CA on Telepresence multiple regression analysis was applied. Then to complete the construct a linear regression analysis was done to measure the impact of telepresence on the behavioral intention of the customers.

Table 1: Reliability and validity Statistics

S.No.	Variables	N	References	Chronbach $\alpha$	AVE
1.	Sensory Attributes (SA)	3	<i>Mahfouz et al. (2008)</i>	0.827	0.7535
2.	Emotional Attributes (EA)	3	<i>Schmitt (1999)</i>	0.775	0.7562
3.	Cognitive Attributes (CA)	3	<i>Mahfouz et al. (2008)</i>	0.792	0.7762
4.	Telepresence (TE)	3	<i>Wang et al. (2009)</i>	0.804	0.7453
5.	Behavioral Intention (BI)	3	<i>Harris and Goode (2010)</i>	0.867	0.7721

### Demographical Profile of Respondents

Classification of gender consists of 64% of males and 36% of females among the 312 respondents (Table 2). This result clarifies that 199 respondents were male who agreed to be a customer of hotel websites and 113 were female according to them. Classification of total respondents were in 4 categories including individuals with less than 25 years were 48%, individuals ranging from 25-40 users were 37%, individuals ranging from 40-55 years were 14% and 1% individuals who were above 55 years of age (Table 3). 39% of total respondents are in private

service, 27% in government service, 25% in business man and 9% are unemployed (Table 4). Among 312 respondents 25% have done intermediate, 53% are graduate and rest 22% were post graduates. (Table 5)

Table 2: Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Male	199	64	64
Female	113	36	100
	312	100	

Table 3: Age of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
<25 years	149	48	48
25-40	116	37	85
40-55	44	14	99
>55 years	3	1	100
	312	100	

Table 4: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Govt. service	84	27	27
Private service	122	39	66
Businessman	78	25	91
Unemployed	28	9	100
	312	100	

Table 5: Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Intermediate	78	25	25
Graduate	166	53	78
Post graduate	68	22	100
	312	100	

## IV Data Analysis

### Regression results of SA, EA, CA on TE

The regression results between telepresence generated from sensory attributes, emotional attributes, and cognitive attributes taken independently and found significant are given in Table 6(a) and 6(b). Value of

coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 68.2%, which means 68.2% variance have been explained by independent variable for dependent variable. Thus, it is an indication of good predictor model. The standard error in each case is relatively low. Table 6 (a) shows that F value is significant which shows overall significance of regression model. The significant p-value is low in corresponding to the t-value is an indication of good linear relationship between dependent variable (telepresence) and three independent variables (sensory attributes, emotional attributes, cognitive attributes). Table 6 (b) shows that significance value of sensory attribute is 0.153 which proves our hypothesis not accepted whereas significance value of emotional and cognitive attribute is 0.027 and 0.036 respectively which proves our hypothesis accepted.

Table 6 (a): ANOVA table for the Regression results of SA, EA, CA on TE

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	171.966	3	57.322	220.26	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	80.156	308	0.26		
Total	252.122	311			

Table 6 (b): Regression Coefficient table for the Regression results of SA, EA, CA on TE

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	0.04	0.15		0.256	0.8
SA	0.21	0.15	0.194	1.432	0.15
EA	0.39	0.17	0.329	2.217	0.03
CA	0.35	0.17	0.312	2.111	0.04
Dependent Variable: TE					

### Regression results of TE on BI

The regression results between behavioral intentions generated from telepresence of customers related to the hotel websites is shown in table 7 (a) and 7 (b). The value of coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) between TE and BI is 61.1% which means 61.1% of variance is explained by independent variables (behavioral intentions) on dependent variable (telepresence) which is an indication that the predictability power is 61.1%. Standard error is relatively low. This table is about analysis of variance between dependent variable and independent variable. It shows that F value is significant which exhibit overall significance of this regression model. A good linear relationship between dependent variable (behavioral intention) and three independent variables (telepresence) is evident with the values of p-value in correspondence to t-value.



Table 7 (a): ANOVA table for the Regression results of TE on BI

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	140.491	1	140.491	485.921	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	89.628	310	0.289		
Total	230.119	311			
a. Dependent Variable: BI					
b. Predictors: (Constant), TE					
Source: Primary data					

Table 7 (b): Regression Coefficient table for the Regression results of TE on BI

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T value	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.046	0.125		8.385	0
TE	0.746	0.034	0.781	22.044	0
a. Dependent Variable: BI					
b. Source: Primary Data					

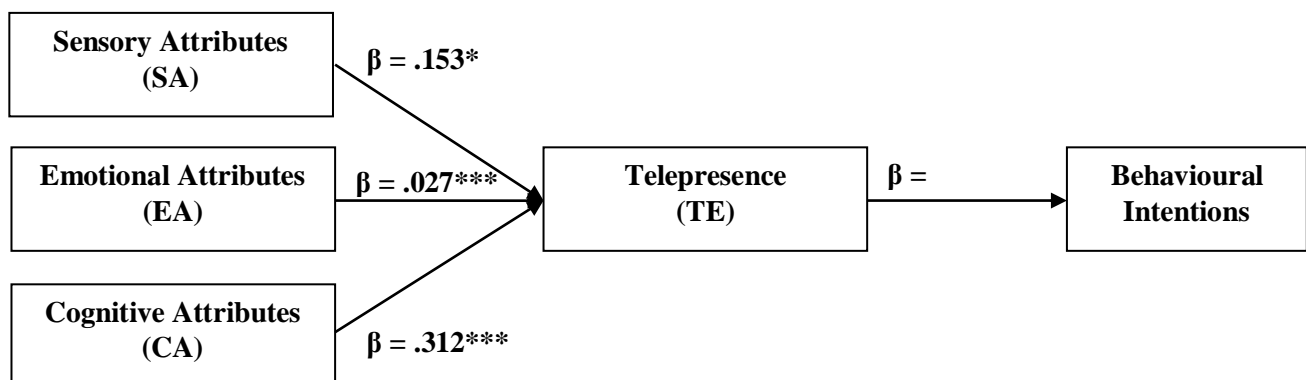


Figure 2: Conceptualized Model to Measure the Impacts of Telepresence on the Behavioral Intention of Customer

## V Discussions and Implications

An essential strategic decision needs to be done in order to recognize the antecedents of telepresence by examining variables such as sensory, emotional and cognitive. Empirical results of this work established that sensory attributes do not influence telepresence in hotel website settings. Thus, sensory characteristics are not engaging users enough to influence their purchasing decision. However emotional attributes are playing an important role in order to foster telepresence among customers regarding usage of hotel websites. According to (Kim and Perdue, 2013), an emotional aspect on customers' hotel choice behaviors plays an integral role while making purchase decision. Consistent with past researches, this research also identifies that when customers are

bared to the hotel websites which absorb their attention and engage their emotions, they tend to have a higher impact of telepresence. This finding implied sensory attributes are not contributing much in motivating telepresence. In addition, customers felt telepresence when they were exposed to the cognitive attributes of the telepresence websites. It proves being an indirect experience emotional and cognitive attributes are more related to telepresence in comparison to sensory attributes. Customers' cognitive attributes focused more on functional or utilitarian needs. Also telepresence have positive effects on behavioral intentions of the customers using hotel websites. According to previous study of (Suh and Chang, 2006) a positive relationship was observed between these two dependent and independent variable.

This study has contributed to create a better understanding of the significance of telepresence theory by investigating its various antecedents and outcomes of the customers' telepresence on a hotel's website context. It has elaborated that higher telepresence leads to positive behavioral intention among customers. Previous researches show that the theory of telepresence is at developing stage and require extra attention in the different online business settings including e-commerce, hotel business, online food ordering etc. So a telepresence model in context of hotel industry where a positive experience before usage is required to develop customers' decision making has been proposed and empirically tested. Customer's had difficulty to decide upon their future experiences, thus telepresence plays an integral role in promoting usage of hotel websites, helping customers with their decision making and information processing.

Table 8: Comprehensive Picture of all Hypotheses and their Results

Hyp. No.	Hypotheses Statements	Status
H <sub>1</sub>	There is a significant positive impact of Sensory attributes on hotel's telepresence	Rejected
H <sub>2</sub>	There is significant positive impact of Emotional attributes on customers' telepresence in the context of the hotel's websites.	Accepted
H <sub>3</sub>	There is a significant positive impact of Cognitive attributes on customers' telepresence in the context of the hotel's websites.	Accepted
H <sub>4</sub>	<i>There is significant positive impact of Telepresence on the hotel's website on customers' behavioral intentions.</i>	Accepted

### Managerial Implications

This study concludes the importance of inclusion of telepresence by the hotel websites managers in order to create differentiation in the minds of customers and influence their purchasing behavior. When customers felt an emotional and cognitive connection with the hotel websites they showed a positive behavior regarding the particular hotel websites. These attributes enhanced their indirect experiences. An impressive website marketing strategy should

- (a) Focus on creating emotional attachments, appealing the customers to feel pleasant and happy.
- (b) Include cognitive attributes, to emphasize over utilitarian aspects and foster a positive behavior.

Hotel marketers should take advantage of emotional attributes to enable customers feel telepresence. Since hotel websites are visited at the pre-consumption stage in order to facilitate a better decision making by the customers thus, a positive first impression is required to be developed in order to engage emotional attachment among customer and foster them to choose that particular hotel website. This emotional attachment can be created with the help of technological features as in animation, music, enchanting pictures of sceneries and previous customers' enjoyment.

In addition, cognitive attributes can be created by emphasizing functional benefits related to the hotel websites of the customers. These attributes can be explained with showing customized services, comparative pricing, differentiated services, quick responses etc. These attributes support a persuasive hotel website which can promote telepresence to impact behavioral intentions.

### **Limitations and Future Scope for Research**

The study has limitations regarding its future scope. This study has studied only three -- sensory, cognitive and emotional attributes and doesn't include the presence and impact of social influences. (Schmitt, 1999) Social influence can also play an integral role in creating behavioral intention of the customers. Future research should investigate more about social influence on the telepresence of hotel websites to have an insight about its impacts upon the topic and behavioral intention. In addition using advanced innovative technology like virtual reality might create an impressive impact over the minds of the customers and influence their behavioral intentions. This study has been specifically used for hotel websites, hence can't be generalized in other contexts. Future researcher may replicate on other commercial websites

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