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Leisure and Digital Culture

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INTRODUCTION

The *Institute of Childhood and Urban World* (CIIMU) promotes a Biannual Report about the situation of Childhood and Adolescence in Catalonia. This report is based on statistical data and focus discussion groups and covers 10 blocks (demography, family, family policies, education, work, health, leisure and digital cultures, social exclusion, gender, and migration). Each block has an academic director. The report is available on line (www.ciimu.org).

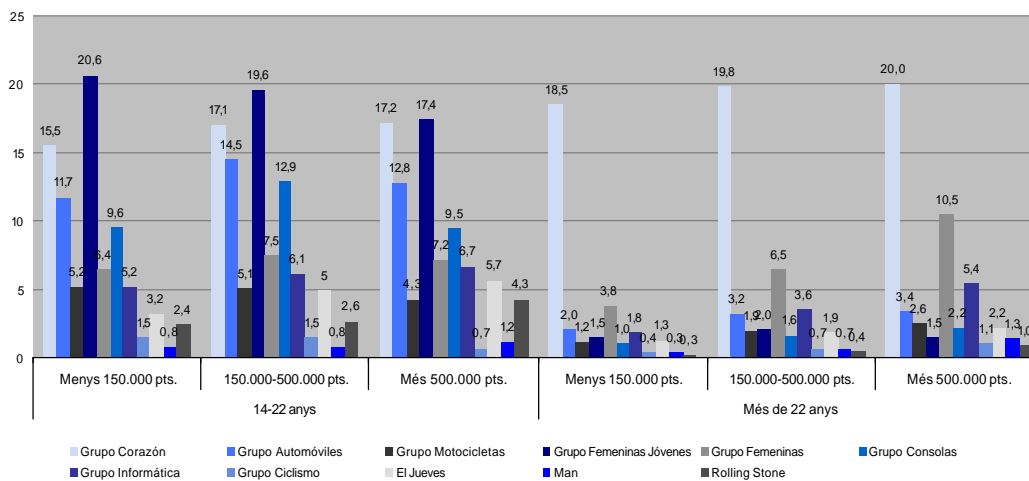
The Cultural consumption and lifestyles block is divided into two sections: lifestyles and digital consumption. The lifestyles section (expressive dimension of cultural identities, which can be expressed as "an observable set of selected behaviours") is a revision of the First Report on Infancy and Families. The section on digital consumption is based on the idea that adolescent digital culture (and the lifestyles it generates and at the same time affects) is not an irrelevant phenomenon, but rather a key factor in the society of knowledge that is emerging in the early XXI century. The aim is to study digital consumption and its relationship with other aspects of young people's lifestyles, as this is a sector that can provide us with a wealth of information about the processes of change in relation to new consumer strategies, new forms of socialising, and even new ways of participating in civilian life.

CULTURES OF LEISURE

1. Material culture

What *infants* consume most are children's journals, television and comics (22%), followed by the consumption of newspapers and Internet (around 30%) and, finally, the consumption of magazines and cinema is proportionately lower (less than 20%). For the following age group (11 to 13 years) we find an increase in material consumption, which is most visible in the consumption of magazines (from 28% to 72%), radio (from 38% to 62%) and cinema (from 36% to 64%). For the *adolescent* group (from 14 to 16 years) and *post-adolescents* (from 17 to 19 years) the most common media is clearly television, consumed by 91% of the population in these age groups. Magazines are the next most popular media, especially for girls (71% compared to 69% of boys). Moving on to *young adults* (20 to 22 years), we find television remains at the forefront (87%) although there is an increase in radio listeners and a reduction in magazine readership. There are also differences in consumption depending on *purchasing power*, which are especially noticeable in terms of Internet. Television seems to be the only media that is not used more the higher the educational level of the head of family. In all other cases, it tends to be middle class infants, adolescents and young adults that most consume the Internet, newspapers and magazines, as well as cinema and comics.

FIGURE 1. AUDIENCE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF MAGAZINES BY AGE AND FAMILY INCOME. SPAIN. OCTOBER 2002 - MAY 2003

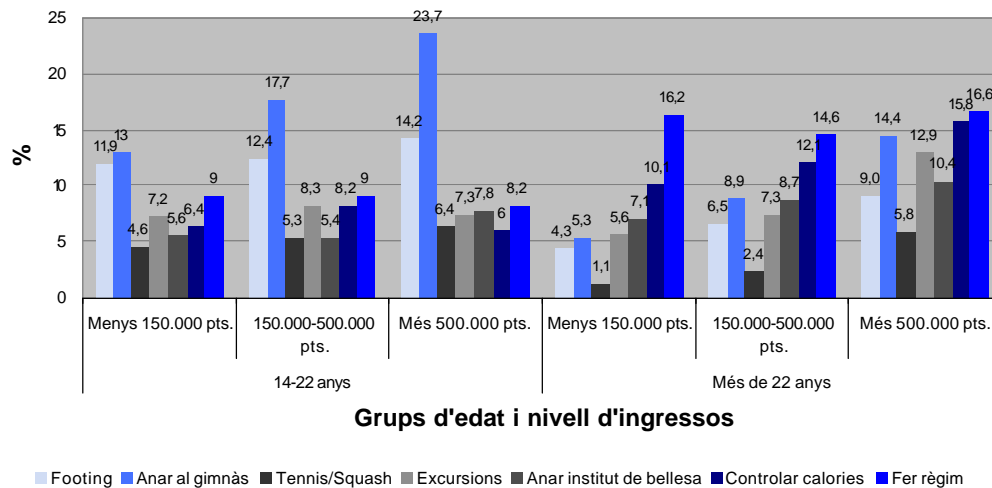


SOURCE: Elaboration CIIMU from *Encuesta General de Medios*.

2. Body culture

As for *corporal image*, which refers to such activities as going to beauty centres, controlling calories and going on diets, these activities increase with age, and most notably for females. As for *doing sport*, between 8 and 13 years almost half of boys and girls do some kind of sporting activity (51% of boys and 46% of girls). It is interesting to note that there are differences in terms of gender and social class not in relation to the amount of sport done, but to the types of sports that are done.

FIGURE 2. ACTIVITIES RELATED WITH THE BODY DEVELOPE DURING THE LAST 30 DAYS BY AGE AND FAMILY INCOME. SPAIN. OCTOBER 2002 - MAY 2003

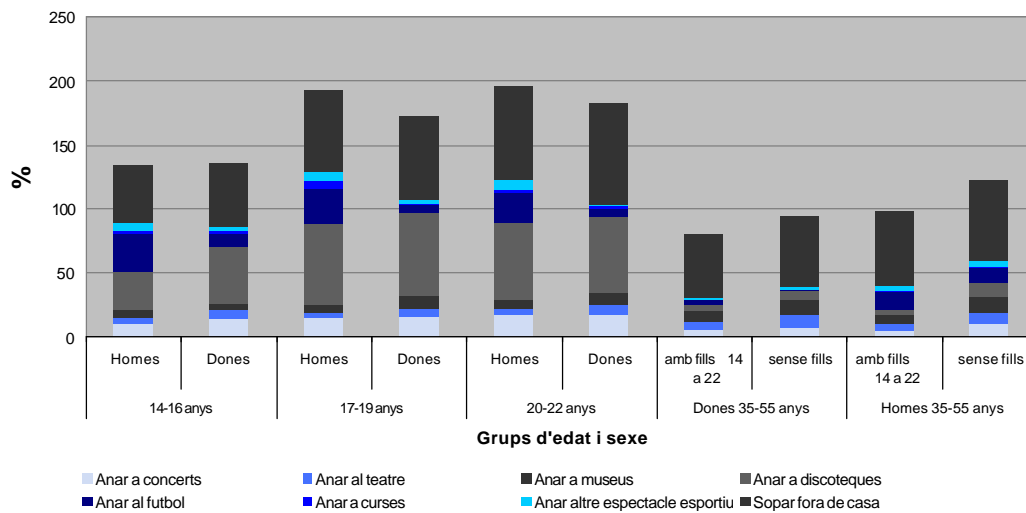


SOURCE: Elaboration CIIMU from *Encuesta General de Medios*.

3. Leisure culture

Among the most common activities we find "*going out for supper*", especially for the 20 to 22 year old group, followed by "*going to discos*", especially between 17 and 19 years, and where this is more common for those with greater purchasing power. Here we could also highlight the importance of being able to go out at night, which is seen as a battle to win over parents. Another interesting statistic refers to "pocket money", as most children receive some kind of occasional or monthly quota. Depending on social status, the preference seems to be for a monthly payment (lower classes because they feel that that way they learn to control expenditure). Finally, leisure time is considered to be of major importance because this is when personal relationships are developed with peer groups.

FIGURE 3. LEISURE ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED DURING THE LAST 30 DAYS BY AGE AND SEX. SPAIN. OCTOBER 2002 - MAY 2003



SOURCE: Elaboration CIIMU from *Encuesta General de Medios*.

4. Music culture

Music plays an important role in the lives of adolescents and young adults. Data supplied by the IDESCAT Department of Culture (2003) suggests that there is a high proportion of young people between 15 and 29 years that enjoy listening to music on a regular basis, but as they get older, this goes back to being a more sporadic activity. Musically, people are looked down upon if they like the same kind of music as the majority. Anything commercial is often considered to be of poor quality. However, there is more acceptance of commercial techno music if it is for dancing, or "summer music" if it is purely for enjoying oneself with friends. As for films, we find that these are rented more often purchased. Alternative resources are often used to obtain music other than buying CDs: music is often downloaded from the Internet, or copies are made of original CDs belonging to friends.

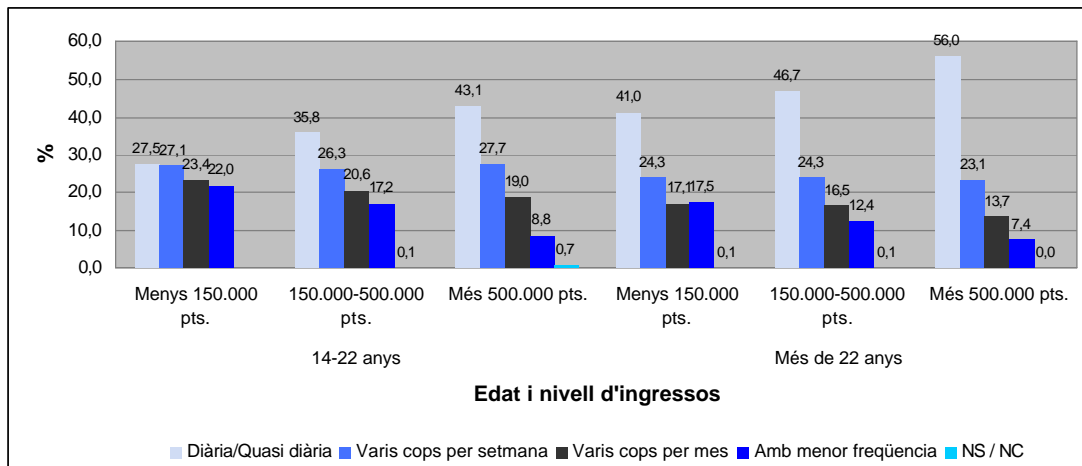
DIGITAL CULTURE

New information and communication technologies certainly play an important role in the construction of the children's identities, and we have observed an association between their use (and intensity of use) and young people.

1. Digital devices.

Currently, it seems that this use is most extensive among the younger age groups. To be more specific, and according to a Barcelona City Council survey (2004), 87% of those surveyed use a computer, 81% regularly connect to the Internet and 77% use electronic mail. There are also important differences between gender and social class. Girls use these technologies less, and so do lower classes. An interesting statistic states that the set of technological equipment tends to be concentrated in domestic spaces, specifically in their own special room (we could even describe a new "**digital room**" that adolescents are starting to construct in their own private areas). Another area is that of games and videogames. These products are extremely popular among adolescents, somewhat less so among girls. Of the different types of games on the market, the most popular are strategy games because they involve more of an element of challenge

FIGURE 4. FREQUENCY OF THE USE OF INTERNET BY AGE AND FAMILY INCOME. SPAIN. 2002.

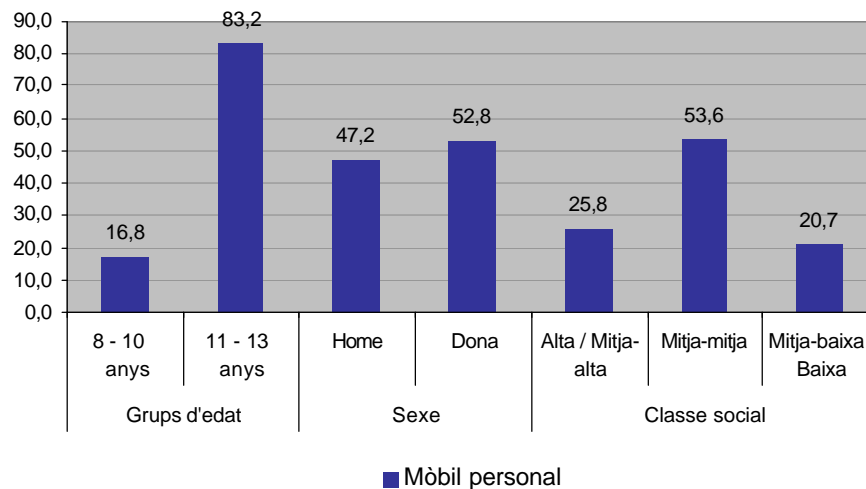


SOURCE: Elaboration CIIMU from *Encuesta General de Medios*.

2. Digital uses.

The **computer** is the most basic item among the set of new technologies to which we are referring. It may be for that reason that it is also the item that gets the most use by the different age groups, but **Internet** is undoubtedly the star among the different information technologies. Apart from being used for schoolwork, the computer is also mainly used for Internet connection and using the different services offered on the Net. Possession of a **mobile telephone** for personal use is also highly extensive among young people, in fact in greater proportions than among the adult population. According to EGM; information, the **place** young people most use computers is at home, followed by "other places", which in this case might be at school, in the educational environment in general (extracurricular IT classes, languages, libraries etc.), at Internet cafés or leisure centres, or at friends' houses. On the Internet, searches made are for reasons of personal and leisure interest, but also educational. The other most popular use is that of communication, mainly for relationships with friends. They most commonly use the MSN Messenger program (a program based on the exchange of short text messages in real time sent between friends that are online at the same time).

FIGURE 5. POPULATION WITH MOBILE PHONE BY AGE, SEX AND FAMILY INCOME. SPAIN. FEBRUARY-MARCH 2002.



SOURCE: Elaboration CIIMU from *Encuesta General de Medios*.

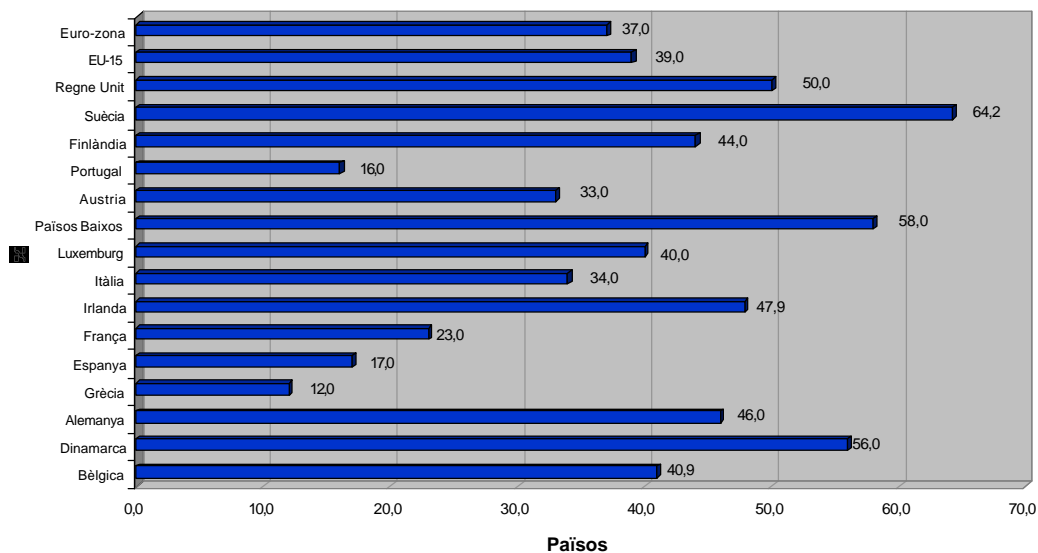
3. Digital Meanings.

As for the reasons for the use of new technologies, we find that people highlight the need to connect with other people, to communicate. They find it just as natural as actually being with their friends, with people of the same age. That is why the messenger is so attractive, because it can be used to communicate with people they know (usually friends) and the communication is often more profound than in face-to-face relationships. As for mobile telephones, INJUVE has found that girls and boys between 15 and 29 years mainly use their mobiles to send and receive text messages, quite frequently to speak to friends, and less to speak with relations, very little for playing games and even less so for connecting to Internet (WAP) or handling other matters. The most popular type of communication is the short message (SMS), which is cheaper than speaking and these are used differently to the way adults use them.

4. Digital Nations.

Finally, we should mention the *level of penetration of digital culture in relation to other European countries*. It seems clear that Catalonia is the hotspot in terms of Spain, but is still way down the ranking on a European level, even lower than some countries with lower levels of income (with the important exception of mobile telephones, where Spain is above the average).

FIGURE 6. RATE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH INTERNET ACCESS. EUROPE. 2004.



SOURCE: Elaboration CIIMU from Eurostat.

CONCLUSIONS

The lifestyles of young Catalans are moving towards the society of knowledge at a faster rate than they are for other age groups. This does not only mean an increase in the presence of electronic instruments in the everyday lives of children and adolescents, as there has only been a significant increase in the amount of Internet access. The essence of the matter is that digitalisation is affecting all lifestyle areas. In this particular case, the progress of digital culture is not limited to the consumption of computers, Internet, mobile telephones and videogames (analysed in the previous section), but also relates to its presence in other areas: in material culture (through the digitalisation of all audiovisual production, from DVDs to e-zines), in corporal culture (through the experiences of incorporation (embodiment) in virtual reality spaces); in leisure culture through the deconstruction of the night (space and time in urban life becoming progressively younger) and most of all through the reconstruction of a new "digital" room, a private area where new adolescents form their relationships with their environment; and finally in musical culture, through the gradual substitution of physical formats (CDs) with songs downloaded from the Internet.

This report has enabled us to suggest the existence of a *social gap and digital split*. There is evidence to suggest that digital consumption is not the same for different social groups, as there are differences between social classes and gender. It has been observed that middle classes consume the most. This may be because of the desire of be of the same or similar standing to the higher socio-economic bracket, or may be because higher class groups do different kinds of activities or use items that the data does not cover. More and more, the most common place for using new technologies (especially computers and using the Internet) is a private space. The consequences of this are the inevitable increase in inequalities in the way young people use and access these technologies. Another of the factors that this chapter has emphasised the most, and also one of those that is most worrying, is the way that females make less use of ICTs.

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