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European Ph.D. on  
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At the Multimedia LAB & Research Center, Rome-Italy

Social Representations In Action and Construction  
in Media and Society

"Developing Meta-Theoretical Approach to  
Social Representations Literature:  
the contribution of Italian Scholars belonging to  
the International So.Re.Com THEMatic NETwork"

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Key Lectures

European Ph.D

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# “SAPIENZA” UNIVERSITY OF ROME

## Web and Kids A content analysis of web sites aimed to kids



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## GOAL OF THE RESEARCH

analysis of formal and content features of web sites aimed to kids

to evaluate:

- potentiality;
- possible risks for younger people.

## SAMPLE OF THE RESEARCH

- adoption of a non probabilistic sampling
- different channels of research
  - ⇒ on line search engines
  - ⇒ portals
  - ⇒ web pages
  - ⇒ catalogues
- final analysis over a sample of 135 web-sites

# DATA SURVEY TOOL: CONTENT ANALYSIS GRID

103 voices divided among 4 thematic areas:

- **General features**

- Sites authors self-presentation
- Target age
- Prevailing thematic area
- Site goals

- **Formal and structural features**

- Sound
- Written language
- Colors
- Graphic animations
- Character design
- Direct interactivity

- **Content features**

- Environment
- Relational interactivity
- Prevailing content areas
- Advertising

- **Values and Needs**

## **DATA MINING:**

- pre-test on a reduced set of analysis unit;
- individual data survey through three analysts;
- common analysis, comparison, collegial decision and final codification.

## **DATA ANALYSIS:**

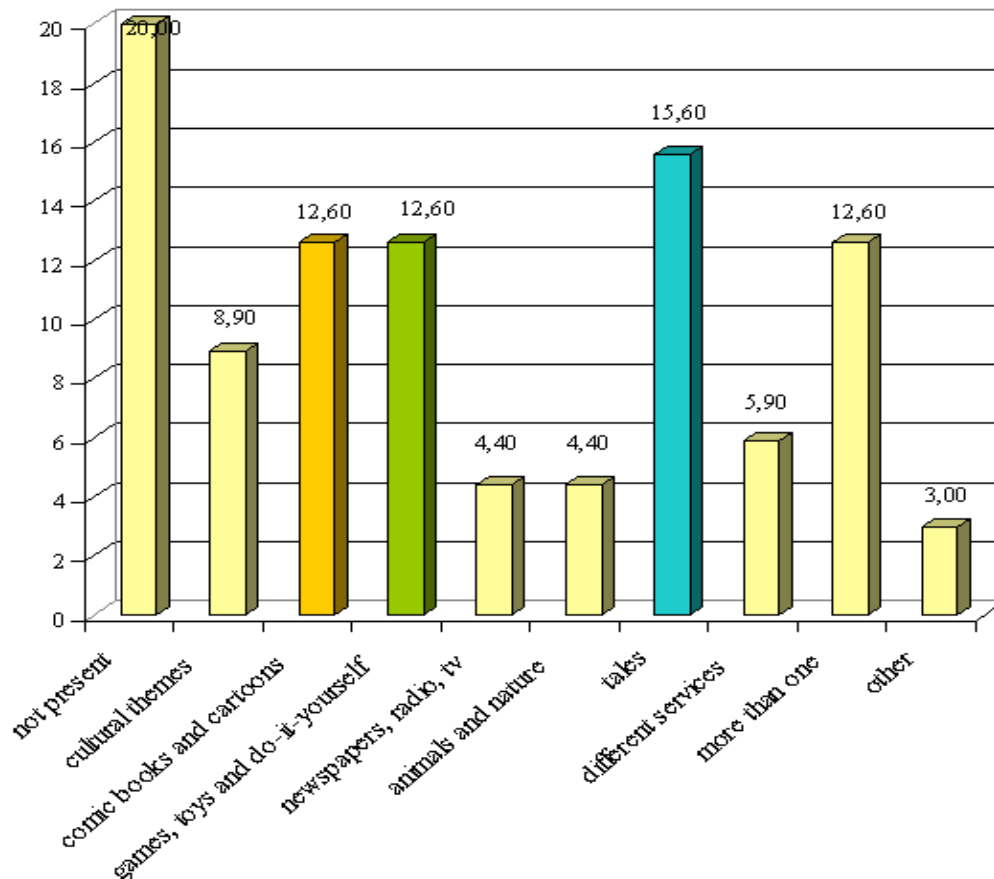
- Frequencies analysis (SPSS)
- Cluster analysis (SPAD\_N).

# RESULTS

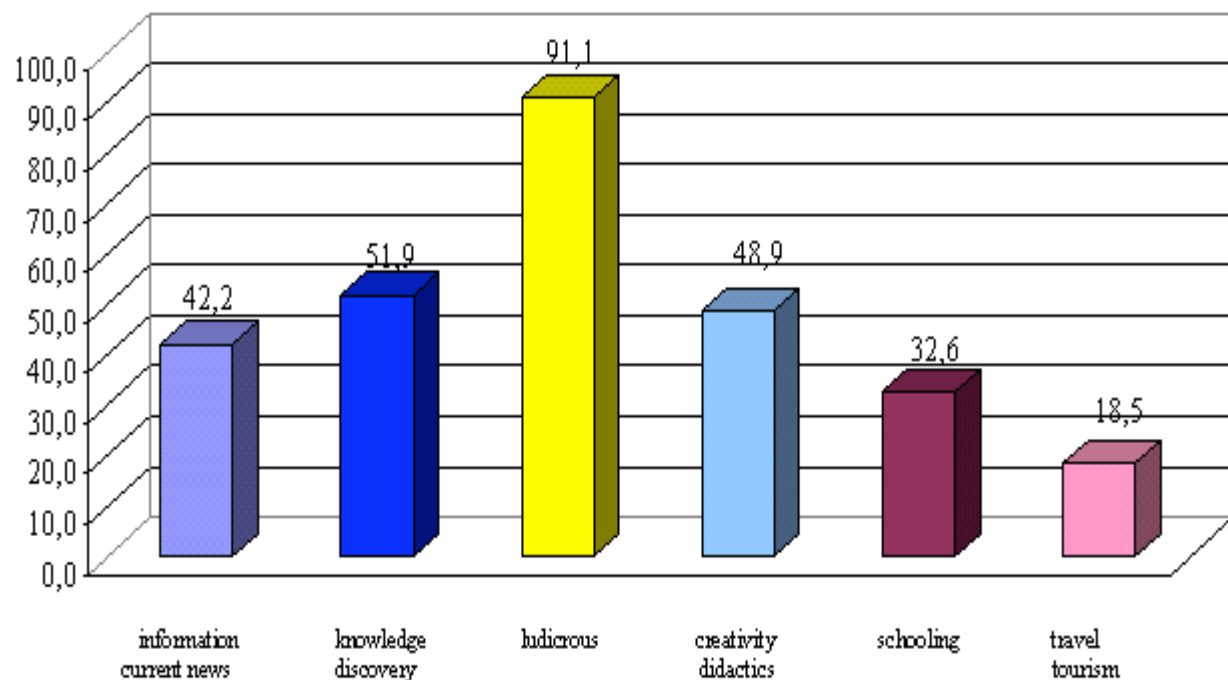
## General features

- **lonely net-surfing**  
(the section for adults is not present in 63.7% of sites);
- **no genre differentiation;**

*When a specific **thematic area** is present, it is usually about tales, toons, toys and games.*



*The web for children and teens is usually configured as  
**vacation and discovery environment***



## Formal features



**Sound: *not very present in sites of the sample***

- *spoken language in 21.5% of cases;*
- *narrator voice in 10.4%;*
- *music in 48%.*

**Written language : *always “present”***

*Neologisms, fantastic-language and emoticons are not very used.*



## Graphic:

### use of colors

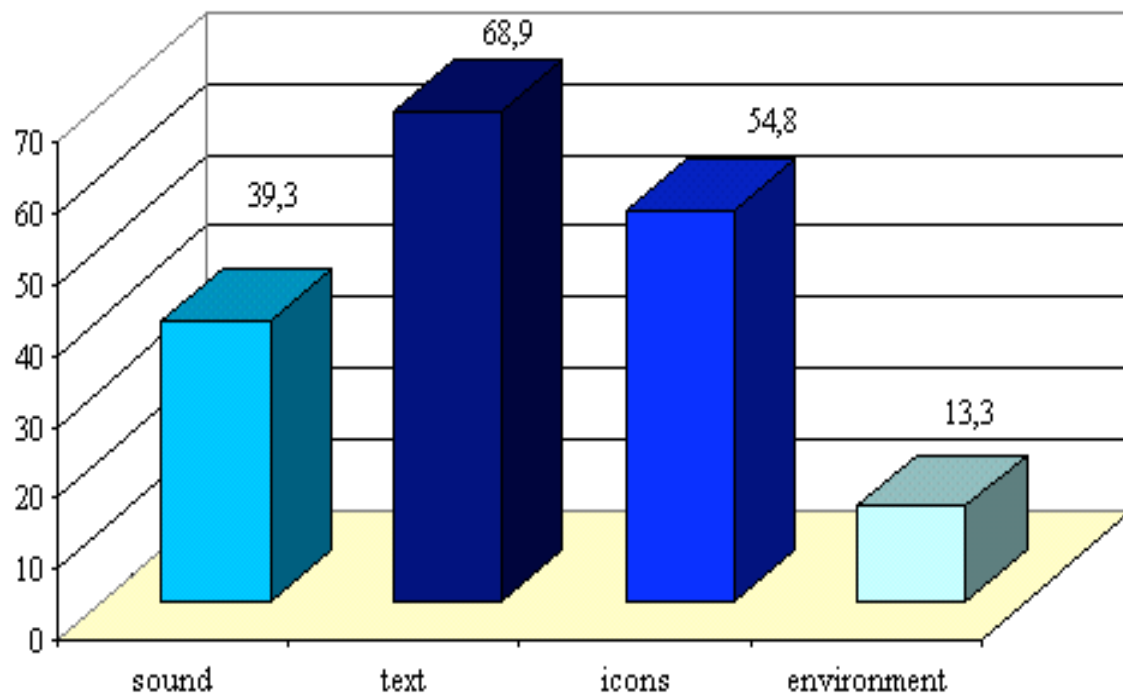
- *single color in 51.9% of sites;*
- *use of different colors among different sections in 22% of sites;*
- *use of contrasting colors in 48.9% of sites;*
- *prevailing “lively” tonalities, both hot as cold.*

### graphic animation

- *motion of objects in 63.7% of sites;*
- *motion of figures in 65.2% of sites.*

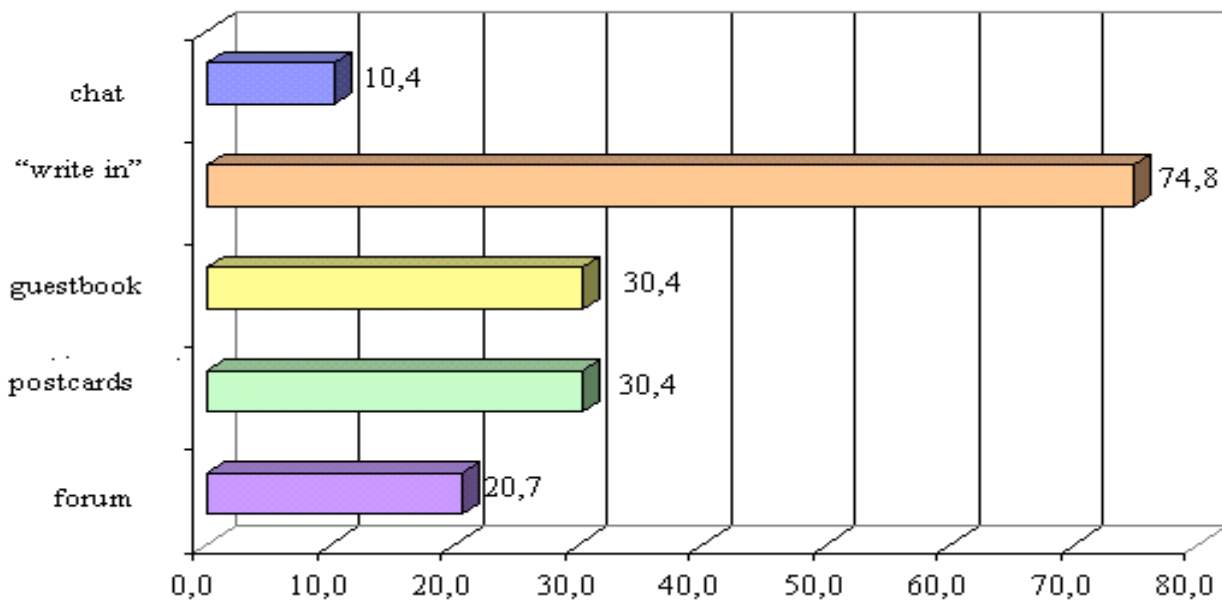
## Direct interactivity:

*sounds, images, text and environment modify themselves after user interaction*

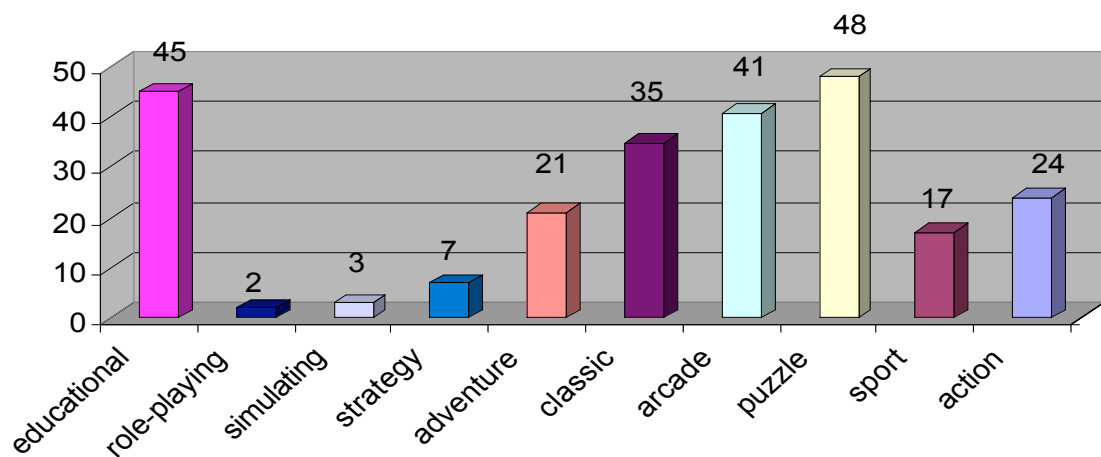


## Content features

- *narration* is present in about 20% of the sites
- *advertising banners* are present in 54.1% of the sites
- *relational interactivity forms* (selective and participative) are present

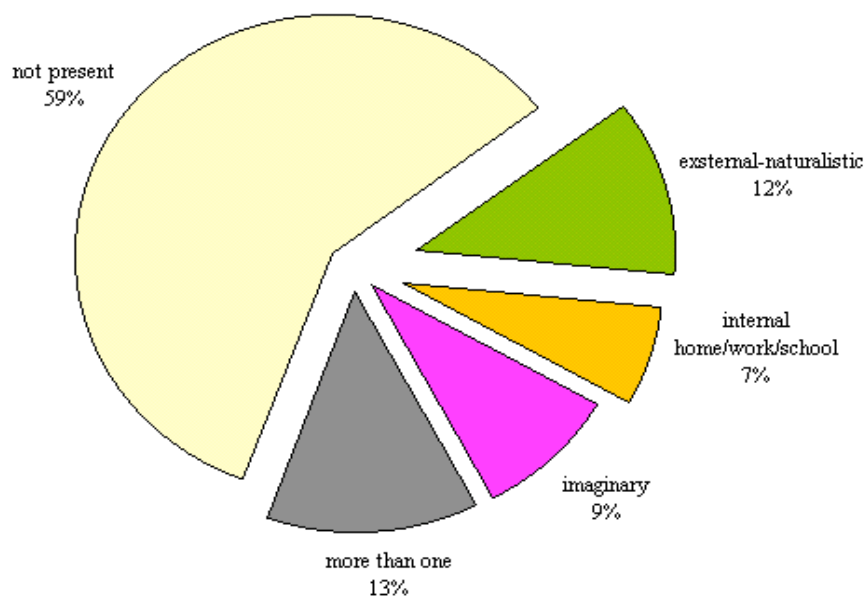


- there are *interactive games* mostly "puzzle" and "educational"

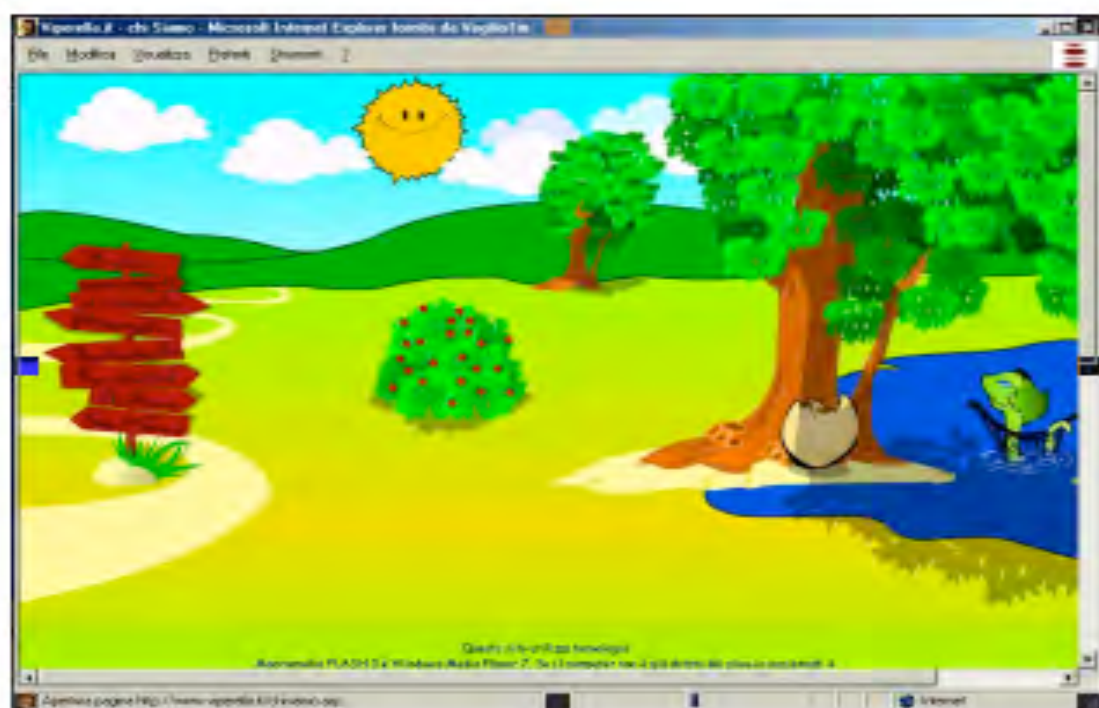


- the **environment**, sometimes interactive, is present in the sample in different ways. The external-naturalistic environment is the most present.

## Environment in the sites

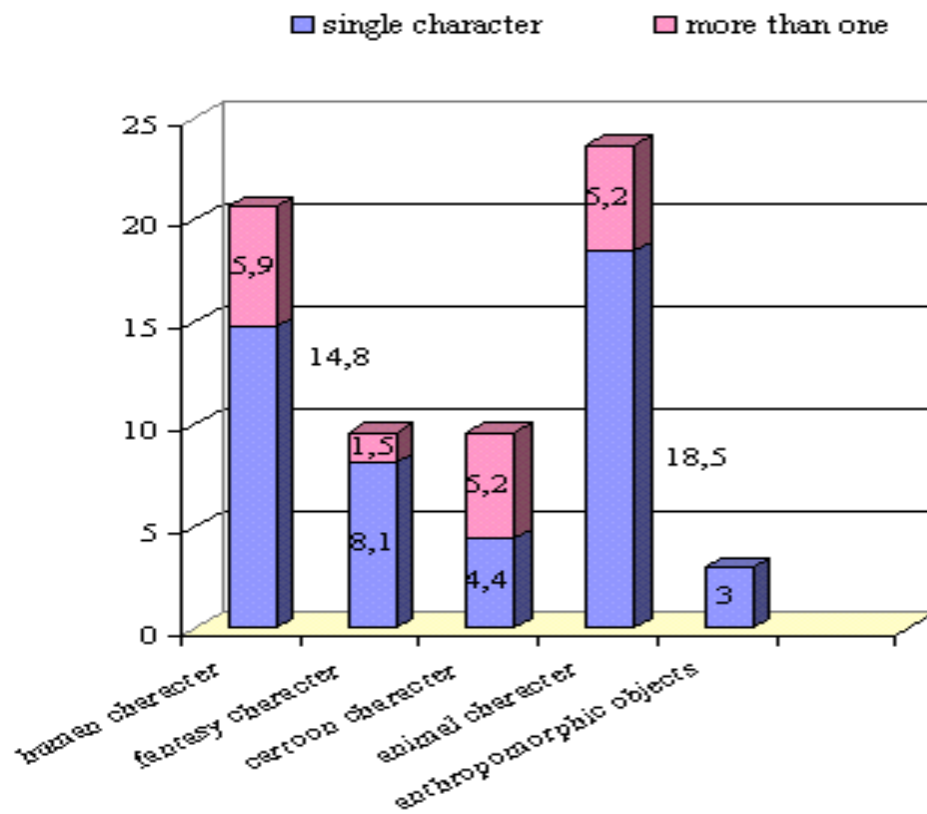


## Example of external-naturalistic environment

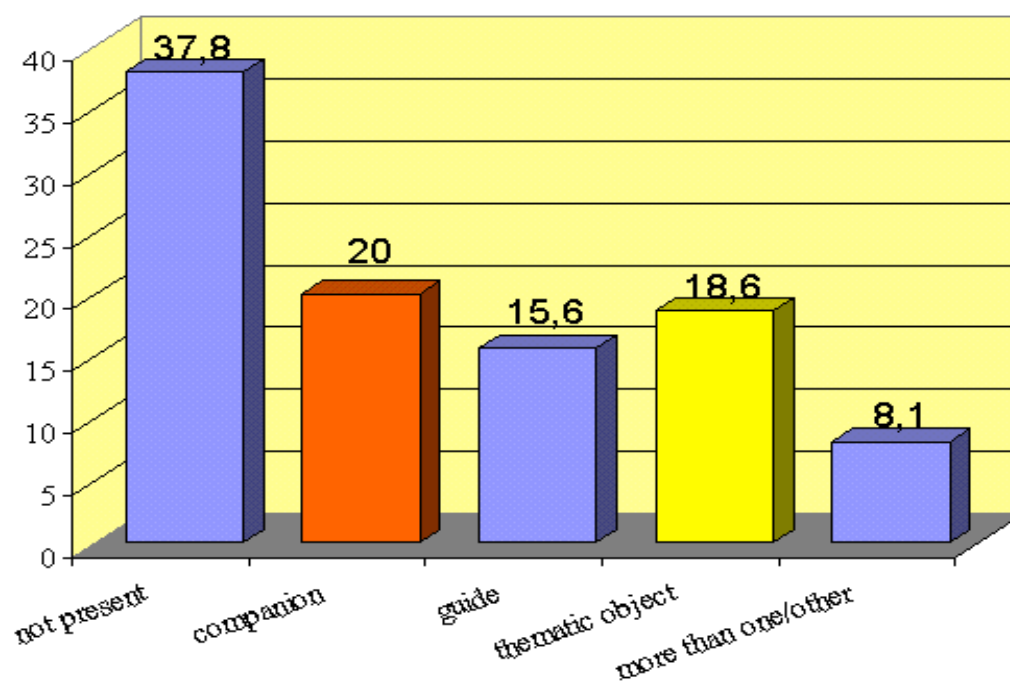


- *the main characters' form is usually animal or human with the guide function.*

## Main characters

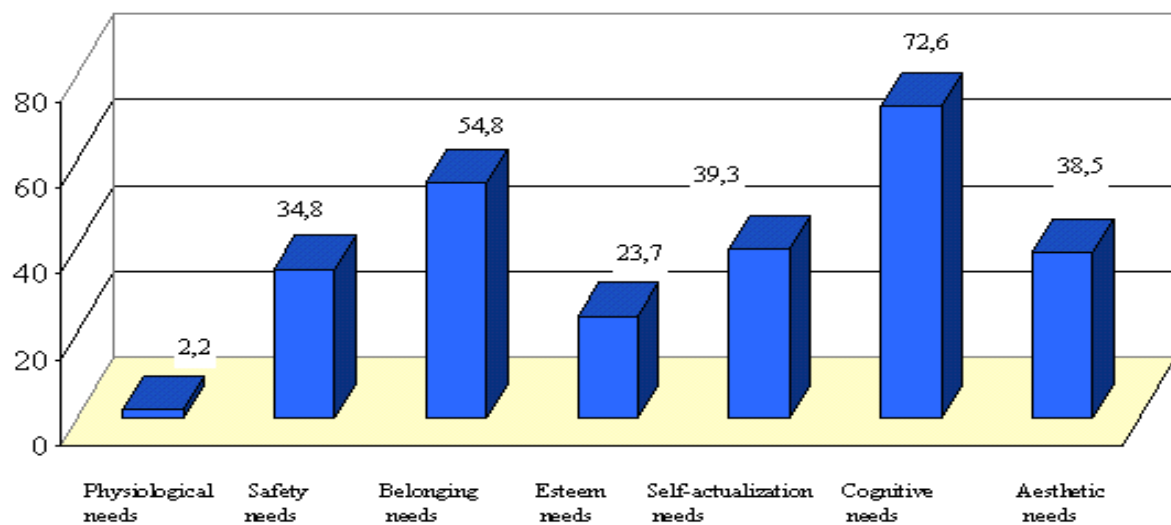


## Main characters functions

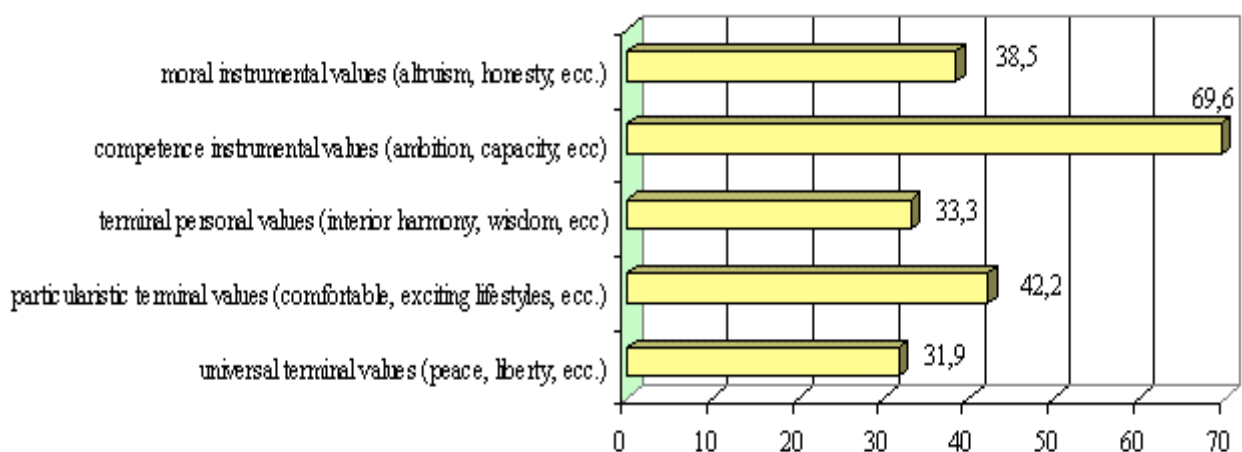


## Values and needs

- the attention is prevailing on “cognitive”, “belonging”, “self-making” and “aesthetic” needs



- the most present values are about personal features, such as enjoyment, creativity, ambition.



## *Formal features' Cluster*

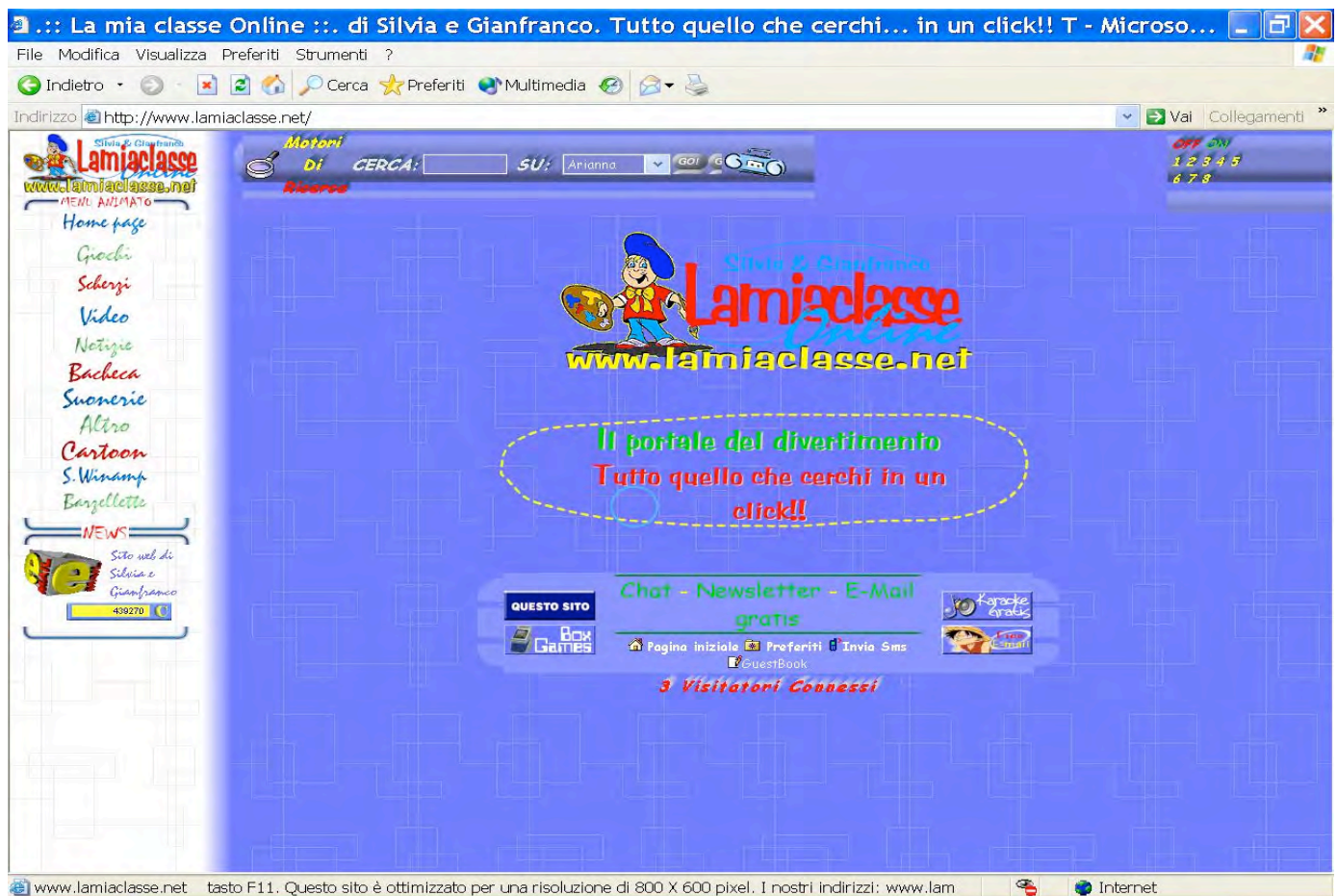


The formal features' Cluster analysis allowed the division of the sites in four groups named:

- “very complete” (1° cluster, 24 sites, 17.8%);
- “fun & games” (2° cluster, 33 sites, 24.4%);
- “portals” (3° cluster, 37 sites, 27.4%);
- “simple ” (4° cluster, 41 sites, 30.4%).



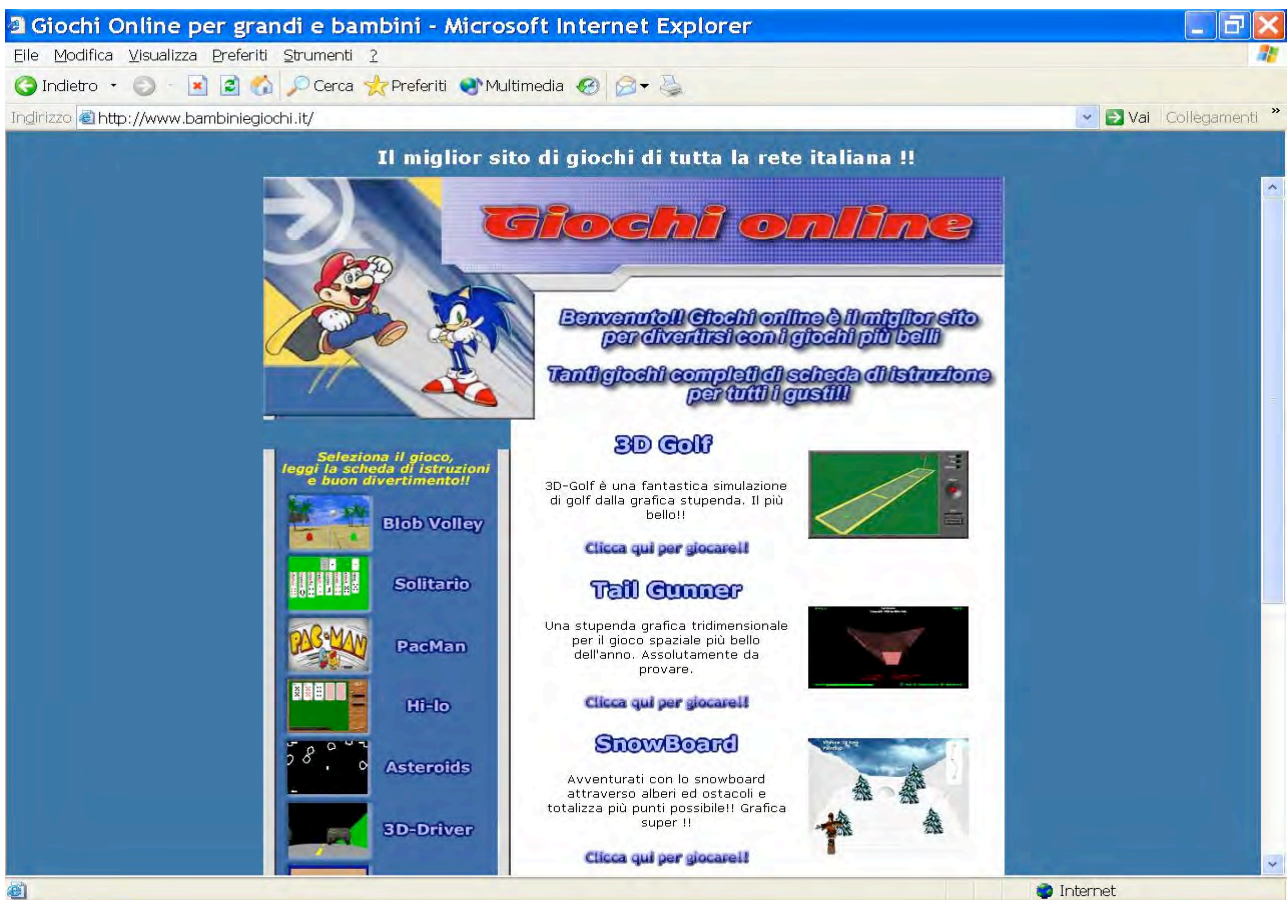
# 1° cluster: “very complete sites” (24 sites, 17.8%);



- Most of the **games** are of an **interactive** type.
- The **graphic** is **lively**, through animated and rich scenes, movie clips, contrasting colors, moving objects and figures.
- Different forms of **direct interactivity** (interactive environment, interactive sounds, download areas) and of **relational interactivity** such as selective and partecipative (forum and chat).
- **Sound** in the form of spoken language and narrator voice.
- The **written language** is average.
- The **content areas** contain information and news.
- There isn't a prevailing **thematic area**.



## 2° cluster: “games & fun sites” (33 sites, 24.4%);



- The **interactive games** are mostly puzzle, educational and arcade.
- The prevailing **thematic area** involves toys and games.
- There are different forms of **direct interactivity**: interactive sounds linked to the presence of videogames and interactive icons.
- **Sounds and effects** as strong as weak/average.
- **Graphic** is composed from motion of objects and figures.
- The **written language** is “weak”.
- There are no content areas about knowledge and discovery.

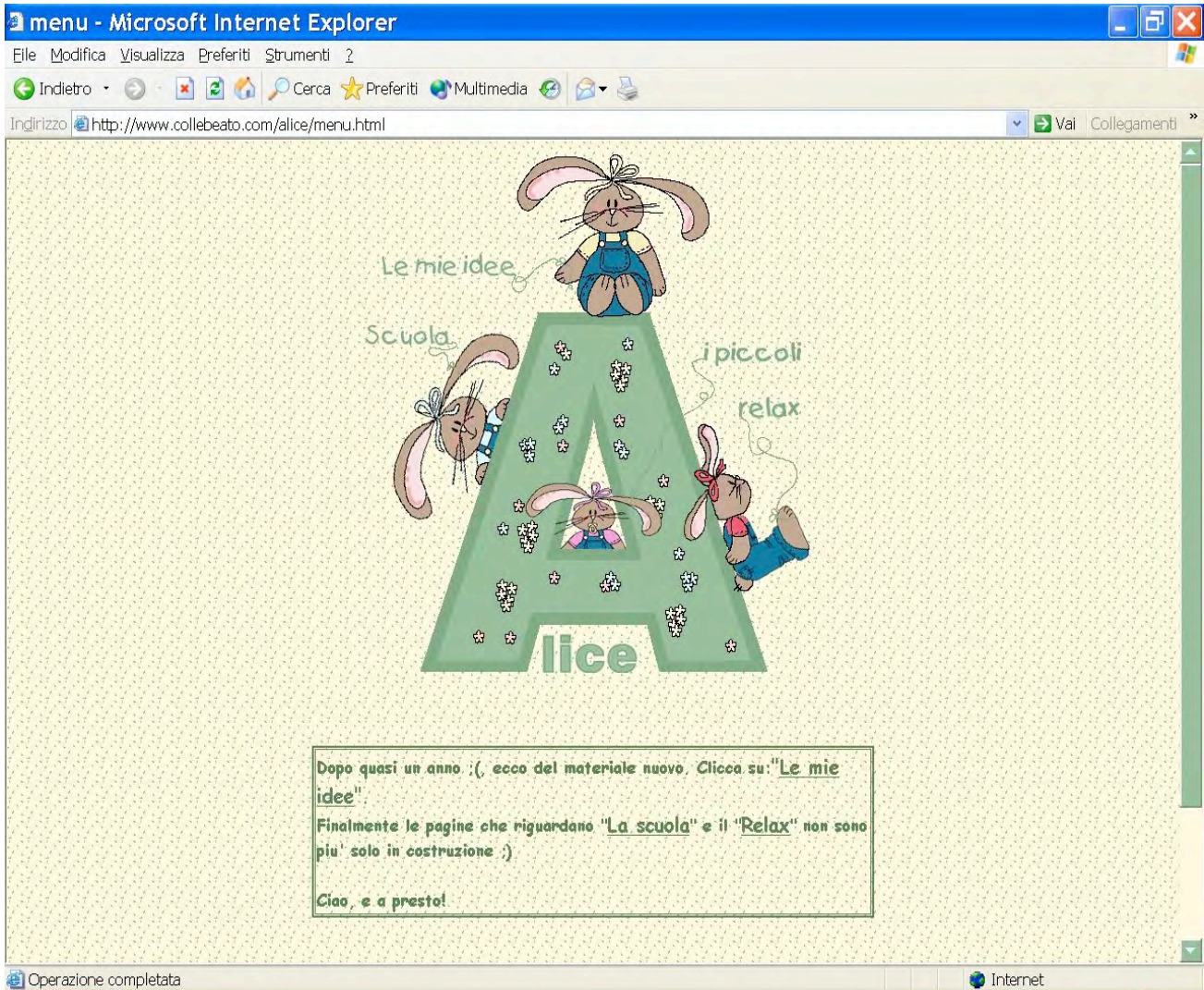
### 3° cluster: “portals” (37 sites, 27.4%);



- There are **advertising banners** regarding services and products.
- There are **no interactive games and sounds**.
- There are **no spoken language, narrator voice and movie clips**.
- There are “**strong**” **written language** and neologisms.
- The **goal** of these sites is **research/exploration**.



## 4° cluster: “simple” ( 41 sites, 30.4%).



- The only present element is color tonalities: **cold colors** are prevailing.
- There are no: advertising banners, dynamic graphic (moving objects and figures, contrasting colors..), interactivity, information/news areas, interactive games, sounds.

## *Content features' Cluster*



The content features' Cluster analysis allowed the division of the sites in three groups named:

- “Fan sites”  
(1° cluster, 46 sites, 34.1%);
- “Guided surfing sites”  
(2° cluster, 20 sites, 14.8%);
- “Surf, explore, learn”  
(3° cluster, 69 sites, 59.1%).

# 1° cluster: “Fans’ sites” (46 sites, 34.1%)



- The **main characters function** is: “thematic object of the site”.
- The **main character** is usually single and in the form of cartoons, fantasy characters and animals.
- The **environment** is imaginary.
- The **target age** is twelve-fourteen years.
- The **prevailing thematic area** is “toons and comics”.
- The **goal** is entertainment.
- There is no “didactic” area.



## 2° cluster: “Guided surfing sites” (20 sites, 14.8%)



- The **single main character** is usually an animal.
- The **relational context** of the main character is relational/emotional.
- The **main character function** is: “guide/ illustrator”.
- There are animals with the function of **secondary characters**.
- The characters are represented through more interaction (one to one, one to more, more to one ).
- Self-making **needs** are present.
- The **environment** is internal (home / work / school).
- **Interactive games** are present.
- There are no words and phrases in other languages.

### 3° cluster: “Surf, explore, learn” (69 sites, 59.1%);



- The **content areas** are about “school/didactic” and “knowledge/discovery”.
- **Cognitive needs** are present.
- There are no main human, toon, fantasy or animal characters, nor secondary animal and human characters, action, decorative icons and self-making needs.

# CONCLUSIONS

## General features

- young surfers in a “lonely journey”
- web-surfing for younger generations is characterized from an equal offer aimed at both genders.



## different age target sites

the *quality of surfing* is influenced by the age of the surfers

### Sites for pre-teens (12-14) :

- contain forms of interactivity, content areas and goals that require maturity and autonomy such as chats, forums, research areas, explorative goals;
- don't contain resources to involve as: interactive sounds, narrator voice and spoken language;
- contain strong written language, complex and more articulated linguistic style, advertising banners.

### Sites for child (3-5) :

- contain a communicative style oriented to entertainment surfing that allows the pre-school child to enjoy reading (the written language is weaker);
- contain oral communicative forms linked to the sound channel such as background music and different types of sound effects;
- advertising banners aren't present

## Enjoyment on the web



- The game area is present in more than 90% of the sites;
- The interactive games are present in more than half of the sample, with a prevalence of “puzzle” and “educational” games;
- The most retrieved goals are “entertainment” and “educational”.



There are:

- weak and average sound effects;
- animated and lively graphics;
- “weak” written language;
- absence of content area about “knowledge and discovery”.

## Future research goals:

### *Implications*

The possibility to explore the World Wide Web, a large network of documents containing texts, images, sounds and animations, distributed through the Internet's nodes, and linked each other to build a virtually endless web.

### *Potentiality:*

- Build individual paths following personal interests and curiosities;
- Exercise personal capacities to integrate and select information. Actively participate with more consciousness to the building of individual knowledge.

### *Possible risks :*

The multiform, sometime untouchable, nature of Internet: on the net any information could be gained by any user.

## **“Education to Internet use”**

- Acting on the critical sense of young surfer.
- Stimulate adults, parents and educators, in the role of guide and companion in this complex growth and discovery process.