The Internet of Toys: A Report on Media and Social Discourses around Young Children and IoToys

Engl. transl.: The Internet of Toys: A Report on Media and Social Discourses around Young Children and IoToys

# Keywords

* internet
* toys
* advertisments
* usage

# Details

## Year

2017

## Issued

2017

## Language

English

## Editors

Mascheroni G.;Holloway D.

## Authors

Aliagas C.;Brito R.;Dias P.;Holloway D.;Jorge A.;Kupiainen R.;Lampert C.;Liubiniene V.;Lobe B.;Mascheroni G.;Mifsud C.;Milosevic T.;Ólafsson K.;Velicu A.;Trültzsch-Wijnen C.W.

## Type

Report and working paper

## Book title

The Internet of Toys: A report on media and social discourses around young children and IoToys. DigiLitEY

## Publisher

COST

## Topics

* Learning
* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Digital and socio-cultural environment

## Sample

Drawing on experience of the content analysis of media coverage of online opportunities
and risks for children within the EU Kids Online network (Haddon Stald, 2009a;
Mascheroni et al., 2010), we designed a comparative quantitative and qualitative content
analysis of representations of IoToys in 12 countries (Australia, Austria, Finland, Germany,
Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Spain).
Based on the assumption that IoToys would receive more media coverage during the socalled Christmas season, data collection was carried out in the two-month period between
15 November 2016 and 10 January 2017, providing a database of 203 commentaries and
47 advertisements. These were coded according to a coding guide that underwent several
waves of refinement.

## Implications For Parents About

Parenting guidance / support

## Implications For Stakeholders About

# Abstract

The Internet of Toys (IoToys) is part of the growing world of the Internet of Things (IoT). While certain internet-connected toys are part of some children’s everyday experiences (such as toys-to-life which connect to video games), they are yet to become an everyday experience for most young children. Nonetheless, the diffusion of Internet-connected toys is expected to grow significantly in the next few years. The aim of this report is therefore twofold. First, we aim to provide a critical introduction to the Internet of Toys, by setting its conceptual boundaries and discussing the theoretical, methodological and policy challenges it raises. Second, we aim to report on the findings of a small comparative project we have carried out as part of the activities of Working Group 4 of the COST Action DigiLitEY. At this stage, Internet-connected toys are an emerging market, thus making empirical research on their appropriation and use in the everyday lives of children and their families difficult. As a consequence, and in order to understand whether and how IoToys have entered play discourses, we examine the discursive environment of smart toys, i.e. its representations in media commentaries and commercial advertisements. Analysing these representations help us to understand how the opportunities and risks of IoToys are constructed and framed. It also shed lights on the production and design of internet connected-toys, as well as on their reception. In conveying meanings, values and identities, representations are central to how new technological artefacts are produced and consumed (du Gay et al., 1997): in other words, discursive constructions of IoToys construct ideal users and uses that feed into parents’ and children’s imaginaries, and inform social expectations and anxieties at large. Previous research has shown that media representations around children and the Internet (and associated lay discourses) shape parents’ perceptions of online risks and opportunities and, ultimately, children’s own experiences with new technologies (Mascheroni et al., 2014).

# Outcome

The Internet of Toys (IoToys) is part of the growing world of the Internet of Things (IoT). While certain internet-connected toys are part of some children’s everyday experiences (such as toys-to-life which connect to video games), they are yet to become an everyday experience for most young children. Nonetheless, the diffusion of Internet-connected toys is expected to grow significantly in the next few years. The aim of this report is therefore twofold. First, we aim to provide a critical introduction to the Internet of Toys, by setting its conceptual boundaries and discussing the theoretical, methodological and policy challenges it raises. Second, we aim to report on the findings of a small comparative project we have carried out as part of the activities of Working Group 4 of the COST Action DigiLitEY. At this stage, Internet-connected toys are an emerging market, thus making empirical research on their appropriation and use in the everyday lives of children and their families difficult. As a consequence, and in order to understand whether and how IoToys have entered play discourses, we examine the discursive environment of smart toys, i.e. its representations in media commentaries and commercial advertisements. Analysing these representations help us to understand how the opportunities and risks of IoToys are constructed and framed. It also shed lights on the production and design of internet connected-toys, as well as on their reception. In conveying meanings, values and identities, representations are central to how new technological artefacts are produced and consumed (du Gay et al., 1997): in other words, discursive constructions of IoToys construct ideal users and uses that feed into parents’ and children’s imaginaries, and inform social expectations and anxieties at large. Previous research has shown that media representations around children and the Internet (and associated lay discourses) shape parents’ perceptions of online risks and opportunities and, ultimately, children’s own experiences with new technologies (Mascheroni et al., 2014).