REPORT

# Media Agency of Generation Alpha

Analytical report on digital media, competence profiles, and systemic agency among young users

BASED ON THE MONOGRAPH

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*Generation Alpha and Digital Media: Theory and Reality*

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**Note:** This report has been prepared as a standalone analytical document. It does not replace the monograph; rather, it organises and synthesises its argument and findings.

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## Origins and Aims of the Report

The monograph *Generation Alpha and Digital Media: Theory and Reality* offers an in-depth study of the relationship between changes in the media environment and the everyday practices of children and young people born between 2010 and 2025. Its principal aim is to confront popular representations of Generation Alpha—as "digital natives", an "Always on" generation, "Google Kids" or the "iPhone and iPad generation"—with existing research and the authors' own qualitative empirical study. The authors do not dismiss the significance of extensive exposure to technology, but they question any simple relationship between the intensity of technological engagement and the level of media competence.

The book continues the authors' earlier research into the actual digital competence profiles of young adults and disinformation (see *Young Adults and Disinformation: Catalogues and Actual Profiles of Digital Competence*, 2024). In the present project, the focus shifts to a younger generation and to the environments in which its competences develop: the family, school, peer groups and platform culture.

The study was qualitative, triangulatory and inductive. The empirical material included more than 70 members of Generation Alpha, as well as statements from educators, a school psychologist and teachers. The "adult voice" served to contextualise the main body of research.

One of the principal outcomes is the "Media Competences 4.0" model, built around the concept of media agency. The model combines six dimensions: functional, autonomy-related, developmental, identity-related, cultural and systemic. It therefore moves away from the idea of competence as a closed catalogue of technical skills and treats it instead as the capacity to act in relation to other people, institutions, platforms, algorithms and culture.

This report presents findings on the media agency of Generation Alpha, understood as the capacity to make decisions, negotiate meanings, manage one's own presence in media environments, and regulate cognitive, emotional and social experiences. It draws on the authors' original research, presented in full in the monograph *Generation Alpha and Digital Media: Theory and Reality* (2026). The qualitative analysis challenges the stereotype of Generation Alpha as a homogeneous group of "digital natives" whose extensive exposure to technology automatically translates into advanced media competences. The young people studied demonstrate considerable operational proficiency. They use media for learning, communication, emotional regulation and creative expression, and develop strategies for managing their online presence. At the same time, their independence varies, and their reflection on the consequences of their actions does not always match their practical skills.

Four findings are particularly important: media inactivity may be a deliberate protective strategy; functional competence is not equivalent to full autonomy; creative activity does not necessarily lead to a desire for public visibility or professionalisation; and young users' knowledge does not always translate into actual social influence. Developing media agency therefore requires attention both to individual resources and to family, school and peer relationships, as well as to the characteristics of the platform environment. The report calls for a shift away from controlling behaviour and developing technical skills alone, towards strengthening reflective, relational and responsible media agency.

**Keywords:** Generation Alpha; media agency; Media Competences 4.0; digital autonomy; prefigurative culture; media education.

## Generation Alpha in Existing Research: From Digital Proficiency to Media Agency

Generation Alpha is growing up in an environment in which digital media are not merely tools for communication or access to information. They are an integral part of everyday life: they organise peer relationships, support learning, contribute to emotional regulation, provide opportunities for expression and help shape the conditions in which identity is constructed. Analysing children's and young people's media competences therefore requires moving beyond a perspective focused on operating devices and applications.

In public discourse, Generation Alpha is often presented as a generation that is naturally digitally competent and at ease in new technological environments. This view oversimplifies the relationship between technological experience and the actual capacity to act consciously. Proficiency in using applications does not in itself demonstrate an ability to evaluate information critically, understand platform mechanisms, manage privacy or anticipate the social and emotional consequences of one's media practices.

In the monograph *Generation Alpha and Digital Media: Theory and Reality*, the authors move away from the homogeneous image of "digital natives" towards an analysis of diverse, dynamic and context-dependent competence profiles. The central concept is media agency: the capacity to act in media environments, make decisions, negotiate meanings, construct identity and regulate one's own experiences and emotions.

Agency here does not mean complete independence from one's surroundings. On the contrary, it develops through relationships with family, school, peers, media culture and technological infrastructure. Young users' opportunities to act are expanded by the tools available to them, but also constrained by platform rules, recommendation mechanisms, the attention economy, pressure to be visible and unequal educational support.

The aim of this report is to isolate and explore this aspect of the authors' research in greater depth. Rather than reproducing the entire Media Competences 4.0 model, it addresses three questions:

- How does media agency manifest itself in the everyday practices of Generation Alpha?
- What are its possibilities and limitations in cognitive, emotional, creative and social terms?
- What implications do these findings have for media education, families and institutions supporting young media users?

The report's central thesis is that the media agency of Generation Alpha is a diverse, developing and context-dependent capacity to act. It should not be equated either with technical proficiency alone or with the intensity of media use.

The authors establish an initial diagnostic picture by analysing Polish and international reports. The sources form a mosaic comprising academic studies, institutional reports, marketing research and publications by organisations concerned with children and young people. They include, among others, Leader Sheep, NASK's Nastolatki 3.0 (2025), EU Kids Online, the Springtide Research Institute, The Annie E. Casey Foundation and research by Razorfish/GWI.

One of the review's most important conclusions is that findings must be compared cautiously. Studies differ in respondents' ages, sample size and composition, country, fieldwork period, measurement method and definition of competence. It is therefore not possible to construct a single "Alpha profile" by simply aggregating results. Existing reports are treated as a map of hypotheses, which are then considered alongside the authors' own qualitative material.

**Table 1. Existing Research and Implications for the Authors' Study: Selected Strategic Areas**

| AREA | DOMINANT PICTURE IN EXISTING RESEARCH | IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRESENT STUDY |
|---|---|---|
| **Technology** | Technology is highly present in everyday life | Examine whether exposure translates into competence |
| **Communication** | Intensive use of messaging services and platforms | Analyse the relational functions of media |
| **Information** | Easy access to information, but difficulties assessing credibility | Investigate verification strategies |
| **Family** | Different styles of parental mediation | Analyse the "parental membrane" |
| **School** | Media are often used instrumentally | Assess the school's role in competence development |
| **Identity** | Profiles, avatars and self-presentation are highly visible | Examine the multiplication of identity |
| **AI** | Growing familiarity with and use of AI tools | Incorporate AI into future media education |

The book also offers a critical discussion of the figure or metaphor of the "global teenager". Global platforms do create shared cultural repertoires—"hypermarkets of global media culture"—but they do not eliminate local differences to such an extent that we can speak of a homogeneous cohort with uniform media patterns. The same TikTok, YouTube or Discord may function differently depending on family, school, cultural capital and users' particular competences. Digital globalisation does not, therefore, lead to the complete homogenisation of experience or media-use patterns.

## Empirical Basis and Analytical Approach

As noted above, the report draws on the authors' qualitative research presented in the monograph *Generation Alpha and Digital Media: Theory and Reality* (Ogonowska and Walecka-Rynduch, 2026). The analysis was qualitative, triangulatory and inductive. Grounded-theory procedures were used, including open, axial and selective coding, alongside the constant-comparison method. MAXQDA Analytics Pro supported the management of the material and the coding process. The analysis moved from individual descriptions of media practices to higher-order categories, including media worlds and their functions, levels of independence, competence trajectories, media identity, prefigurative culture and systemic conditions of action. The research was inspired by Margaret Mead's theory of prefigurative culture and by the anthropology of everyday life.

This perspective makes it possible to analyse agency not as an isolated individual attribute, but as a process embedded in everyday practices and social relationships. The findings should be interpreted in light of the limitations of qualitative research and its local context. They do not provide a basis for statistically generalising these characteristics to all members of Generation Alpha. Their value lies in reconstructing ways of understanding media, strategies of action and tensions that may inform further research and the design of educational interventions.

## Media Agency as an Analytical Category

Media agency is defined here as the capacity to act, make decisions, negotiate meanings, construct identity and regulate experiences in media environments, while remaining embedded in social relationships and systemic conditions. Agency understood in this way extends beyond access to technology and the ability to operate it. It also concerns how individuals define their goals, choose strategies, recognise constraints, respond to problematic situations and draw on support from others.

Within the approach adopted in the monograph, six interrelated dimensions of Media Competences 4.0 can be distinguished:

• **Functional:** using media for communication, relationship-building, learning, emotional regulation and expression.
• **Autonomy-related:** the degree of independence in making decisions, organising activities and regulating media use.
• **Developmental:** changes in competence and the non-linear nature of its development.
• **Identity-related:** managing profiles, visibility, roles and membership of communities.
• **Cultural:** participating in prefigurative culture, in which younger users pass knowledge on to older generations.
• **Systemic:** the influence of family, school, peers, platforms and technological mechanisms on opportunities to act.

These dimensions do not operate independently; they form a system. A young user may, for example, search for information independently while needing social support to assess its credibility. They may manage their social-media presence efficiently but have little influence over platform rules. They may also consciously choose not to publish content, treating withdrawal as a way of protecting privacy.

The model therefore distinguishes between possessing a competence, having an opportunity to act and exerting actual influence. These are not equivalent concepts. Agency may be expressed through individual self-regulation, negotiating relationships, creative activity or supporting others, but its scope remains dependent on available resources and socio-technological conditions.

## How Does Media Agency Manifest Itself in Generation Alpha? Research Findings

### Functional Agency: Media as an Environment for Everyday Action

In the material analysed, digital media emerge as a multifunctional environment of everyday life. Participants use them to maintain relationships, search for information, learn, develop interests, relax and regulate their mood. These functions overlap, making it difficult to reduce media practices to a simple distinction between educational and entertainment activities. An important expression of agency is the ability to select a medium in response to a current need. Participants' accounts suggest that different platforms and formats are used in different situations: to improve one's mood, find explanations, contact peers or pursue interests. Media thus provide resources through which young people organise parts of their social and emotional lives. This does not mean that their choices are always fully conscious. Media use may be purposeful or automatic. When bored, lonely or lacking alternative activities, a phone can become the default way of organising time. Participants also recognise fatigue, overstimulation and difficulties concentrating, yet reflection on these consequences does not always lead to lasting behavioural change. Functional agency is therefore ambivalent: media help meet needs, but can also reinforce patterns of action that users do not fully control.

## Autonomous Agency: Between Self-Direction and External Regulation

The empirical material indicates considerable operational independence among young users. Participants can select tools for particular tasks, find information, use applications and organise their own media activities. They also recognise some costs of excessive media use and report strategies for limiting their activity, such as taking breaks or temporarily giving up devices. Autonomy, however, is unevenly developed. Independence in operating technology does not necessarily imply an equally strong ability to assess information credibility, anticipate the consequences of publishing content or regulate emotionally engaging activities. Parents play an important role by introducing time limits, application blocks or temporary bans on device use. External regulation can help organise activity, but it may also generate frustration, conflict and a sense that autonomy is being restricted. Its impact depends on how rules are communicated, how consistently adults apply them and whether young people have opportunities to develop self-regulation gradually. The findings suggest that media independence is a process of negotiating control. Young users are neither entirely independent nor simply subordinate to adults. They operate between self-direction and external supervision, and their autonomy varies according to the situation, type of activity and support available.

## Creative and Identity Agency: Between Expression and Control of Visibility

Digital media create space for expression, experimentation and the development of interests. In the research material, creativity is not limited to publishing content publicly. It may involve pursuing passions, testing ideas, creating material for personal use and sharing it with a limited audience.

Managing one’s own online presence is an important element of agency. Using different accounts and addressing different audiences indicates an awareness that media communication takes place among diverse groups and that published content can mean different things in different contexts. Selectivity, limiting visibility, separating private from public spaces, and maintaining multiple accounts and profiles can be interpreted as strategies for protecting autonomy and intimacy.

Participants do not treat public visibility as an obvious goal. Digital creativity does not necessarily imply aspirations to become an influencer. It may support learning, skill development, the promotion of interests or the completion of specific projects. Awareness of competition, algorithms and the emotional costs of exposure may encourage young people to limit their public activity.

The distinction between creativity and self-promotion is therefore particularly important. Choosing not to publish does not necessarily indicate a lack of creativity, just as high levels of public activity do not prove deep reflectiveness. Identity agency involves not only presenting oneself, but also deciding what to disclose, to whom and to what extent. Control over visibility is, in this sense, an important dimension of media autonomy.

## Epistemic and Social Agency: Knowledge Does Not Always Mean Influence

One important finding is the presence of prefigurative relationships in which younger users pass knowledge on to older people, such as parents or grandparents. Children and young people may act as practical experts in using applications, solving technical problems, understanding safety rules or recognising some information-related risks. Media knowledge then becomes a resource for influencing one's surroundings. Young users are not merely recipients of education provided by adults; they can also co-create knowledge and support the competences of other family members. This is central to prefigurative culture as understood by Margaret Mead.

A reversal in the direction of knowledge transmission does not, however, completely reverse intergenerational hierarchies. Adults retain educational and regulatory authority, while children may possess greater practical knowledge in specific technological areas. This creates a form of fragmented authority in which competence and the right to make decisions do not always reside with the same person. A similar ambivalence appears in responses to harmful content and behaviour. Recognising hate, disinformation or other problematic phenomena does not necessarily lead to intervention. A user may understand what is happening but choose to withdraw, avoid conflict or turn to an adult.

It is therefore necessary to distinguish epistemic agency—the recognition and interpretation of phenomena—from social agency, which involves taking action and influencing other people's situations. From an educational perspective, this means developing not only knowledge about risks, but also the ability to respond responsibly, collaborate, provide support and use available channels of assistance.

## Systemic Agency: Opportunities for Action and the Limits of Individual Responsibility

Media agency develops in an environment whose rules are not fully controlled by young users. Family, school, peers and digital platforms form an interacting system of factors that may strengthen or constrain autonomy. Families can support competence development through dialogue, jointly agreed rules and modelling responsible practices. They can also restrict agency when rules are inconsistent, prohibitions are the sole response or adults lack sufficient competence to understand the child's digital environment.

Schools can provide knowledge and develop critical thinking, but their efforts may be constrained by the absence of systematic media education and by a reactive approach to risks taking precedence over the long-term development of competences.

At platform level, recommendation mechanisms, competition for attention, pressure for visibility and rules governing content circulation are significant. Users may recognise some of these mechanisms without having the power to change them effectively.

The asymmetry of responsibility is particularly important here. Expecting young users to identify every risk independently, regulate their emotions and control their media time may individualise problems that also arise from the characteristics of the media environment.

Developing agency therefore requires not only strengthening individuals, but also creating appropriate social, educational and institutional conditions. Responsibility for young people's safety and well-being in digital environments cannot rest with them alone.

## Trajectories of Agency: Why Is There No Single Type of User?

The study identifies four principal trajectories of media competence: passive, functional, creative and professionalising users. These should not be treated as rigid categories of people or as universal successive stages of development. Rather, they represent configurations of practices between which users may move depending on the situation, purpose and context.

### Table 2. Media Competence Trajectories and Their Significance for Agency

| TRAJECTORY | CHARACTERISTICS OF PRACTICES | SIGNIFICANCE FOR AGENCY |
|---|---|---|
| **Passive user** | Viewing, observing and selectively refraining from publishing | May express protective agency, although not necessarily social action |
| **Functional user** | Using media for learning, information search and goal attainment | Pragmatic agency, sometimes accompanied by critical reflection |
| **Creative user** | Experimenting, developing interests and creating content | Expressive, cognitive and identity-related agency |
| **Professionalising user** | Developing skills for a particular project, activity or potential career | Goal-oriented agency that requires attention to costs and platform constraints |

Based on “Developmental Trajectories of Media Competence”, pp. 161–164. The typology is also presented in Table 14, pp. 180–181.

These trajectories may coexist in one person. A user may be creative in one area, passive in another and functional in educational situations. They may also develop competences and subsequently choose to limit a particular activity. The key point is that agency is not a stable trait assigned to a user, but a capacity that emerges in particular situations and relationships. Diagnosing it requires analysing practices, motivations and conditions of action, rather than relying solely on declarations or isolated indicators such as screen time.

## Conclusions: From Operational Proficiency to Reflective Agency

The research supports five principal conclusions.

First, media agency does not follow automatically from early exposure to technology. Young users possess considerable operational resources, but their competences are uneven. Proficiency in using applications may coexist with limited reflection on the consequences of one’s actions.

Second, agency is multidimensional. It includes selecting media functions, regulating one’s activity, managing visibility, developing creativity, evaluating information and influencing one’s surroundings. These dimensions may develop at different rates.

Third, agency may also be expressed through limiting activity. Selectivity, not publishing content and giving up the pursuit of popularity may be deliberate strategies for protecting privacy, well-being and autonomy. They should not automatically be interpreted as a lack of competence.

Fourth, knowledge does not always translate into action. Recognising risks, understanding media mechanisms and possessing practical skills do not guarantee social intervention or effective self-regulation.

Fifth, agency is relational and systemic. Its development depends on the quality of family support, school practices, peer relationships and the characteristics of the platform environment. Digital safety and well-being require cooperation between individuals and institutions.

The findings therefore support a change of perspective. Rather than asking only whether young people can use technology, we should investigate the conditions under which they can use media consciously, recognise the limits of their knowledge, make responsible decisions and influence their surroundings.

## Recommendations for Media Education and Supporting Institutions

### Developing Independence Rather Than Relying Solely on Control

Restrictions on device use may be justified, but they cannot replace education aimed at developing self-regulation. Children and young people should be involved in setting rules, analysing their own practices and finding alternative ways to rest, communicate and regulate emotions.

### Diagnosing Actual Practices

Educational programmes should take account of differences between declared knowledge and the ability to apply it. Useful approaches include analysing authentic content, practising information verification, completing privacy-related tasks and discussing situations that require participants to justify their decisions.

### Involving Young People in the Educational Process

The potential of prefigurative culture can be used through projects in which pupils co-create educational materials, share knowledge and help identify problems and challenges in the media environment. This does not mean transferring responsibility for educating adults to young people; it means recognising their knowledge and experience as valuable resources.

### Strengthening School–Family Cooperation

Consistent rules, intergenerational dialogue and the development of adults' competences are conditions for effectively supporting young users. Schools and families should cooperate not only in crisis situations, but also in developing critical reflection, communication and digital well-being.

### Taking Systemic Media Conditions into Account

Media education should address how platforms work, including recommendation systems, the attention economy and the management of visibility. Young users need to understand not only how to use media safely, but also how the media environment shapes the choices and behaviours available to them.

### Developing Differentiated Educational Pathways

Not all young people need the same interventions. Programmes should reflect different competence trajectories, family experiences and pupils' needs. They should begin with a local assessment of practices and resources, rather than assuming that an entire generation has a uniform level of competence.

## Summary

Media agency provides a way of describing Generation Alpha in more nuanced terms than traditional divisions between competent and incompetent, active and passive, or safe and at risk. It is visible in everyday practices, decisions about online presence, the use of media for learning and emotional regulation, identity management and relationships with other users.

The research shows that young people possess substantial operational resources and can use media to pursue a variety of goals. At the same time, their independence is uneven, and reflectiveness, self-regulation and the ability to intervene socially do not always develop in parallel with technical skills.

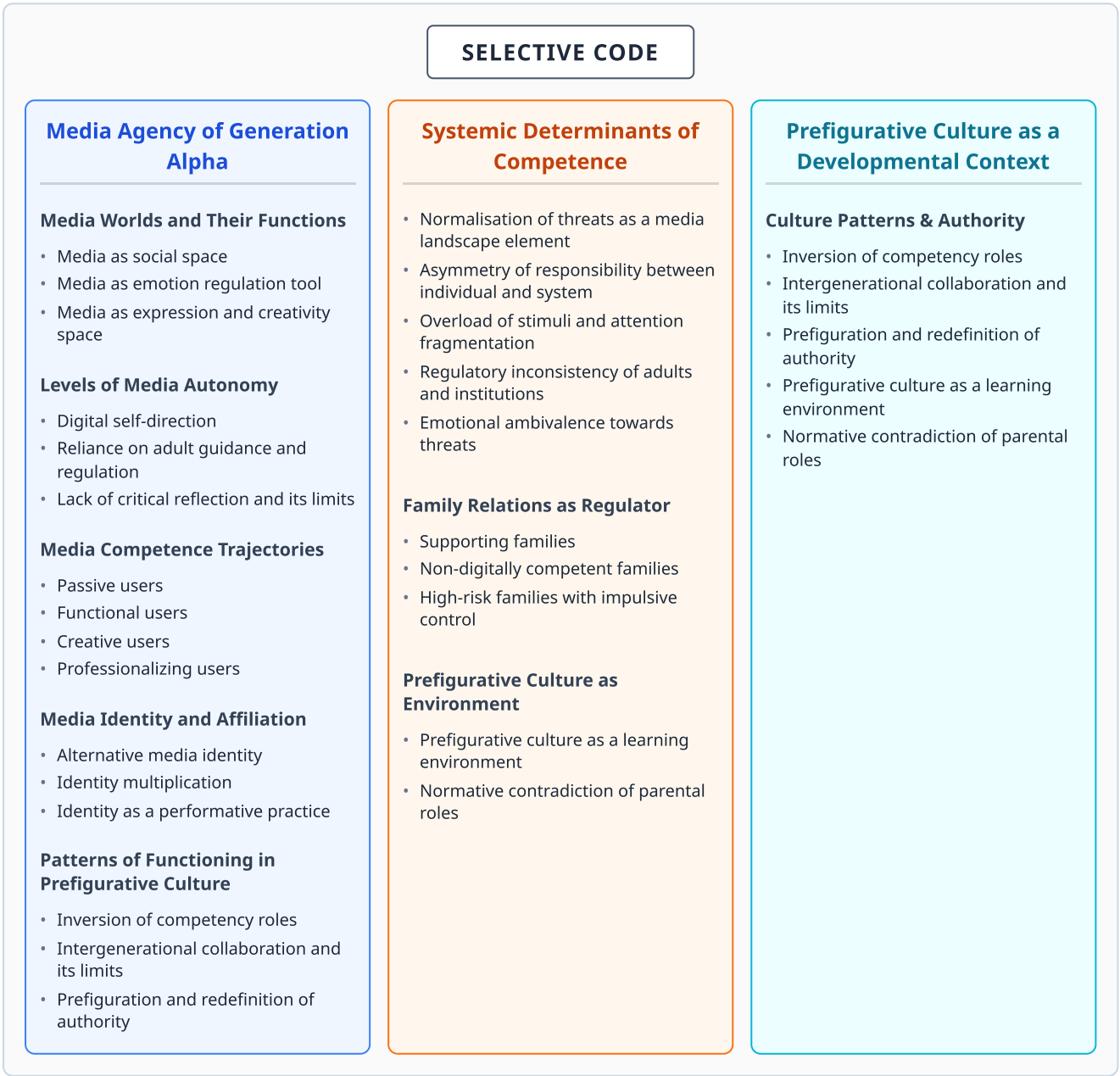
The central challenge is therefore not simply to provide young people with access to technology, but to create conditions in which conscious, critical and responsible agency can develop. This requires a combination of media education, psychological support, intergenerational cooperation and reflection on the systemic conditions under which platforms operate.

Media agency does not mean having full control over the digital environment. It means being able to act consciously within its limits, recognise those limits, seek support and contribute to a more responsible media culture.

In this sense, the transition from control to agency is an important direction for the development of Media Education 4.0.

### Figure 1. Types of competence and behaviour among members of Generation Alpha that illustrate their media agency.

The data shown in the figure form part of the empirical analysis. Based on A. Ogonowska and A. Walecka-Rynduch, *Generation Alpha and Digital Media: Theory and Reality*, Jagiellonian University Press, Kraków, 2026.



## Contextualising the Findings in Light of Recent Analyses of Generation Alpha

The final part of this Report relates the findings of our research to other analyses present in contemporary academic and educational discourse which, owing to their publication dates, were not included in the book *Generation Alpha and Digital Media: Theory and Reality* (Jagiellonian University Press, Kraków, 2026). Bringing these studies together makes it possible to situate our findings within a broader research context and, at the same time, to identify areas requiring further analysis.

One important point of reference is *Alpha Insights: A Report on Generation Alpha*, published on 15 September 2026 by the Półtorej Minuty Foundation (https://www.poltorejminuty.pl/raport). The report combines a review of nearly 70 studies from Poland and around the world with the findings of its own qualitative study conducted among 17 teenagers aged 13–16. Its aim is to confront established perceptions of Generation Alpha with research findings and young people's own experiences.

From the perspective of our analyses, the findings concerning the ways in which digital tools are used and the assessment of the credibility of information available through them are particularly interesting. The report's authors indicate that Google and artificial intelligence tools are frequently used by young people, but are relatively rarely regarded as reliable sources of knowledge. Young people primarily use them to obtain quick answers, which does not necessarily mean that they regard these tools as epistemic authorities. This observation provides an important starting point for further research into changing forms of authority, trust in information sources and ways of verifying knowledge in digital environments.

The issue of Generation Alpha's sources of authority and its members' ability to critically assess and verify information is therefore a shared problem area linking the findings of *Alpha Insights* with those presented in our Report. In our research, we situated representatives of this generation within the perspective of prefigurative culture, in which the traditional direction of the transmission of knowledge and competences between generations is reversed or substantially transformed. This perspective encourages a reassessment of traditional ways of defining and evaluating young people's digital, communication and social competences. In the case of Generation Alpha, an expert is not merely an external observer and interpreter of reality, but also becomes a participant in a relationship whose dynamics they must themselves recognise and understand.

In the thematic areas analysed, we emphasised the importance of critical thinking, the verification of false information and the identification of the actual digital competence profiles of young people operating in a complex and demanding media environment. At the same time, we drew attention to the emergence of trust relationships with artificial intelligence agents and the possibility of assigning them cognitive functions traditionally associated with authorities. Comparing our findings with those of *Alpha Insights* points to the need for further research into how young people recognise authorities, assess the credibility of sources and make decisions on the basis of information obtained through technology. It is important, in this respect, to distinguish between the frequency of using digital tools, trust in the answers they generate and the actual ability to verify those answers critically.

Another important point of reference is the *Nationwide Adult Digital Hygiene Survey*, a long-term research initiative conducted since 2022 by the Digital Citizenship Institute Foundation (Fundacja Instytut Cyfrowego Obywatelstwa) in cooperation with the Orange Foundation (https://higienacyfrowa.pl/publikacje/higiena-cyfrowa-doroslych/). The survey provides knowledge about adults' technology-use practices which, when considered from the perspective of prefigurative culture, may constitute an important context for analysing the media behaviour patterns emerging among younger generations. This does not mean directly transferring findings concerning adults to children and adolescents, but rather taking into account the broader social environment in which their habits and media-use strategies develop.

An important strength of this line of research is its health-oriented and behavioural perspective. It analyses the relationships between technology use and physical and mental health, taking into account such issues as digital stress, sleep and overstimulation. Everyday habits associated with digital hygiene are also examined, including putting one's phone away before going to sleep and managing notifications. The findings broaden the interpretative perspective of our analyses by making it possible to consider the importance of the family and social environment, as well as adults' practices, in shaping the digital everyday lives of the younger generation. Digital hygiene and well-being should not be analysed solely as the outcome of young users' individual decisions, but also in relation to the behavioural patterns, norms and conditions prevailing in their surroundings.

A particularly important point of reference for our analyses is the *Internet Children 2026* report, presented in the Polish Sejm on 15 June 2026 (https://higienacyfrowa.pl/publikacje/internet-dzieci/). The report combines the monitoring of the actual behaviour of the youngest internet users with expert analysis of the consequences of their digital activity. This year's edition broadens the research perspective: in addition to the use of particular applications and screen time, it also considers artificial intelligence tools, the attention economy, the mechanisms involved in designing engaging digital products, and issues relating to public health and the functioning of society.

The data presented in the report indicate the large scale of children's presence in digital environments. According to the published findings, 60% of children and young people under the age of 15 use so-called social media, while 43% of respondents aged 7–14 use the most popular AI chatbot. The authors also draw attention to children's exposure to alcohol advertising and to platform mechanisms that may increase the intensity of digital service use. These findings are relevant to research on Generation Alpha's media agency because they make it possible to consider children's activity not only in the context of their individual competences and choices, but also in relation to the architecture of the technological environment in which they function.

The report's authors emphasise that analysing the behaviour of the youngest internet users requires taking account of the characteristics of digital platforms and services, including algorithmic recommendation mechanisms, autoplay, infinite scrolling and notification systems. These solutions may influence the way users organise their activity and make it more difficult to manage the time spent online consciously. From the perspective of our research, a particularly important question is therefore the extent of children's agency in an environment designed by platforms, as well as the conditions that support the development of autonomy, critical thinking and the ability to manage one's own media activity consciously.

The findings of *Internet Children 2026* should also be considered against the background of other studies on children's and young people's functioning in digital environments, including NASK reports on adolescents' activity, the Sprawdzian 13+ study, publications by the Empowering Children Foundation (Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę), and studies on digital hygiene and young people's physical activity in Poland. Bringing these sources together may help identify recurring trends and differences between age groups, as well as areas requiring further exploration. When comparing the findings, however, it is necessary to take account of methodological differences, the populations studied and the indicators adopted.

The findings of *Internet Children 2026* converge with observations obtained in our in-depth interviews. Of particular importance is the possibility of comparing young users' experiences and practices with mechanisms for commercially engaging their attention and algorithmically organising their activity. This perspective makes a significant contribution to the debate on the psychosocial profile of a generation growing up in conditions of intensive mediatization, commercialisation and the algorithmisation of everyday life. It assumes additional significance in the context of today's infosphere, in which disinformation, manipulation and post-truth pose major challenges to cognitive and social processes. This convergence of findings does not mean that the studies measure precisely the same phenomena; rather, it provides grounds for further comparison of results and more in-depth interpretation.

The *Diagnosis of Young People 2026* report is a comprehensive study commissioned by the Ministry of National Education and prepared by experts from the Polish Society for Social Policy (PTPS). It presents the key contemporary developmental and social challenges facing the younger generation across eight areas: family and the upbringing environment; identity and relationships; health and psychological capital; the digital ecosystem of everyday life; education and development; civic engagement; work and professional competences; and financial and housing independence (https://ore.edu.pl/2026/03/raport-diagnoza-mlodziezy-2026/). Of particular relevance to our research is the report's observation that 'young people have been immersed in a digital environment since early childhood without adequate protection and preparation'. Generation Alpha's media agency should therefore be closely linked to, and considered in relation to, media education projects and the protection of minors online.

Analysing contemporary discourse on Generation Alpha's media development and digital competences is an important research task, but also part of the responsibility of the academic and educational communities. In the light of the studies cited above and the findings of our research, three interrelated areas can be identified as deserving further analysis: digital hygiene and well-being, critical thinking, and media education. These are not separate fields of concern, but mutually conditioning dimensions. Digital hygiene practices are associated with well-being and ways of regulating one's own activity; critical thinking supports the assessment of information credibility and the recognition of manipulation mechanisms; and media education can create conditions for developing the competences, autonomy and agency required to function in a complex digital environment. The reports we have prepared represent an attempt to contribute to this debate and to develop interpretative frameworks that enable these processes to be analysed from multiple perspectives.

Considered against the background of the studies cited, the Report *Media Agency of Generation Alpha* indicates the usefulness of the theoretical models we have proposed for analysing the contemporary infosphere and the media experiences of the younger generation. It also makes it possible to identify several important problem areas. The first concerns difficulties in recognising advanced forms of visual and audiovisual manipulation, including deepfakes, and other tools used in disinformation activities. These issues are directly related to the development of critical thinking and competences in assessing information credibility.

The second area concerns the dominance of screen time over other forms of activity and possible changes in everyday habits, including family ways of spending time together. This issue directs attention towards digital hygiene and well-being, while requiring consideration of the diversity of media practices and their social and family determinants. The third area is associated with changes in formal education, particularly the development of a sense of agency and autonomy, the strengthening of media competences and the creation of conditions conducive to the mental well-being of children and young people.

The areas identified do not exhaust the complexity of Generation Alpha's media experiences, but they point to important directions for further research and educational activities. Their common denominator is the need to move away from a simplified perception of digital competences as a set of technical skills towards an approach that takes account of social relationships, cognitive determinants, everyday practices and institutional conditions. Only such a perspective makes it possible to analyse young people's media agency not merely in terms of what they can do with technology, but also how they understand its operation, assess its consequences and make conscious decisions in digital environments.

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