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Media Behaviour of Generation Alpha with a Focus on Audio

ABSTRACT

Generation Alpha is growing up in an environment dominated by digital visual platforms, where short video formats and constant online connectivity shape their media behaviour. In this context, media such as radio remain less examined. The aim of this study is to analyse the position of radio and audio in the media behaviour patterns of Generation Alpha, while also examining the relationship between these formats and the development of media competences. The theoretical background is based on an analysis of current international research focusing on children's media consumption, audio content, and media literacy, which serves as an interpretative framework for the empirical part of the study. Empirical data were collected through a questionnaire survey conducted among pupils in the first stage of their primary education. The questionnaire focused on the frequency of audio listening, perceptions of radio, and preferences between linear and on-demand audio content. The results show that although radio is not among the dominant media in children's everyday media use, audio content is nevertheless perceived as an understandable and less distracting medium. Children prefer it during shared family activities and also use it while performing parallel activities. Furthermore, the findings indicate a relationship between the frequency of audio listening, the ability to concentrate, and a better comprehension of media content. In conclusion, radio and audio formats represent a promising, yet insufficiently explored part of Generation Alpha's media environment. The results open space for further research, which should focus on children's listening competences, multimodal content processing, and the long-term relationships between audio use and the development of media literacy.

KEY WORDS

Audio. Generation Alpha. Media Competences. Media Literacy. Podcast. Radio.

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1 Introduction

For many adult audiences, media still tends to be understood as a set of relatively distinct categories (television, radio, print, web). For Generation Alpha, media boundaries are far less stable: a single platform can simultaneously function as entertainment, social communication, gaming, and search engine. As a consequence, patterns of media use and the ways credibility and authority are learned are increasingly shaped within multi-purpose environments rather than within clearly separated media channels. This study therefore links Generation Alpha's technological and media habits with the concept of media literacy, paying particular attention to audio formats that operate as companion media, compatible with everyday activities, including shifts in radio-related consumption (Šramová & Pavelka, 2023).

Growing up with mobile devices as a default, children in Generation Alpha commonly integrate phones and tablets into their daily routines, most visibly through entertainment-oriented activities such as games, streaming, and short-form content. In the literature, this pervasive device-centred childhood has been captured through labels such as homo tabletus, the "Glass generation", "screeners", or "screenagers" (Tootell et al., 2014; Williams, 2015). Importantly, these labels point less to a single medium and more to a broader media ecology in which attention, identity, and information are negotiated across platforms.

Evidence from Slovakia supports this platform-based view of children's media behaviour. Šramová and Pavelka (2023) describe children's engagement with apps as something that is better explained by the functions platforms serve than by traditional media categories. In their qualitative findings, teachers interpret children's app use from a needs-oriented perspective: digital tools are associated not only with entertainment, but also with everyday regulation (e.g., relaxation, reassurance, social connection) and with developmental functions related to learning, curiosity, and autonomy. In children's accounts, platform use tends to cluster around recurring purposes: entertainment, information seeking, learning, and gaming. This illustrates how a single platform may serve multiple roles at once. Overall, the study characterises children's media engagement as largely intentional and selective, a point with direct implications for how credibility cues and authority norms are formed inside multi-purpose environments.

The latest research report (Holdoš et al., 2025) presents a comprehensive analysis of the digital ecosystem of Slovak students, focusing on the interaction between online behaviour and specific psychosocial determinants. The authors reflect on dynamic changes in digital communication, including the growing popularity of short videos and the integration of artificial intelligence into young people's daily activities. The study critically examines not only preferences regarding social platforms but primarily emphasizes the risk dimension of the internet – ranging from cyberbullying and digital manipulation to the specifics of intimate communication in the online space. A key contribution of this work is the placement of technological trends within the broader context of psychosocial health, which provides an important empirical basis for the development of targeted media literacy strategies and protective measures in the Slovak context.

To situate these insights in a broader context, two large-scale syntheses are particularly informative: one focusing on early childhood media practices in families, and another offering a cross-national European benchmark of children's online lives. Mannell et al. (2024) argue that research and public discourse still too often reduce children's digital lives to "screen time", even though everyday media use is shaped by content, context, relationships, and purpose. They call for more precise conceptualisation of technology use, and for approaches that move beyond time-based or dosage-style assumptions to better reflect the complexity and diversity of family media practices (Mannell et al., 2024).

From a broader European perspective, the EU Kids Online 2020 report documents how deeply internet use is embedded in children's routines and how engagement differs across countries and groups. It describes patterns of everyday online activity that commonly include watching videos, listening to music, communicating with peers and family, using social networking

services, and playing online games. The prominence of both video and audio in daily routines is important for this thesis because it supports the view that companion formats are not peripheral, but structurally embedded in children's media diets (Smahel et al., 2020). At the same time, the report shows that participation is uneven across contexts, and that age and gender remain relevant for certain practices such as gaming.

From a media literacy standpoint, EU Kids Online is valuable because it differentiates between competence domains rather than treating digital skill as a single trait. Children frequently report strong operational and social skills, yet information-navigation and creative skills appear more uneven, suggesting that confidence in using platforms does not automatically translate into strong evaluation or content-production competencies. This distinction is directly relevant to credibility formation: the ability to operate within platforms can coexist with weaker capacities to assess information quality or to understand how content is produced and circulated (Smahel et al., 2020).

1.1 Media Literacy

In conceptual terms, UNESCO defines Media and Information Literacy (MIL) as an integrated set of competencies for engaging with communication and information services across media organisations, information institutions, and online communication companies. MIL is framed as a practical capacity that enables people to access, understand, critically evaluate, use, and create information, particularly in an information environment shaped by misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech. UNESCO also emphasises that MIL should be embedded across formal, non-formal, and informal learning and adapted to local realities rather than applied as a rigid model (UNESCO, 2022). UNESCO's "Five Laws of MIL" further underline that all information providers, including technology platforms, belong to one civic information environment; that people are not only consumers but also creators; and that messages are shaped by interests and biases. MIL is therefore treated as a rights-based, lifelong process involving access, evaluation, use, and production rather than a one-time skill acquisition.

In the Slovak context, Šupšáková (2016) similarly frames media literacy as an educational objective grounded in children's lived media environments rather than in purely technical digital skills. She argues that media education should develop pupils' understanding of how messages are constructed and why they persuade, so that children can navigate information and entertainment across text, image, and sound with greater awareness and responsibility. The paper notes that children's orientation to the world is strongly mediated through television and the internet, while everyday communication increasingly takes place through mobile and messaging practices. Given these realities, Šupšáková treats media education as a necessary part of schooling, especially with respect to critical evaluation and the recognition of manipulation or media influence. She also points to implementation challenges in Slovakia, including uneven integration across schools and limited systematic assessment tools for evaluating learning outcomes, suggesting a need for stronger institutional support through teacher preparation, materials, and evaluation frameworks (Šupšáková, 2016).

Similarly, Vrabec (2025) conceptualizes media and information literacy (MIL) as an essential competence for functioning in the contemporary digital environment, while highlighting its anchoring in international political and theoretical frameworks. The author emphasizes that the development of MIL cannot be reduced to the mere acquisition of technical skills; it is a pedagogically grounded process centred on critical reflection on media content and an understanding of the broader social context in which media operate. According to him, the effective design of educational strategies is determined by the ability to adapt the curriculum to the cognitive specifics of target groups, as well as to the sociocultural and systemic factors that shape the educational reality.

For this reason, media competence can be understood primarily as part of pedagogical practice, while conceptually it also ties in with the concept of communicative competence (Theunert, 2009). Kačinová (2015) also emphasises the normative focus of media education, which consists in defining what forms of contact with the media can be considered meaningful and stimulating for development. At the same time, she points to the need to consider didactic strategies through which such contact can be mediated not only to children and young people, but also to the adult population.

A related dimension concerns attention and the conditions under which media literacy is exercised. Cardoso-Leite et al. (2021) argue that children's media engagement should not be treated as a single screen time exposure, because distinct patterns of use can relate to different outcomes. Their analyses suggest that concurrent media use (media multitasking) is more consistently associated with adverse indicators than total media time, and that links to school performance may operate indirectly through attention, behavioural measures, and sleep. This is relevant when interpreting Generation Alpha's platform-based routines because critical evaluation is not only a matter of knowledge, but also of the attention context in which media is consumed.

1.2 Generation Alpha and Audio Formats

Audio formats such as radio, music streaming, and children's podcasts occupy a distinctive position in Generation Alpha's media ecology, because they are often integrated into daily routines and combined with other activities. Evidence on children's audio consumption suggests that digital audio use is growing, while child-targeted audio content may remain relatively limited and not always salient to young audiences (Pérez-Alaejos et al., 2025). Research on children's podcasts also indicates that families commonly embed listening into everyday practices and use podcasts in ways that support routine activities, reinforcing the role of audio as companion media rather than as a standalone form of engagement (Cardarelli et al., 2025).

Research conducted on a representative sample of children and adolescents in Spain (aged 3-18) shows that audio media consumption has significant age-specific characteristics and different trajectories for traditional radio and podcasts. While listening to traditional radio is highest in the 7-12 age group (54.5%), it drops to 32.5% among adolescents aged 13-18. Conversely, podcasts become particularly important in adolescence (29.8%), while their use remains low in younger age groups (8.4% for 3-6-year-olds and 13.9% for 7-12-year-olds). Music dominates content preferences: children aged 7-12 most often prefer music radio (48.4%), and music is also the most frequently mentioned category within audio platforms (Pérez-Alaejos et al., 2025). Audio content for young children can function as a low-barrier medium that naturally integrates into family routines without the need for visual attention. A mixed-methods study conducted on 110 families from low-income backgrounds (children aged approximately 4-8 years) shows that children's podcasts were attractive and flexible for most participants: parents described them as a format that can be used in activities where screen media are not practical (e.g., driving, cooking, or evening calming down). The findings also suggest that podcasts did not generally lead to a systematic reduction in screen time, but rather were added as a complementary element to existing family media routines; only a small proportion of parents explicitly stated that they used them as an alternative to screen time breaks. The research also identifies the limitations of the audio-only format: some children needed time to adapt without visual support, and excessive unfamiliarity with the topics or inappropriately set interactive elements (e.g., calls for participation, which disturbed some children) also emerged as barriers. In their recommendations based on co-design, the authors emphasise the importance of narrative structures (e.g. serial stories), sensitively dosed interactivity, and design elements that help children "learn" to listen and navigate audio-only media (Cardarelli et al., 2025).

In the context of Generation Alpha, however, radio can no longer be understood as merely linear broadcasting: audio is increasingly distributed through platforms and applications where content is searched for, recommended and personalised. This shifts the focus from content reception to media literacy issues, such as the ability to assess the credibility of sources, distinguish commercial elements and understand the mechanisms of recommendation systems. Audio is therefore not just a format, but also part of a broader platform information environment. Radio is a long-established and accessible form of audio technology that can, in certain contexts, deliver educational content on a large scale, especially where connectivity is limited or digital literacy is low. The Rapid Evidence Review EdTech Hub also highlights the importance of interactive approaches, particularly the concept of Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI), which can support student-centred practices (e.g. questions and guided activities) while indirectly modelling better pedagogy, even in environments with limited teacher training opportunities. In terms of subject areas, radio is often used in practice for language and mathematics subjects, with available evidence suggesting greater effectiveness, particularly for language topics, especially among younger children. The strengths of radio include its affordability, portability and the fact that it does not require reading skills; on the other hand, its limitations include its audio-only nature and the limited ability to pause or replay broadcasts, so it is recommended to supplement it with supporting materials or other technologies, if available (Damani & Mitchell, 2020).

The literature review shows that Generation Alpha's media behaviour is shaped by a platform environment in which traditional media categories overlap and competencies are developed in everyday use situations. Media literacy therefore requires more than just technical skills. It involves critical evaluation, ethical decision-making, understanding context, and the ability to navigate content distribution and recommendation mechanisms. Audio formats fit into this framework as a practical accompanying medium: on the one hand, they integrate naturally into family routines and can promote understanding; on the other hand, they place new demands on navigation in platform-distributed content. These starting points form the basis for the empirical part of the work, which examines the position of radio and audio in the media habits of younger school-age children.

2 Methodology

The main objective of this study is to analyse the position of radio and audio in the media behaviour patterns of Generation Alpha. The authors of the study examine the relationship between these audio formats and the development of media literacy in early school-age children. The theoretical framework of this analysis is based on research into children's media consumption, the characteristics of audio content and monitoring of media literacy levels, which serve as an interpretative framework for the extensive empirical part of the research.

Method and data collection process: The primary source of data is a structured questionnaire developed by the authors of the study. The survey took place between October 2025 and January 2026 and was linked to an activity organised by the Skladová Creative Centre, in which children were introduced to radio work, learned about job positions and how radio works, and recorded an original audio story together. The research was conducted exclusively among pupils in the first stage of primary education, which is a critical period for the formation of lifelong media habits and the development of critical thinking. The questionnaire was anonymous and distributed directly during the activity or retrospectively via the Edupage portal. The questionnaire was completed by children aged 6-11 (N = 161). The structure of the research tool (questionnaire) was designed with the cognitive abilities of the target group in mind and combined quantitative methods with an effort to obtain qualitative, freely formulated answers.

The questionnaire included a demographic filter (respondent's age), qualitative-frequency (closed) questions, association items, and scaling.

Demographic profile: The respondent's age served as the basic independent variable for the purpose of finding developmental correlations.

Type and design of research: The survey was designed as a cross-sectional empirical study using a mixed research design. This approach methodologically links quantitative measurement of frequencies and preferences with qualitative examination, which makes it possible not only to determine children's media habits, but also to understand their way of viewing the media.

Content focus of the questionnaire: The questionnaire tracked several key variables. The first axis was the frequency of media consumption, where the research focused on how often children listen to the radio and what type of audio content dominates (music, fairy tales, educational content). The second axis was the qualitative perception of the media itself. An open-ended question asked children to define the concept of radio in their own words and explain to their peers what radio is. These answers serve as an indicator of their media literacy and abstract thinking skills. The third axis was the scaling of preferences in two different environments: leisure time and school. The children were asked to rank activities from most preferred to least preferred. In the leisure category, the relationship between watching television, listening to audio stories, playing digital games and socialising with friends was measured. In the school category, preferences for receiving information through the teacher's spoken word, written text on the board, visual demonstrations on the interactive whiteboard, and pure audio demonstrations were measured.

Data processing and analysis methods: Given the heterogeneous nature of the data, the following types of procedures were used in evaluating the questionnaire: descriptive statistics (evaluation of percentage representation), bivariate analysis and cross-tabulation (searching for causal links, primarily by cross-referencing the respondent's age with their behavioural responses), qualitative text analysis (for children's free responses) and comparative analysis (comparing results in individual sections of the questionnaire). In terms of age, we worked with two groups, namely children aged 6-8 and 9-11, and their separate analysis yielded interesting and thought-provoking results, as well as significant differences.

3 Results

As part of this study, we conducted a survey using a structured questionnaire aimed at mapping the relationships of a selected group of children from the Alpha generation and the position of radio and audio in their media behaviour patterns.

A quantitative analysis of the frequency of contact with audio among the surveyed group of children showed that, despite the dominance of audiovisual content and media, audio still has its place among Generation Alpha. Specifically, we asked about the frequency of radio listening. 21.4% of respondents said they do not listen to the radio at all. On the other hand, 29.6% of children said they listen to the radio every day and 31.4% several times a week.

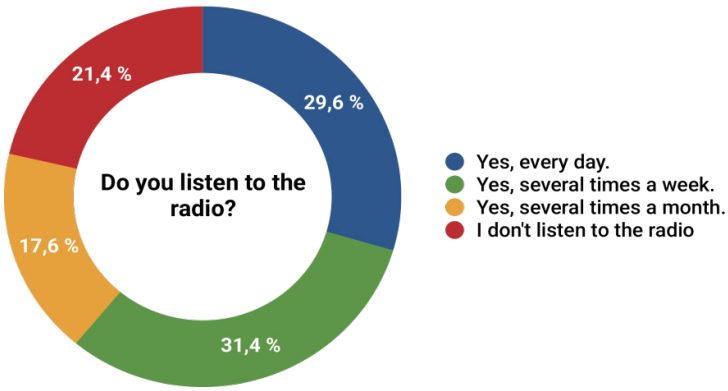

Figure 1: *Radio listening frequency*
Source: own processing, 2026

If we combine these two groups of respondents who listen to the radio on a daily or almost daily basis and contrast them with respondents who do not listen to the radio at all, we get two opposing groups. We attribute this polarisation to the family environment associated with daily routines. Listening to the radio is not an autonomous decision made by children, but is strongly conditioned by the media habits of the family. Children in primary school do not crave radios and therefore do not own them. They therefore receive linear audio broadcasting through their parents or grandparents, who provide it for them. This finding is underlined by the qualitative responses of respondents who reported listening to the radio mainly in the car, during the morning drive to school with their parents. In this environment, children do not actively choose audio content, but are exposed to it and process it passively. In their case, radio is not their primary medium of choice, but rather a background medium that fills the space during parallel activities. The finding that radio is considered by children to be a less disruptive type of media stems precisely from this nature. It does not require eye contact, does not isolate the child from their physical environment, and allows for social interaction with their surroundings even while listening.

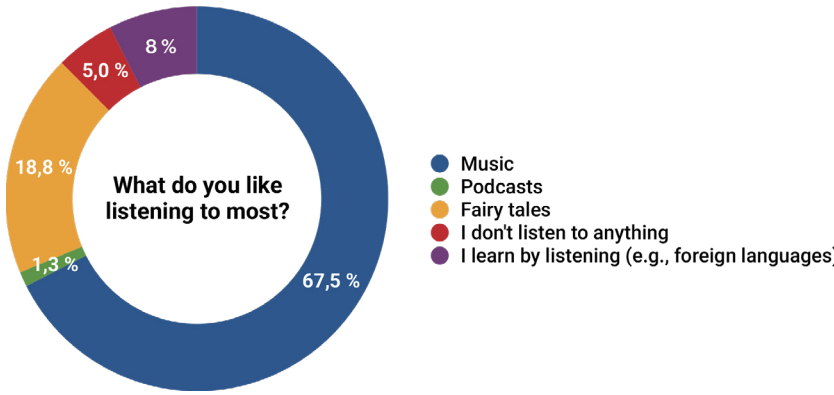

Figure 2: *Most frequently played audio content*
Source: own processing, 2026

As part of our questionnaire survey, we asked Generation Alpha about their preferred audio content, among other things. The data collected clearly confirms that children prefer listening to music the most. This type of audio content dominates across all age groups. Music is an emotional stimulus for children. It also functions as a tool for regulating mood or as background for other activities such as playing with building blocks, drawing, and the like.

The second most listened to audio content among Generation Alpha is fairy tales. This narrative format requires children to maintain concentration for long periods of time and visualise images based on verbal cues. The data obtained shows that the group of children who favour audio fairy tales also exhibit cognitive and educational preferences in other areas. We will present these findings in the next section of the study.

Also worth mentioning in the responses of Generation Alpha is their preference for new forms of audio content in the form of podcasts. This form of audio was chosen by the smallest number of children, but nevertheless, the beginnings of this trend (on-demand spoken word) are also visible among primary school pupils.

In terms of the educational potential of Generation Alpha, it is important that 8% of respondents stated that they use audio for learning. We can therefore conclude that audio content is also perceived as a legitimate and effective educational tool by this generation. This shift from passive listening to music to actively acquiring skills through audio is a potential finding for the field of pedagogy and didactics.

3.1 Media Perception

A qualitative analysis of open-ended responses to the question "If you had to explain to a friend what radio is, what would you say?" reveals the development of children's abstract thinking and their ability to define technologies that are historically older than the respondents. From a semantic and cognitive point of view, children's answers can be divided into four perception models:

- **Material model of perception and cognition**
  A significant proportion of younger respondents aged 6-7 perceive radios primarily through their material essence and define objects based on their tangible properties. The children characterised the radio as "a box for listening", "a box", "a machine", "a music box" or "a rectangle on which you listen to music". Some respondents go into visual details and describe the radio as "grey" or specify that it has "a little window in the middle". This model shows that the abstract concept of radio broadcasting is still incomprehensible at the age of 6-8 without reference to a specific physical object.
- **Sensory and comparative (visual deprivation) model**
  A group of respondents defined radio using a comparative method, using television as the basic frame of reference. They then characterised radio in relation to television as the reference medium by negating the image. Children defined radio as, for example, "radio is TV, but we can't see it, we can only hear it", "a mobile phone without a picture" or "like YouTube but without a picture". These answers are key to understanding the media perception of Generation Alpha. Sound itself is not perceived as a primary attribute, but rather as what remains when the visual component is removed. For them, audio is "television with the screen turned off".
- **Content and utility model**
  Respondents across age groups characterise radio exclusively by the content it provides, and their answers focus on functionality: "radio is for listening to the news", "a place where you listen to music", "a device that plays songs, news, weather and traffic". This utilitarian approach shows how well children understand the informational value of the medium. Respondents often associated radio with newspapers: "you can listen to the news on the radio". In this context, the word "news" does not refer to printed newspapers, but to the general concept of news and information.

- **Technological and abstract model**
  with material models of perception and cognition. Specifically, children in this age group define radio as “a device that transmits sound over a distance”, “electronics that transmit information”, or state that radio is “the sound we hear” or “voice”. Audio content is perceived by children as an understandable type of media. Even respondents who do not actively listen to the radio are able to adequately describe its basic functions and social purpose.

3.2 Analysis of Leisure Patterns

An essential part of the survey was a comparison of the position of audio with other forms of leisure activities. Respondents were asked to assign values from 1 (*enjoy the most*) to 4 (*enjoy the least*) to the following activities: watching television, listening to audio stories, playing on a tablet or mobile phone, playing with friends. Depending on the age of the respondents, there were some misinterpretations of the instructions when filling out the questionnaire, and some children gave the same value to several activities. Therefore, we interpret the results with the understanding that children may have considered several leisure activities to be equally popular.

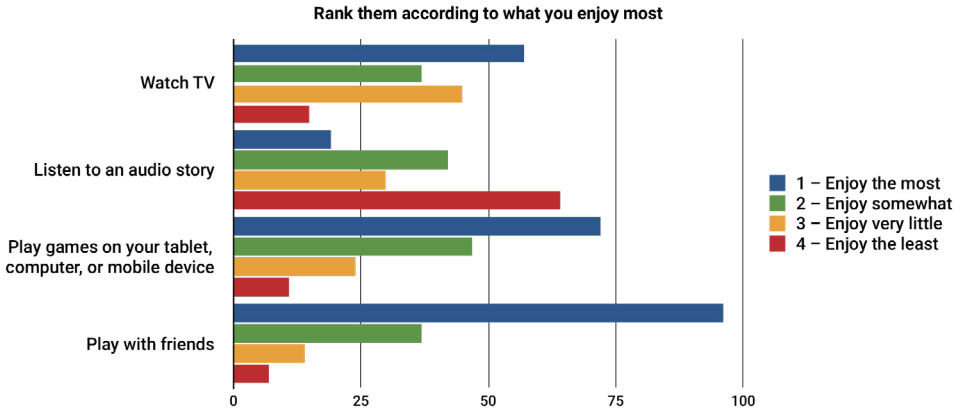

Figure 3: *Preference for leisure activities*

Source: own processing, 2026

The survey shows that the need for socialisation absolutely dominates. The activity “playing with friends” was rated most frequently with a value of 1 by almost all of respondents. This finding may serve as a counterargument to the general opinion that digital devices replace the need for physical social interaction. More extensive research would be needed to fully confirm this, but even in this context, it is a very positive finding.

The popularity of digital devices is confirmed by the second most popular activity, “playing on a tablet or mobile phone”, and the third most popular activity, “watching television”. These activities require the child’s exclusive visual, auditory and, in the case of games, motor engagement. Compared to these activities, “listening to an audio story” may seem unattractive. To conclude that children are not interested in audio content in their free time would be a superficial view of this survey. Such an interpretation would ignore the very essence of audio media. As we have repeatedly stated in the study, radio and audio recordings are so-called background media and we consume them while doing other activities. Due to the nature of the question and the need to rank individual activities, respondents naturally chose activities that require their full attention.

3.3 Association between Audio Listening and Educational Preferences

The most significant contribution of this study is the discovery of a clear and significant association between the frequency of audio listening at home and students' educational preferences in the school environment. This part of the analysis directly follows on from the study's objective of examining the relationship between audio formats and the development of the skills of concentration and comprehension.

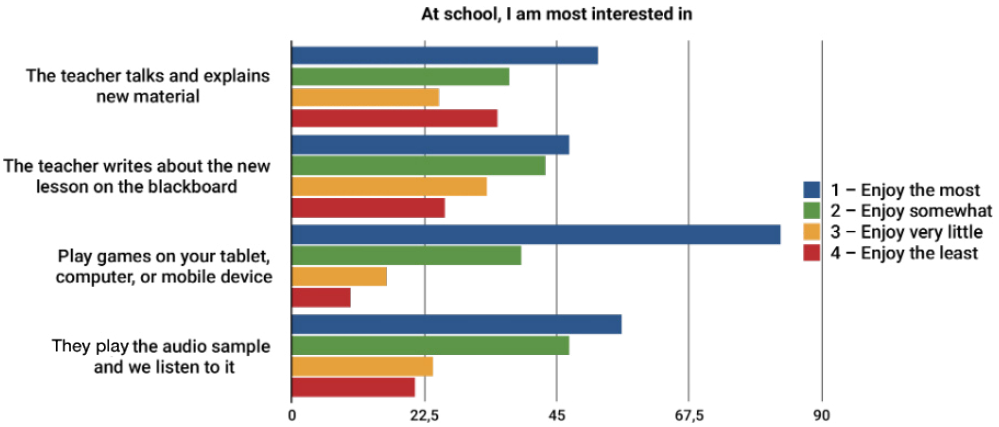

Figure 4: *Preference for the way teachers explain the subject matter*

Source: own processing, 2026

As in the previous question, respondents were asked to assign a value from 1 to 4 to the way teachers explain the subject matter: the teacher talks and explains, the teacher writes on the board, the teacher shows pictures and videos on the interactive whiteboard, the teacher plays an audio sample.

A cross-analysis of these school preferences in relation to the frequency of listening to the radio at home reveals a clear pattern of behaviour. Among children who stated in the questionnaire that they do not listen to the radio at all, the need for visual stimuli is absolutely dominant. This group of children ranks interactive whiteboards with pictures and videos first. Traditional teaching methods, such as listening to a teacher speaking or reading from the blackboard, are rated by these "audio non-listeners" as significantly less interesting and less preferred. The cognitive systems of these children, accustomed to a constant stream of dynamic visual stimuli from tablets and television, show signs of visual dependence. In the absence of video content, they quickly lose the ability to maintain attention, which manifests itself in low tolerance for classic verbal explanations.

On the other side of the spectrum is a group of children who consume radio or audio formats every day or several times a week. These regular listeners are experiencing a change in preferences. They still rate the use of interactive whiteboards and video demonstrations highly, but the method of "the teacher talking and explaining new material" is rapidly rising in popularity and is becoming the absolute number one preference for many. Equally high, often in first or second place, is the method "She plays an audio sample and we listen to it".

This finding suggests a fundamental connection: exposure to spoken language and audio without visual support in the family environment (whether listening to radio news, podcasts or audio stories) acts as intensive cognitive training. We can assume that the brains of these children are accustomed to decoding complex meanings exclusively from audio signals, with better-developed auditory working memory and higher tolerance for the absence of visual stimulation. As a result, these children are able to fully concentrate on the teacher's verbal expression at school.

These results point to a positive relationship with a better understanding of media and educational content, as children who train their auditory attention more are able to engage more effectively in the traditional educational process, which is still based more on words than images.

4 Discussion

Generation Alpha is growing up in an environment that is completely dominated by digital visual platforms. Their everyday media behaviour is shaped by constant online connectivity, touch interfaces on smart devices, and the consumption of short, highly stimulating video formats on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. In this crowded visual context, more traditional forms of information reception, such as radio and content based exclusively on the spoken word, appear to be a less explored but all the more important area. Despite predictions of the decline of traditional media, spoken word content continues to play an irreplaceable role in children's lives, establishing itself particularly in specific contexts such as family, education and leisure environments.

Audio formats, whether in the form of linear radio broadcasting, on-demand podcasts or audio stories, offer a diametrically different cognitive experience compared to visual media. The absence of a visual component inevitably forces the child listener to engage their imagination more actively, promotes mental visualisation of narrative structures, stimulates vocabulary development and requires a different type of sustained attention. Another key attribute of audio is its nature as an accompanying medium. Audio consumption allows for so-called parallel activity, meaning that it does not require the child's exclusive visual and motor attention, allowing radio and audio formats to be seamlessly integrated into other activities such as family car trips, playing with physical toys, or preparing for school.

Data from international surveys show that audio remains attractive to Generation Alpha, and the popularity of listening to podcasts increases with age. A survey conducted in London in 2024 on a sample of nearly 38,000 children aged 8 to 18 showed that 42.3% of respondents listened to audio content (audiobooks or podcasts) in their free time. For the first time since 2020, when research into audio listening among this group began, children and young people enjoyed listening to audio recordings more than reading, which was indicated by 34.6%. Forty-four per cent of respondents listen to audio at least once a week, and 26.5% said they had listened to an audiobook, podcast or radio programme with their family in the last four weeks (Picton & Clark, 2025). Similar findings are confirmed by a survey conducted in the USA (on a significantly smaller sample of N = 245, the survey was conducted through the children's parents). According to the survey, 46% of respondents, children aged 6-12, had listened to a podcast at some point, and 29% had listened to a podcast in the last month. 68% of parents of the children who listen to podcasts every month say that their children listen to podcasts with their parents in the car (Edison Research, 2023). As we mentioned in the introduction to the study, a survey conducted in Spain confirms that the popularity of podcasts increases with age (Pérez-Alaejos et al., 2025).

The surveys mentioned above did not focus solely on determining the frequency of listening to audio content, but also on its benefits for the listener. We consider these findings to be a very positive effect of listening to audio, and they convey an important message that audio both has a place in the media habits of Generation Alpha and can be beneficial to them.

The London survey shows that children and young people are motivated to listen to audio recordings to support their mental health or to learn something new. Fifty-two per cent said that listening to an audiobook or podcast helped them relax and improve their emotional state when they were feeling anxious or stressed, and 48 per cent said that listening helped them understand a story or topic. The survey also reveals connections to broader literacy behaviour. 52.9% of respondents agreed with the statement that they use their imagination more when listening to stories than when watching videos (Picton & Clark, 2025).

The survey conducted by the authors of the study shows that respondents prefer to listen to music (67.5%) and audio stories (18.8%). Only two respondents selected the podcast option. For further research into Generation Alpha's media content consumption preferences, it would be desirable to focus specifically on the area of podcasts, and to find out at what age interest in this format increases and what content they prefer.

Overall, we can conclude from the survey that it is wrong to assume that radio and audio are completely uninteresting to Generation Alpha in today's digital and visual age.

The survey reveals several key findings regarding the role of audio media. Firstly, audio maintains a stable position; although it is not among the most popular and sought-after media, it remains popular and can be highly beneficial to listeners. It actively supports and develops their concentration, imagination, and overall understanding of different types of content. This audio consumption largely occurs in parallel with family activities, most often during car journeys. Furthermore, audio is highly understandable to children, who can easily describe the functionality of the radio. They often perceive it as "television without images", which evidences their understanding of the technological differences between formats. They describe it as a less distracting type of media that allows them to perform other activities simultaneously. Finally, the survey highlights that the spoken word facilitates and promotes attention in school. A key finding from the questionnaire is the strong correlation between the frequency of listening to audio at home and the ability to concentrate on auditory teaching formats at school. Children who are accustomed to radio and audio stories are noticeably more receptive to verbal explanations from teachers, unlike children who primarily prefer visual media and tend to lose concentration without visual stimuli.

5 Conclusion

The conclusions of the study indicate that radio and audio formats, despite their underestimated nature, remain a very promising and irreplaceable part of the media environment of Generation Alpha. Their contribution lies mainly in improving the ability to concentrate for long periods of time and in developing imagination through words.

At the same time, this area remains largely under-researched. The results of this study open up a wide scope for further academic and applied research. Future studies should primarily focus on a deeper examination of children's listening literacy skills, specifically how they can critically deconstruct audio information and recognise misinformation spread through audio.

Isolated research on a single medium is no longer sufficient. It is also necessary to examine the relationships between intensive use of narrative audio in early childhood and the later development of reading, academic and comprehensive media literacy in adolescence. Audio formats have proven their cognitive benefits and deserve a firm place not only in media studies theory but also in practical strategies for modern education.

Based on the survey and its results, which show a correlation between listening to audio at home and the ability to concentrate at school, targeted listening could be incorporated more into teaching practice. Audio-only activities in the teaching process, especially in primary schools (e.g., listening to and subsequently analysing audio stories without visual support), can serve as highly effective tools for building cognitive resilience to visual overload. In this way, schools can compensate for children's declining tolerance for traditional verbal instruction.

An analysis of available foreign studies clearly shows that Generation Alpha's habits in consuming audio content are influenced by their parents (especially listening while travelling together). The findings suggest that this unconscious but intensive cognitive training effectively prepares children to process complex verbal information at a later age.

The study also shows that, from Generation Alpha's perspective, radio is not a dead or outdated medium. Children perceive it functionally and sensually as "television without pictures". Understanding this mental model is key for creators of both educational and commercial content. Successful audio formats for this generation must be designed with the understanding that sound primarily serves as background noise that allows them to multitask, but at the same time, the content must be engaging enough to hold their attention, even in the absence of visual stimuli.

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