



SCIREA Journal of Education

ISSN: 2995-3901

<http://www.scirea.org/journal/Education>

March 13, 2025

Volume 10, Issue 2, April 2025

<https://doi.org/10.54647/education880581>

## **From Gen Z to Generation Alpha: Navigating the Evolution of Communication in a Digital Age**

**Benjamin Zierock <sup>1\*</sup>, Jonas Schulze <sup>1</sup>, Sierr Angar <sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> *SRH University of Applied Sciences Heidelberg*, Ludwig-Guttman-Str. 6, 69123 Heidelberg, Germany,

<sup>2</sup> Socratyes GmbH, Waldhofer Straße 102, 69123 Heidelberg, Germany

\*Corresponding author: [Benjamin.zierock@srh.de](mailto:Benjamin.zierock@srh.de)

### **Abstract**

Current research delves into the ever-evolving communication habits of Generation Alpha (born 2010 – 2025), conglomerated with that of Generation Z (born 1997 – 2012). Key strengths will consist of technological fluency, global connectivity, and the flexibility to adjust as new and unique platforms come along. Yet, issues such as over-dependence on digital technology, privacy issues and risks to mental health remain. Immersive technologies, AI-powered emotional growth, and personalized communication tools offer potential opportunities, while the digital divide and cybersecurity risks persist as meaningful threats.

The study notes that people have blended digital and physical communication and stresses the importance of balanced screen time, digital literacy and equitable access. It calls on educators, policymakers and developers to create safe, inclusive environments and adjust strategies to match the preferences of this hyperconnected generation.

Generation Alpha's communications trends will change media, society and education, requiring immersive, ethical, diverse facilities. Technology needs to be fully leveraged for

personalized learning and collaboration, gamification along with cultural aspects like music and the arts should enhance creativity, emotional expression, and cultural awareness. By leveraging these tools, society can empower the next generation to lead an interconnected, empathetic future, blending technological innovation with holistic development.

**Keywords:** *Generation Alpha, Gen Z, Communication, Collaboration*

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Context and Relevance**

Data suggests that technology is changing means of communication, connection, and engagement for the better. The first generation to grow up in a largely internet-driven environment, Generation Z (born circa 1997–2012) laid the groundwork for a digital-first approach to communication styles. [1] Now, as we look at Generation Alpha, approximately born between 2010–2025, Gen Z's younger siblings; we see a troubling, but not surprising pattern: they are building their lives with technology more integrated than ever. [2]

*"Generation Alpha, the largest generation in history, is already shaping the future with significant brand influence and purchasing power. Born from 2010 onward, they will soon surpass the Baby Boomers and redefine the social media landscape, popular culture, and consumer trends. Understanding their traits is crucial for organizations aiming to thrive in the coming decades."* (McCrindle & Fell, 2020) [3]

This research treads a path between the forces of technological evolution and those of societal change, proceeding to investigate the impact of means of communication such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) on the forms of communication exhibited by Generation Alpha. Furthermore, events in society, like the COVID-19 pandemic, which has kept many of us isolated with more time for remote learning and online interaction, also impact how Generation Alpha has learned to communicate. Understanding these dynamics is crucial not only for researchers but also for educators, policymakers, and industries seeking to engage with these emerging digital natives effectively.

## **1.2. Generational Definitions**

### ***1.2.1. Generation Z (Gen Z)***

Generation Z experienced the advent of smartphones, social media, and an increasingly globalized internet. Their communication styles are characterized by the use of short-form media, visual platforms like Instagram and TikTok, and a strong focus on activism and diversity. [4]

### ***1.2.2. Generation Alpha (Gen Alpha)***

Generation Alpha is the first to grow up entirely in a world where AI, AR, and voice-activated assistants are commonplace. Their exposure to screens and digital environments begins at a very young age, and their communication preferences are shaped by immersive technologies, gamified interactions, and the metaverse. [5]

## **1.3. Research Questions**

This research seeks to investigate the key differences and evolving trends in communication styles and media use between Generation Z and Generation Alpha. The central questions guiding this study are:

What are the key communication preferences and behaviors of Generation Alpha, and how do they integrate digital and physical communication in their daily lives?

How will the communication preferences of Generation Alpha shape the future of society, media use, and education?

In what ways can gamification and cultural goods, such as music and the arts, enhance the communication strategies targeted at Generation Alpha?

Through these inquiries, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the youngest generations are shaping, and are shaped by, the digital communication landscape. This knowledge will be pivotal in preparing society, media, and educational systems to support and engage with these generations effectively.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Research Approach**

The literature used in this research source is diverse and comprehensive, covering the media habits and news use of Generation Z and Generation Alpha the most. The key readings

covered the attitudes and beliefs of Generation Z; their media habits and preferences; and the way they interact with artificial intelligence tools, all of which provide insight into their learning and social behavior. The analysis also applied SWOT, PESTLE, and NOISE to highlight both internal and external elements affecting communication among generations. The research additionally delved into Generation Alpha's emerging traits and their expected media consumption patterns, with a particular focus on their future in academic settings and their early exposure to new technologies.

## **2.2. Data Sources**

This research relies on a variety of sources, including academic papers, book chapters, online articles, and analytical tools. Academic papers provide insights into the communication habits, media consumption, and technological engagement of Generation Z and Generation Alpha. Book chapters offer deeper context on generational behaviors, while online articles highlight emerging trends, especially regarding Generation Alpha's digital preferences.

## **3. Analysis Methods**

Five communication tools that Generation Z and Generation Alpha communicate through were directly compared; the tools were compared in terms of platforms, functionalities, and usage pattern. Differences in reliance on social media, gaming, and immersive technologies were observed.

They reviewed social media to identify prevalence (e.g. engagement), type of content preferred (e.g. short-form video, memes, AR filters), the power of social media influencers, etc. That included looking at posts, interactions and user-generated content on Instagram and TikTok, among other platforms.

### **3.1. SWOT, PESTLE, and NOISE Analysis**

#### ***3.1.1. SWOT Analysis***

The SWOT analysis of Generation Alpha reveals both the opportunities presented by new communication tools and the threats associated with overreliance on such technology; important considerations for adults charged with guiding their development as communicators. Evaluated internal strengths and weaknesses of generations in the communication domain and external opportunities and threats. [6]

### ***3.1.2. PESTLE Analysis***

PESTLE analysis highlights the diverse external factors shaping the communication landscape for Generation Alpha, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities for fostering effective and responsible communication practices. Identified political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors influencing communication trends. [7]

### ***3.1.3. NOISE Analysis***

NOISE analysis outlines the internal and external factors influencing Generation Alpha's communication landscape, providing a clear framework for addressing their needs while leveraging strengths and opportunities. Evaluated the needs, opportunities, improvements, strengths, and exceptions in communication tools and behaviors for Generation Alpha. [8]

## **3.2. Scope and Limitations**

Despite this study being based on multiple data sources and analytical approaches, some limitations do exist. Generation Alpha, for example, is still growing up, and their data points are largely affected by their parents and their societal strife. Moreover, findings may not be generalizable due to regional and socio-economic differences. As much as these limitations can be, this research hopes to illuminate the ever-changing landscape of communication and its impact on society, media, and education.

## **4. Background and Theoretical Framework**

### **4.1. Historical Perspective**

Over the last three decades, digital communication tools have radically transformed the nature of human interaction. The late 20th century saw the birth of the internet, which provided the underlying framework for global online and data communication, and the 2000s brought about smartphones; facilitating fresh personal messaging. For Generation Z, the rise of social media and mobile devices defined an era in which they grew up. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and later TikTok became central to their daily lives, fostering a preference for visual and short-form content. This generation also witnessed the early stages of digital activism and the role of online communities in shaping societal discourse. [9]

In contrast, Generation Alpha has entered the world amid a new era forged by some of the most sophisticated technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) In contrast, while Gen Z grew into their relationship with technology,

Generation Alpha has been committed from an early age to a digital matrix, practically from birth, adding AI-powered assistants, gamified education tools, and the metaverse as potentially important elements of their communications environment.

*"Understanding the perceptions, concerns, and intentions of Gen Z students and Gen X and Gen Y teachers regarding the use of generative AI in higher education is crucial for bridging the gap between their expectations and promoting seamless integration of AI-driven educational tools." (Chan & Lee, 2023) [9].*

## **4.2. Theoretical Framework**

### ***4.2.1. Media Ecology Theory***

Media Ecology Theory posits that media environments shape societal behaviors, values, and communication patterns. Social media platforms helped create a culture of visual storytelling, activism and instant sharing for Gen Z. Generation Alpha's environment, marked by AR/VR technologies and AI-powered tools, creates new ways of engaging, with an emphasis on interactivity, personalization and digital fluency.

### ***4.2.2. Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants***

Prensky's concept of digital natives versus digital immigrants provides a lens to understand generational differences. While Gen Z represents digital natives who grew up with the internet and smartphones, Generation Alpha extends this idea further, representing an ultra-digital native cohort, seamlessly navigating advanced technologies from an even earlier age. [10]

### ***4.2.3. Sociocultural Theory***

The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky highlights the impact of social and cultural settings of learning and development. Similar to how technology serves as a pair of communication and interaction goggles for both groups, the effects of these goggles differ. Gen Z has learned to navigate technology that was being introduced in their formative years, while Generation Alpha's development is directly being shaped around these built tools, modifying their cognitive, social and cultural frameworks.

## 5. Key Differences

### 5.1. Communication Styles

Generation Z gravitates towards visual storytelling platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Their communication methods are centered around quick videos, curated photo backdrops and augmented reality filters; tools for creative self-presentation. Gen Z's speedy, efficient communication, embodied by their use of emojis and abbreviations, serves as the crux of their desire for easy-to-consume content. Gen Z consumes content and follows influencers who show authenticity, vulnerability, and relatability to define their online and social behaviors. [11]

Generation Alpha naturally connects with AI-driven tools such as virtual assistants and chatbots, which tailor and conform to their style of communication. They use voice-activated devices and augmented reality applications as part of their interactions, fuelling creativity and engagement. Roblox and Minecraft provide Generation Alpha with multi-sensory and immersive environments for socializing away from their traditional home. Generation Alpha prefers to socialize in spaces that are interactive and shared over traditional formats. [3]

### 5.2. Media Use Patterns

Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube are preferred by Gen Z for their dynamic and engaging content styles, catering to their need for quick entertainment and learning. Gen Z often participates as both consumers and creators themselves, driving trends through the vlogs, tutorials and other influencer-driven media. Platform like Snapchat caters to this aspect of Gen Z, allowing for quicker communications that favour privacy.

Early studies already confirm that Generation Alpha achieves significantly better results in reading comprehension and problem-solving skills, while also showing higher-quality social interactions, in digital learning environments compared to traditional ones. (Swargiary, 2024) [12] Educational tools and gamified platforms shape Generation Alpha's media landscape, blending learning with play. Generation Alpha's initial media exposure is often supervised, with curated content accessed on family-shared devices. Personalized algorithms enhance engagement by tailoring content to Generation Alpha's developmental needs and interests. [13]

*"Generation Alpha, born into a world of constant connectivity, is redefining how brands engage with consumers. Unlike Gen Z, who witnessed the rise of the internet, Gen Alpha has*

*never known life without it. Their preferences; from embracing offline experiences to confidently navigating online spending; demand innovative marketing strategies that align with their evolving expectations." (Walsh, 2024) [13]*

### 5.3. Social Media Behavior

Social media is an advocacy platform, and Gen Z uses it for campaigns on climate change, social justice and other movements. And while social media can be a place for support and awareness around mental health, the culture of comparison and cyberbullying that exists on many platforms has also played a role in increased anxiety and depression.

Generation Alpha starts as passive content consumers but as they age, they are finding and using interactive tools and educational platforms like nobody ever has before. Their early social media behavior is greatly shaped by family members, determining content exposure and platform use. AI algorithms curate their experiences, shaping preferences and expectations for digital interactions from an early age. [14]

### 5.4. Implications and Societal Impact

For Gen Z, the emphasis on authenticity and activism reflects societal pushes for transparency and inclusivity. Generation Alpha’s preference for immersive and gamified interactions highlights a cultural shift towards personalized and interactive digital experiences.

### 5.5. Challenges and Future Trends

Both generations are beset by significant challenges, from mental health effects of screen time, to consuming media driven by algorithms that threaten to restrict range of perspectives. [15] The emergence of AI, VR, and AR will redefine how we communicate including blended physical and digital spaces, led by Gen Alpha.

This study offers actionable insights to leverage the shifting media habits of Generation Z and Generation Alpha; alongside the unique challenges and opportunities they present; by understanding these differences. (See Table 1).

**Table 1** Communication styles and factors Generation Z and Alpha

Factors	Generation Z (1997-2012)	Generation Alpha (2010-2025)
Technological Fluency	Adapted to technology during adolescence, strong in social media and digital tools.	Born into technology with early exposure to AI, AR, VR, and multi-modal platforms.



Global Connectivity	Engaged in global conversations via social media and online platforms.	Seamless real-time cross-cultural interaction through immersive technologies.
Privacy Awareness	Increasing awareness of online privacy but often share personal data freely.	Limited privacy awareness, requiring education on data safety.
Communication Style	Informal, often text-based with emoji use, influenced by social media.	Visual and gamified communication, leveraging AI and personalized tools.
Attention Span	Preference for short-form content (e.g., TikTok, Snapchat).	Even shorter attention spans, prioritizing interactive and gamified content.
Social Influences	Focused on inclusivity and diversity in interactions.	Emphasizes empathy, emotional intelligence, and diverse perspectives.
Mental Health Concerns	Struggles with social media pressure and online comparison.	Risks from over-reliance on digital personas and screen time.
Education Integration	Began seeing digital tools integrated into learning environments.	Hybrid learning models blending communication and education.
Opportunities	Leveraging social media for branding, networking, and activism.	AI-driven personalized tools and immersive AR/VR experiences for development.
Challenges	Balancing offline and online communication; cybersecurity threats.	digital divide, privacy erosion, and age-inappropriate content.

## **6. Conclusion**

Using a unique analysis of media literacy, this study lays out how the communications styles of Generation Z and Generation Alpha are transforming, and what this means for interpersonal connections and information dissemination going forward. Gen Z has been the generation that has led the way in using visual platforms, short-form means of communication, and activism through social media, Generation Alpha is steadily appearing as a generation that will have been immersed in AI-enabled systems and immersive experiences since at least the moment they were born.

Understanding these trends is vital for educators, parents, and policymakers. The seamless integration of digital and physical communication by Generation Alpha highlights the need to prepare for a hyperconnected future. Policymakers must address challenges such as digital equity, mental health, and ethical algorithm use, while educators should embrace technology to foster personalized learning and collaboration. Parents and technology developers have a shared responsibility to ensure secure, inclusive, and innovative digital environments that nurture creativity and well-being.

This research also underscores the importance of gamification and cultural goods, such as music and the arts, in shaping communication strategies. Gamification can drive engagement, collaboration, and creativity, while music and the arts contribute to emotional expression, cultural awareness, and holistic development. These elements are essential for crafting inclusive, meaningful communication experiences that resonate with Generation Alpha's unique preferences and needs.

### **6.1. Key Questions and Future Directions**

A critical question arises: What will Generation Alpha's communication preferences mean for society, media use, and education in the coming decades? This research envisions a transformative impact. Society must adapt to a generation prioritizing digital fluency, global connectivity, and inclusivity. Media platforms must evolve to support immersive, ethical, and diverse interactions, ensuring both engagement and security. Education systems must fully integrate technology to provide personalized, interactive learning experiences that prepare students for a rapidly changing world.

Future research should investigate the long-term effects of early media exposure on Generation Alpha, particularly in areas such as cognitive development, emotional well-being, and social behavior. It would also be very interesting to conduct further research into the direct comparison of Generation Alpha with previous generations in order to gain a greater understanding of “*the unique characteristics, behaviors, and traits of the digital native Generation Alpha.*” (Höfrová et al., 2024) [17] By addressing these questions, we can build a future where Generation Alpha is empowered to lead an interconnected, empathetic, and innovative global society.

## References

- [1] American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. (2019, November 21). *Justice served: Case closed for over 40 dogfighting victims.* <https://www.asPCA.org/news/justice-served-case-closed-over-40-dogfighting-victims>
- [2] Parment, A. (2023). Generation Z kennenlernen. In *Die Generation Z* (pp. 125–137). Springer Gabler, Wiesbaden. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-42682-8\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-42682-8_5)
- [3] Mc Keever, M., O'Rourke, V., & Diffley, S. (2021, August). *Generation Z: An exploration of their unique values driving brand affinity.* Paper presented at the Irish Academy of Management Conference, Waterford IT, Ireland.
- [4] McCrindle, M., & Fell, A. (2020, July). *Understanding Generation Alpha.* McCrindle Research.
- [5] Slepian, R. C., & Furman, H. (2024). Social media, wearables, telemedicine, and digital health: A Gen Y and Z perspective. In *Comprehensive Precision Medicine* (1st ed.).
- [6] Jha, A. K. (2020, June). *Understanding Generation Alpha.* <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/d2e8g>
- [7] Puyt, R., Lie, F. B., & Wilderom, C. P. M. (2023). The origins of SWOT analysis. *Long Range Planning.* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2023.102304>
- [8] Rastogi, N., & Trivedi, M. K. (2022, September). *PESTLE technique - A tool to identify external risks in construction projects.* Paper presented at Manoj Trivedi's Lab.

- [9] Zacharias, A. (2023, October 19). Turning ideas into effective strategies with a NOISE analysis. *For Teams*. <https://www.notion.com/blog/noise-analysis>. Retrieved December 4, 2024.
- [10] Chan, C. K. Y., & Lee, K. K. W. (2023). The AI generation gap: Are Gen Z students more interested in adopting generative AI such as ChatGPT in teaching and learning than their Gen X and millennial generation teachers? *Smart Learning Environments*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-023-00269-3>
- [11] Maas, R. (2021). *Neueste Generationenforschung in ökonomischer Perspektive: Reichen Generation X, Y, Z zur Beschreibung der Wirklichkeit aus?.* Deutschland: Kohlhammer Verlag.
- [12] Corporate English Solutions. (2024, February 20). *Language transformation: Navigating Gen Z's communication style in the workplace.* British Council. <https://corporate.britishcouncil.org/insights/language-transformation-navigating-gen-z-communication-style-workplace> Retrieved January 3, 2025.
- [13] Swargiary, K. (2024). Digital learning environments on cognitive, social, and emotional development in Generation Alpha children. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4904338>
- [14] Walsh, G. (2024, October 4). 7 Gen Alpha characteristics to know for 2025. *GWI Blog*. <https://blog.gwi.com/marketing/gen-alpha-characteristics/>. Retrieved January 2, 2025.
- [15] Nagy, Á., & Kölcsey, A. (2017). Generation Alpha: Marketing or science? *Acta Technologica Dubnicae*, 7(1), 107. <https://doi.org/10.1515/atd-2017-0007>
- [16] Ziatdinov, R., & Cilliers, J. (2021). Generation Alpha: Understanding the next cohort of university students. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 10(3), 783–789. <https://doi.org/10.13187/ejced.2021.3.783>
- [17] Höfrová, A., Balidemaj, V. & Small, M.A. (2024). A systematic literature review of education for Generation Alpha. *Discov Educ* 3, 125. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-024-00218-3>