



Rethinking family prosumption and media competence: Legitimizing children's technology use in multi-device households

Arantxa Vizcaíno-Verdú¹ · Mónica Bonilla-del-Río² · Sabina Civilá³

Received: 20 November 2025 / Accepted: 7 April 2026

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2026

Abstract

In family environments increasingly permeated by digital media, parents' competencies in understanding and managing technology critically shape how children engage with multiple devices. Using questionnaire data from 1,502 families in Andalusia, Spain, this study analyzes how parental education, age, and screen time relate to both the critical and production dimensions of media competence, and in turn, to children's use of mobile phones, tablets, computers, and gaming consoles. The results reveal a persistent generational gradient: higher education predicts stronger critical awareness, whereas younger parents display greater technical fluency. As parents' media competence deepens, their mediation practices evolve toward more permissive and legitimizing forms, particularly regarding the use of mobile phones and computers. Critical competence operates less as a safeguard and more as a cultural lens through which digital technologies become normalized within everyday family life. These findings highlight the reconfiguration of parental prosumption as a process of legitimation in multi-device households, in which care, control, and connectivity converge.

Keywords Media literacy · Parental mediation · Family · Parenting media culture · Children · Prosumer

✉ Arantxa Vizcaíno-Verdú
arantxa.vizcaino@unir.net

¹ Department of Marketing and Communication, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja, Avenida de La Paz 137, 26006 Logroño, La Rioja, Spain

² Department of Education, Universidad de Cantabria, Santander, Cantabria, Spain

³ Department of Communication, Universidad del Atlántico Medio, Gran Canaria, Canarias, Spain