Improving journalism standards and providing alternative media in Iran

Start date: January 2006

Finish date: July 2011

Media types: Online

Issue: Media Development

Country: Iran

The ZigZag project has created an interactive virtual newsroom, ZigZagmag.net, to enable aspiring Iranian journalists to generate high quality content.

ZigZagmag consists of an audience-focused online space where young Iranian trainees from all over the country can experience the day-to-day activities and interactions of an online newsroom, this works alongside mentored iLearn journalism courses.

> *"Those running the site know Iranian society, young people and their issues."*

Male, 32 years

The trainees receive feedback from an online community of seasoned journalists, other trainees and the site's users.

This often results in interesting discussion threads developing after the publication of new articles, both in the virtual newsroom between trainees and trainers and, at a later stage, in the public space of the website.

The community has evolved to the extent where it has developed and refined its own code of conduct.

The popularity of the site is reflected in:

461 articles published to date

Over 3064 users have contributed to more than 7551 posts

and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

"*Those running the site know the Iranian society, the youth and their issues and they discuss these in a very professional way. I think you [ZigZag] have been very successful in making a connection [to your audiences] while performing your professional duty.*" Male, 32 years.

Building on the Iranian popular culture of blogging, it has generated a pool of very interesting, media aware trainee reporters.

Their features for the site provide an opportunity for users to find out about aspects of Iran which are often under reported.

New media is embraced not only in delivering the project (online training, virtual newsrooms, website) but also in conducting the research.

Research using online surveys, interviews and web metric analysis is exploring the project's multiple audiences (trainee journalists, registered users and visitors) and how new media has facilitated learning and communication.

As user generated content continues to transform the way we consume our media, we feel proud to combine training (which includes 'old fashioned' topics like impartiality, accuracy and fairness) and a new media user space that allows young journalists to practice their skills.

http://www.zigzagmag.net/