



CASE

ZAVOD ZON.SI

“**Editorial Outreach:**
Explaining How Real
News Works

STUDY

IN SHORT

Zavod Zon.si created a section on their website with innovative “editorial comments” to educate its audience on the difference between real and fake news, and between formal journalism and social media, and also to show how the outlet works behind the scenes.

ABOUT THE NEWS OUTLET

Zon.si is a media outlet based in Slovenia covering regional daily news — including economics, health, society, culture, politics, education, and sports. Zon.si focuses its coverage on the municipalities of Hrastnik, Trbovlje, Zagorje, Litija and Radeče. Its website, Zon.si, has over 100,000 monthly visitors. The outlet also maintains a social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

To increase media literacy by showing how verified journalism works and to strengthen public trust through editorial transparency and audience education.



SOLUTIONS

Zon.si launched a dedicated website section featuring “editorial comments” that explain journalistic decisions, fact-checking processes, and distinctions between verified reporting and online misinformation.

WHY THIS PROJECT?

Zon.si decided to create a section with editorial comments to show, firsthand, how its team works and what they experience on the job. Increasingly, journalists are becoming less and less respected, and audiences criticize their work hastily, without considering the fact that it is reported content. With this in mind, Zon.si wanted to educate its audience on the difference between real and fake news, and to show them how accurate content is made.

HOW DID APPLYING DESIGN THINKING PRINCIPLES HELP?

When considering the project, Zavod Zon conducted statistical analysis and used Google Analytics to investigate what sort of coverage its audience wanted. By taking demographic information into account, the organization was able to identify the kind of news different pockets of its audience were interested in. Survey results and interviews were also very helpful in this regard. This feedback changed the newsroom's overall strategy and allowed it to focus on the bigger picture.

DID ZON.SI'S APPROACH CHANGE ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS AUDIENCE IN ANY WAY?

Zon's target audience was its existing readers, especially the younger ones, who it has found to be vocal critics, avid social media users, but increasingly less engaged with serious news. The creation of this new section allowed Zon.si to understand that negative feedback was in reality coming from a very small subset of its audience. After the project, many positive comments and support started coming in from the audience expressing appreciation for Zon's coverage.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID ZON.SI ENCOUNTER AND HOW DID IT ADDRESS THEM?

Zon.si faced logistical challenges when trying to conduct statistical analysis. Slovenia is a small country, and Zasavje is the smallest region in the country with 52,000 inhabitants — some functions on Google Analytics were not useful given these constraints. Google Analytics did not have a data set large enough to provide accurate information on Zon's audience. Zon.si used surveys to fill the gaps from statistics.

HOW WAS ZON.SI'S PROJECT RECEIVED BY ITS AUDIENCE?

Yes. The project helped the newsroom distinguish between vocal online critics and the silent majority of supportive readers. After launching the new section, Zon.si received numerous messages of appreciation and increased readership on transparency-themed articles. For example, one editorial explainer reached over 5,000 readers. This confirmed that clear communication about journalistic practices could strengthen trust and invite positive dialogue rather than defensive reactions.

WHAT INSIGHTS OR LESSONS DID ZON.SI GAIN FROM THIS PROJECT?

The project taught the newsroom how to plan, manage, and sustain a public-facing initiative from start to finish. Beyond improving editorial processes, it helped staff gain experience in promoting content and coordinating teamwork. Zon.si also learned that financial simplicity and achievable goals are key to project success. Transparency can serve as both an educational and reputational tool, strengthening credibility in polarized media environments.

WHAT DOES ZON.SI PLAN ON DOING NEXT?

Moving forward, Zavod Zon hopes to keep educating the public on the difference between real and fake news, and on what accurate journalism looks like. The organization is also looking for new journalists to work alongside them. Zon.si is designing a space for learning and creativity — it's called Media Laboratory (also a JFE project), and it's using the editorial web page to promote future projects.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD ZON.SI GIVE TO OTHER JOURNALISTS OR ORGANISATIONS CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PATH?

Set ambitious but achievable goals. Don't overextend — success lies in consistency and clarity. Learn from others' experiences, be transparent about mistakes, and focus on education rather than perfection. Zon.si's story shows that even small regional outlets can lead meaningful conversations about truth, trust, and journalism's role in democracy.



Bringing Journalism Closer to the Public



The Heart of Zon.si