



CASE

GOGO.AL

“**What Are You Thinking?**
Engaging the Audience to
Open Discussions

STUDY

IN SHORT

The “What Are You Thinking?” project brought Gogo.al’s audience directly into content creation. Through two focus groups with 23 participants, the newsroom gathered real opinions on what people want from their media — and began making tangible editorial changes based on that feedback.

ABOUT THE NEWS OUTLET

Founded in 2021 in Albania, Gogo.al is an independent investigative media outlet reporting on the intersection of politics, law, and democracy. The newsroom focuses on exposing lobbying, corruption, and power structures that affect citizens’ daily lives. Guided by ethical journalism principles, it is working toward Journalism Trust Initiative certification to reinforce its commitment to credibility and transparency.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

To build stronger audience relationships by listening, learning, and adapting. The project aimed to involve readers in shaping content, explore youth engagement through podcasts and visuals,



IMPLEMENTED SOLUTIONS

Gogo.al organized two focus groups and several interviews with young audiences, educators, and civic voices. Using their feedback, the team redesigned parts of its website, refined content tone, launched podcasts on social issues, and began integrating AI tools and English-language features to reach new audiences.

Transitions

WHY THIS PROJECT?

Gogo.al is working to deepen its connection with audiences and adapt its journalism to better reflect public needs. With limited staff and little direct feedback beyond social media messages, the newsroom launched a project to better understand its audience — particularly younger users on platforms like Instagram — and to improve content targeting and engagement.

The effort was also driven by a desire to shift the newsroom's mindset. The team began embracing constructive journalism — reporting that not only exposes problems but also explores potential solutions. They hope this approach will help foster public dialogue on issues such as bullying and cyberbullying in schools. As part of the initiative, the team is also experimenting with podcasts to dive deeper into stories and reach new audiences.

HOW DID APPLYING DESIGN THINKING PRINCIPLES HELP?

Gogo.al learned important design-thinking principles through the research process, particularly empathy and method choice. The team initially did not fully understand the differences between focus groups and in-person interviews.

The in-person interviews were more in-depth and allowed participants to share their thoughts more freely, while the focus group, which was not divided, created a dynamic where opinions may have been influenced. This experience highlighted the value of empathy and the benefit of using mixed methods to gain deeper insights. It underscored the importance of listening, adapting, and learning directly from participants.

DID GOGO.AL'S APPROACH CHANGE ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS AUDIENCE IN ANY WAY?

To improve its engagement with younger audiences, Gogo.al began with small steps based on group feedback. Initial changes included updating the platform's visuals — switching from a hard-to-read gray font to black and moving away from a stark black-and-white design — and experimenting with English-language and AI-powered audio tools.

The team introduced content more relevant to young people, such as podcasts on emotional intelligence, bullying, and career development. Some users expressed discomfort with certain interview styles or found themes too detailed or irrelevant, prompting the team to refine both tone and subject matter. These user-informed changes, though incremental, marked a shift toward a more accessible, relatable platform aligned with the audience's needs and preferences.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID GOGO.AL ENCOUNTER AND HOW DID IT ADDRESS THEM?

The project faced two challenges: a short timeline and a change in technical support. The limited time frame required careful coordination to stay on track. Prior experience with similar work helped manage the process, but maintaining the pace required focus and adaptability.

A staffing change also occurred when the original IT expert had to be replaced early in the project. The transition was managed successfully, but it highlighted the importance of selecting team members carefully and confirming availability before the work begins.

In hindsight, the project included too many objectives for the time available. This placed additional pressure on the team and made it harder to manage progress. The experience emphasized the value of setting clear, realistic goals and aligning the timeline with available resources.

HOW WAS GOGO.AL'S PROJECT RECEIVED BY ITS AUDIENCE?

Gogo.al's IT expert expanded the AI tool's capacity and confirmed it was being used by the audience, which was seen as useful feedback. The team has continued working with focus-group participants, including educators, and collaborated with one on a follow-up podcast.

Gogo.al has worked on podcast topics like bullying, cyberbullying, and food safety. Analytics have shown new audience traffic from outside Albania since the introduction of English-language content. Instagram engagement has also increased. Gogo.al noted more audience response in recent weeks but it's unclear whether that's due to the project itself, improved content quality, or the regular podcast schedule of one episode per week.

WHAT INSIGHTS OR LESSONS DID GOGO.AL GAIN FROM THIS PROJECT?

Gogo.al reflected on three key lessons from the project. First, it was important to see the value in each research method and to remain open to using different approaches. The experience highlighted how methods like in-depth interviews can offer deeper insights that might not emerge in group settings.

Second, the project reinforced the need to be more grounded when setting objectives. With limited time, it became clear that trying to do too much can overwhelm a team and reduce the overall impact.

Third, Gogo.al emphasized the importance of assessing each team member's availability from the beginning. Understanding how much time and support each person can commit is essential for meeting deadlines and avoiding last-minute challenges.

WHAT DOES GOGO.AL PLAN ON DOING NEXT?

Looking ahead, Gogo.al's team is continuing its work with the Constructive Institute. "Constructive journalism is not solutions journalism," founder Valmora Gogo said. "If you don't find the solution the most important point is to open discussion."

The team is collaborating closely — brainstorming, conducting field interviews with experts and state representatives, then reviewing findings in the newsroom to decide next steps. Recently, they have worked with parents and the Albanian National Child Helpline (Alo 116) and identified two possible solutions to school bullying. They are exploring both the potential and the limitations of these solutions.

To maintain connection with its audience, the team is reaching out through Instagram, sharing messages about podcasts featuring young people and encouraging followers to subscribe on YouTube. "The responses are minimal, but at least we are trying to keep up to date with them and to send our products," Gogo said.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD GOGO.AL GIVE TO OTHER JOURNALISTS OR ORGANISATIONS CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PATH?

Teach editing methods. Young journalists do not often value or know the purpose of the editing process. "It's not just correcting some spelling mistakes," Gogo said. "But it's connected with planning, with building, with the idea, with mindset." She emphasized having the mindset of creating an impact on society. "Seeing all the perspectives and having put all the perspectives in our articles, or in our media content, is really important," Gogo said.

She also highlighted the importance of connecting with the newsroom and the team. "With the Constructive Institute, we write down things we love. We discuss. We don't agree every time," Gogo explained. "This is the most important; changing the mindsets and having this relaxed atmosphere and a workplace where you can work and think in a constructive way." The newsroom noted that when they tell sources they are building constructive articles — focusing on what's been done and what should happen next — the sources are more helpful and open.