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# **International and Intercultural Public Relations**

## **A Campaign Case Approach**

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## Developing and Maintaining the Aljazeera Websites

PHILIP J. AUTER

### Executive Summary

Established in 1996, Aljazeera's Arabic satellite news service has had a short, but meteoric history. Although initially fully funded by the government of Qatar, the channel differentiated itself from state-run news services in that it followed a Western journalism model by covering stories of interest to Arab viewers in a way that attempted to represent all sides of an issue. This objective approach, along with faster paced video and programming style, resulted in Aljazeera quickly becoming one of the most popular channels in the Arab world and with Arab-speaking people worldwide.

Five years after its inception, Aljazeera created a companion Arabic website ([www.aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net)), effectively increasing its reach to any reader of Arabic with Internet access worldwide. In addition to stories and photos, the website initially attempted to provide free streaming video of the TV channel, briefly abandoned that service, and now has gone to a subscription video streaming service. There have also been several abortive attempts to launch an English version of the website that would thus expand the Aljazeera audience beyond the realm of Arab-speaking peoples. Several of these attempts were sabotaged by hackers, while others never quite got off the ground. Finally, in the autumn of 2003, the English website (<http://english.aljazeera.net>) was born, but to less than critical acclaim.

While a fairly stable entity, Aljazeera.net has faced a number of challenges over its short history. Some mirror those of the parent organization, such as criticisms from many governments about its reporting as well as struggles to move to an advertiser-funded model. Other problems have been unique to the web experience, including difficulties with video streaming, hacker attacks, and the challenges of developing a foreign language (English) version of the site.

This case study will review the past, current status, and future prospects of Aljazeera's companion websites from a public relations perspective. It will deal with the website's startup, its link to Aljazeera TV, the difficulties with video streaming, and the challenges with the English website.

What is commonly known as the "Arab World" is a region that stretches from the shores of the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf and consists of 22 nations. Broadcast television in the region relative to the United States and many Arab countries about 20 years behind in the development and distribution of broadcast radio and television. In the early television systems in the Arab world were constrained by three major problems. First, insufficient local program production led to external program importation, mainly from the United States and Western Europe. Second, close government scrutiny and control led to prohibitive working environments. Finally, shortages in human and financial resources led to dull and low-quality local programming.

News on these predominantly state-run TV channels has been until recently characterized as particularly lackluster and consisting of "protocol news" heavily laden with government propaganda. News gathering and reporting—as defined in the Western sense—were not central to the government-run newscast model. The primary purposes of such news organizations were to improve dissemination of information about national government, and to control access to and formatting of incoming foreign news. Newscast formats were bland and monolithic in both content and delivery. Political news dealing with leadership speeches, official visits, and protocol activities was always topping Arab world TV news agendas. In many cases, video of state events essentially unedited with no commentary or detailed moment-by-moment breakdowns of a ruler's event schedule would be the primary focus of such "news." Anchors were essentially readers, and a newscast generally consisted of long items dealing with leadership news and short items dealing with regional and international developments. TV's visual potential was used in a very limited fashion and news "packages" were not used at all.

In the 1980s, however, advances in satellite and telecommunication technologies gave rise to a direct broadcast satellite revolution in the region. Arabs both rich and poor obtained satellite dishes (even in countries where they were banned), and used them to tap into global media satellite broadcasts that were beyond the direct control of their countries' governments. Faced with the competition of international television news that had been so carefully censored in the past, Arab governments determined that it would be better for them to compete by creating their own satellite channels or bringing their broadcast operations over to direct broadcast satellite. This created the added benefit—and challenge—of most state-run Arab media that have become transnational: crossing regional borders. This created an interesting phenomenon that promised to disturb power dynamics and public opinion in the region. Although government-run TV had now achieved the technology to get their message on the same dish as their global competitors, their television news was still predominantly used for propaganda. Most investment was in technologies, but some channels began to establish networks of reporters and correspondents.

As a result, many Arab viewers began to see several types of direct broadcast channels available on their satellite dishes: those that belonged directly to their home government, broadcasts from other governments, and ones considered to be privately controlled. The face of Arab television news was changing, and at the forefront of this change was Al-jazeera Television.

The home of Aljazeera is the small Gulf State of Qatar. Although Qatar is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council, its constitutional monarchy has a more political system than other countries in the Gulf States. Government control of media is limited since the establishment of the monarchy. The Department of Information was created in 1969. It was replaced by the Ministry of Information and Culture in 1972. In the same year a separate department was added to the ministry, the Qatar News Agency. The Press and Publications Law, which is considered the first official censorship from the government to regulate the media and population, was issued in Qatar in 1979. It was aimed at regulating the relationship between the state and press establishment, printing, publishing and distributing houses, libraries, bookshops, artistic production sales outlets, and publicity and advertisement agencies. For example, the law banned many newspapers and books from access to the country because they did not agree with the government's political, economic, or religious perspective.

In 1995, while the Emir of Qatar, Shaykh Khalifa bin Hamad ath-Thani, was visiting Geneva, he was deposed by his 45-year-old son, Shaykh Hamadi bin Khalifa ath-Thani, in a bloodless coup. The new emir ushered in a wave of liberalizations in government and society. Censorship was essentially lifted in 1995 when a new, much more liberal, Press and Publications Law was enacted, a law that is periodically reviewed and updated even today.

Aljazeera satellite TV was started in 1996 with an initial government grant (the equivalent of U.S. 137 million) and the mission to speak out to Arab people and provide the many sides of stories that affect the Arab World. Despite its government funding, Aljazeera worked under a clear mandate of freedom of speech. The climate in which it worked became even more favorable when Qatar abolished the Ministry of Information and Culture in 1998. The nation now has both government-sponsored and privately owned newspapers, radio, and TV.

In November 1996, Aljazeera was introduced in Qatar as the first Arab all-news and public affairs satellite channel. Although initially funded by the Qatari government, with only a small amount of revenue coming from advertisers and subscribers, the network has grown by leaps and bounds. Aljazeera quickly became the most popular TV news channel of Arab people in the region and world-wide, stealing Arab television audiences from every one of the big television powers in the region. Few in the West had heard of Aljazeera, which operates from cramped and heavily fortified studios in the outskirts of Doha. But when the station started broadcasting video statements by Osama bin Laden and became the only foreign network to broadcast from inside the Taliban, who controlled Afghanistan, its name became familiar throughout the world. In 2001, the network had an estimated 40 million viewers, including 150,000 Americans. After the start of the U.S.-led war with Iraq, Aljazeera saw its European subscriber numbers double almost overnight.

Aljazeera's popularity was due in part to several major breaks from the formatting of traditional Arab TV news programming: a more objective, dual-sided approach to news coverage; more video of events and the people that were affected; and a much greater reliance on regularly featured anchors and reporters—all characteristics of the BBC and other Western media on which it was modeled. Western-trained newscasters and producers use video and slick graphics and emphasize fast-paced, sleek deliveries on the part of anchors and regularly featured correspondents. Whenever possible, video—often live—of events and the people they happen to are emphasized. The network also features many talk shows, hosted

by regular personalities, that cover controversial topics and invite guests of varying opinions. News and programs such as these have led Aljazeera to captivate a growing number of viewers. The network has soared in popularity in a region accustomed to state-controlled media.

Aljazeera has become very popular by modeling much of its format on Western media outlets such as BBC and CNN. Viewers cannot seem to get enough of the channel. In understanding how and why viewers use the channel, it is important to first review studies of Arab audience use of, and gratifications from, television.

As the network continues to replace government funding with advertiser sponsorship, it has faced several governmental challenges. First, despite claims of its hard-hitting, investigative approach to issues that affect the Arab World, critics have complained that Aljazeera rarely if ever trains its eye on the government and social structure of Qatar. While perhaps considering the sensibilities of its host/owner, as many Western media have also been accused of doing with their own, it has indeed angered many governments in the Middle East, considering the needs of its viewers above maintaining good relations with regional powers. Leaders and governments that often have significant persuasive pull on Arab businesses that may—or may not—advertise on Aljazeera.

In many respects, Aljazeera seems to have taken into consideration the cultural sensitivities of the "Arab Street"—the average person in most of these nations with access (often in coffee houses) to satellite TV news. A diverse tapestry of cultures and beliefs with several common threads running throughout, the Arab world is a mixture of beliefs, religions, and political positions. One of Aljazeera's catch phrases, to present "the opinion and the opposite opinion," addresses a common theme among viewers in different nations. Many have relied in the past on state-run censored media that would only present the government opinion, supplemented by news from the West that seemed to take a decidedly Western spin on the stories even when presenting both sides. Aljazeera's controversial style, which at times raises concerns with almost every Arab nation, was precisely its strongest tool in attracting its target audience.

Aljazeera was clearly addressing the needs and gratifications of its primary public—the Arab person in the street, hungry for uncensored news from the Arab point of view. In most news organizations, it had been less successful in pleasing another one of its "publics"—the governments and corporations that could affect significant sway over the company's profitability and even its very existence. Still, poised as it was at the crest of a successful satellite television run, Aljazeera was now prepared to extend its reach and influence through a companion news site on the World Wide Web (Figure 1).

## Objective

From its inception, Aljazeera's organizational goal has been to provide the Arab world with an informative alternative to censored state-run media and also the news as provided by dominant western global players such as CNN and the BBC. Aljazeera's approach has at times angered governments in the Middle East and throughout the world. While this in many cases has impressed its core audience, it has often dissuaded secondary audiences, called into question the network's objectivity, and initially affected its ability to obtain support from Arab governments and advertising revenue from Arab businesses.



FIGURE 1 Aljazeera's Arabic Website  
 Source: Used with permission from Aljazeera.

Several complementary, but in some cases competing, issues surround Aljazeera's entry into the World Wide Web and its more recent attempt to expand from only an Arabic audience site to an English site as well. Its goal is to provide Arabic audiences worldwide greater access to news content developed by and for the network. It would also like to expand its advertiser base. The English version of the website is meant to expand their base further, bringing their brand of journalism to non-Arabic-speaking people around the world, but particularly those who speak English as their primary language, in the West.

From a news editorial perspective, these are challenging, worthwhile goals. From a public relations perspective, several conflicts arise with secondary objectives. The primary PR objective is to expand the reach of Aljazeera via the Arabic and later English websites, to provide Aljazeera's particular "take" on the news to a larger global audience as a supplement to the globally distributed satellite television news network.

Secondary objectives included (1) to provide a companion website to the TV network that would both enhance audience experiences and drive traffic to the station, (2) make a live video stream of Aljazeera's television programming freely available via the Internet, increasing overall program audience, (3) develop a new medium in which to expand their advertising revenue opportunities, and (4) branch out into English content to further expand their audience base beyond Arabic-speaking people (Figure 2).

## Strategies

Aljazeera launched a companion website ([www.aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net)) in Arabic in January of 2001 with almost immediate plans to launch a companion English site. More than 25 people were hired from a number of reputable regional media institutions to staff the website. They were trained to work online and put to work in five different departments: editorial; research and studies, monitoring and analysis, multimedia, and e-marketing. The original staff of the Aljazeera website grew to 60 persons independent of the television news personnel. Of these, 36 were editors, journalists, and researchers. Over the past two years, the organization has grown to about 150 professionals—including the news staff of the English website.

Aljazeera partnered with iHorizons ([www.ihorizons.com](http://www.ihorizons.com)), an Internet and e-business content manager founded in Qatar in 1994 to build its Arabic news site. The company's server software is designed to allow businesses to easily take existing content and modify it for the web and also to create new content for a site such as user chat rooms and polling. iHorizons personnel trained Aljazeera's website news staff on the Arabic-language-based interface, and the website team began building a rich, multimedia news portal.

As an internal department of the Aljazeera Satellite Channel, advertising on the website is separate from that on the news service and is handled by the E-Marketing Department. In addition to advertising packages, which include banner ads, sponsorship banners, and newsletter ads, the department offers clients other services: (1) syndication of Aljazeera content, (2) Aljazeera.net short messages service (SMS) to cell phones, (3) Aljazeera news via phone, (4) streaming video, (5) interactive financial services, and (6) a tourism page.

Although it was popular with Arabic reading audiences from its inception, the website's popularity doubled after September 11—jumping from about 700,000 page views a day to about 1.2 million page views, with more than 40 percent of them from the United States. Popularity of the site increased, from 3 million hits per day during the initial phases of the Afghanistan war to over 10 million hits per day by late 2002. Aljazeera.net ranks top in the Arab World and as tensions in the Middle East mount and the website's reputation grows, its popularity has skyrocketed to more than 811 million page views and 161 million visits in 2002 alone.

One of the popular features of the original website was the live streaming video of the channels' programs. This service was initially offered for free, but was limited to a relatively

Aljazeera.Net English - Home Page - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address http://english.aljazeera.net/HomePage

Home Site Guide Contact Us Set As HomePage Add to Favorites

**QATAR AIRWAYS** launches flights to

ALJAZEERA.NET

Updated on: Monday 22 December 2003, 21:32 Makkah Time, 18:32 GMT

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Looking forward  
Thaw in Turkey-Armenia relations

Silenced voices  
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**POLL**

Should Saddam Hussein be tried by an international court or an Iraqi court?

International court

Iraqi court

Submit Vote

From: 21/12/2003  
To: 01/01/2004

**STOCK QUOTES**

Dow*	9820	•
Nasdaq 100*	1425.1	•
CAC*	3494.8	
FTSE*	4417.8	
Nikkei*	18072	

\* 30 sec average by Dukacopy ©

Done

Internet

FIGURE 2 Aljazeera's English-Language Website

Source: Used with permission from Aljazeera.

small number of simultaneous viewers. Particularly in times of great news interest, potential web-based viewers of the streaming video were almost never able to connect. To improve the quality and allow more people to enjoy the service, an external company (www.jumptv.com) was appointed to develop and present it to the online audience worldwide, on a subscription basis. In addition to program scripts, the station still offers many free streaming audio and a few video clips of stories that previously aired on the channel.

In part due to the enormous number of requests that began to come in after the network and website's coverage of the war in Afghanistan, management decided to launch an English website, often the only alternative look at news shaping the world for non-Arabic readers, particularly in the West.

Initially, English.aljazeera.net was supposed to launch in late March of 2003, and hosted by the U.S. company DataPipe (www.datapipe.com). The site, which was very streamlined in content, was almost immediately shut down by intense hacking attacks. Some were in the form of "denial of service," which blocked users from accessing the site since its host had been inundated with so much junk e-mail and partial computing code that the system overloaded. Additionally, their domain name (along with that of the Arabic site) were "hijacked" so that users would be redirected to U.S. patriotic slogan pages or to porn sites.

While Aljazeera worked to alleviate these problems, many of their Western partners dropped out of the venture—some claim due to political pressure from the U.S. government and some American citizens. DataPipe gave notice as the website's host. Later, U.S.- based Akamai Technologies (www.akamai.com), a company that claims its servers can stand up to unprecedented traffic, signed on to host the English site—but promptly pulled out of the deal for unspecified reasons. Additionally, some companies like "Yahoo!" declined to carry ads for the Aljazeera programming and websites, citing concerns about sensitivities over the war in Iraq.

The site was up and down several times, in great part due to an aggressive attack by hackers. Eventually, the site found a new host, but until the situation was resolved, it stayed offline until the fall of 2003 when it reappeared to little fanfare and some criticism.

With the establishment of the English website, and at some time in the future possibly an English audio translation with the satellite news feed, Aljazeera faces a challenge in trying to attract a new target audience without disenfranchising its existing audience. News from the Arab perspective, if considered too inflammatory by Western readers, will result in the site being ignored by many English-reading individuals. Truly angry groups may attempt to hack the site, an approach that has been successful in the past. On the other hand, when the site debuted again in the fall of 2003, it was criticized by many who like the original Aljazeera site; they feel it was watered down and is lackluster—not a true representation of news from the Arab perspective. For a comparison, see the sites listed in Figure 3.

**FIGURE 3 Compare These International News Websites**

The Aljazeera websites in English and Arabic are said to mirror the reporting style of the United Kingdom's BBC. Compare them to BBC coverage and CNN coverage from the United States.

- Aljazeera (Arabic) www.aljazeera.net
- Aljazeera (English) http://english.aljazeera.net
- BBC www.bbc.co.uk/
- CNN www.cnn.com

## The Arabic Website

The Arabic Aljazeera website covers news, sports, entertainment, technology, health, arts, and culture throughout the Middle East and around the world. Content is available as text, still images, audio files, and video clips. Live streaming audio fed from the network—once freely available on the website—is now a pay service available through Jump TV ([www.jumptv.com](http://www.jumptv.com)). This change was made because the original free service was unable to handle the crush of interested viewers and Aljazeera could not afford to put more resources into this free service.

The website presents in-depth analysis, special coverage, book reviews, marketing, and advertising. It also offers user interactivity options, such as quick vote and discussion forums where users can express their opinions directly without censorship. The website originally provided the full script of Aljazeera Satellite Channel's main programs, attached with its audio file within 24 to 36 hours from the time of the first broadcasting. While much of the content on the web is the same as the TV programming, as with most TV news websites, the service provides somewhat different and sometimes additional content to the satellite channel. Like its parent television channel, Aljazeera.net's focus on war has increased with the increased fighting in the Middle East. Also like the satellite news channel, it has often angered governments and "secondary audiences" with its graphic representations as well as a journalistic approach that its detractors claim is unbalanced.

Like the satellite news channel, Aljazeera.net has often angered Arab country leaders with the type of content that it published on the website. Initially praised by the United States as a beacon of free expression in the Arab World, its reputation with U.S. government officials changed when the network began airing tapes of Osama Bin Laden and the website printed graphic pictures of the negative effects of the U.S.-lead wars in Afghanistan and Iraq on citizens of the region.

## The English Website

The initial content of the English website—the first time it was launched—was very rudimentary. The level of news coverage and content was nowhere near the amount available on the Arabic site because [English.aljazeera.net](http://English.aljazeera.net) was a new venture and the organization's resources were already stretched due to its increasing popularity as a result of interest in the Iraq war. Consequently, during the site's brief history, it limited itself to limited text and still photo coverage of the Iraq war.

The focus of the site was somewhat unclear at first. There was a stated goal to "bridge the gap" between news as presented in the Arab world and in the West. It was not destined to be a site, however, that offered full English translations of all stories on the Aljazeera.net website or satellite news channel. Although the amount of content carried was dramatically less than the Arabic site, the graphic photos of wounded civilians and wounded and captured U.S. soldiers displayed on both sites resulted in a hacker backlash against the Aljazeera sites.

When the site returned, first abortively in March of 2003 and then later in the autumn of the same year, it was greeted with lukewarm praise. With hacker and server problems settled,

were raised by critics because its initial second launch consisted mostly of wire stories obtained from other services and a few in-house stories that were not widely reviewed. Still, the site has slowly built up and now provides a significant amount of original news and opinion—though much less than the Arabic site does. A polling service is used, and some of the Arabic site content is translated and used, but stories featured on the English site differ in many cases from the Arabic content. Multimedia content has yet to be fully developed. Stories tend to focus or frame events in a perspective that differs from most Western news media and often times English. [www.aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net) carries stories that Western media do not. The site walks a difficult line between presenting the news from an Arab perspective and alienating much of its English-reading potential audience with its particular editorial slant.

## Evaluation

### The Arabic Website

Despite difficulties branching out into the English reading audience, Aljazeera has clearly established a strong following among Arabic reading people worldwide. Many new findings about Aljazeera's primary audience have been revealed as a result of an online Arabic survey conducted in the fall of 2002. The management of Aljazeera's website allowed for an 80-item Arabic survey developed by a Qatari masters student and his professors in the United States to be made available through Aljazeera.net's homepage. The original intent was to leave the survey up for at least a month, but response was so great that over 5,300 useable responses were obtained in a two-week period from August 20, 2002, to September 4, 2002. At that point, the survey was pulled down and the data analyzed. It is important to note that while this information can help to provide valuable insight into the Aljazeera online audience, it was a one-time sample and was taken prior to the war in Iraq.

Findings were in some cases confirmatory of expectations about the audience and in some cases quite surprising. Respondents hailed from over 120 individual countries around the world; however, the majority, nearly 25 percent of the sample, lived in Saudi Arabia ( $n = 1,215$ , 22.6%) at the time they responded to the survey. The next largest groups of respondents lived in the United States ( $n = 386$ , 7.2%), the United Arab Emirates ( $n = 356$ , 6.6%), Jordan ( $n = 304$ , 5.7%), Syria ( $n = 265$ , 5%), Egypt ( $n = 238$ , 4.4%), and the Palestinian territories ( $n = 206$ , 3.8%). Interestingly, only 106 respondents (2%) resided in Qatar, Al-Jazeera TV's home. Slightly over half ( $n = 2,879$ , 53.5%) of the sample lived in the country they were originally from, while the remainder lived abroad ( $n = 2,500$ , 46.5%). The vast majority of the sample ( $n = 4,972$ , 92.4%) were originally from one of the 22 Arab world countries. Of those originally from an Arabian nation, 3,690 (74.2%) were still living in the Arab world at the time of the survey. At the time of the study, 70.3 percent ( $n = 3,782$ ) of the entire sample lived in the Arab world—nations where the predominant language is Arabic (Hejleh, 2001)—regardless of where they were originally from.

Although ages ranged from 18 to 65 plus, the vast majority ranged between 18 and 35, with male respondents surpassing females by 10 to one. They were about equally split between single and married, with almost none widowed or divorced. The overwhelming majority of the sample was Muslim (96.5%), with only a very limited number of Christians,

Jewish, and other faiths and belief systems. Half of the group surveyed considered themselves to be politically and socially moderate, with only a few considering themselves to be extremely liberal or conservative within the context of their culture. Most had an advanced education, with at least the equivalent of a bachelor's. Many had pursued advanced degrees as well. The majority of the participants (35.9%) had an annual household income equivalent to less than \$U.S. 15,000 although another 30.4% made between \$U.S. 15,000 and \$U.S. 35,000 per year. Income varies widely in the Arab world and with the Arab Diaspora, depending greatly on the country in which they live.

The survey found that the amount of time spent with the Aljazeera website was directly related to fulfilling socialization as well as news-gathering needs. Web users consider the site to be extremely credible. Interestingly, users living inside the Arab World—but not necessarily within their own nation of origin—developed stronger socialization feelings for the service than did those living outside the Middle East.

Aljazeera.net has clearly met its objectives in developing and maintaining a rich, multimedia website offering news and opinion from an Arab perspective, but free of regional governmental censorship restrictions. Its success can be seen in the large and demographically diverse pool of Arabic users as well as the many satellite channels and companion websites that have begun to imitate Aljazeera's style.

### **The English Website**

While the Arabic Aljazeera website seems to be a stunning success, the jury is still out on the English Aljazeera website. The site faces unique challenges in trying to speak to an English-language public about news and information from an Arab world perspective. If the quality and quantity of content continue to expand to match that of the parent website, the audience may continue to grow. However the overarching question that remains is, will English-language audiences accept this non-Western perspective to news and information? And if not, will english.aljazeera.net be subsidized by the parent company and the Qatari government, or will it simply become an interesting but failed experiment in cross-cultural journalism?

## **Critique**

While reading this critique of this campaign, keep in mind that the campaign to expand the reach of Aljazeera targets multiple publics in several very different cultures. Because of this diversity, both campaign planning research and evaluation research are very difficult.

### **Research**

The research presented is limited to descriptions of the history of broadcasting in the Arab world and the development of Aljazeera. Questions that should have been asked and answered before developing a campaign include:

1. Who are the potential target publics for this campaign? Specifically, what group of people now watches Aljazeera and what groups might be motivated to watch Aljazeera?

What businesses now advertise on Aljazeera and what businesses might be induced to advertise there?

2. What are the demographics of Aljazeera's existing and potential audiences? Where do they live? What language(s) do they speak? How well educated are they? Are they literate in English, Arabic, or both?
3. What are the existing attitudes in the target publics toward news coverage? Are they really "hungry for uncensored news" or do they only want news consistent with their worldview? What is their worldview?
4. Do members of the target publics have Internet access? Where do they access the Internet—in schools, offices, homes, or cyber cafes?
5. What media reach the target publics? Will those media carry messages encouraging people to visit the Aljazeera websites or to view Aljazeera broadcasts? What media do members of the target public evaluate as credible?
6. Finally, who watched Aljazeera before the introduction of the website? How large was its audience and what were the audience demographics and psychographics?

Reliable and valid measurement of the existing and potential audiences was essential to designing a potentially successful campaign to expand the reach of Aljazeera. Further, identification and analysis of existing media should have preceded any selection of strategies or tactics.

### Objective

The organizational goals were to "provide the Arab World with alternative media and to provide Arab audiences with access to news content developed by and for the network." These goals are too broad and vague to provide much campaign guidance. The lack of specificity in the goals also makes it difficult to judge whether any particular public relations objective can advance those goals.

The public relations objective here is to expand the reach of Aljazeera via the Arabic and English websites. This objective could be met if only one additional member of the target public viewed Aljazeera because of its websites. In short, it provides too little guidance to help those planning the campaign and it lacks the detail needed to facilitate evaluation of the campaign.

### Strategies

The action strategies reported here focus on the launching of the Arabic website in 2001 and the English website in 2003. These are completely appropriate. Unless the client takes the action of launching the websites, it obviously will be impossible to exercise communication strategies to use those websites to expand the reach of Aljazeera.

The communication strategies, on the other hand, are limited to describing problems associated with the action strategies. Communication strategies should include some description of what messages can be delivered to what publics in order to accomplish the campaign's objectives. Here we simply are not told how members of the target public were informed of the websites. This weakness may be the result of the lack of research on what media are avail-

able to the target publics and what messages might motivate those publics. It is also possible the campaign planners simply had no communication strategy. In other words, the campaign planners may never have adopted any strategy to tell the target publics about the websites.

### Tactics

The campaign's tactics, like its communication strategies, focus on the content of the website. Of course it is critical that the content of a website keep visitors returning. But a new audience cannot be motivated to attend to a medium by the content of that medium. People in the target public must hear of the website from another source, and something in that other source must motivate them to visit the Aljazeera website.

This campaign failed to adopt any procedure for motivating members of its publics to make their first visit the Aljazeera website.

### Evaluation

The survey presented as evaluation shows that Aljazeera has a large audience and identifies some demographics of that audience. The fact that the survey respondents in the evaluation research are all self-selected volunteers raises serious questions about the reliability and validity of the results, but this is not the major problem with the evaluation. The most significant problem with the evaluation research is that it does not evaluate whether the public relations objective was met. The public relations objective was "to expand the reach of Aljazeera via the Arabic and English websites." To measure whether the reach of Aljazeera has expanded, one would need a baseline measure of its reach prior to the introduction of the websites. To prove the campaign expanded the reach, a second survey or measure would be needed to show that the number of viewers had actually increased. The evaluation here lacks such a measurement of increased audience. Further, the survey was administered only through the Arabic website. It does not provide any measure at all of the audience or effect of the English website.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the research section of the critique, several research questions are listed. Describe how research could be designed to answer each of those questions.
2. There are several nations, cultures, and governments in the Arab world. Pick one of those cultures or countries and research its values and attitudes toward news coverage. Based on your research, describe what messages you believe would motivate citizens there to watch Aljazeera.
3. In many parts of the Arab world, individual communication or word-of-mouth is the major source of information. Describe some tactics that could be used in such a culture to disseminate information about Aljazeera.
4. Assuming that the objective of a public relations campaign is to increase the audience for Aljazeera in the United States, write a complete public relations objective that could be used to guide the planning and evaluation of such a campaign.

the Aljazeera coverage and the BBC coverage are based on the same model of a "dual-sided" approach to news coverage? If you agree, describe the similarities in the two site's approach to coverage. If you do not agree, describe the differences in the two sites' approach to coverage.

Describe how you would evaluate the success of a campaign whose public relations objective was to use the Aljazeera websites to expand the reach of Aljazeera broadcasting. Be sure to operationalize all the variables you would use in your evaluation research.

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