Google News Initiative

Impact in Asia Pacific

2020 GNI Impact Report Asia Pacific

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Introduction

Rolling out GNI programs across Asia Pacific (APAC) was all about striking the right balance. Asia Pacific is complex in size, population, language, and readership, and we took a localized approach for maximum impact in this diverse media landscape. We worked with smaller publishers on digital transformation, built data maturity programs for larger news organizations, and partnered with journalists to fight the spread of misinformation across the region, with special focus on first-time, mobile-first users. These programs were built from the ground-up in partnership with journalists, news organizations and industry associations - those who best understand the challenges and opportunities for news in APAC. Our shared successes, as well as lessons learned, will equip us for the next steps of the GNI journey in Asia Pacific.

— The Google News Initiative Team
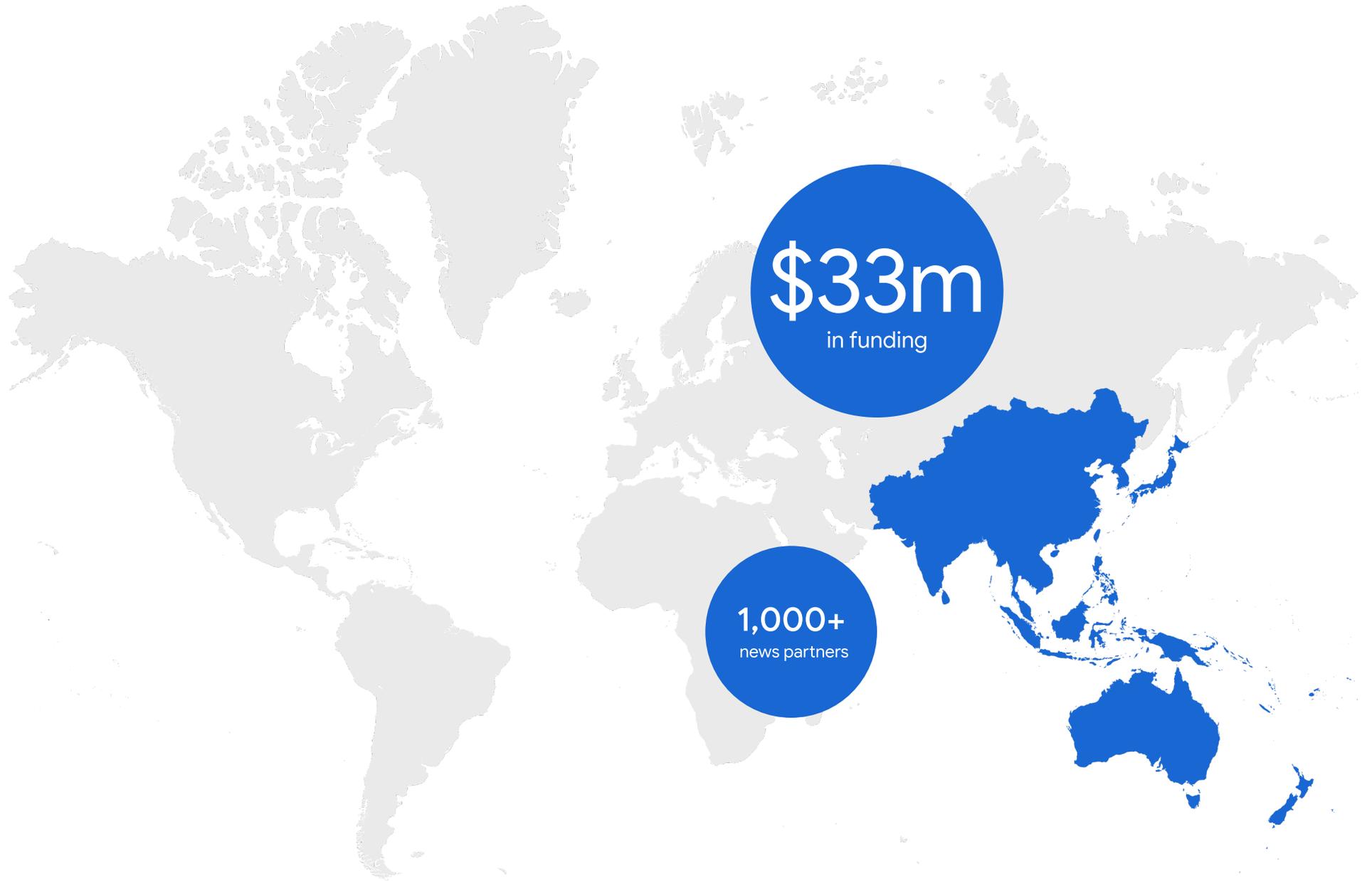   in Asia Pacific

Google News Initiative

About this Report

This report is a summary of the activities conducted by the Google News Initiative in the Asia Pacific region between March 2018 and June 2020.

The financials in the Impact Report reflect total spending for GNI programs, as well as commitments to the Journalism Emergency Relief Fund and Google.org's global media literacy programs, in USD from March 2018 to June 2020. Amounts in other currencies are converted to USD when the work is performed. This report excludes Marketing, PR, and Travel overhead as well as payroll, benefit, and compensation to Google full-time and temporary employees who are involved in programming. Spend is assigned by key focus area based on the primary objective of each project.

The tally of news partners supported reflects the number of news organizations, industry associations, academic institutions and nonprofits that have been funded by or participated in GNI programs from March 2018-June 2020, including the Journalism Emergency Relief Fund. The total does not combine news organizations and their parent companies in cases where each has participated in separate GNI programs, and does not include operational partners and vendors, or news organizations reached through trainings.

$33m
in funding

1,000+
news partners

Since 2018, we've committed $33 million to support 1,000+ news partners in 32 countries in Asia Pacific

Elevating Quality Journalism

Enabling diverse sources of impactful journalism is critical for our societies and core to Google's mission. To this end, we've delivered regional training programs focused on digital skills for journalism, partnered with industry organizations to combat misinformation, contributed to regional media literacy programs in Asia Pacific, and implemented programs to support a more diverse and inclusive news ecosystem.

Journalist Trainings

Through both in-person sessions and an online Training Center, we help journalists develop knowledge and skills in digital journalism across a range of topics — from harnessing large datasets to enhance storytelling, to verification of videos and images, to an introduction to machine learning.

Since launching a global journalist training program through the News Lab in 2015, we've trained over 78,900 journalists in-person in Asia Pacific, and have enabled an additional 418,400 online trainings through the GNI Training Center.

The GNI India Training Network

The GNI India Training Network, founded in 2018, has trained 20K+ Indian journalists in-person or via virtual live workshops in 10 languages since 2018, reaching 1,000+ news organizations and 700+ universities and training nearly all of the IFCN signatories in India. The network is now focused on a recertification program for all 240 trainers in the network, conducting virtual online sessions in more newsrooms and building a new module focused on mental well-being, trauma awareness and resiliency in verification.

78,900+
journalists trained
in-person since 2015

418,400+
online trainings

Combating Misinformation

Tackling misinformation is a complex challenge that requires coordinated action with a broad range of experts and organizations. We've worked together with newsrooms, fact-checkers, civil society organizations, and academic researchers in support of initiatives that help curb disinformation and elevate quality journalism.

GNI Indonesia Training Network

In 2018 we launched CekFakta, a collaborative fact-checking and verification project in Indonesia. It was developed in partnership with 22 media companies, as well as news associations, ahead of the 2019 national election. Two years and 2,700 fact checks later, the coalition is growing for the 2020 local elections, adding 100 local media to fight misinformation across the country. The GNI Indonesia Training Network has trained more than 10,800 journalists, academics and journalism students in support of the project.

The Australian Science Media Centre

The Australian Science Media Centre worked with more than 85 COVID-19 experts and organized 60 expert reactions, explainers, briefings and myth busters on COVID-19, all of which informed more than 30,000 news stories in Australia and overseas. GNI funds allowed the centre to hire an additional media officer for six months.

Engaging with the regional news community

Trusted Media Summit

With First Draft and the International Fact-Checking Network at Poynter, we've co-hosted three annual Trusted Media Summits, which brings together industry experts involved in fact-checking and fighting misinformation from across the Asia-Pacific. In 2020, 750 participants from 28 countries gathered (virtually) to discuss new fact-checking technologies, ways of connecting trustworthy media to readers, and strategies to improve media literacy.

10,800+
journalists trained

> I was very lucky that I have had the opportunity to participate in the Trusted Media Summit over the past three years. These events have given me many tools on how to debunk fake news that spread on social media platforms. After the 2019 Summit, I launched the first fact-checking organization in Timor-Leste and have been training other journalists across the Pacific Islands on fighting misinformation and verification.

Raimundos Oki
Editor in-chief of The Oekusi Post and Fact-Checker

Verified and credible information is one of the keys to maintaining freedom of expression.

We realize that hoaxes can reduce public trust, weaken and threaten freedom of expression. Therefore, as an organization that upholds freedom of expression, AJI must be at the forefront of fighting hoaxes. AJI is grateful to be able to work with Google since 2018 in the Google News Initiative program to increase the ability of journalists and the general public to build awareness against hoaxes.

REVOLUSI RIZA
GENERAL SECRETARY, ALIANSI JURNALIS INDEPENDEN (AJI) INDONESIA

Media Literacy

Misinformation is not new, but with the rise of technology, misleading online content can spread rapidly and deceive even savvy users. To help combat this, we've committed to support media literacy programs and help readers discern fact from fiction online.

INDIA

FactShala

$1 million to Internews to launch FactShala, a first-of-its-kind news literacy program focused on first-time internet users in non-metro cities in India. 250 journalists, fact checkers, academics and NGO workers are rolling out a media literacy curriculum in 7 Indian languages to help internet users assess online information.

INDONESIA

Anti Hoax Web Series

We supported Mafindo and the University of Hong Kong's Journalism and Media Studies Centre to create "Anti Hoax Superhero Family" and "Cooking Talk Show," a web drama and a media literacy cooking series designed to reach Indonesian housewives.

SOUTH KOREA

Fact-Checking Contest

In the last two years, we've partnered with the Korea Communications Commission as well as the Korean Broadcasting Journalists Association and major broadcasters in a national fact-checking contest. More than 340 teams participated in 2019, and we look forward to the outcome of this year's contest.

AUSTRALIA

Media Literacy Lab

We invested $1 million with the Alannah & Madeline Foundation to create Media Literacy Lab, helping Australian school students build the critical thinking skills and knowledge needed to identify misinformation. This project will help students aged 12-15 years to critically assess sources of information and ensure they are discerning and informed media consumers.

$1 million

to support media literacy in India

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diverse media is critical for creating a thriving and representative media for everyone, filling gaps for stories that don't rise to mainstream media, and providing a positive and authentic representation of underrepresented communities.

We have worked to champion diversity, equity and inclusion in journalism through a combination of efforts: research, pipeline development, talent support, and digital transformation of diverse news organizations.

ASIA PACIFIC

Google News Initiative Newsroom Leadership Program

The Google News Initiative Newsroom Leadership Program, created in collaboration with the Columbia School of Journalism, was established to enhance the leadership skills of emerging newsroom leaders in Asia Pacific. Each Fellow worked on a specific project that was relevant to their newsroom within the main fellowship topics: technology, monetization and data.

> " At a time when generating revenue for journalism has been tough, the fellowship has helped us to be certain that our ideas are viable without wasting time or money, find resources that provide the most important data, and best prepare for raising funds.

Marium Chaudhry
Founder, The Current

AUSTRALIA

Research: Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories?

We partnered with Media Diversity Australia to release a landmark report on diversity in Australia's broadcast news. Who Gets To Tell Australian Stories? analyzed 81 news programs over two weeks in June 2019, equal to about 19,000 news items. The report found that almost 76 percent of those on Australian screens were of Anglo-Celtic background, while just six percent were from Indigenous or non-European backgrounds.

SOUTH KOREA

Equipping Newsroom Leaders

We partnered with the Journalists Association of Korea and HeyJoyce, Korea's largest community for women, to create a leadership program that supports reporters' career development while on parental leave in a country where women occupy 10% of senior level newsroom positions.

> " I worked for 20 years as a journalist and experienced serious difficulties keeping up with work and caring for my children at the same time; I considered quitting every day. I was also anxious about falling behind my colleagues in such an intensely competitive environment. Programs like these will help build concrete skills, so the participants won't have to go through what I did.

Naree Lee
CEO, HeyJoyce

Journalism Emergency Relief Fund

In early 2020, the news industry dealt with job cuts, furloughs, and cutbacks as a result of the economic downturn prompted by COVID-19. The [Journalism Emergency Relief Fund](#) was created to sustain essential reporting around the world by delivering emergency funding to local newsrooms in this time of need.

$6.4m
in funding offered to 855 newsrooms across Asia Pacific

AUSTRALIA

The [Murray Pioneer](#) adapted their entire workflow to a remote working situation, while building ways to maintain business relationships with advertisers.

INDONESIA

Beyond its news portal, [Suara Surabaya](#) allowed readers to submit complaints like a public service hotline and worked with stakeholders to find solutions to the problems people raised.

JAPAN

[Saitama Shimbun](#), a 75-year old newspaper covering the Saitama prefecture, dedicated specific additional resources to detail the impact of the pandemic.

Evolving Business Models

As the business of news continues to fundamentally evolve, we've designed programs and resources to address the business challenges at the core of that evolution. We've enabled publishers to grow advertising and reader revenue, increase readership and engagement, and find new models and technology to support local news.

Most recently, we worked with industry experts to combine many of these efforts under the **GNI Digital Growth Program** to help news organizations across the world grow their digital businesses.

Google News Initiative

Reader Revenue

We're working with news organizations to build and grow reader revenue models, as well as develop technology that can support them along the way.

Subscriptions Lab

Our GNI Subscriptions Labs bring together publishers, subscriptions experts and industry associations over several months to build roadmaps for long-term success, implement tactics to improve performance across the funnel, and identify short-term experiments.

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We believe it's crucial for publishers of all sizes to find ways to grow their reader revenue to ensure a sustainable future for their business. By launching the Subscriptions Labs in APAC, we hope to support and encourage more news organizations in their transitions towards this model.

Rohan Tiwary
Head of Media, News & Entertainment Partnerships for Google APAC

Subscribe with Google

As part of the original GNI launch, we announced Subscribe with Google, which makes it easy for readers to subscribe, stay logged in and get the most out of their news subscription.

We've seen a 25% increase in subscriber clicks to publishers' sites when the "From your subscription" module appears in Google Search. 11 publishers from 6 countries have signed to implement Subscribe with Google in Asia Pacific.

● 11 publishers from 6 countries have signed to implement Subscribe with Google in Asia Pacific.

8

news organizations selected to participate in the first Asia Pacific Subscriptions Lab.

Advertising Revenue

The digital ad ecosystem continues to rapidly evolve, which can present challenges for news publishers — particularly small, local organizations — to ensure they are set up to optimize monetization of their digital traffic across platforms.

Our efforts aim to help publishers grow their digital ad revenue, from training and consulting support, to projects that test and scale new, innovative advertising solutions.

Local Foundry

The GNI Ad Lab in Asia Pacific, called "Local Foundry," focused on website optimization and monetization strategy for more than 45 publishers across the region. Participating publishers have seen:

- +95% increase in advertising revenue among **Indonesian participants**

- +135% increase in advertising revenue among **Japan participants**

The second phase of the program expands to Australia, New Zealand & India, increasing reach to almost 1,000 publishers.

5
countries

+95%
increase in advertising revenue among Indonesian participants

+135%
increase in advertising revenue among Japanese participants

Data

More data is available to news organizations today than ever before. This abundance of data can help publishers better understand their readers and identify opportunities for growth in key business areas. But it can also be challenging to harness the potential of this data effectively — to know what metrics to focus on, and how to use those figures to inform stories, products, and business strategies. We aim to help news organizations elevate data-driven thinking, and use insights to develop product offerings and grow digital revenue.

GNI Data Tools

We developed News Consumer Insights and Realtime Content Insights to help publishers make data-driven business and editorial decisions.

PHILIPPINES

Rappler

Rappler uses News Consumer Insights (NCI) to better understand its audience, and optimize its content and distribution strategies, leading to:

- **20% increase** in average monthly readers, year-on-year

- **8% increase** in articles read per visit, year-over-year

- **5% increase** in ad revenue, year-over-year

INDIA

Dainik Jagran

Dainik Jagran used News Consumer Insights and Realtime Content Insights to **boost audience engagement** during India's 2019 General Election, resulting in:

- 450% boost in traffic

- 180% increase in the time readers spent on their site

- 300% growth in ad revenue on election day

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Asia Pacific Data Lab

Our Asia Pacific Data Lab is a 5 month intensive program aimed at advancing the data maturity of participating publishers. We developed five key methodologies, delivered 11 solutions, and conducted 11 change management workshops. Outcomes included:

● 40% increase in 'brand lovers' - users that visit the site most frequently

● Overall 20% yield uplift

● Up to 50% ad viewability

● Changed behaviors across editorial and data teams, embedded data first strategies, and new KPIs

GNI Cloud Program

We launched the GNI Cloud Program in September 2018 to support local, small and medium-sized news organizations globally and help them unlock their own imaginative solutions to business and storytelling, through the power of Cloud.

● Source, by Storyful: Storyful used support from the GNI Cloud program to launch an image verification tool that uses Google Cloud technology to give instant access to an image's public history, detect and translate text in images — especially useful for journalists cataloguing or analyzing memes online.

JAPAN

Using data to grow revenue: Sankei Digital

In partnership with e-Agency, we worked with Sankei Digital to match audience segments to different revenue streams such as ads and paid content and built a customized dashboard to deliver data frameworks that fit business goals. As a result, Sankei could delve deeper into business-critical metrics such as number of paid subscribers, new subscribers, ad revenue by article type, and conversions by article. A/B testing revealed that simple UI changes could drive higher conversion rates and better engagement, including an increase in the conversion rates of paid users:

● 150% for web

● 176% for smartphone

Before the project, we struggled with a slowdown in subscriber growth.

We couldn't identify what the biggest bottleneck was— whether it was the articles themselves, the headlines, or simply that readers couldn't find and access the articles in the first place. We didn't know how to address the challenge, so it was hard to make progress and move forward.

HIROSHI MIYAMOTO
GENERAL MANAGER, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT DIVISION, SANKEI DIGITAL INC.

Empowering Newsrooms Through Innovation

As we work with publishers to navigate challenges for elevating quality journalism and evolving business models, it's clear that innovative thinking and approaches will be vital in developing and scaling solutions for the digital future. We've enabled news organizations around the world to demonstrate and test new ideas by investing in efforts to accelerate innovation in the news ecosystem, and partnering with news organizations to expand their journalism to new formats.

Google News Initiative

Innovation Challenge

The GNI Innovation Challenge is an application-based program open to organizations of all sizes that produce original journalism. Each Challenge is designed around a theme that meets that region's unique requirements, enabling diverse approaches that publishers have emphasized are needed to address specific needs in each region.

Through two Asia Pacific Challenges, we received 470 applications and funded 41 projects in 15 countries, totaling $5.6 million.

41
projects funded in
15 countries

$5.6m
in funding

AUSTRALIA

Community Broadcasting Association of Australia

Built a fundraising platform through **Community Broadcasting Association of Australia**

- Increased the revenues of 30 of the association's member radio stations

- Attracted major follow up funding of 2.1M over 4 years via the government to further develop services into an app for on-demand listening

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MYANMAR

Frontier Myanmar

Introduced the first membership program for Myanmar to diversify revenue streams and ensure editorial independence in an environment where press freedom is under pressure – currently Myanmar is ranked 139 in the 2020 **World Press Freedom Index**. Succeeded in attracting memberships ranging from individuals through to institutional memberships.

- Acquired around 400 paying members at launch

- New revenue stream from individuals (membership and donations) represent 10% of total revenue in less than 6 months

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MALAYSIA

Malaysiakini

Incentivized readers to engage productively with the national publisher by introducing a points and awards-based subscription loyalty scheme to drive subscriptions. Launched the 'Kini Community' as an add-on basic subscription which allows users to accrue points for rewards of user behaviors such as bookmarking stories for later reading; connecting with other members; tipping comments and other interactions. Results show a 140% rise in subscriptions in the 140% rise in subs in the first month after launch.

JAPAN

Iwate Nippo

Regional newspaper Iwate Nippo wanted to do something to help elderly residents of Iwate (Japan's second-largest prefecture) access life-saving services and help them feel more of a sense of belonging in their communities. With funding from the Google News Initiative Innovation Challenge, they developed Iwapon, an app created specifically for their older subscribers.

- Thousands of downloads within six months of launch

- Increased online newspaper subscribers by more than 50%

Monthly new subscribers for the online newspaper increased by more than 50 percent, and local businesses have approached us to become sponsors.

Most importantly, the atmosphere within the company has changed. The app has helped increase cooperation within the editorial, advertising and sales departments. It's also had a huge positive impact on the motivation of younger employees.

TAKUYA WATANABE
DIGITAL MEDIA MANAGER, IWATE NIPPO

YouTube Innovation Funding

Supported 29 publishers in Asia Pacific on projects to strengthen their online video capabilities, try out new formats for video journalism, and experiment with new business models.

THAILAND

Thairath

Thairath developed Thaistringer — a central marketplace for digital video footage, where stringers (freelancers and independent news correspondents) could sell their footage to buyers (major national broadcasters).

- Beta launched new platform and standard operating procedure for buying and selling video footage in Thailand

- Empowered stringers with increased distribution and earning capabilities

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VIETNAM

VTC Television

VTC Television used the funding to establish a dedicated digital video newsroom and drive channel growth, which resulted in:

260%
increase in subscribers on its YouTube channel

320%
increase in watch time compared to the previous year

TAIWAN

The News Lens

The News Lens was able to invest in digital video capabilities and create a membership program to drive non-ads revenue, leading to:

- 50,000 increase in subscribers

- News video formats saw almost the same retention rates as old ones

- New steam of revenue through channel membership programs

Emerging Technologies

New technology presents new opportunities. We help partners respond to changing news consumption habits by experimenting with new approaches to gathering information and storytelling.

JAPAN

Power of Words

The News Lab, in partnership with 24 local news organizations, Buzzfeed Japan and national broadcaster NHK, launched "Power of Words," a collaborative news website that delivers reporting from athletes across the country in an immersive web app. Originally intended to launch for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, our news partners decided to launch despite the event's postponement to give people hope amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The Japan Olympic Committee plans to incorporate Power of Words in their official app for Olympic athletes.

ASIA PACIFIC

Design Accelerator

Our Asia Pacific Design Accelerator focused on the ever-growing need of news organizations to bring innovation and user-centric approaches to designing new digital products and revenue streams. In the 6-month accelerator, we worked with 7 news organizations to train their teams and develop product ideas that addressed immediate and core business challenges, resulting in:

- 7 prototype products to drive new revenue, tap new audiences and more

- Design Accelerator Playbook

- 10-week online Digital Product Launch program

What's next?

As we continue to learn, we're consolidating insights from the work we've done, and finding ways to scale those learnings to publishers globally through efforts like the Digital Growth Program.

The news industry is still in the midst of a difficult transition. But this period of evolution presents opportunities to rethink the role news plays in people's lives and how it should evolve to meet our changing information needs.

We'll continue to collaborate with organizations around the world working to create a healthy, diverse and sustainable news ecosystem, and we're excited to share more in the coming year.

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