Research Article

The Iraqi Digital Media Center and its role in combating disinformation in the Iraqi digital environment.

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A B S T R A C T

The Iraqi Digital Media Center (DMC) was established to combat disinformation, rumours, and digital manipulation in the unregulated Iraqi cyberspace. Its website is part of the national infrastructure, providing reports, updates, and educational resources to raise public awareness and protect against fake news, cyberattacks, and digital crimes. The centre uses daily digital monitoring, analysis, and verification tools—supported by networks of experts and volunteers—to detect false content and promote media literacy. Operating semi-independently due to the lack of a comprehensive legal framework, the centre serves journalists, researchers, and the public, playing a key role in building an informed and resilient digital society. This study examines the centre's objectives, its working mechanism, and the challenges it faces in achieving its goals.

Keywords: Iraqi Digital Media Center, disinformation, digital violations, news verification, misinformation.

Introduction

Amid the rapid digital transformations taking place worldwide, digital media has become an essential component in shaping public opinion, conveying information, and influencing social and political behaviour (Yılmaz & Topsümer, 2023).[1] In Iraq, where the information environment faces significant challenges such as disinformation, rumours, and a lack of digital awareness, the Iraqi Digital Media Center (DMC) has emerged as an effective initiative aimed at organising the digital landscape, enhancing information awareness, and protecting users from content manipulation. One of the centre's most prominent tools in carrying out its mission is its official website, which serves as a central portal for publishing reports, updates, awareness guides, and warnings about misleading or suspicious digital activities(https://dmc-iq.com/who-are-

we/). This website's role goes beyond being a traditional media platform; it transcends that to become part of the national infrastructure for confronting contemporary digital challenges, including fake news, cyberattacks, and digital violations. Several studies indicate that the conscious use of official websites affiliated with digital oversight institutions can raise the level of information awareness among local communities (Lewandowsky, Ecker, & Cook, 2017).[2] The centres was established at a critical historical moment, when the country was experiencing a massive influx of unregulated information and a growing activity of digital campaigns seeking to influence public opinion through illegal means. The centre's founders realised that the battle in the modern era is no longer waged solely in the arenas of politics and economics, but has moved forcefully into the online sphere, where attitudes are shaped, convictions are changed, and mental images of events and people are

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created. Therefore, the centre chose to stand on the front lines of this battle, armed with digital analysis tools, news verification skills, and experience in dealing with modern media phenomena. The centre's mission encompasses multiple aspects, ranging from daily monitoring of Iraqi content on social media platforms, to analysing circulating media discourse, to issuing reports and studies that shed light on digital issues affecting society. The centre does not limit itself to remote monitoring; it sometimes intervenes through awareness campaigns, explanatory statements, or initiatives to counter false information, especially that which could threaten societal security or incite divisions. This role has gained double importance in the absence of a comprehensive legal framework regulating the digital space, which has made the centre a semi-independent entity that deals with challenges according to professional and ethical standards. One of the most prominent features of the centre's work is its reliance on digital verification as a primary tool. In an age of fabricated images and altered videos, it has become imperative for entities capable of exposing visual and audio deceptions and clarifying the truth of what is being circulated (Cover, 2022).[3] The center leverages the latest technologies, in addition to networks of volunteers and experts who provide it with information and evidence. This approach has made it an important reference for journalists, researchers, and even ordinary citizens searching for the truth in a turbulent sea of rumours (Waisbord, 2018).[4] From this perspective, the current research focuses on the experience of the Iraqi Digital Media Center website as a unique case study within the Iraqi context in terms of security and media challenges, as well as the social and cultural context associated with technology.

Study goals

This study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Iraqi Digital Media Center's website in terms of its structure, content, operating mechanisms, and its actual impact in helping Iraqi users identify misleading information. The importance of this analysis stems from the recognition of the danger of false information, which has become a soft weapon used by internal and external actors to influence societal and political stability, as noted by Wardle & Derakhshan (2017).[5]

Study Importance And Its Questions

The Iraqi Digital Media Center stands out as a modern and influential phenomenon in the local media landscape. Writing about this centre is not merely a review of its history or activities, but rather an attempt to understand a new role for the media in an era where facts are intertwined with lies and where news is intertwined with analysis and directed influence. The importance of this research stems from the fact that the Iraqi Digital Media Center serves

as a model that can be leveraged for other experiences, both within Iraq and in the region. A scholarly study of the centre may reveal effective strategies for combating fake news or spreading digital awareness among users— expertise that could be transferred to other countries experiencing similar phenomena. By analysing its reports and activities, the researcher can develop a theoretical framework for understanding the role of digital institutions in building a healthy media environment. Research on this topic contributes to documenting an important phase in the history of Iraqi media, as the country witnesses a gradual transition from reliance on traditional media to digital platforms open to all. The Digital Media Center has been and continues to be a part of this transition, indeed one of its most prominent players. Since digital transformations are occurring rapidly, documenting and analysing them now ensures that this experience is not lost in the rush of future events. This centre represents the first line of defence against the torrent of misinformation and works to protect collective consciousness from deliberate distortion. Through academic research, its methods of verifying news, its mechanisms for exposing misinformation, and its impact on public opinion can be monitored. This, in turn, opens the door to a number of questions that this study seeks to answer: What are the goals the centre seeks to achieve? What is the mechanism by which the Iraqi Digital Media Center works to achieve these goals? And what are the challenges facing the centre as a national non-governmental organisation trying to establish its presence in the highly complex field of digital media?

Literature Review

Traditional media, such as print, radio, and television, have historically been major tools for providing people with news, shaping public opinion, and influencing their ideas and beliefs. Then, the development of media and communication technologies led to a radical shift in the media field (Hiebert, & Gibbons, 2017).[6] The emergence of the Internet and the spread of social networking sites led to the extinction of the democratic nature of information dissemination, which allowed individuals to access information, create content, publish it, and share it with unprecedented ease (Oyighan &Okwu 2024).[7] This transformation not only led to the rapid spread of information and the expansion of its scope but also led to the emergence of new challenges represented by the widespread dissemination of misleading information and fake news (Martens, et al 2018).[8] Media disinformation has always been characterised by the deliberate manipulation of facts and the dissemination of false or misleading information. Its negative effects on public opinion and the social fabric as a whole cannot be overestimated, which in many cases leads to undermining the reliability and credibility of information sources and

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distorting the perceptions of recipients, whether they are decision-makers or ordinary people(Al Yazidi, 2023). In fact, social media sites in particular have become a digital space dedicated to the viral spread of misinformation and fake news, which often respond to pre-existing psychological biases and ideological divisions on the ground(Anderson, 2021).[9] The media is considered a window through which we look at the social reality, and at the same time it constitutes a mirror to it. However, media specialists believe that the media chooses to focus on some topics and issues and deals with them in different ways and is biased towards certain visions, not because they reflect the social reality, but rather to achieve some interests and goals of those who control it (Bennett, 2020).[10] Public opinion influence operations in general have always been and still are worrying, when it comes to exploiting the right to access information in order to manipulate the recipient and spread false and misleading information about this or that topic, in addition to information poisoning operations to weaken the truth in the recipients' vision and positions on issues that concern them(Miao,2018).[11] Today, the Internet and social media in our digital age constitute the space in which various conflicts, tensions and crises appear and become clear in all areas of life. From this perspective, we can understand and comprehend this great rush of individuals and various media, political, economic, religious and cultural institutions towards this new media space to diagnose, address and influence reality and, above all, address public opinion and the masses (Evans2015).[12] This matter has led to the spread of media misinformation as a real problem in our current era. It is a special procedure, whether ongoing or limited to a time period, represented by misleading an opponent or encouraging sabotage in his areas with the aim of weakening him, relying on all possible means (Ferreira & Borges 2020).[13] Today, disinformation constitutes a set of dialectical processes deliberately used to maliciously manipulate individuals, groups, and even entire societies (Marwick& Lewis,2017).[14] This aims to influence their political behaviour, control their thoughts, or even enslave them. This means concealing the true intent, sources, or objectives behind the distorted presentation or biased interpretation of reality. disinformation is a form of aggression that attempts to go unnoticed and is part of psychological subversion (Fırıncı, 2020).[15] It is not easy to define media disinformation. It is simultaneously a weapon with its own techniques and methods, and a state of mind resulting from the addition of an ideological dimension to the concept of total war. Ludendorff defined it as an extension of the battle that encompasses all of society's military, economic, social, and political activities (Tschuppik, 2017).[16] John Baron defines media disinformation as the conscious and deliberate dissemination of false data and opinions that the sender knows in advance to be false in

order to create a false reality that is convincing enough for the opponent to make him mistake the correct logic of facts and events(Baron& Ish-Shalom,2024).[17] Disinformation is also a form of psychological sabotage aimed at destabilising a country or society and undermining its ability to resist without the need to resort to armed force, or at the very least, to prepare for it if necessary. In short, the term "media disinformation" refers to false, inaccurate, or misleading information that is created, produced, presented, and disseminated for profit or to intentionally cause harm to the targeted group (Załoga, 2022).[18] Media disinformation uses an offensive discourse such as incitement that targets the intellectual and psychological structures of the masses (Konieczny,2023).[19] For this purpose, it fabricates a huge system of speech that is broadcast and pumped continuously among the masses through all media and propaganda means so that it penetrates the depths of their consciousness and becomes entrenched in it(O'Shaughnessy2024).[20] Thus, the processes of intellectual, moral, and psychological destabilisation are achieved in order to make people behave in a manner that contradicts their convictions and true interests and act against their actual interests (Tsang2002).[21] Therefore, the person who spreads disinformation aims to create an emerging symbolic reality that contradicts the tangible and existing reality so that it is established in the public mind as an imaginary base that influences their souls as a kind of social control, directing them towards the desired behaviour, considering that these imaginary facts are real facts that help the person who spreads misinformation determine the nature of the relationship with the country targeted by the fake news and also in drawing the boundaries of its relationship with other countries(Guarda, Ohlson & Romanini, 2018).[22] It is noteworthy that the term "fake news" has become more widely used in the media environment after the 2016 US presidential elections for two reasons. The first is the use of the term by Donald Trump, the current US President, in his media statements, and the second is the use of fake and misleading news as a means to win the US elections and influence the opinions of voters. However, the term "fake news" is not considered a new term(Lee,2019).[23] If news is supposed to be based on truth, what makes fake news fake? The word "fake" is often used as a synonym for a group of words such as "fraud," "forgery," "imitation," and "inauthentic." Thus, "fake news" means the opposite of truth and what is true(Reilly, 2018).[24] Referring to the contemporary media discourse, fake news is defined as posts that have the property of viral spread and are based on fake accounts, whether on news websites or social media sites, to appear as if they are real and correct news reports(Sukhodolov, & Bychkova, 2017).[25] But there are those who put fake news in a larger context that falls under misinformation

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and disinformation. If misinformation means sharing and spreading false information without prior knowledge of it and without intending to cause harm, i.e. an unintended mistake by the journalist that may occur as a result of inattention, lack of time or negligence, then disinformation is the fabrication of false information that is basically spread intentionally with the aim of causing harm to the targeted party and offending them (Scheufele, & Krause, 2019).[26] Misinformation has always outperformed accurate information. According to a large study conducted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2018, false information spreads six times faster than true information. It directly targets emotions and seduces the masses. It is often published in revolutionary or shocking formats. It simply tickles our emotions (Kumar, & Shah, 2018).[27] The spread of misinformation and fake news on the Internet is primarily due to the combined contribution of these methods adopted by the disinformer on the one hand, and the technical nature of social media sites on the other hand, where algorithms control the spread of content on these social networks, exploiting the cognitive, intellectual and psychological biases of individuals in choosing what they want to see (de Cock Buning, 2018).[28]

Methodology

In conducting this paper, the researcher adopted a logical, gradual methodology, relying on diverse sources to ensure the accuracy and objectivity of the results. In the first phase, previous literature related to the topic of misinformation was reviewed by reviewing academic studies, research reports, published scientific articles, and several books specialising in digital media and news verification. This phase aimed to build a solid theoretical framework that clarifies the basic concepts related to media disinformation, its forms, tools, and its impact on public opinion. In the second phase, the researcher moved on to a field study that focused on analysing the website of the Iraqi Digital Media Center, the subject of the study and a model of an institution working to monitor and combat media disinformation in the local digital environment. The analysis included a review of the website's structure, published content patterns, and verification mechanisms, in addition to tracking the awareness campaigns and projects it implements to combat fake news. At this stage, the researcher adopted content analysis as a simultaneous quantitative and qualitative approach. Published materials were monitored and categorised according to specific criteria, then analysed to extract trends and patterns prevalent in the centre's work. The social and political context within which the centre operates was also considered, as its existence has an impact on the nature of the content and the methods it uses to address media misinformation.

Discussion

The Emergence Of The Iraqi Digital Media Center: Founding Background And Motivations For The Need

The establishment of the Iraqi Digital Media Center (DMC) came as an inevitable response to the challenges posed by the rapid expansion of internet and social media use in Iraq after 2003, and more acutely after 2014, coinciding with the escalation of armed conflicts and digital disinformation campaigns targeting societal unity and stability. In this context, the need arose for an independent entity responsible for monitoring, analysing, and evaluating circulating digital content and providing awareness to Iraqi users about the safe and responsible use of digital media. The centre was established in 2018 by a group of researchers and specialists in digital media and cyber technologies, driven by the need to develop a credible Iraqi digital environment and confront the media chaos prevailing in the Iraqi cyberspace at the time. Since its inception, the centre has been described as a qualitative step towards building a "community digital shield" against fake news and digital disinformation, as local reports indicated (Al-Sharhan, 2021).[29]

The Founding Objectives Of The Center

From the outset, the centre established a series of strategic objectives that created the overall framework for its mission. Among the most prominent of these are combating misinformation by publishing documentary and analytical reports, raising digital awareness among the Iraqi public through awareness campaigns and training initiatives, and monitoring digital activity that threatens national security, particularly on social media. The centre also aims to enhance digital transparency and hold accountable pages or websites that broadcast hate speech or disseminate false news, in addition to building partnerships with global social media platforms to develop self-monitoring and content verification mechanisms (https://dmc-iq.com/who-are-we/). This shift was deemed necessary in light of what researchers described as a "digital awareness gap" in Iraq, which allows fake news and inflammatory content to spread without effective societal resistance (Al-Rawi, 2020).[30]

The Relationship Between The Establishment Of The Center And The Iraqi Digital Situation

The centre began its work during a period when the Iraqi digital environment lacked independent institutions whose mission was to monitor and verify digital content news, in addition to the lack of coordination between government, security, and community agencies in monitoring digital

content and the threats it contained to the values, customs, and security of Iraqi society (Al Barazanchi,&Rasheed2024).[31] This, in turn, has led to an increase in cyberattacks on Iraqi government institutions and news sites. According to some observers, the centre represents one of the first civil digital initiatives in Iraq that combines technical expertise with a community-based vision (Ahmed, 2022).[32] In the years following its establishment, the Centre's scope of work expanded, and its organisational structure expanded to include specialised units: the Digital Monitoring Department, the Media and Awareness Department, the Cyber Analysis Department, and the Global Digital Platforms Coordination Unit. The Centre also launched unique initiatives, such as the "Beware of Misinformation" campaign in 2020 and the "Digital Citizen's Guide" video series. It also launched a digital application dedicated to monitoring fake news. In a relatively short period, the Centre has succeeded in establishing itself as a reliable source for digital reporting and analysis in Iraq, with a growing media presence on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram (Haddad,2024).[33] The establishment of the center was not merely an administrative response to a state of digital chaos. Rather, it can be viewed from the perspective of social and political interaction with technology, where technology has become a tool for conflict and political and cultural influence. This has necessitated the establishment of civil institutions such as the DMC to recalibrate the relationship between citizens and information. As Castells (2010).[34] has shown, digital networks have become the primary incubator of power and influence in the twenty-first century, and national security cannot be separated from digital security. From this perspective, the Iraqi Digital Media Centre represents a pioneering Iraqi attempt to establish informal digital media governance based on community input, analytical techniques, and a comprehensive approach to the digital environment in Iraq.

Iraqi Digital Media Center Website

The official website of the Iraqi Digital Media Centre (https://dmc-iq.org) is the centre's primary digital interface, its main tool for providing its services, its primary means of communication with the public, and a reference for information and reports related to digital activity in Iraq. Through this website, the centre seeks to implement its awareness-raising and analytical mission through updated content and achieve one of its most important goals: reaching a broad digital audience with reliable, accurate, and accessible content.

General structure of the site

The Centre's website features a clear organisational structure, based on thematic classifications and content targeted at different audiences. The site consists of a main page and seven secondary pages, as follows:

Home page: Includes the latest news and reports issued by the Center, in addition to urgent warnings or prominent content in digital monitoring.

Platforms page: A page dedicated to publishing detailed reports on the use of social media platforms in Iraq, including related statistics, guidelines, and user trends.

Digital Government page : This page provides information on all digital government platforms, critiquing their content, as well as legislation related to digital content in Iraq, in addition to guidance information for users of these platforms.

Digital Security page: This page addresses topics such as fake pages and fake messages, methods for verifying images and videos, and methods for protecting digital accounts.

Infographics page: This page provides information related to Iraqi media, utilising this information and statistics in the form of images and charts about Iraqi media networks, satellite channels, programme presenters, and opinion polls about them, in addition to statistical information about the websites of security and military institutions.

Technology page: This page provides all news related to technology in digital media in Iraq, such as internet companies and content creation, in addition to prominent figures in this sector.

Economy page: The Economy page covers everything related to the economic aspect of the digital media sector, such as advertising and digital payments.

More pages: This page consists of six subpages: Digital Diplomacy, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Marketing, Applications, Studies and Articles, and finally a Videos page. Each of these subpages provides information and news related to the page title.

The website design is based on a simple and smooth interface, free of complexity, and suitable for Internet users in Iraq who may suffer from weak digital infrastructure, as shown in previous analytical studies on the Internet environment in Iraq (Hameed & Alwan, 2021).[35]
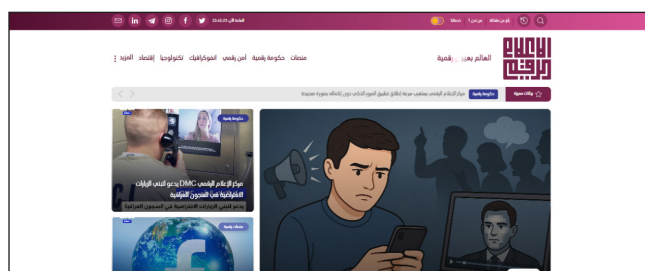

Figure 1. The Digital Media Center Home page

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Figure 2. Platforms page

Figure 3. Digital Government page

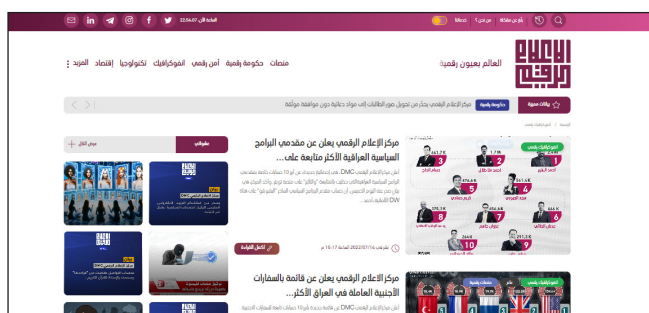**Figure 4. Digital Security page**

Figure 5. Infographics page

Figure 6. Technology page

Figure 7. Economy page

Figure 8. More page

Site's Basic Functions

The website goes beyond its role as an information platform to become an interactive and awareness-raising tool. The first function is digital verification: this is achieved by publishing reports that clarify the falsity of certain news circulating, particularly on Facebook and Twitter. The second function is warning against fake pages and accounts: The website displays periodic warnings about pages claiming to represent government or media entities. The third function is digital education: The website provides educational articles and instructional videos that focus on safe internet use. The last one is documentation and analysis: The website includes an archive of many documented cases illustrating digital manipulation of news content, as well as tools for detecting such manipulations. These functions have proven effective, especially in times of crisis, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, when fake news about vaccines spread. The centre worked to refute many of these with scientific sources via its website and social media platforms (Digital Media Center, 2025).[36]

User Interface

The main page of the centre's website has a good user interface in terms of design, organisation of information, and ease of dealing with the cognitive content contained therein. The colour diversity and use of charts and images on this page make it more attractive to users. This page relies entirely on the Arabic language due to the lack of informational content in English, which is considered one

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of the website's shortcomings. The lack of English-language pages on the centre's website deprives the site of an additional dimension of openness to international viewers and foreign entities interested in digital affairs in Iraq. Despite the simple design, the site lacks some advanced interactive features, such as the ability to comment or interact with articles, and it also does not have integrated tools for checking news automatically.

Digital Content On The Site As A Mass Communication Tool

The website serves a media function parallel to traditional media, but it distinguishes itself by its focus on digital and information issues, areas that have not received sufficient attention in the Iraqi media landscape. According to an analysis conducted by the Lebanese organisation SMEX (2022), DMC is among the few in the Arab region that provides technical content directed at the general public, in simplified language, without compromising scientific accuracy. The website does not operate in isolation but rather is closely integrated with the centre's accounts on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Telegram. Links to the full content on the website are often posted across these platforms as part of a hybrid media strategy that combines quick access to content (social media) with analytical details (website). This strategy has proven successful in enhancing community engagement, increasing the number of website visitors by up to 62% between 2020 and 2023, according to published internal statistics.

Website Digital Content Analysis

The digital content provided by the Iraqi Digital Media Center's website is the core of its media and awareness-raising mission. Content is the means by which the centre's objectives are achieved, awareness messages are delivered, verified information is disseminated, and misinformation campaigns are countered. This content is diverse in form and function, ranging from analytical articles, documentary reports, warning statements, and visual content.

Types Of Content Published On The Site

After analysing the content of a sample of 200 posts on the site for the period 2021-2023, it was found that the site relies on qualitative classifications for the digital content it provides, as follows:

This distribution shows that the site focuses primarily on the warning and analytical aspect, in line with its nature as a monitoring entity.

Communicative objectives in the content

Content analysis of the website content shows that the information it provides serves multiple communication goals and these goals are achieved through different means, as shown in the table below:

Recent studies have shown that websites that adopt this multifunctional approach achieve higher levels of digital engagement and overall trust (Tully & Ekdale, 2020).[37]

Linguistic And Structural Analysis Of Content

Stylistically, the content published on the website is characterised by clear, fluent language that addresses the general reader without academic verbiage. The website relies on real-life examples to communicate ideas to users, such as referencing fake campaigns that took place in Iraq. The website relies on reliable sources of information in its media discourse, whether local or international. The use of images and videos also enhances the information disseminated by the website, especially in educational content. This approach aligns with what McGuire (2018).[38] indicated, stating that the success of educational digital content depends on simplicity, persuasion, and rapid access.

Content Impact Evaluation

The number of monthly visits to the website and the number of shares of content published on social media reflect the effectiveness of digital content in achieving its goals. Through a statistical study prepared by the centre for 2023 for its website, the data appears in the table below.

Table 1. Site qualitative digital content classifications

Content Type	Description	Approximate Frequency
News and Warnings	Short posts highlighting a digital threat or circulating rumors	35%
Analytical Reports	In-depth articles on digital phenomena such as "deep fakes" and "fake pages"	25%
Educational Content	instructions, Videos, and Guides on Digital Security	20%
Studies and Research	Scientific papers or extended analyses aimed at decision-makers and professionals	10%
Center News	Coverage of the Center's activities and official statements	10%

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Table 2. The site's communication goals and means of achieving them

Goals	Means
Public awareness	By publishing simplified educational content aimed at non-expert users
Rapid response to rumors	By publishing updated warnings clarifying the falsity of news circulating on social media
Restore trust in reliable information	By providing verified and accurate alternatives to false content
Supporting decision-makers	Through studies that highlight widespread digital threats.
Community digital empowerment	By teaching people how to protect themselves from misinformation and hacking

Table 3. The website's monthly visits and shares of content published on social media.

Index	Approximate number (2023)
Average monthly visits to the website	80,000 visits
Average engagement per post	300-500 shares
Number of alerts issued per month	From 8 to 15 warning posts
Growth in visits	+24% since the previous year

The Role Of The Iraqi Digital Media Center Website In Combating Disinformation

Combating disinformation is one of the most complex challenges of the digital age, especially in countries undergoing political and security transitions like Iraq, where rumours and fake news are widely spread across social media. Accordingly, the Iraqi Digital Media Center's website has played a pivotal role in countering this threat through a series of thoughtful digital tools and practices. The website of the centre defines digital verification as "a set of technical and linguistic tools and procedures aimed at verifying the authenticity of online content before it is circulated, whether in the form of text, images, videos, or links." The centre treats digital verification as a societal duty, not just a media responsibility, and therefore seeks to engage users in the reporting, observation, and verification processes.

First: Defining Misinformation In The Iraqi Digital Context

According to Wardle & Derakhshan (2017), disinformation is "content that is created and disseminated with the intent to harm and is either false, taken out of context, or intentionally distorted." In the Iraqi context, misinformation takes many forms, including rumours about government decisions or fake statements by officials, fake content related to sectarian or security issues, news about fake jobs or aid from government agencies, and fake images or videos of unrealistic events or incidents occurring outside Iraq. A recent study indicated that nearly 45% of Iraqi users encountered misleading content during the past year (UNESCO Iraq, 2023).[39]

Second: The Site's Editorial Strategy For Exposing Misleading Information.

The Centre's website adopts a proactive and reactive approach to dealing with misleading content. This approach is based on several elements:

The chart below shows an increase in the volume of digital measures taken by the centre to combat disinformation.

### Third: Approved Digital Verification Tools

Digital verification is a cornerstone of the Iraqi Digital Media Centre's (DMC) efforts to combat misinformation. With the increasing use of doctored images, misleading videos, and fake posts, the need for a clear methodology for verifying digital content has become urgent, especially in a fast-paced digital environment like Iraq. The Centre's website has been keen to showcase and adopt several digital mechanisms and tools that enable the general public and digital professionals to uncover media misinformation, with a focus on the practical, not just academic, dimension. The centre relies on several tools to analyse fake content as shown in the table below.

According to Tufekci (2018) [40], the use of these technical tools contributes to bridging the digital awareness gap, especially in societies that lack strong factual media traditions. The site also offers illustrated tutorials and educational videos that explain how to use these tools step-by-step, a feature lacking in many similar Arabic-language sites.

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Table 4. The website's monthly visits and shares of content published on social media.

Element	Description
Continuous Monitoring	Analyzing social media trends to detect whether there is an active disinformation campaign.
Instant Verification	Verifying Images, Videos, and Quotes Using OSINT Tools.
Analytical Interpretation	Providing publications that explain how and why the public was misled.
Rapid Posting	Posting clarifications across the website and associated social platforms.

Number of rumors debunked

- Year 2020 (84)
- Year 2021 (102)
- Year 2022 (126)
- Year 2023 (138)
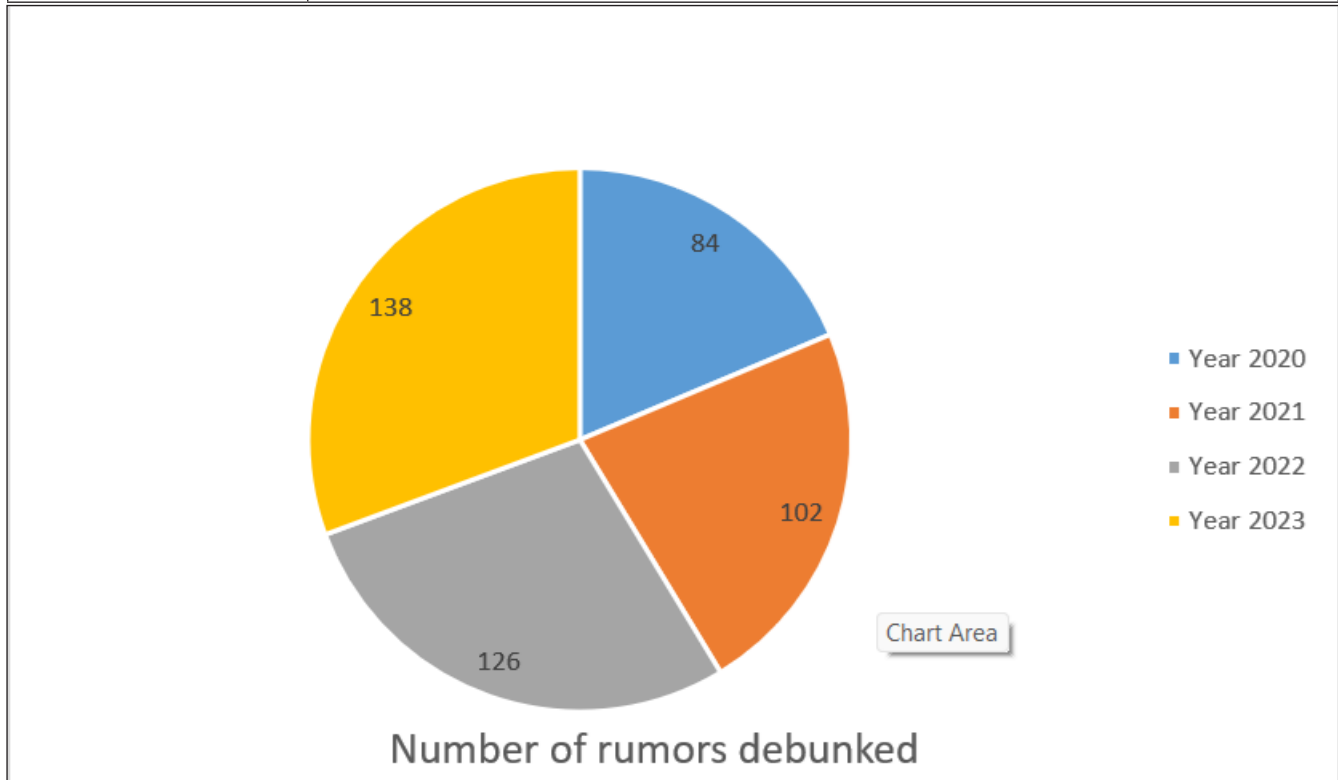
Figure 9. Digital measures taken by the center to combat media disinformation.

Table 5. Tools to analyze fake content

Tool	Function
Google Reverse Image Search	To verify the images used in the rumors.
InVID	To check viral videos and find out their original source.
CrowdTangle	To track the spread of posts on Facebook and identify their initial source.
WHOIS	To check the ownership of suspicious websites and ensure their credibility.

Fourth: The campaigns launched by the center website to combat misinformation.

Through its website, the centre has launched several awareness campaigns aimed at raising public awareness of fake news. Most notable is the "Beware of Fake Pages" campaign, which publishes examples of accounts and pages impersonating official institutions. The centre also launched the "Verification is Your Responsibility" campaign, an educational campaign that helps users develop self-verification skills. Additionally, the centre launched the "Smart Interaction Guide," an online guide available on the website that explains how to handle suspicious content. These campaigns and initiatives, along with the content published on the website, may help build a base of digitally active and risk-aware users.

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Fifth: The strengths and weaknesses of the site's performance in combating disinformation.

By analysing the information contained on the website and the advisory and informational content it publishes, a set of positive and negative points can be identified in the website's work regarding combating digital media disinformation as shown in the table below.

Sixth: Technical challenges facing verification mechanisms

Despite the availability of tools, the site faces some challenges, including:

Therefore, the Centre always proposes to develop local or translated verification tools that suit the Iraqi linguistic and cultural environment.

Seventh: The site as an awareness source for Iraqi users.

Considering the rapid changes in the Iraqi digital space, there is a growing need for educational platforms that are credible and capable of reaching broad segments of society. Here, the Iraqi Digital Media Center (DMC) website emerges as a vital digital awareness resource that seeks to bridge the information literacy gap in Iraq, particularly among non-specialised internet users. This awareness-raising role is based on integrating digital media with information literacy, presenting content in a simplified, gradual manner, and appropriate for a knowledge environment suffering from limited digital literacy, as Al-Rawi (2020) points out. Digital literacy is defined as "an informational and educational process that aims to raise users' awareness of the risks of the digital environment and enhance their skills in safely and intelligently handling digital information and content" (Livingstone et al., 2019).[41] The Iraqi Digital Media Center website has adopted this concept in a practical way, focusing on content that addresses general awareness rather than the digital elite, and addressing specific local issues rather than general discourse about technology. The site targets several segments of Iraqi society, most notably:

These tools demonstrate the site's transformation from a mere information platform to a micro-learning environment that the average user can rely on to build a more profound understanding of modern digital technologies. It is noted that the discourse used in the digital awareness content on the website is characterised by several linguistic and strategic features:

This approach is consistent with what Hobbs (2017).[42] recommended in the field of media education, as he emphasises the need to address the audience from a position of participation, not from a position of authority or preaching. Despite the importance of the awareness provided by the website, these efforts face several challenges. The disparity in educational levels makes it difficult to communicate some technical concepts to users with limited backgrounds. Furthermore, access to rural areas and areas remote from major cities is limited due to the weak digital infrastructure in some Iraqi regions. Certainly, the fact that the content on the centre's website is limited to Arabic and the absence of Kurdish or English versions of most awareness materials is a factor that narrows the scope of the awareness the centre seeks. Furthermore, the lack of direct interaction with visitors on the website limits opportunities for dialogue or discussion about awareness concepts. The website displays direct links to its official accounts on various platforms and clearly directs visitors to follow its content on social media. This is achieved through prominent icons in the top and bottom bars, the inclusion of tweets and posts embedded within articles, and the regular publication of shortened versions of awareness-raising content on social media platforms. This integration demonstrates the centre's awareness of the importance of an omni-channel presence, which contributes to enhancing digital influence, as recommended by recent studies in digital media (Kietzmann et al., 2011).[43] According to statistics for the first quarter of 2025, the following data demonstrates the extent of user activity and engagement with the Centre's content across various platforms:

This dynamic is in line with the "digital participatory" model (Jenkins et al., 2013).[44] which is considered more effective in societies with a fragile digital infrastructure. Engagement isn't limited to the number of likes or shares. It extends to receiving comments and enquiries on awareness posts, responding quickly to questions about fake news, opening the door for mass reporting of misleading pages, and responding to digital complaints from citizens regarding identity theft or online fraud. In 2024, the centre launched a campaign titled "Report... and We'll Follow Up," encouraging users to report directly via platform messages. More than 600 digital reports were handled during the campaign's first month.

Table 6. Positive and negative points in the website's work

Strengths	Weaknesses
Quick response to fake posts.	Lack of user-friendly self-verification tools on the website.
Direct and clear language.	Lack of translation of some content into Kurdish or English.

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Collaboration with global platforms (such as Meta and Twitter) .	Limited access to less connected audiences.
Existence of a specialised analytics team.	Lack of a mobile application that facilitates quick access to content.

Table 7. Challenges facing the site

Challenge	Impact
Poor internet access in some areas	Impedes immediate access to interactive tools or video downloads.
Lack of general digital awareness	Limits the use of tools despite their availability.
Difficulty using some technical tools	Some users lack the expertise to understand verification mechanisms.
Lack of translated versions of some tools	Most tools are only available in English.

Table 8. Iraqi society segments appear on the site.

Tool	Form	Function
Awareness Articles	Text	Explaining the Principles of Digital Security and Self-Authentication.
Short Videos	Visual	Interactive Visual Awareness on Digital Forgery .
Downloadable PDF Guides	Documents	Useful References for Users or Trainers.
Illustrated Awareness Posts	Infographics + Texts	Simple and Rapidly Spreading Explanations on Social Media.
Digital Awareness Assessment Tests	Interactive (Experimental)	Testing the User's Comprehension of Digital Content.

Table 9. linguistic and strategic features of the website

Rhetorical element	Description
Simplified Language	Uses vocabulary that is user-friendly free of complex technical terms.
Realistic Narrative	Clarifies concepts through realistic and common Iraqi examples.
Positive Warning Tone	Alerts the user without inciting panic or casting doubt on all digital content.
Promotes a sense of responsibility	Addresses the user as a partner in combating misinformation.

Table 10. Quantitative analysis of audience interaction

Platform	Number of Followers	Average Monthly Engagement	Most Engaging Content Type
Facebook	380,000	1.4 million interactions	Short videos
Twitter (X)	94,000	270,000 interactions	Breaking Tweets
Instagram	52,000	190,000 engagements	Infographic
YouTube	21,000	85,000 views	Video verification episodes

Conclusions

The Iraqi Digital Media Center's website is a vital tool in combating the wave of media disinformation sweeping Iraqi society amidst the rapid digital media transformations. Through its diverse awareness-raising strategies and integration with social media platforms, the site provides a platform for Iraqi users to understand the risks of disinformation and take informed positions regarding digital content. Despite the technical and linguistic challenges it faces, the centre remains a pioneer in spreading digital media culture and raising community awareness, with the potential to develop its tools and content to keep pace with developments in the local and global digital landscape. This study emphasises the need to continue supporting the centre in developing its infrastructure, improving its engagement with the public, and expanding its content beneficiary base to ensure a deeper and more sustainable impact on Iraqi society. It is essential to establish partnerships with educational institutions and universities to spread the culture of fact-checking and combating disinformation and to collaborate with traditional media outlets to raise awareness outside the digital space. The study also emphasises the importance of coordination with

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social media platforms to facilitate reporting of misleading content. The centre's website administrators should consider offering a Kurdish-language version to meet the needs of Kurdish speakers in Iraq and providing selected materials in English to attract researchers and interested parties outside Iraq. Adding a comment and discussion feature to the site allows users to exchange opinions and ask questions, which enhances community dialogue. Creating an online forum or discussion platform to encourage in-depth discussions on digital media topics is also crucial. The use of artificial intelligence tools to provide immediate support via interactive chatbots to answer user enquiries will certainly offer the site a significant positive boost. The challenges facing the centre are numerous and sometimes daunting. There is always resistance from parties that benefit from the spread of lies or digital chaos. Moreover, the pace of production of false content sometimes outpaces any party's ability to quickly pursue it. Nevertheless, the centre continues to work resolutely, relying on the strategy of "influence by example", which means revealing the truth accurately and calmly, leaving the public to make their own judgements without being drawn into emotional rhetoric or personal confrontation. The centre's work has contributed to creating a more informed media environment, even though there is still a long way to go. Through its frequent exposure of false information, the public has begun to develop a greater critical sense and is more inclined to research sources before believing any news.

Media organisations themselves have also found in the centre's reports a tool to improve their performance and avoid falling into the traps of misinformation. Ultimately, it can be said that the Iraqi Digital Media Center represents a pioneering experience in the region, as it combines a sense of patriotism, technical expertise, and professional independence. It is not merely a monitoring office or an awareness platform but a living entity that interacts with the pulse of society and senses risks before they turn into crises. In a world where algorithms control the spread of news, the existence of such a centre becomes a necessity, not a luxury, because protecting collective consciousness is the first step towards building a state capable of withstanding contemporary challenges.

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