

ASSESSMENT ON BLUE RIZAL GAZETTE: BASIS FOR PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

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Article Information	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 4th July, 2024</p> <p>Accepted: 30th August, 2024</p> <p>Published: 27th September, 2024</p> <p>KEYWORDS: <i>Blue Rizal Gazette, e-newsletter, assessment</i></p> <p>Publisher: Empirical Studies and Communication - (A Research Center)</p> <p>Website: www.cescd.com.ng</p>	<p><i>This study focused on the assessment on Blue Rizal Gazette, the official e-newsletter of Schools Division Office of Rizal. Sixty-five (65) reader-respondents from the thirteen (13) Sub-offices were asked to evaluate the e-newsletter. More so, ten (10) BRG writers were asked about the limitations they have encountered in accomplishing the monthly issue and how they dealt with the identified gaps. They were chosen using purposive random sampling considering the availability of their internet connection and their willingness to participate in the study.</i></p> <p><i>Based on the results, the reader-respondents evaluated the Blue Rizal Gazette as Very Satisfactory with respect to its content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and up-to-datedness of information. In addition, the reader-respondents suggested that BRG should reach the far-flung areas through giving them printed copies so that they would also be educated regarding the important happenings in the educational community in Rizal. On the other hand, the writer-respondents identified three common limitations which included: 1) overlapping schedules; 2) challenging gathering of necessary data; and 3) limited motivation. Furthermore, based on their challenges, they have suggested to: 1) limit BRG Team's duties and responsibilities; 2) provide memorandum with regard to data gathering; 3) recognize the writers as form of motivation.</i></p> <p><i>The findings of the study may contribute to an increased understanding of the BRG editorial board and the top management in maximizing fullest potential in strengthening the publication of Blue Rizal Gazette. Thus, the study serves as the basis for further improvement of the process of the BRG.</i></p>

Introduction of Research

Media, in any forms, play very crucial roles when it comes to informing the public on what is happening in the society. In addition, media keep people abreast with new and up-to-date issues which concern the whole community. These make every individual well-educated and apprised with the current affairs surrounding them.

Undeniably, media, particularly the newspaper, is one of the many technologies that human uses to make communication easier and faster most especially in this era when media literacy is important. Likewise, 21st century is considered as the age information revolution. Thus, newspaper as a formal source of key information seems to be more efficient to deal with the fast-changing literacy demands of the people.

It is stated in **1987 Constitution Article III Section 7** that: “The right of the people to information on matters of public concern shall be recognized.” This statement explains that people should have equal access to all the vital information of interest of the whole community. Everyone should be well-informed with regard to the all the latest and topical events in the society.

In this connection, Schools Division Office (SDO) - Rizal has established its Public Affairs Team (PAT) through the Division Memorandum no. 322, series of 2020 titled Creation of Public Affairs Team. This group of efficient individuals aims to enable SDO Rizal to have a unified information to the public, partners, employees, and other stakeholders for a positive organizational image and sustained partnerships. More so, some of their tasks include addressing public relations and media communications, dissemination of information and strategic communications advice, provision of written or oral press releases and build relationships with media contacts, and keeping the Rizaleños abreast of important media stories on a daily basis.

Along with this is the formation of the Blue Rizal Gazette (BRG), the official e-newsletter of the division. This includes the active campus journalism advocates and school paper advisers who work on the monthly issues of SDO- Rizal's online newsletter which covers significant, relevant, and current events about education in the province of Rizal amidst the current health crisis in the country due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Repia (2021) stated in an article titled *What Lies Beneath: Blue Rizal Gazette's Mapusong Pamamahayag* that information empowers, and BRG is a very powerful tool to share the facts and figures behind the posts in social media, and to keep inspiring the Rizaleños.

At present, the Blue Rizal Gazette was able to publish 14 online issues with stories highlighting the plans and programs on educational services, focusing the best practices among schools, featuring personalities who serve as role models for their exemplary performances and other related to the Department of Education. Targeting all the Rizaleños, this official e-newsletter of SDO- Rizal provided accurate, relevant and up-to-date information to all.

However, like the other organization, the team experienced limitations and downtime because of the confined situations as the new normalcy had arisen. Likewise, since the writers are all teachers who have equally important special tasks in their station, the group encountered some challenges publishing the articles for the e-newsletter.

In this regard, the researchers who are also writers of the BRG, opted to conduct this study to determine the assessment of the readers of the e-newsletter of the SDO-Rizal. Moreover, they aimed to investigate the experiences of the writers as they continue to issue important happenings in the province. They believe that the results are important to further improve the process of the Blue Rizal Gazette.

Literature Review

This chapter discusses pertinent information about the study. This information is in the form of literature by authors.

According to (Chan & Leung, 2005; Hujanen & Pietikainen, 2004; Kayany & Yelsma, 2000; Livingstone & Markham, 2008; Nguyen & Western, 2007) the use of online news media complements the consumption of news in traditional media as on the basis of a survey about news consumption in Texas, Chyi and Lasorsa argued that “the Online News Consumption Research Findings from some analyses of the behaviors and motivations of online news consumers support the complementarity hypothesis. Flavian and Gurrea (2007) as they surveyed news consumers in Spain, they both concluded that accessing Internet news is tied to seeking specific or up-to-date information and for readers at all levels, the newspaper can be a versatile tool to obtain useful and interesting information while developing an individual's ability to read.

As stated by (Ahlers, 2006; Coleman & McCombs, 2007; Lee, 2006; Ogan, Ozakca, & Groshek, 2008) , in their study of news habit formation among American college students, they concluded that members of ‘the first internet generation’... ‘are less likely to read newspapers than older people and less likely to watch network news’ (2006: 197 and 205). With this, there seems to be a complex relationship between complementarity and displacement that is, in part, dependent on temporal and socioeconomic factors. Some contend that audience behavior could change over time, as the appropriation of online technologies is normalized which is also proved by (Metzger, Flanagin, & Zwarun, 2003; Salwen, Garrison & Driscoll, 2005; Tewksbury, 2003).

On the other hand, as stated by Cindy (2006), using the newspaper of their medium contains a variety of information in a number of differing formats. Straight news and sports stories can be used to teach or reinforce the skills of attending to detail, comparing and contrasting, categorizing, determining the main idea, understanding vocabulary, sequencing, establishing a purpose for reading, cause and effect, drawing conclusions/predicting outcomes, critical reading, and dictionary skills. She cited the editorials are well suited to teach and reinforce the skill of distinguishing between fact and opinion. Skills which can be taught or reinforced through the use of the editorial cartoons include: making inferences, drawing conclusions, understanding symbols, summarizing, and critical thinking. The classified ads, comics, and the index can also be used to teach and reinforce basic reading skills. The ability to read and interpret the visual displays presented in newspapers is important if students are to become independent learners and thinkers. The key to using the newspaper to enhance instruction lies in teachers' abilities to be creative and in their abilities to see a match between the objective to be taught and the type of article which best fits the intended objective.

Furthermore, Sharon (2001) stated his views on the use of the newspaper that encourages and remediate skills in older nonreaders. It will be able to function in society and describes seven activities requiring use of critical, literal and inferential skills and helpful to teaching essential reading skills concomitant with basic voting procedures so that nonreading adults.

The reviewed literature and studies are deemed significant to the present study since related studies on the utilization and assessment of newspaper are discussed which contributed in the development of the phases of the study. Furthermore, the ideas and findings of the review of related literature and studies were used in strengthening the findings and implications of the study.

Research Questions

The study aimed to assess the process of Blue Rizal Gazette as an official e-newsletter of Schools Division Office of Rizal.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following:

1. How do the reader-respondents evaluate the Blue Rizal Gazette with respect to its:
 - 1.1 content;
 - 1.2 format;
 - 1.3 presentation and organization; and
 - 1.4 accuracy and up-to-datedness of information?
2. What are the suggestion and recommendations of the respondents to further improve the Blue Rizal Gazette?
3. What are the limitations encountered by the Blue Rizal Gazette writers in working with the monthly issue of the e-newsletter?
4. What action do the writers do to deal with these limitations?
5. Based on the findings, what action plan can be proposed for the process improvement of the Blue Rizal Gazette?

Research Methodology

A. Participants Sources of Data

This study used random sampling in choosing the respondents in the study. Sixty-five (65) readers from the thirteen (13) Sub-offices of SDO-Rizal. The researchers considered the internet connectivity of the respondents. Likewise, these respondents were students, parents, stakeholders, teachers, and school leaders who are regularly reading the monthly issue of Blue Rizal Gazette.

Ten (10) BRG writers were also randomly chosen. These writers belong to the core group of the division's Blue Rizal Corpse.

B. Data Collection and Data analysis

The researcher used a researcher-made questionnaire-checklist and survey questionnaire in gathering the necessary data. The reader-respondents were asked to evaluate the e-newsletter with respect to its content, format, presentation and organization, and accuracy and up-to-datedness of information. They were also asked to give suggestions and recommendations for further improvement of the publication.

For the evaluation of the Blue Rizal Gazette, the following scale, range and verbal interpretation were used.

Scale	Range	Veral Interpretation
4	3.25 – 4.00	Very Satisfactory (VS)
3	2.50 – 3.24	Satisfactory (S)
2	1.75 – 2.49	Poor (P)
1	1.00 – 1.74	Not Satisfactory (NS)

Meanwhile, the writers were asked about the limitations they experienced, the things they do to cope with these challenges, and their plan of action for the improvement of the process of the monthly issue of Blue Rizal Gazette. Qualitative discussion was done to analyze their answers.

Discussion of the Results and Recommendations

This presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered which aimed to answer the given research problems.

Evaluation of the Reader-respondents on Blue Rizal Gazette with respect to its Content, Format, Presentation and Organization, and Accuracy and Up-to-datedness of Information

Table 1 presents the evaluation of the reader-respondents on Blue Rizal Gazette with respect to its content.

Table 1

Evaluation of Reader-respondents on Blue Rizal Gazette with respect to its Content

Content	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.The e-newsletter contains relevant information that is worth reading.	3.78	Very Satisfactory
2.The e-newsletter includes issues in SDO which enlighten the Rizalenos with regard to the happenings related to education in the province.	3.95	Very Satisfactory
3. The content is consistent and parallel to the main objective of the e-newsletter.	3.80	Very Satisfactory
4. The readers are educated with the vital programs, activities, and plans of SDO through reading the stories in the e-newsletter.	3.97	Very Satisfactory
5. The e-newsletter is free from any ideological, cultural, religious, racial, and gender biases and prejudices.	3.92	Very Satisfactory
Weighted Mean	3.88	Very Satisfactory

It can be seen on the table that the reader-respondents evaluated the Blue Rizal Gazette with respect to its content as Very Satisfactory with the weighted mean of 3.88. This means that the respondents agreed that the e-newsletter contains stories that provide readers necessary knowledge about the important happenings in SDO-Rizal and educate them with regard to significant programs, projects

and activities related to education in the province of Rizal. The results imply that the Blue Rizal Gazette manifests its purpose to disseminate vital information about education that will allow readers be aware and cognizant.

Table 2 presents the evaluation of the reader-respondents on Blue Rizal Gazette with respect to its format.

**Table
2**

**Evaluation of Reader-respondents on Blue Rizal Gazette
with respect to its Format**

Format	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. The online publication is of good quality in terms of font size and style, spacing, density, and color.	3.69	Very Satisfactory
2. The design allows the target readers to navigate freely through the online publication.	3.68	Very Satisfactory
3. The e-newsletter has illustrations that clarify and supplement the texts and are properly labeled.	3.78	Very Satisfactory
4. The design and layout attract the readers and arouse their interest to read the featured stories.	3.95	Very Satisfactory
5. The elements of the e-newsletter have harmonious blending making it aesthetically pleasing.	3.97	Very Satisfactory
Weighted Mean	3.85	Very Satisfactory

It can be gleaned on the table that the reader-respondents evaluated the Blue Rizal Gazette with respect to its format as Very Satisfactory with the weighted mean of 3.85. This means that the reader-respondents believe that the e-newsletter has complimented features that is appealing to the readers and is attractive and pleasing design and layout that contribute to their interest in reading. The results imply that the e-newsletter illustrates good quality, simple, and easily recognizable publication of stories in its monthly issues.

Table 3 presents the evaluation of the reader-respondents on Blue Rizal Gazette with respect to its presentation and organization.

Table 3

**Evaluation of Reader-respondents on Blue Rizal Gazette
with respect to its Presentation and Organization**

Presentation and Organization	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. The stories are well-organized based on their type and purpose.	3.78	Very Satisfactory
2. The e-newsletter has a logical and smooth flow of details.	3.72	Very Satisfactory
3. The stories contain vocabularies which are clear and appropriate for all the readers.	3.71	Very Satisfactory
4. The sentences and paragraph structures are varied and interesting to the target reader.	3.66	Very Satisfactory
5. The structure of the e-newsletter is apparent and visible.	3.86	Very Satisfactory
Weighted Mean	3.75	Very Satisfactory

It can be gleaned on the table that the reader-respondents evaluated the Blue Rizal Gazette with respect to its presentation and organization as Very Satisfactory with the weighted mean of 3.75. This means that the reader-respondents concurred that the logic of presentation of ideas in Blue Rizal Gazette is clear and well-organized and promotes engagement and supports understanding by the target readers. The results imply that the e- newsletter follows systematic flow of presentation and well-ordered structure which allows readers not to be misled.

Table 4 presents the evaluation of the reader-respondents on Blue Rizal Gazette with respect to its accuracy and up-to-datedness of information.

Table

4

**Evaluation of Reader-respondents on Blue Rizal Gazette
with respect to its Accuracy and Up-to-datedness of Information**

Accuracy and Up-to-datedness of Information	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. The e-newsletter includes information which is accurate, factual, and current.	3.98	Very Satisfactory
2. The content has no errors in spelling, grammar, capitalization and other mechanics.	3.97	Very Satisfactory
3. The illustrations, pictures, graphs and tables comprise correct data.	4.00	Very Satisfactory
4. The quotations from the involved personalities in each story are precise and valid.	3.98	Very Satisfactory
5. The information is evidence-based.	4.00	Very Satisfactory
Weighted Mean	3.99	Very Satisfactory

It can be reflected from the table that reader-respondents evaluated the Blue Rizal Gazette with respect to its accuracy and up-to-datedness of information as Very Satisfactory with the weighted mean of 3.99. This means that the reader-respondents accorded that Blue Rizal Gazette contain elements that are supported with accurate and precise information and the stories were all based on current and true happenings in the educational community in the division. The results imply that the e-newsletter is comprised of correct and relevant information that may contribute to its effective utilization.

Suggestions and Recommendations of Reader-Respondents

Based on the answers of the reader-respondents, the following are some of their common suggestions and recommendations for further improvement of Blue Rizal Gazette.

- Give printed copies to those who are in far-flung areas and who do not have internet connection for them to be knowledgeable as well in the vital happenings in SDO-Rizal.
- Make the font size and font style larger so that other readers could read the contents clearly.

- Featured stories should not focus on the same sub-offices. Get stories from sub-offices most especially those in last miles and mountainous areas.
- Include other fun and leisure content like comics, poems, and puzzles.

Limitations of the Writers

According to the answers of the writers in the survey questionnaire, the writers experienced various challenges in their monthly issuances of the e-newsletter. Being teachers and considering the status of the education in the country, they were encountered limitations in accomplishing the Blue Rizal Gazette stories. The following are the common answers of the writers.

- Overlapping schedules of the writers because they are also teachers with important assignments in their stations which resulted to the delay in publication.
- Gathering of information about the stories to be featured was very challenging due to the distance and connection concerns.
- More support from the top management is requested by the writers to easily collect information and stories from the involved persons such as school heads, teachers and pupils.

Writers' Ways to deal with the Limitations

As the writers identified the challenges they have experienced, they had provided the actions as well they have done to address these limitations. These actions allowed them to continuously accomplish the e-newsletter and provide relevant and current information to Rizaleños. From their responses, the following are their common answers.

- Doing intensive research about the assigned topic and conducting online interviews with the involved personalities.
- Asking the assistance of the top management in order to gather information about the stories easily.
- Strengthening self-motivation to accomplish the task given for the particular issuances.

Suggestions and Recommendations of Writers

Based on the results of the interview, the writers had given suggestions and recommendations for further improvement of the process of the Blue Rizal Gazette.

- There should be an actual recognition of the efforts of the writers to keep them inspired and motivated.
- There should be a memo requesting the supervisors, principals and teachers to give utmost consideration and favorable treatment to the BRG writers as they wish to set an interview for an upcoming issue.
- BRG writers also want to have IDs so that they can be easily recognized and be able to easily get a scoop for a certain issue needed in every article.
- Conduct a meeting monthly or every 2 months to discuss matters involving the issues to be released by the gazette.
- Seek feedback and suggestions from our readers to further know their tastes in terms of content.
- Make a buddy system for the writers, so if both can't provide an article, at least 1 will be able to submit.

- Limit the BRG team's task to publication duties and responsibilities only.

Action Plan for the Process Improvement of the Blue Rizal Gazette

The action plan is included as researchers/BRG writers take ownership of the final assessment results and reflects the results in future decision making/implementation process.

Dissemination, Utilization and Advocacy Plans

Considering the findings of the study, the assessment of Blue Rizal Gazette can be used to improve its publications and can be utilized by the top management to fully realize its aim of *Mapusong Paglilingkod and Mapusong Pamamahayag* as it establishes linkages that have potential to benefit the SDO Rizal as Blue Rizal Gazette serves as powerful instrument to keep Rizaleños abreast with up-to-date, accurate and true events in SDO-Rizal.

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