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Research Article

A Comparative Analysis of Media Viability between Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper in the Digital Age of Journalism

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to analyze the survival of two operational community newspapers in Cavite: Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper, amidst the surge of the digital age of journalism. The researchers employed a qualitative method, specifically a descriptive type, through semi-structured interviews for the research design. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were utilized in the study. The selected editorial board members of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper were the main criteria for participant selection. During data analysis, the researchers examined the gathered data using thematic analysis. In this method, researchers interpreted the extracted codes from participants' responses.

The results revealed that Dateline Weekly Newspaper is more stable than Bantay Balita due to its long-standing presence, digital adaptability, additional business opportunities, and strong networks with accredited partners, substantially contributing to its survival. Dateline maintains a good reputation, is free from lawsuits and criticism, and actively avoids competition. However, it faces challenges in the editorial process, production, and distribution resources. It is observed that Dateline Weekly Newspaper lacks the ABCs of news writing—accuracy, brevity, and clarity—in some of its news articles, often relying on outsourced press releases and encountering issues with operators and delivery systems.

On the other hand, Bantay Balita struggles with digital adaptation but remains viable due to its quality journalism. Most of its connections are with governmental sectors, limiting its business potential. Despite legal accusations and financial distress, Bantay Balita continues to operate by engaging in friendly competition, contributing to its resilience in the industry.

Keywords: *Bantay Balita, Community newspaper, Dateline Weekly Newspaper, Digital age, Media viability*

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Introduction

Journalism's traditional methods of making money have been challenged by the rise of digital media (Hossain, 2023). This shift has forced the media industry to adapt strategies to survive in the digital landscape. How news is disseminated and how people find, read, and consume it have changed rapidly and radically over the years (Cairncross, 2019). The era of smartphones and the internet has also brought about a change in information and news consumption habits. Television, online sources, and social media now significantly surpass printed newspapers as people's main sources of news (Deselaers, James et al., 2019).

With the rapid changes brought by the digital age, traditional forms of media like newspapers have gradually taken a backseat in the race to become the dominant source of news. The newspaper business has been steadily declining as a result of readership and advertising revenue migrating to other media, primarily digital (Adgate, 2021). In the Philippines, a Social Weather Station Survey (2019) recorded that only 2% of Filipinos read news daily through print media, while 21% of Filipinos use digital media every day, primarily Facebook, for news reading. An international study by Andi et al. (2020) revealed that 19% of Filipinos subscribe to online news services, while also highlighting the dominance of Facebook as the primary platform for news consumption with a usage rate of 93%, followed by YouTube (49%), Facebook Messenger (33%), Twitter (16%), Instagram (12%), and LinkedIn (6%). Moreover, according to an article written by the Deutsche Welle Akademie entitled "What is media viability?" (2023), with the continual shift towards digital transformation and evolving user behaviors, media outlets worldwide, particularly community-based public interest media, often find it challenging to remain financially sustainable while also delivering accurate news content to their audience.

Community newspapers have always played an essential role as the voice of the community, and their presence became even more important during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, like other small businesses, the majority of community newspapers, which rely on advertisements, experienced massive losses

(Braid, 2021). Ardia et al. (2020) also claim that the COVID-19 pandemic delineates an extinction-level threat for local newspapers. Traditional print media face the dilemma of reduced circulation, influence, and shrinking advertising business, which puts pressure on them to survive (Bai et al., 2021). As stated by the Philippine Press Institute (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic is taking a heavy toll on community newspapers, with some stopping print editions, some ceasing operations, and others gradually switching to online and forcibly embracing technology to survive. This ties well with Esguerra (2020), who justifies that the pandemic has taken its toll on the Philippine print media, forcing 13 community papers nationwide to suspend their print editions, including Mindanao Observer, Baguio Chronicle, SunStar Baguio, Mabuhay, Pahayagang Balikas, The Northern Forum, Palawan News, Mindanao Times, Mindanao Daily Mirror, Ilocos Times, Visayan Daily Star, and SunStar Cagayan De Oro.

The challenges of media viability in light of financial pressure, along with changing media consumption where digital platforms, specifically social media, have become a dominant source of information, are real and relevant, affecting news and media as a whole. Traditional media and its function in a democracy, where journalism is viewed as a public good, are awakening to the reality that their credibility and existence are at risk. The process of integrating hybrid models of traditional media with digital platforms is crucial for survival. However, many media entities cannot afford to implement these changes, making their ability to adapt a matter of existential crisis. The dilemma faced by traditional media, particularly community newspapers, extends beyond financial constraints. Navigating the digital shift while upholding journalistic integrity adds complexity to their survival (Schmidt and Maharaj, 2022).

While international studies have explored media viability, there is a noticeable research gap in understanding the survival of community newspapers in the digital age of journalism using media viability dimensions in the local context. Addressing media viability is paramount for researchers to grasp the tremendous struggles of providing quality news while

remaining financially stable. Infante (2023) clarifies that people are debating the existence of print media, particularly newspapers, questioning whether it is disappearing or being replaced by the advent of digital transformation. Hollifield, Jurrat, et al. (2020) point out that the survival of quality media is omnipresent, which opens an opportunity for researchers to conduct a study related to this matter.

The researchers focused on two community newspapers, namely Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper, based in the Province of Cavite and covering news from its various localities. Bantay Balita started on October 7, 2022, and is dedicated to serving the community by documenting the history of cities and towns, advocating for good governance, and aiding local government units (LGUs) in fulfilling their duty to serve the people effectively. It also plays the role of the people’s voice, addressing complaints, mismanagement, and alleged anomalies involving government officials and employees through columns and letters to the editors (E. Taparan II, personal communication, 2023). Meanwhile, Dateline Weekly Newspaper was established in March 2003 by Gloria Ablan. It is dedicated to the publication of news, advertisements, and other matters of public concern. In 2015, the newspaper’s ownership was transferred to Heidelita L. Paginag through a third-party acquisition. Since then, Dateline Weekly Newspaper has garnered substantial support from the business sector,

governmental bodies, educational institutions, and various community groups (W. Paginag, personal communication, 2024).

Given the escalating trend of digital news consumption, it is important to further study how community newspapers have adjusted to the massive changes brought by the digital age of journalism to retain their media viability. For this purpose, the media viability model developed by the Deutsche Welle Akademie in 2019 is applied in the study. This model identifies five dimensions—political, economic, community, technology, and content—that serve as comprehensive guidelines, allowing media practitioners and academics to assess independent media outlets in a feasible and solution-oriented manner. The model aims to gather comprehensive data to determine major challenges and adversities so that appropriate solutions can be recommended (Hollifield et al., 2020). The main purpose of this study is to comparatively analyze the media viability of two community newspapers in the digital age of journalism: Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper. To do so, the researchers will emphasize the application of ideas derived from the Media Viability Model from the Deutsche Welle Akademie. This approach helps to analyze and assess the complex concept of media viability and acquire a more detailed understanding of the shortcomings and potentials of particular media outlets (Deselaers et al., 2019).

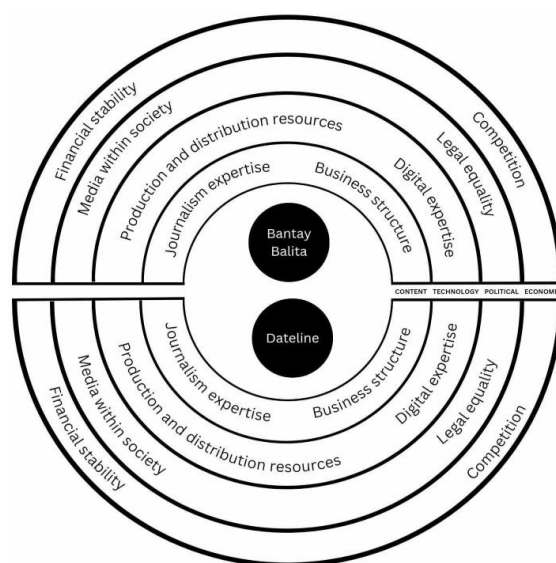


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

The two black circles represent the community newspapers Bantay Balita (in the upper circle) and Dateline Weekly Newspaper (in the lower circle). The variables within the semicircles illustrate a mirrored effect on each other. A straight line encloses both Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper semicircles, ensuring clear demarcation and preventing redundancy in the framework. At the semicircle's midpoint, distinct dimensions of media viability—economic, political, technological, and content—are delineated. These dimensions provide a clear indication of the subdimensions within the semicircle.

The selected subdimensions from the media viability model were applied to compare and analyze the media viability between Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper. Specifically, they examined the content dimension, which underlies journalism expertise and business structure, followed by the technology dimension, which encompasses digital expertise, production, and distribution resources. Next, the political dimension addresses the role of media within society and legal equality. Lastly, the economic dimension pertains to financial stability and competition.

This study generally aimed to analyze the media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper in the digital age of journalism. Specifically, the researchers deem to answer the following questions:

1. What is the analysis of media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper and how do they compare in terms of content dimension:
 - a. Journalism expertise
 - b. Business structure
2. What is the analysis of media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper and how do they compare in terms of technology dimension:
 - a. Digital expertise
 - b. Production and distribution resources
3. What is the analysis of media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper and how do they compare in terms of political dimension:
 - a. Media within society
 - b. Legal equality

4. What is the analysis of media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper and how do they compare in terms of economic dimension:
 - a. Financial stability
 - b. Competition

Methods

The researchers employed a descriptive qualitative research approach to comprehensively analyze and compare the survival of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper. The research team conducted a combination of face-to-face and online semi-structured interviews with selected editorial board members, including the publisher and editorial consultant from Bantay Balita and the publisher and editor-in-chief from Dateline Weekly Newspaper. The study utilized purposive sampling, intentionally selecting specific research participants who met certain criteria rather than choosing randomly. Additionally, due to unforeseen circumstances and limited participant availability during the interview schedule, convenience sampling was also employed.

The study did not assess or evaluate the readership status of these two community newspapers, as the researchers did not focus on their audience. Furthermore, the researchers did not fully replicate the media viability model, omitting some sub-dimensions related to content, technology, political, and economics. In crafting the conceptual framework, they also excluded the community dimension of media viability and its associated sub-dimensions, deeming them incompatible with the study.

For data collection, the researchers created interview guide questions that were validated and approved by the thesis adviser, technical critic, and expert validators from the journalism field. This validation process ensured that the interview questions aligned with the study's objectives and were free from bias or potential offense to the participants. Subsequently, the researchers analyzed the responses using thematic analysis to systematically understand and interpret the qualitative data.

Research instrument

The research instrument used in this study consists of a set of carefully prepared interview guides and follow-up questions. These questions were administered to selected editorial board members from Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper. The purpose of these interviews is to gather detailed information that will help the researchers address the key research question derived from the statement of the problem. Specifically, the questions aim to explore the media viability of the two community newspapers in the digital age of journalism.

To address specific aspects of the main research question, the interview questions are divided into four parts. The first part focuses on the content dimension, examining journalism expertise and business structure within the framework of the media viability model. The second part addresses production and

distribution resources, as well as digital expertise, within the technology dimension. The third part delves into political aspects, including the role of media within society and legal equality. Lastly, the fourth part investigates the economic dimension—financial stability and competition—faced by the two community newspapers in terms of media viability.

Results and Discussion

This part includes the analysis, presentation, interpretation, and discussion of the study’s results based on the researchers’ collected data and the collective responses of the participants. The findings are presented through a comprehensive table that shows the analysis of the media viability of two community newspapers, Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper, highlighting some of their occurring adversities and existing strategies in the digital age.

Table 1. Analysis of the media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper in terms of content dimension particularly in journalism expertise

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEMES	SUMMARIZED
Journalism background	Involvement in campus journalism, Peer influence	Bantay Balita: Student Publication Unit, Manila Times, Surian ng Wikang Pambansa, Influence by friends
	Work experience	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Owner of Llamado daily newspaper before, Work in a newspaper
Position and challenges	Editorial consultant Poor writing skills	Bantay Balita: Writers require substantial editing
	Publisher Financial distress	Bantay Balita: Struggling with debt
	Publisher Typographical errors	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Accuracy in formats
	Editor-in-chief Gatekeeping	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Filtering news
Significance of journalism expertise in newspaper survival	Satisfaction	Bantay Balita: Essential
	Not necessary because of outsourcing	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: N/A

Table 1 implies that Bantay Balita’s journalism background is primarily shaped by university experience and fieldwork, while Dateline Weekly Newspaper’s background is based on its own work experience. These findings are

supported by Teal (2024), who justifies that working in a newspaper demands a combination of theoretical knowledge acquired through education and practical skills honed in real-world settings. Financial struggles and the poor

writing skills of some local journalists are identified as problems in Bantay Balita. Harman (2024) determined that small and medium publishers have struggled with inadequate financial access and poor writing skills, as supported by the study of Pacaldo (2019), which confirmed that a lack of writing practice is a hindrance to the development of writing skills for some journalists. Additionally, the study by Markou and Squires (2021) states that independent publishers struggle to publish in particular sub-sectors in a financially sustainable manner.

On the other hand, Dateline Weekly Newspaper highlights their struggle with their editorial process, such as typographical errors and gatekeeping. This ties well with the results of Mukhiyatdinova’s (2021) study, which found that common problems in newspapers include spelling, grammatical errors, text composition, and punctuation. This is also supported by Guanah et al. (2019), who claimed that confronting gatekeeping activities may weaken the credibility of information. NewsLab (2019) also stressed that typographical and grammatical

errors can lower the credibility of a publication. Similarly, Madu’s (2021) results emphasize that the majority of media practitioners often disregard the rules of grammar or the fundamental principles of standard spoken and written English. Some editors and journalists publish articles and stories without adequate editorial review and proper editing, presuming that the readers will be able to understand what they have written and published. Li’s study (2023) recommends that traditional media and news writing skills should be applied together with the preferences of readers to continually provide high-quality news and promote the positive development of journalism.

Moreover, compared to Dateline Weekly Newspaper, which relies on outsourcing, it is also seen that journalism expertise is more significant for Bantay Balita, as it gives them satisfaction. This follows the study of Rai (2023), which verified that opportunities for professional development and a positive organizational image play a crucial role in enhancing job satisfaction among journalists.

Table 2. Analysis of media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper in terms of content dimension particularly in business structure

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEMES	SUMMARIZED
Main and other source of sale	Advertisement, Legal ordinances	Bantay Balita: Friends with business and issuance of legal matters
	Legal notices, Advertisement	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Issuance of legal matter and advertisement
Promotion strategies	Subscription, Online promotion Coverage	Bantay Balita: Subscribers, Facebook, Events
	Online post, Coverage, Product launch, Subscription	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Website, Events, Product launching, and Subscribers
Promotion and advertisement challenge	Social media rise	Bantay Balita: Social media preference
	No challenge due to long run	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: N/A
Advertising rates	Modular pricing	Bantay Balita: Based on set modules
	Price per column inch	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Based on the size
Target market	Academic institutions	Bantay Balita: School
	Business individuals/entities	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: More on business

Table 2 implies that Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper share two similarities and three differences in their business structures. Both newspapers generate revenue from legal notices and advertisements, as verified by Meyer-Joiner (2023), who states that legal notices are published as classified ads and must be paid for, making them a crucial revenue source for publishers. Additionally, both newspapers rely on advertisements. Totum Research (2019) found that advertisements in print newspapers are almost twice as effective compared to other media platforms such as radio, television, social media, and online and digital newspapers, indicating that newspaper advertisements are one of the most persuasive and interactive types of advertising.

Both newspapers also use subscriptions, online promotions, and media coverage to promote their content. Eric (2021) verified that community newspapers are increasingly dependent on subscriptions as advertising revenue shifts to the online landscape. Ahmad et al. (2021) found that online promotion has a promising future for newspaper advertising. Furthermore, Baronowski-Schneider (2019) emphasized that media coverage helps boost marketing strategies by attracting attention to the business and developing an emotional connection with the audience. Dateline Weekly Newspaper additionally implements product launches in their services. Norton (2023) emphasized that product launch press releases aim to generate interest among the media, potential clients, and other stakeholders.

Table 2 also implies that Bantay Balita struggles with the rise of social media in their promotions. This finding is verified in the study by Barland et al. (2021), which claimed that the newspaper industry is facing a severe revenue crisis, with the advertising sector of the news business almost collapsing due to competition with global technology platforms and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, Dateline Weekly Newspaper faces no such challenges due to its established reputation and long-standing presence. This finding is supported by Jenkins et al. (2020), which indicates that for local news to thrive, journalists need to gain a deeper understanding of the business strategies employed by their news organizations. Dateline Weekly Newspaper has been well-known in the community newspaper industry for two decades, which has led to them encountering no issues in promotion. Their advertising rates differ, with Bantay Balita using modular pricing and Dateline Weekly Newspaper using price per column inch. Emnace (2023) justified that both are standard methods of print newspaper ad pricing. Table 2 also shows that Bantay Balita targets academic institutions, whereas Dateline Weekly Newspaper focuses on business individuals and entities. This finding ties well with the article published by Abernathy (2019), which states that strong community newspapers often benefit from loyalty from both their existing advertisers and readers, with levels of loyalty being twice those observed for national newspapers.

Table 3. Analysis of media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper in terms of technology dimension particularly in digital expertise

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEMES	SUMMARIZED
Digital platform	Bantay Balita Facebook page	Bantay Balita: Only Facebook, Web page is on going
	Dateline website	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: IT handles the security against hackers
Digital challenge	Resource and workforce limitations	Bantay Balita: No resource personnel
	No challenge due to digital security	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: N/A
Strategy to monetize	Planning to create collaborative content	Bantay Balita: Reels
	Public accessibility	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Online visibility
	Fact checking	Bantay Balita: Tools for evaluating

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEMES	SUMMARIZED
Significance of digital expertise in newspaper survival	Press release archive	facts Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Documentation

Table 3 implies that Dateline Weekly Newspaper is ahead of Bantay Balita in terms of digital expertise. Due to inadequate digital skills, Bantay Balita faces challenges related to resource and workforce limitations. This finding is verified in the case study by Kimani (2020), which asserts that smaller media entities, particularly community-based ones, are still struggling to embrace digital technology due to resource and workforce limitations. This is further supported by the study from the Media Council of Tanzania (2019), which shows that many journalists from print media lack the requisite expertise and have poor digital skills, making it difficult for some community-based outlets to maximize the use of technology and adapt to online strategies.

Upon checking, it was found that the Bantay Balita Facebook page has not been active for almost 10 months. Instead, the publisher’s personal Facebook account is being utilized for online posting. This indicates that their digital presence is not well-established. It appears that Bantay Balita lacks resource personnel to manage their digital content and is still planning to produce collaborative outputs like reels. They rely on individuals who are often incompetent rather than hiring professionals (Media Council of Tanzania, 2019). However, despite Bantay Balita’s poor digital expertise, they still value the role of digital tools in their fact-checking practices, which is a significant factor in the newspaper’s survival. This finding is validated by Aulock (2024), who states that digital fact-checking is a vital instrument for

journalists in combating misinformation. It is also supported by Moreno-Gil et al. (2022), who assert that fact-checking platforms can be viewed as self-regulatory entities aimed at promoting public engagement and ensuring transparency. Mattelart et al. (2019) also highlight that these evolving conditions have important consequences for media reportage, content consumption habits, and the quality of informed citizens’ access to relevant public information.

On the other hand, Table 3 also implies that, with the support of information technology (IT) personnel, Dateline Weekly Newspaper shows no digital adversity due to digital security measures, which mitigates the risk of data malware. Dateline Weekly Newspaper effectively manages its digital platform by focusing on digital strategies, allowing it to optimize its digital publicity presence. As stated in the study, the Media Council of Tanzania (2019) explained that building awareness to handle inherent risks such as fake online sources, fraudulent websites, and phishing emails will equip journalists with the skills they need in the evolving digital landscape. It is also revealed that Dateline Weekly Newspaper finds digital expertise significantly necessary for archiving press releases online for record purposes or documentation. This finding is supported by an article published by Patzer (2023), which confirms that a digital archive serves as a comprehensive library of news and announcements, providing easy access to past press releases.

Table 4. Analysis of media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper in terms of technology dimension particularly in production and distribution resources

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEMES	SUMMARIZED
Start of operation	Start with small fund	Bantay Balita: Begins with small capital and motivation of the publisher
	Acquisition	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Acquired through third party
Location of distribution	Provincial wide, RTC	Bantay Balita: Selected province in Cavite and RTC

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEMES	SUMMARIZED
	LGU, RTC, SM, Cardbank Senatorials	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Municipalities, RTC and accredited partners
Release schedule	Every monday 500 copies	Bantay Balita: Weekly
	Every monday 200 copies	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Weekly
Production and distribution adversities	Unestablished facilities	Bantay Balita: No own office and printing press
	Inconsistent operator and delayed delivery	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Machine operator behavior and delivery system
Significance of production and distribution resources in newspaper survival	Brand visibility	Bantay Balita: Distribute to be recognized
	Tangibility and credibility	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Finished product enhance credibility

Table 4 implies that these two community newspapers are slightly different yet similar in production and distribution resources. Dateline Weekly Newspaper was established through acquisition, while Bantay Balita started with a small capital. Both newspapers are published every Monday, which aligns with Rivera (2020), who indicates that community paper publication frequency can be daily, weekly, biweekly, twice a week, triweekly, or monthly. However, they differ in the total number of copies distributed.

They strategically distribute their newspapers to their clients, aligning with the Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media (2019), which affirms that community newspapers primarily attract local retail, classified advertisers, and public institutions. Furthermore, the distribution of these two community newspapers is not limited to their geographic areas; they also reach selected areas depending on their respective clients. Dateline Weekly Newspaper has a wider range of distribution because it also issues newspapers to its accredited partners.

Table 4 also implies that the significant factor for the production and distribution resources for Bantay Balita is brand visibility. This increases their newspaper visibility and brand presence. According to Gitnux’s website (2024), distribution and production are effective tools to promote one’s brand, boosting

visibility and recognition among target audiences. This can aid in establishing a long-lasting brand and repeat clients. On the other hand, tangibility and credibility are significant factors for Dateline Weekly Newspaper, as their tangibility instills credibility. This result aligns with Emrich’s (2022) article, which justifies the fact that newspapers have a physical presence that readers can hold. This tangibility instills a sense of credibility, creating a lasting impression and being perceived as more reliable compared to digital formats.

Similarly, there are still identified challenges they encountered, such as the unestablished facilities of Bantay Balita. Venturini (2023) verified that most community newspapers have been under pressure due to rising inflation costs, affecting their capability to own a facility. The results of the study are similar to Onwuliri’s findings (2019), which found that financing the operations of media entities such as newspapers is crucial to their satisfactory performance, sustainability, and survival.

The ongoing problems for Dateline Weekly Newspaper are inconsistent operators and delayed delivery, which entirely affect their production and distribution process, as stated by Santos (2022), inconsistent staff create unnecessary deviations and missed deadlines, leading to unsatisfied clients, negative feedback, and brand damage (Puri, 2023).

Table 5. Analysis of media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper in terms of political dimension particularly in media within society

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEMES	SUMMARIZED
Local & Regional government agencies and other organizations	PAPI, CPPLI, Cavite Press Corp, DOST, Malacañang, Supreme Court	Bantay Balita: Membership and Partnership
	LGU (Imus, Bacoor), Enchanted Kingdom, Cardbank, SSS, SM, GoNegosyo, CALAX	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Partnership
Outsource	Malacañang, DOST, PIO Cavite, Cavite Provincial Capitol, PIA CALABARZON, DOJ, NGCP, PhilHealth, PICAD	Bantay Balita: Government agencies
	PNA, PIO, CIO	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Government agencies
Significance of government in newspaper survival	Unreliable	Bantay Balita : Not government-funded
	Amplifying relationship	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Continuous connection

Table 5 implies that Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper have established strategic collaborations with local, regional, and other organizations for their newspaper business through partnerships and memberships. This finding is supported by Cornelius (2023), who argues that building relationships with local, regional, and various organizations is a powerful tool for managing community newspapers. By establishing a vigorous network of business connections, these newspapers can explore new possibilities and increase the likelihood of discovering and pursuing new business collaborations (Faster Capital, 2024). The collaborative efforts of these two community newspapers highlight their intentional approach to working with both public and private organizations to gather news articles from external sources. This result aligns well with Adade et al. (2024), who emphasize that partnerships can generate benefits for all parties involved, broadening influence, boosting connections, and enhancing brand reputation.

Table 5 also implies that Bantay Balita has multiple sources for news published in their newspaper, with a significant portion coming from various government agencies. This news outlet has access to news updates and press releases from entities such as Malacañang, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST),

the Public Information Office Cavite (PIO), the Philippine Information Agency Calabarzon (PIA), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP), PhilHealth, and the Provincial Information and Community Affairs Department (PICAD). According to Svärd (2019), outsourcing is an approach that allows citizens to monitor and evaluate government processes, fostering greater transparency and trust in governmental institutions. Dateline Weekly Newspaper has also outsourced news from the Philippine News Agency (PNA), the Public Information Office (PIO), and the City Information Office (CIO). This finding aligns with the study by Ketterer et al. (2019), which asserts that newspapers have effectively utilized essential outsourced journalism functions, including copy editing, advertising sales, and news reporting. Such strategic decisions are often viewed favorably in the newspaper business because they enable companies to focus on their core activities. Faster Capital (2024) further claims that as the media landscape evolves and consumer preferences shift, outsourced journalism strategies remain relevant and visible, offering several advantages, including cost-effectiveness, flexibility, and other perks. However, this perspective contrasts with Nerone’s study (2021), which highlights that editorial

professionals in media companies currently face challenges related to outsourcing and other disruptions. Outsourced journalism poses potential risks to content quality when external journalists are unfamiliar with the editorial standards of the newspaper business (Faster Capital, 2024).

Conversely, the role of the government in the survival of these newspapers varies. Bantay Balita distances itself from reliance on the government for financial support, asserting that they do not depend on government funding.

This stance aligns with an opinion piece by McCall (2024) published in The Hill, where the author argues that media outlets increasingly seek public support as government involvement in sustaining journalism declines. In contrast, Dateline maintains its relationship with the government, consistent with The National’s perspective (2019). The latter study emphasizes that a strong connection between government and media is crucial because it significantly influences the information accessible to the public.

Table 6. Analysis of media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper in terms of political dimension particularly in legal equality

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEMES	SUMMARIZED
Legal adversities	Accusations of libel	Bantay Balita: Follows Journalism Code of Ethics
	Sensitive issue	Conflict resolution
	Conflict avoidance	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Gatekeeping
Criticism and allegation response	Rejecting libelous stories	Bantay Balita: Democratic approach
	Honoring freedom of the press and speech	Creating friends
	Smile technique	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Accommodating people
Significance of legal equality in newspaper survival	Promoting harmonious relationship	Bantay Balita: Legal consultation
	Legal protection	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Legal consultation
	Legal help and support	

Table 6 implies that Bantay Balita has faced legal challenges related to the stories they publish in their newspaper. These challenges include accusations of libel and sensitive issues, which have been observed in some of their news articles. In a local context, these findings align with a study conducted by the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines (2022). The study confirms an increase in lawsuits filed against journalists within the country, highlighting that defamation cases inevitably occur as media practitioners strive to adhere to the journalist code of ethics. Conversely, Dateline Weekly Newspaper has not encountered any lawsuits for its published stories. This is attributed to their proactive approach to avoiding conflicts and firmly rejecting libelous content. This observation aligns with the recommendation from the Global Investigative Journalism Network (2021), which advises

journalists to exercise caution in their assertions and only articulate what they can substantiate with evidence.

Additionally, the table implies that Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper employ different strategies when handling criticism and allegations in their published articles. Bantay Balita emphasizes honoring freedom of the press and speech, along with employing smile techniques. In contrast, Dateline Weekly Newspaper focuses on promoting harmonious relationships. Hutton (2020) verifies this approach, emphasizing that positive relationships with local and industry media, as well as effective communication, are crucial for maintaining a favorable image. Furthermore, a study by Owino and Karani (2021) supports this perspective, highlighting the media’s role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding by shaping public perception through its reporting.

Lastly, the significant factors contributing to the survival of these two community newspapers are nearly identical. Bantay Balita benefits from legal protection, while Dateline Weekly Newspaper receives legal help and support. These findings align with the U.S. Mission Kazakhstan’s report (2024), which emphasizes the importance of legal assistance in addressing the widespread issue of journalists facing

intimidation and assaults. Legal support ensures press freedom, allowing journalists to disseminate accurate information without hindrance and holding those who attempt to silence them accountable. Both Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper recognize the value of these legal measures in maintaining their respective newspapers’ good reputations.

Table 7. Analysis of media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper in terms of economic dimension particularly in financial stability

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEMES	SUMMARIZED
Newspaper condition	Center of adjustment	Bantay Balita: Newly-established
	Stable	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Long-standing and established brand
Biggest expense	Printing cost, equipment, Gasoline, Employee compensation	Bantay Balita: Production, distribution, and operation
	Printing cost	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Production
Digital age impact	Work from home setup	Bantay Balita: Reliance to digital
	Convenient	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Acing the process

Table 7 implies that the financial stability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper differs slightly. Based on the data presented, Bantay Balita is still in a period of adjustment, as it has been operational for only its first two years since its inception in 2022. Similarly, a study by Barnes, Dugmore, et al. (2022) reveals that a significant number of new print newspapers were launched during the COVID lockdown to address “news deserts” resulting from the closure or transition to online-only formats of more than 125 regional newspapers in Australia. These new publications have been well-received by local communities, indicating a resurgence of traditional principles and practices. In contrast, Dateline Weekly Newspaper experiences financial stability due to its long-standing operation and well-established brand. The newspaper attributes its stability to two decades of industry experience. This finding is further supported by Thompson (2024), who asserts that stability within businesses provides a solid foundation, enabling them to withstand economic downturns, market volatility, and unforeseen disruptions.

Subsequently, the biggest expenses for these two community newspapers are nearly similar. Bantay Balita’s primary expenses include printing costs, equipment, gasoline, and employee compensation, as validated by Chambers (2023) in their article on newspaper expenses. These factors are essential when creating a newspaper. In contrast, printing costs represent the sole largest expense for Dateline Weekly Newspaper. This aligns with the findings from Helyer & Roberts (2024), who assert that the newspaper industry is undergoing significant changes due to rising printing and paper costs. In 2023, paper prices surged by 65% following a global paper shortage that began in 2020. Consequently, traditional bulk sales of printed materials have become less viable, leading to challenges for numerous publications and community newspapers.

Lastly, Table 7 illustrates the impact of the digital age on the sustainability of these two community newspapers. The editorial consultant at Bantay Balita employs a work-from-home (WFH) setup because he is currently based in Canada. He utilizes technology for editing and producing news articles, which he

then sends via email. This trend aligns with an article by Vreede (2024), which highlights the growing popularity of flexible work enabled by WFH setups. Such arrangements offer advantages for both workers and businesses, allowing employees the freedom to determine their work hours while meeting company deadlines. Additionally, Mentis (2021) supports the

use of instant messaging apps and publishing platforms in WFH setups, facilitating real-time communication between employers and employees worldwide. In contrast, Dateline Weekly Newspaper emphasizes the convenience of digital tools for reader and client accessibility, as confirmed by đoc (2022).

Table 8. Analysis of media viability of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper in terms of economic dimension particularly in competition

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEMES	SUMMARIZED
Strategy to stay ahead	Originality	Bantay Balita: Write own story with fresh angle
	Exchange deal	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Non-monetary equal benefits
Difference from other community newspaper	Avoiding churnalism	Bantay Balita: Not practicing the copy-paste culture
	Self-competition	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Focus on self-improvement
Competitive pressure	Cross-subsidization	Bantay Balita: Using profit from other businesses
	Tracking the profit and expenses	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Well-versed in financial matters
Newspaper survival	Friendly competition	Bantay Balita: Dual roles: to inform and to operate as business
	Adaptability	Dateline Weekly Newspaper: Adapts to digital advancements

Table 8 implies that Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper employ different strategies to stay ahead. Bantay Balita emphasizes the significance of original news content, highlighting fresh angles in their articles (McKenzie, 2024). In contrast, Dateline Weekly Newspaper engages in exchange deal agreements with partner companies, mutually benefiting from each other (ROI Marketing, 2023). These agreements involve exchanging goods and services of equal value without monetary transactions.

Furthermore, Bantay Balita actively discourages the practice of copy-paste culture in journalism, commonly known as churnalism. Revise Sociology (2019) highlights churnalism as the use of ready-made materials from various sources without conducting independent investigations or verifying information. Perreault (2023) argues that the rush to be the first to report often hinders verification and balance, especially during complex and time-

sensitive events. Unfortunately, this approach compromises the accuracy and integrity of the news. In contrast, Dateline Weekly Newspaper takes a different approach by competing with its publication. This self-competition mindset, as advocated by Smith (2023), ensures that the newspaper adapts to changing customer needs and market trends.

It also implies that Bantay Balita utilizes cross-subsidization, using profits from one business to support or subsidize another business that is still in the center of adjustment, as supported by Quickonomics (2024). This strategy helps maintain the overall health of the operation, allowing the less profitable businesses to continue operating while finding ways to become more financially stable. However, while Bantay Balita practices cross-subsidization between two businesses, Murschetz (2022) observes that government subsidization is more prevalent and primarily targets traditional

newspapers, magazines, and periodicals. Additionally, financial assistance extends to non-commercial radio and public service television broadcasting. Discussions surrounding media subsidies remain contentious, as the available subsidy programs are commonly regarded as ineffective, inefficient, and unfair. Meanwhile, Dateline Weekly Newspaper manages to balance profitability and financial sustainability by keeping a comprehensive record of all business activities. This approach is strengthened by Cash Flow Inventory (2023), which affirms that maintaining a comprehensive record assists a business entity in differentiating personal expenses from business ones and simplifies tracking outgoings and income. An Ukrainian study by Chernodubova and Lebedenko (2024) explores the conceptual foundations of strategic income and expense management within companies operating under economic uncertainty. By examining conceptual provisions, organizations can evaluate how income and expenses influence financial performance and identify strategies to enhance profitability.

Lastly, Bantay Balita balances its informative and business roles. It educates readers through its news content, as stated by the University of Hull (2024). Simultaneously, it fulfills its business role by generating revenue through various means and maintaining harmonious connections even with competitors (Rogers, 2019). In contrast, Dateline Weekly Newspaper emphasizes adaptability, following Casey's (2024) argument that a newspaper business embracing change positions itself for long-term success in the evolving media landscape.

Conclusions

The following are the conclusions drawn from the outcome of the study:

The journalism expertise of Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper is entirely different due to their backgrounds, challenges encountered, and the significant factor of journalism expertise in their survival.

In terms of business structure, these two community newspapers are slightly similar. Both Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper have primary and secondary sources of revenue derived from legal notices and ads.

They are almost similar in promotion strategies but differ in advertising rates and their target market.

In terms of digital expertise, Dateline Weekly Newspaper holds an advantage over Bantay Balita because Bantay Balita lacks digital skills and access. Bantay Balita experienced digital difficulties, while Dateline Weekly Newspaper shared no such problems. Their strategies to monetize differ, as does the significance of digital expertise for their survival.

Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper are slightly different and similar in production and distribution resources. They differ in how they started, but both strategically distribute their newspapers to their massive clients. However, Dateline Weekly Newspaper has a wider network of accredited partners. Both newspapers release copies every Monday, but they differ in the number of copies distributed. They face different challenges and share different factors in how they see production and distribution resources as significant to their survival.

Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper have both similarities and differences in their relationship with society. Bantay Balita holds memberships and partnerships with government agencies, while Dateline Weekly Newspaper primarily partners with private businesses. Both news outlets outsource to government agencies, but they differ in how they view the significance of government support for their survival.

The results indicate that both news outlets have similar but mostly different experiences in legal aspects. They differ entirely in legal adversities and handling criticism, but both community newspapers share similarities in viewing legal equality as a significant factor for their survival.

Regarding financial stability, the results state that Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper have different financial standings due to their newspaper conditions, biggest expenses, and the impact of the digital age.

In terms of competition, Bantay Balita and Dateline Weekly Newspaper are entirely different in their strategies to stay ahead, how they differentiate themselves from other community newspapers, how they handle competitive

pressure, and how they view competition as a significant factor for their survival.

Researchers recommend that Bantay Balita further enhance its promotional efforts and strategies by building valuable connections with diverse stakeholders, particularly in the business sector, to ensure broader outreach and engagement. Given the identified challenges, Bantay Balita is encouraged to explore methods to utilize the digital landscape for potential monetary sources. This includes harnessing trending platforms like TikTok and creating creative and engaging digital content to appeal to a wider audience. Investing in this strategic shift is not only about adapting to innovation but also about helping community newspapers remain financially viable.

The study also encourages Dateline Weekly Newspaper to critically evaluate and assess its editorial process and explore solutions to enhance the quality of its news, ensuring accuracy, brevity, and clarity in its articles. Given the identified challenges, Dateline Weekly Newspaper is recommended to strategically employ competent personnel who are well-versed and driven to work professionally within the workplace to avoid unforeseen circumstances in delivery and operation.

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