

Evaluating the Reflection of Pashtun Culture on Lemar TV Channel

(Case Study: Lemar Makham TV Show)

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Abstract: This research endeavors to assess the role of the Lemar TV channel in portraying Pashtun cultural values through an in-depth examination of the "Lemar Makham" program. The study, conducted over six months, employed qualitative research methodologies, explicitly adopting the case study and content analysis approaches. A comprehensive analysis of 24 episodes, each comprising 6 segments, was undertaken to explore six distinct cultural elements: clothing, food, music, poetry and literature, language, and cultural innovation. The research findings signify the program's success in effectively reflecting Pashtun culture across multiple dimensions. Literature and poetry emerge as the predominant cultural element, constituting 100 percent of the sample size. Subsequently, language is represented at 91 percent, music at 75 percent, clothing at 55 percent, food at 50 percent, and cultural innovation at the lowest percentage, amounting to 15 percent within the entire sample size. In conclusion, this research affirms that the "Lemar Makham" program serves as a compelling and accurate portrayal of Pashtun culture and literature in Afghanistan. The nuanced exploration of various cultural elements within the program contributes to its effectiveness in representing and preserving the rich cultural heritage of the Pashtun community.

Keywords: Television, Pashtun, culture, literature, Cultural renovation

Introduction

Undoubtedly, contemporary society recognizes the indispensable role of mass media, particularly television, in shaping individuals' thoughts, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Mass media stands out as a paramount factor in the process of socialization, with a pronounced influence on adolescents and young individuals who exhibit heightened susceptibility to its impact. The messages and programs conveyed through the media wield considerable influence in molding behavioral patterns among the youth demographic within a given nation (Zinda Boudi, 2011).

It is within this context that the significance of mass media as a potent tool for societal influence becomes evident, underscoring its pivotal role in contributing to the cultivation of both favorable and unfavorable behavioral inclinations among the younger population. As media continues to evolve and expand its reach, comprehending its intricate dynamics in shaping societal norms and individual behaviors becomes imperative for researchers, policymakers, and educators alike.

In contemporary discourse, the media functions as a potent instrument for the transmission and reflection of cultures and literature, wielding a profound impact on its audience. Presently, the media is conceptualized as a locus for cultural foundation, reflection, and profound contemplation concerning the meaningfulness inherent in cultural contexts and social construction. Scholars such as Carlson and colleagues posit that the media serves as a pivotal gateway through which culture is disseminated to the public. Notably, media content itself is regarded as a cultural element, as emphasized by Carlson et al. (2008: p. 126). Carlson underscores the pivotal role of media not only in transmitting cultural narratives but also in actively contributing to the construction and perpetuation of cultural elements within society. Acknowledging the media's dual role as both a reflective mirror and a transformative force in cultural and literary contexts is essential for comprehending its nuanced influence on societal values, norms, and collective consciousness.

The research unfolded across four distinct stages. The initial stage involved the delineation of the research method, wherein the approach and methodology for the study were meticulously defined. Following this, the second stage was dedicated to the systematic collection of data pertinent to the research objectives. The subsequent phase, the third stage, centered on the comprehensive analysis of the acquired data, employing

rigorous methods to derive meaningful insights and draw valid conclusions. Finally, the fourth stage encompassed the synthesis of findings and the composition of the research report, wherein the outcomes of the study were presented coherently and in accordance with established academic conventions. This structured progression through method determination, data collection, analysis, and reporting reflects a systematic and rigorous research process, ensuring the reliability and validity of the study's outcomes. Such a methodological framework underscores the commitment to scholarly rigor and contributes to the overall credibility of the research endeavor.

The present research explores six distinct cultural elements: clothing, food, music, poetry and literature, language, and cultural innovation.

Culture

The definition provided by Collins Dictionary emphasizes certain activities, such as the arts and philosophy, as integral components of culture that contribute to the advancement of civilization and individuals' intellectual growth (Collins Dictionary, 2023).

Culture encompasses a broad array of elements, ranging from language, ideas, beliefs, and customs to codes, institutions, tools, techniques, work of art, rituals, and ceremonies. The concept of culture can be expanded to encompass the underlying beliefs, values, norms, rituals, and tangible items within a society or community (Geertz, 1975). In essence, it comprises a rich tapestry of various aspects that collectively define the way of life, expression, and shared practices within a particular group or society.

Clothes, Food And Music

According to Kuper, the term "clothing" in a comprehensive manner, distinguishing it into three categories: "dress" for everyday wear, "uniform" for ceremonial use, and "costume" for clothing with a mystical or sacred significance employed in rituals or performances (Kuper, 1973).

Clothing holds significance within cultures, involving the transformation of natural or synthetic materials into wearable items. The choice of fabric and the design of clothing play a crucial role in influencing the body's movement and shaping how others perceive the wearer. Clothing is a product created through human intervention, possessing both tangible materiality and symbolic significance (Manlow, 2017). Essentially, the way clothing is crafted and tailored not only impacts comfort and mobility but also contributes to the social impressions and receptions of individuals.

Food is considered one of the significant cultural components. Some foods represent a national or cultural identity, both at the national and international levels. Perhaps this is why Montanari asserts that "food is culture" (Montanari, 2006).

Another element that is emphasized in this research is Music. The widespread acceptance of Music can be attributed to its diversity, with musical pluralism being a crucial factor in attracting people. The relationship between Music and culture is so close that Herndon and McLeod write in their book 'MUSIC AS CULTURE': "Music is patterned sound limited by biology and culture (Herndon & McLeod, 1982). Music, in turn, acts as a mirror reflecting the culture of a society and representing the musical expressions of a nation.

Cultural Innovation

The expression 'cultural innovation' pertains to the introduction of novel ideas or improvements in the products or services provided by a cultural organization. Cultural innovation pertains to the introduction and acknowledgment of novelty within the cultural products and services provided by formal organizations (Castañer X., 2014). Cultural innovation involves the development or enhancement of cultural offerings, such as exhibitions, performances, or educational programs, reflecting a dynamic and evolving approach within the cultural sector.

Cultural innovation is often characterized by a greater reliance on integrating innovations that originate externally, as opposed to relying on internally generated innovations seen in departments like research and development, design, or product development in non-cultural businesses (Castañer & Cavotta, 2010).

Traditionally, innovation involves a certain degree of novelty, which could include the creative rearrangement or combination of existing elements. It means that innovation does not necessarily require entirely new components but often involves the innovative integration or reconfiguration of established elements. In other words, innovation can manifest as a fresh approach to utilizing or combining existing ideas, materials, or methods to generate novel outcomes.

Lemar Television

Television was founded in 1978, coinciding with the Communist coup and the subsequent 14-year regime. In 2020, the country hosted a total of 96 television channels, comprising both governmental and private entities (Khalvatgar, n.d.). According to Altai's data, cited by Khalvatgar television, it covers almost 40 percent of Afghanistan's population.

Lemar TV, a broadcasting entity of considerable prominence, is owned and operated by Lemar TV Entertainment Ltd, a distinguished component of the MOBY Group. This conglomerate is not only an exemplar of organizational prowess but also an integral facet of the media landscape, thereby fortifying the strategic and influential position that Lemar TV holds within the purview of MOBY Group's comprehensive portfolio. Through this affiliative structure, Lemar TV seamlessly integrates itself into the broader framework of media enterprises, underscoring the symbiotic relationship between its operational autonomy and its overarching connection to the MOBY Group, ultimately contributing to its robust standing within the broadcasting industry.

Lemar TV stands as the preeminent Pashto channel, holding the esteemed position of the fourth most favored channel within the broadcasting landscape of Afghanistan. Established on the auspicious date of August 15th, 2006, this channel has swiftly carved a niche within the consciousness and affections of its audience, accomplishing this remarkable feat in an impressively brief period (Lemar TV, 2023). The channel distinguishes itself through the creation of content, exclusively originating locally or procured from a global spectrum, all of which is proficiently transmitted in the Pashto language, further cementing its resonance with its diverse and discerning viewership.

Pashtun

The Pashtun people, constituting a distinct ethnolinguistic group, predominantly inhabit the geographic expanse situated between the formidable Hindu Kush mountain range in northeastern Afghanistan and the expansive northern banks of the Indus River in Pakistan (Britannica, 2023). This resilient community, with its unique cultural and linguistic identity, forms a vital thread in the rich tapestry of the South Asian and Central Asian regions, thereby contributing significantly to the intricate mosaic of diversity in this historically and culturally rich terrain.

Literature Review

In this section, an extensive review of prior research pertinent to the addressed issue has been undertaken. In their 2017 research titled "Cultural Studies Approach to Mass Media as a Factor of Mankind's Socio-Cultural Development," Orochovska and Abysova delve into cultural studies concepts pertaining to mass media. The study is dedicated to exploring the influence of media on the socio-cultural development of society. The conceptual framework employed in this research enables the identification of mass media as a primary avenue for disseminating cultural information and facilitating individuals' integration into cultural contexts. The study further involves an analysis of the intricate interaction between the media system and pertinent cultural values, an investigation into the media's role in the evolution of global civilizations, and an examination of its contribution to the formation of social-cultural systems. This research contributes to the scholarly discourse by offering insights into the multifaceted relationship between mass media and socio-cultural development, grounded in the perspectives and methodologies of cultural studies.

Afrogh and Mehrabanifar (2016) conducted a study titled "Prioritization of Fashion Media Policy Based on the Problematization of Its Cycle in Iranian Society." Employing in-depth interviews and document analysis, the researchers applied the thematic analysis method for data interpretation. The outcomes of their research delineated eight central issues, including epistemological challenges and cognitive confusion within the realm of Islamic-Iranian fashion, the absence of a political economy framework for Islamic-Iranian clothing fashion, and the insufficient visibility and representation of indigenous clothing patterns. In light of these findings, the researchers proposed eight media policy priorities and provided 38 corresponding political recommendations. These recommendations aim to address the identified issues and enhance the cultural landscape by fostering increased visibility of local fashion patterns in the daily lives of the Iranian populace. This research contributes valuable insights into the formulation of media policies that can effectively navigate the complexities surrounding the representation of fashion within the cultural context of Iranian society.

Rahmati and Qurbanzada (2015) conducted a study titled "The Effect of Media on National Identity Indicators," revealing the multifaceted role of media as a communication factor in the contemporary world. The research underscores the media's function in institutionalizing values within society, highlighting its

crucial role in shaping culture and fostering shared sentiments among individuals and societies. Notably, the study positions national identity as the paramount level of identity influenced by the media, superseding traditional methods of identity construction such as formal education.

In the contemporary landscape, the speed of media data and information transmission has transformed the dynamics of identity formation. The media acts as a potent force, serving as a lever for either stabilizing or altering national identity. The research emphasizes that the media, whether under governmental or non-governmental influence, operates as a pivotal factor that can either strengthen and consolidate or weaken and undermine national identity indicators. Employing explanatory analytical methods, the findings of the study elucidate the substantial positive or negative impact of media on three crucial identity indicators: elements, foundations, and the position of national identity. This research contributes valuable insights into the intricate relationship between media dynamics and the evolution of national identity in contemporary societies.

Sarikhani and Ismaili (2014) conducted a research study titled "Investigation of the Role of National Media Television in the Development of Entrepreneurial Culture among Young People," focusing on the case study of Gorgan City, Iran. Employing an analytical survey research method, the study aimed to assess the impact of national media, particularly television, on the cultivation of entrepreneurial culture among the youth in the specified locality.

The statistical population for this research was comprised of all the youth residing in Gorgan City. The findings of the study revealed that national media, specifically television, emerges as a significant and influential factor in fostering cultural development and nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset among the youth. The research contributes to the understanding of the influential role played by media, particularly television, in shaping cultural attitudes and promoting entrepreneurial values among the younger demographic. These insights provide valuable considerations for policymakers, educators, and media practitioners seeking to leverage media platforms for the positive development of entrepreneurial culture among the youth population.

In the study conducted by Nasiri (2010) titled "Investigating the Role of the Media in the Development and Promotion of the Culture of Innovation, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship" in Iran, the research highlights the substantial influence of media in fostering a culture of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. The findings underscore the pivotal role played by media through the favorable production and distribution of information. Media, as a significant societal influencer, contributes to the promotion of diverse and necessary awareness, thereby aiding in the overall advancement and progress of society.

The study emphasizes the media's responsibility as a crucial actor in guiding public opinion toward the creation and development of a culture of innovation. By crafting appropriate programs and content, the media assumes a severe task in steering the collective mindset of society toward embracing and cultivating innovative thinking. Nasiri's research sheds light on the transformative potential of media in shaping cultural values, particularly in the domains of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. It underscores the importance of intentional media programming in contributing to societal progress.

Methodology

The current research was undertaken employing the qualitative case study method over a six-month duration. The case study methodology involves a meticulous examination of a particular case, issue, or phenomenon, with the primary objective of comprehensively observing and interpreting its multifaceted dimensions. This approach aligns with the qualitative paradigm, emphasizing the exploration and interpretation of processes rather than quantitative measurement (Bazargan et al., 1998: 57).

Qualitative case studies provide a valuable framework for investigating complex phenomena within their natural context, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the intricacies involved. By adopting this methodological approach, the research aimed to uncover nuanced insights, capture the richness of contextual details, and facilitate a holistic understanding of the subject under investigation. The utilization of qualitative methods is particularly suited for studies seeking to unravel the underlying processes and meanings associated with the phenomenon in question. As the research unfolded over the designated six-month period, the case study method served as an effective means to delve into the depth and complexity of the chosen subject matter, contributing to the richness and depth of the study's findings.

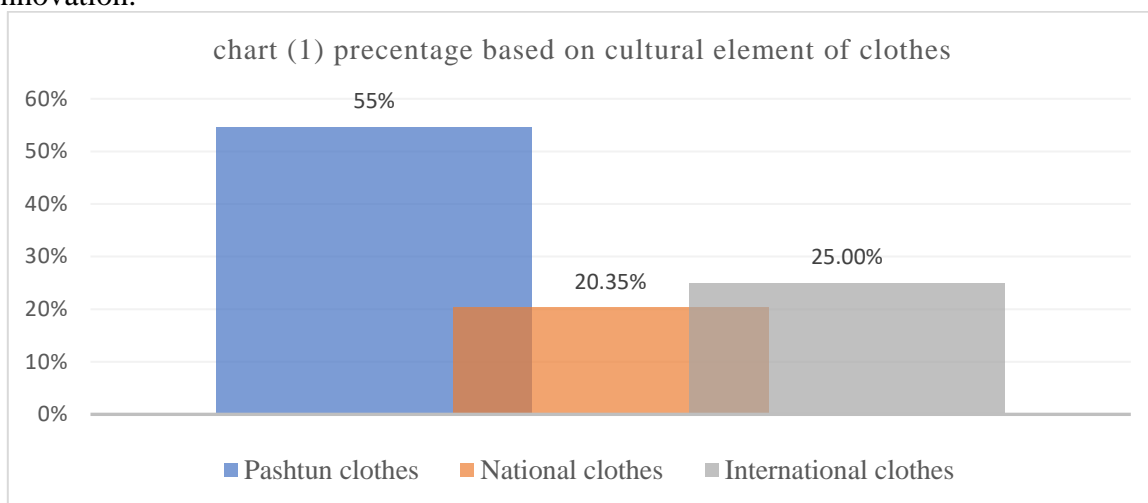
In this current study, a sample size comprising 24 episodes of the Lemar Makham program was selected. To assess the content of the chosen videos, six indicators were systematically applied, encompassing elements

such as clothing, food, music, poetry and literature, language, and cultural diffusion. The utilization of these indicators facilitated a comprehensive analysis of the cultural dimensions portrayed in the program.

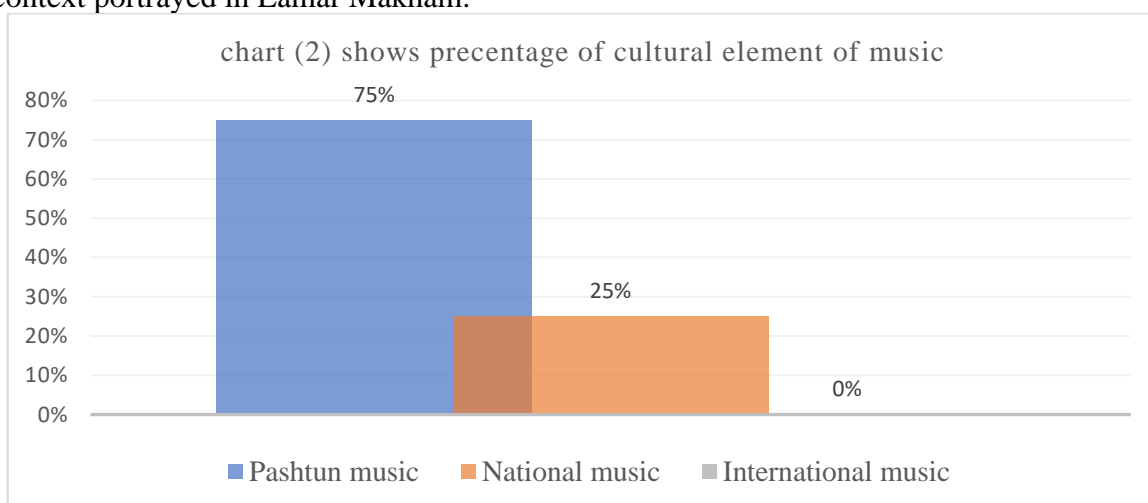
Following the data collection and application of the indicators, the obtained results were meticulously interpreted and evaluated. This interpretive process involved contextualizing the findings within the existing body of literature concerning the nature of culture and literature, as well as the role of media in the dissemination and promotion of cultural values. By grounding the interpretation in established theoretical frameworks and empirical insights, the study aimed to enhance the robustness and depth of its analysis, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the interplay between media content, cultural representation, and the broader sociocultural landscape.

Results And Discussion

The chart below illustrates the indicators and cultural elements present in the Lamar Makham programs. A meticulous analysis of 24 episodes of the Lamar Makham program has been conducted, categorizing these cultural values into distinct elements, including clothing, music, literature and poetry, food, language, and cultural innovation.

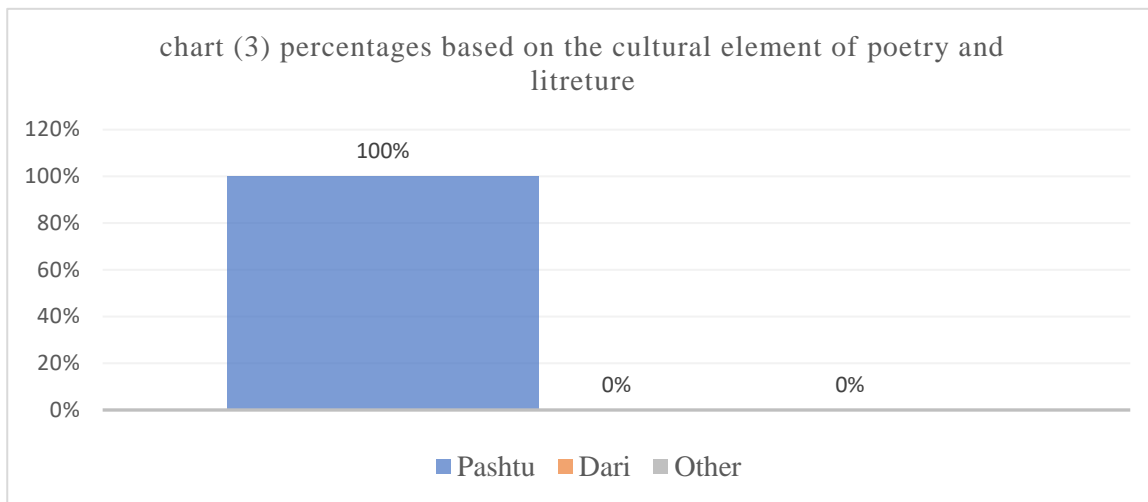


As indicated in Chart 1, among the 24 randomly selected programs for this research, national attire was observed in 5 programs, constituting 20.33% of the total. International clothing was featured in 6 other programs, representing 25% of the sample. Notably, attire associated with Pashtun residents of Afghanistan was showcased in 13 programs, comprising the majority at 54.67%. The statistical breakdown underscores the predominance of Pashtun clothing within the Lamar Makham program, positioning it as a noteworthy indicator of the cultural element of Pashtun attire. The findings suggest that the program effectively highlights and represents the cultural significance of Pashtun clothing, contributing to its prominence within the broader cultural context portrayed in Lamar Makham.



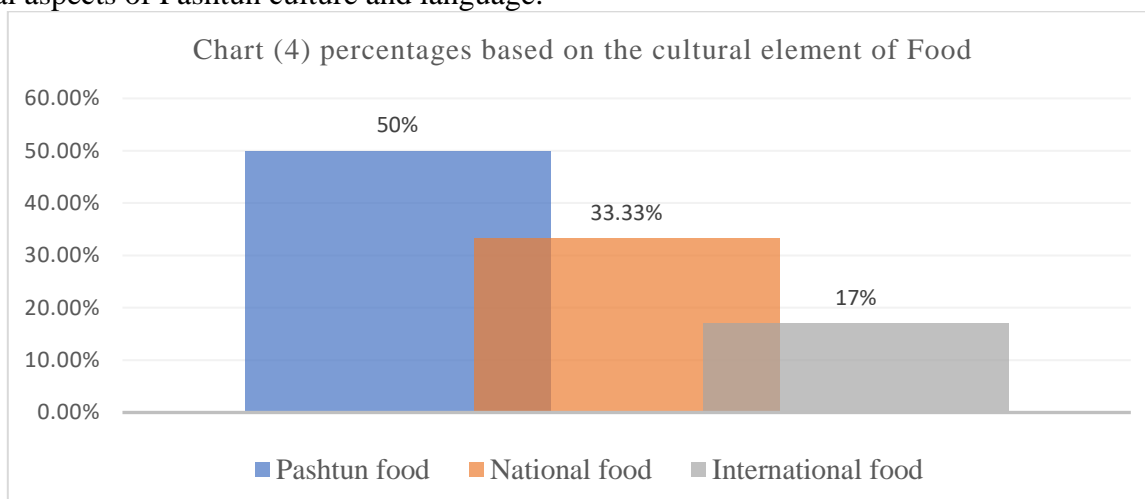
As per Chart 2, music was featured in 20 episodes of the program. Notably, national music was incorporated into 5 programs, constituting 25 percent of the total episodes analyzed. Interestingly, no instances of international music were observed across any of the episodes. The predominant trend, encompassing 15

programs or 75 percent of the entire sample, involved the broadcast of original Pashtun music. This statistical breakdown underscores the significant presence of Pashtun music within the Lamar Makham program, with the absence of international music contributing to the program's emphasis on local and culturally relevant musical expressions. The findings highlight the program's dedication to showcasing and preserving the rich musical heritage of the Pashtun culture within the broader media landscape.



According to Chart (3), all the poems featured on the Lemar Makham TV show originated from Pashto language poets hailing from different provinces. These poems encompassed diverse formats such as folklore, epic, Romance, and couplets. Notably, none of the programs included the presentation of national or international poems. The absence of poems from other linguistic traditions underscores the program's commitment to exclusively showcasing the poetic contributions of Pashto language poets.

Furthermore, the programs featured the integral cultural tradition of Mushaira, a significant aspect of Pashto literature and language. Mushaira, characterized by poets from diverse locations, actively contributes to the rich literary landscape of the southern and southeastern provinces of the country. These gatherings, where poets participate to recite their poems, reflect a longstanding and widely embraced tradition among Pashtuns. The inclusion of Mushaira within the Lemar Makham program aligns with the cultural roots and literary heritage of the Pashto-speaking community, reinforcing the program's dedication to preserving and promoting these vital aspects of Pashtun culture and language.



As per Chart 4, delineating the percentages of cultural elements related to food within the Lemar Makham TV shows, the following observations are noted:

National foods were highlighted in 8 programs, accounting for 33.33 percent of the total. This selection encompassed a diverse array of foods representing various regions across Afghanistan.

International foods were showcased in 4 other programs, constituting 16.66 percent of the episodes. These presentations extended beyond the borders of Afghanistan, incorporating culinary traditions from around the world.

Authentic Pashtun cuisine was featured in 12 additional programs, contributing 50 percent of all the foods presented across the 22 episodes analyzed. This significant representation underscores the program's commitment to preserving and promoting the cultural richness of Pashtun culinary traditions.

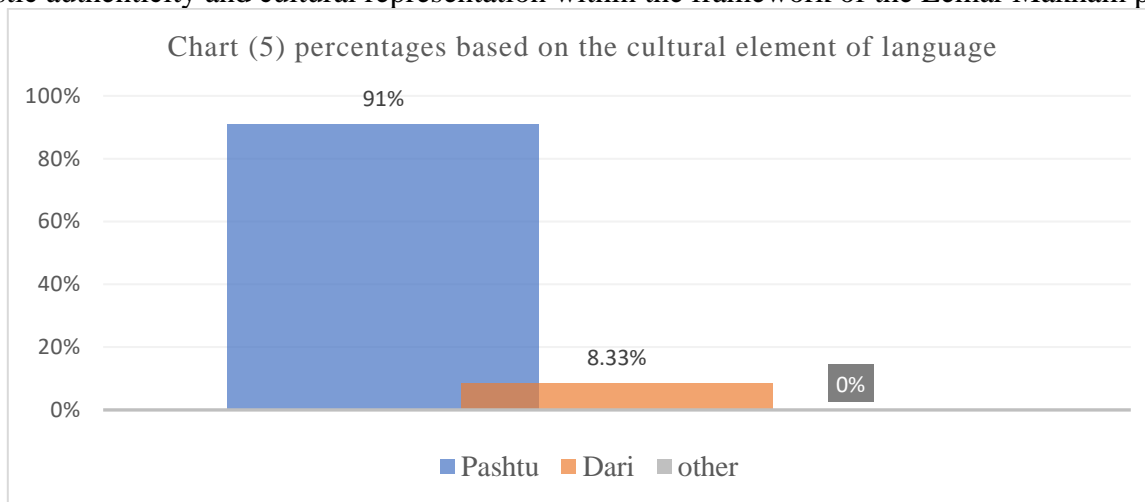
The breakdown provided by Chart 4 reveals a well-rounded approach to culinary diversity within the Lemar Makham TV shows, encompassing both national and international dimensions while placing a substantial emphasis on the authentic gastronomic heritage of the Pashtun community.

As per the data presented in the below Chart (5), which details the language dynamics within the analyzed TV shows, the following observations can be derived:

In 22 out of the 24 analyzed TV shows, both the host and the guests exclusively communicated in Pashto, constituting approximately 91.66% of the total.

In contrast, the remaining two shows exhibited a different linguistic pattern, where the host alternated between speaking in Pashto and Dari. Additionally, the guests used languages other than Pashto. This linguistic variation accounted for 8.33% of the total.

The breakdown provided by Chart (5) underscores a predominant use of Pashto as the primary language in the vast majority of the analyzed TV shows. This linguistic consistency aligns with the program's dedication to linguistic authenticity and cultural representation within the framework of the Lemar Makham program.



As outlined in Chart (5), providing an overview of the cultural dissemination programs within the 24 reviewed episodes, the following observations are made:

Two national cultural dissemination programs were implemented, representing 8.33 percent of the total. In these shows, a blend of Uzbeki¹, Hazaragi², and Pashtu music was orchestrated to create a national-cultural fusion.

The majority of the programs (85 percent) focused on the dissemination of Pashtun culture. Within one notable instance of cultural diffusion, Japanese music—popular in southern provinces, particularly Kandahar—was combined with Nuristani³ music.

In terms of clothing, the show showcased innovation by combining the embroidered clothes of Kandahar with the attire of the people of Hazaristan⁴, resulting in a distinctive and creative blend.

The Chart (5) underscores the program's commitment to cultural diversity, showcasing both national-cultural fusion and specific regional influences. The incorporation of various cultural elements, including music and clothing, contributes to the program's role as a platform for fostering unique innovations and promoting cultural richness within the broader media landscape.

Findings

¹ Uzbek is the name of an ethnic group in Afghanistan.

² Hazara is the name of an ethnic group in Afghanistan.

³ Nuristan is the name a province in Afghanistan.

⁴ The provinces in which Hazara people reside are located in central Afghanistan.

Findings of the research indicate significant insights into the representation of Pashtun culture in the Lemar Makham program. The analysis of 24 randomly selected episodes reveals that Pashtun clothing holds a prominent position, with 54.67% of programs featuring clothing related to Pashtun residents of Afghanistan. National clothes were observed in 20.33% of the programs, while international clothing was featured in 25%. Additionally, the program strongly emphasizes Pashtun cultural elements through the broadcast of original Pashtun music in 75% of episodes.

The linguistic aspect of the program is noteworthy, with 91.66% of episodes featuring both the host and guests speaking entirely in Pashto. A small percentage (8.33%) deviates from this norm, incorporating a mix of Pashto and Dari, with guests speaking in languages other than Pashto.

Furthermore, the research identifies cultural dissemination programs, constituting 8.33% of episodes, where Uzbeki, Hazaragi, and Pashtu music contribute to a national-cultural spread. The majority (85%) of programs focus on spreading Pashtun culture. The program showcases cultural diffusion, exemplified by the fusion of Japanese and Nuristani music. Innovative approaches are also evident in clothing, where Kandahari and Hazaristani attire are combined, showcasing unique cultural innovations within the program. Overall, these findings underscore the Lemar Makham program's role as a significant cultural indicator, particularly in promoting and preserving Pashtun cultural elements.

Conclusion

This research endeavors to assess the portrayal of Pashtun culture and literature in the Lemar Makham program in Afghanistan. The primary objective is to address the question: In what ways does the Lemar Makham program reflect the culture and literature of Pashtuns? The research employs the qualitative case-study method, aiming to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the selected programs.

A total of 24 programs, randomly chosen from the 144 broadcasted in the last six months of 2019, were selected for examination. This sample, constituting over 10 percent of the statistical population, serves as the focal point for investigating six cultural elements identified for the research: clothing, music, poetry and literature, food, language, and cultural dissemination. The qualitative case-study method allows for a nuanced exploration of how these cultural elements are depicted in the Lemar Makham program, providing valuable insights into the program's role in reflecting and contributing to the cultural and literary landscape of the Pashtun community.

The findings of this research not only affirm and reinforce the outcomes of prior studies concerning the impact of media in reflecting and promoting cultural values, as reviewed in the research background, but also distinctly highlight the significant role played by the Lemar Makham program in disseminating the values of Pashtun culture. This role is substantiated through the representation of cultural elements, including clothing at 55%, music at 75%, literature and poetry at 100%, food at approximately 50%, language at 91%, and cultural innovation at 15%.

The program's influence is particularly evident in the popularization of traditional Pashtun clothing, specifically the Gand worn by Pashtun women, traditional clothing for Pashtun men, and the distinctive Kandahari hats. These cultural influences have resulted in the widespread adoption of "Pashtun Gand" in various official and private occasions, including weddings, emphasizing the program's instrumental role in shaping and perpetuating cultural practices in Afghanistan. The observed effects underscore the program's success in contributing to the cultural fabric of Pashtun society, making certain cultural elements integral to contemporary social events and ceremonies.

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