Effectiveness of Multilingual Broadcasting: A Case Study of Radio Nepal

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DOI: 10.3126/hj.v14i2.59062

Abstract

Radio Nepal, as the pioneering radio broadcaster of the country, has played a crucial role in serving its listeners for over seven decades. In the earlier years, it was the sole medium of information, education, and entertainment, particularly for rural communities, before the advent of television and FM radios. As a national broadcaster, Radio Nepal has assumed significant national duties and responsibilities that set it apart from other media outlets. In response to the evolving socio-political landscape, Radio Nepal has bolstered its multilingual or inclusive broadcasting by incorporating more native languages into its programming. Currently, it broadcasts news and programs in 21 different languages, in addition to Nepali, aiming to address the linguistic diversity of the nation. This research aims to fill this knowledge gap and assess the impact of Radio Nepal's inclusive broadcasting from the listener's perspective. To measure the effectiveness, the research conducted a survey based on Radio Nepal's initiative to evaluate its inclusive broadcasting. The findings reveal that Radio Nepal's inclusive broadcasting has been highly effective. Listeners from diverse linguistic communities have shown a growing interest in news and programs broadcast in their native languages. Moreover, broadcasting has successfully transcended linguistic boundaries, reaching beyond specific communities, thereby contributing to the conservation and respect of different languages by the state and society.

Keywords: Broadcasting, Multilingual, News and programs, Radio listeners, Broadcast Contents.

Introduction

Radio Nepal, established on April 2, 1951, stands as the pioneer broadcasting media in Nepal. Over the years, it has evolved from a 250-watt short-wave transmitter with 4 hours and 30 minutes of broadcasting to encompassing almost the entire nation through its Medium Wave and FM transmissions, providing round-the-clock broadcasts (Radio Nepal, 2023). The station has also expanded its reach globally via internet streaming. Presently, 29 FM stations operate in different locations across all seven provinces, compensating for the limited capacity of Medium Wave transmitters due to maintenance challenges (K.C., 2022, 108). As mentioned in *Radio Prasar Sewa Bikash Samiti Gathan Adesh 2041* (Radio Broadcasting Service Development Committee Formation Order, 1985), Radio Nepal's mission extends beyond entertainment and information; it plays a vital role in safeguarding

the sovereignty and integrity of the nation while respecting the right to information and freedom of expression for Nepali people. As of the fiscal year 2019/20, approximately 87 percent of the population had access to Radio Nepal's broadcasts (Economic Survey 2019/20, 2020, 21), but now this figure has increased to 91 percent (K.C., 2022, 109). Radio Nepal's Executive Director Buddhi Bahadur KC in his article titled *Radio Nepal: Aja ko Yethartha ra Bholi ko Bato* [Radio Nepal: Current Realties and Tomorrow's Path] (Jhhankar, 2022) says "Radio Nepal has been increasing its' coverage every year to comply with government policy to expand Radio Nepal's coverage to hundred percent population of the country by the end of the 15th national plan" (109). According to the Nepal Media Survey of 2022, one in five individuals listens to Radio Nepal, amounting to an estimated 6.7 million adults aged 18 and above (50). One of Radio Nepal's significant initiatives as a national radio broadcaster is its commitment to unite the country through inclusive or multilingual broadcasting. The station not only endeavors to maintain content-wise inclusivity but also strives to achieve proportional inclusiveness by broadcasting news in 21 different languages and programs in 20 different languages (Yatru, 2004, 329). These languages fall under three categories: *Rāṣṭra Bhāṣā* [National Language], *Rāṣṭriya Bhāṣā* [National Dialects], and *Anya Bhāṣā* [Other Languages]. This can be shown in the following Table:

National Language	National Dialects	Other Languages
1. Nepali	2. Purbiya Tharu, 3. Rai Bantawa, 4.Limbu, 5. Nepal *Bhāṣā*, 6.Tamang, 7. Sherpa, 8.Urdu, 9. Magar, 10.Gurung 11. Bhojpuri, 12. Maithali, 13. Magadhi 14.Abadhi, 15. Kham Magar, 16. Paschima Tharu, 17. Doteli, 18. Rana Tharu	19. English 20.Hindi 21. Sanskrit

Source: Radio Nepal Survey, 2022

The addition of various languages to its broadcasts was a gradual process, starting with English news bulletin on the same day of first broadcasting in 1951, while Hindi, and Newari news on the same month of April in 1951, followed by other languages at different intervals (Lamsal, 2021). Lamsal (2021) mentions "Radio Nepal started News in the English language on the first day of its broadcasting on April 2, 1951, Hindi News on April 7 and Newari news on April 14 of the same year (Though Hindi and Newari language news bulletin were stopped at April 13, 1965, and later resumed at June 29, 1990), Maithali language at January 1, 1991, Tamang, Rai Bantawa, Limbu, Gurung, Magar, Bhojpuri, Abadhi purbeli Tharu, and Paschima Tharu were added at August 17, 1994, Sanskrit news at April 13, 1995, Sherpa and Urda at August 17, 1996, Kham Magar and Doteli at June 23, 2000, Rana Tharu at April 14, 2001, and as the latest one Magahi at November 2, 2015" (193).

To cater to the diverse linguistic communities, Radio Nepal has allocated separate time slots for broadcasting news and programs in different languages. Each provincial broadcasting receives 3 hours and 45 minutes of airtime from 3:15 PM to 6:00 PM, allowing for daily 5-

minute news bulletins in designated languages, along with several programs lasting 15 to 45 minutes (Radio Nepal Program Schedule, 2022, 188-193). Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of Radio Nepal's inclusive broadcasting in reaching and benefiting the target communities remains a pertinent question. This study aims to assess the impact and effectiveness of Radio Nepal's inclusive broadcasting on its respective linguistic communities, focusing on their representation in the broadcasts rather than content-wise inclusivity.

This study employs mixed methods, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection and analysis. The research is conducted using a descriptive-analytical method, where qualitative data gathered through questionnaires are analyzed to conclude.

Data Collection: The primary data is collected through a survey questionnaire administered to target respondents who are listeners of Radio Nepal's news and programs broadcast in their languages. The questionnaire method is employed, and enumerators physically approach the respondents to gather the data. The survey is conducted nationwide, encompassing listeners from diverse ethnic and linguistic communities. The selection of respondents follows the purposive sampling method to ensure representation from various linguistic backgrounds. A total of 460 respondents are included, representing 17 different linguistic communities from 6 provinces (excluding Karnali province, where Radio Nepal broadcasts solely in Nepali due to the dominant Nepali-speaking population). The respondents are chosen from both rural and urban areas, considering various demographic characteristics.

Questionnaire Design: The questionnaire is designed to measure the effectiveness of Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting. It includes objective and open-ended questions to gain insights into the perceptions of the listeners. Multiple-choice questions are also incorporated to capture opinions and preferences effectively. In total, the questionnaire consists of 10 questions, primarily comprising objective questions with multiple-choice answers.

Data Analysis: The collected data from the questionnaires are analyzed using descriptive analytical techniques. The qualitative responses are categorized and coded to identify patterns and themes related to the effectiveness of Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting. The quantitative data from the multiple-choice questions are summarized and presented in the form of charts and graphs to facilitate a clear understanding of the respondents' opinions and preferences.

Limitations: Although the mixed methodology approach allows for a comprehensive analysis, there are some limitations to consider. The use of questionnaires may limit the depth of responses, and some respondents might provide superficial answers. Additionally, the purposive sampling method might not fully represent all linguistic communities, and the findings may not be fully generalizable to the entire population. However, efforts are made to ensure diverse representation to enhance the study's reliability and validity

Socio-Demographic Analysis of Respondents:

The respondents in this study belong to 17 different linguistic communities, reflecting the diverse audience of Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting. The languages represented in the survey include Nepali, Purbiya Tharu, Rai Bantawa, Limbu, Nepal Bhasha, Tamang, Sherpa, Urdu, Magar, Gurung, Bhojpuri, Maithili, Magahi, Abadhi, Kham Magar, Paschima Tharu, Doteli, and Rana Tharu. This wide range of languages indicates the comprehensive effort of Radio Nepal to address the linguistic diversity of the country through its broadcasting. The survey includes both male and female respondents, ensuring representation of different genders. This helps in understanding how Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting impacts both male and female listeners and whether there are any

Table 1

Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequencies	Percent
	Province 1	**103**	
	Purbiya Tharu	*45*	**22.39%**
	Rai Bantawa	*44*	
	Limbu	*14*	
	Bagmati	**87**	**18.91%**
	Nepal Bhasha	*16*	
	Tamang	*29*	
	Sherpa	*21*	
	Urdu	*21*	
	Gandaki	**43**	**9.35%**
	Magar	*21*	
	Gurung	*22*	
Provinces/Languages	**Madhesh**	**72**	**15.65%**
	Bhojpuri	*21*	
	Maithali	*22*	
	Magahi	*29*	
	Lumbini	**75**	**16.30%**
	Abadhi	*24*	
	Kham Magar	*26*	
	Paschima Tharu	*25*	
	Sudur Paschim	**80**	**17.39%**
	Doteli	*62*	
	Rana Tharu	*18*	

Gender	Male	280	60.87%
	Female	180	39.13%
Age Group	16-25	71	15.43%
	26-35	130	28.26%
	36-45	109	23.69%
	46-55	106	23.04%
	55 above	44	9.56%
	Illiterate	14	3.04%
	General Literate	58	12.61%
Education	SLC/SEE	110	23.91%
	Intermediate	98	21.30%
	Bachelor	70	15.21%
	Masters	50	10.87%
	Ph.D.	1	0.21%
	Not applicable	59	12.83%
Occupation	Housewife	21	4.56%
	Agriculture	74	16.08%
	Service	58	12.60%
	Students	48	10.43%
	Entrepreneurs/others	151	32.83%
	Not applicable	108	23.48%
Total		460	

gender-specific differences in their preferences and perceptions.

The respondents' age groups vary, covering different generations of listeners. Understanding the preferences and opinions of listeners from different age groups is essential to assess the effectiveness of Radio Nepal's broadcasting across generations and to identify any age-related patterns in listenership. The education level of the respondents provides insights into how Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting is perceived across different educational backgrounds. It allows us to analyze whether educational qualifications influence listeners' preferences and the extent to which educated audiences engage with the broadcasting. The occupation of the respondents provides a perspective on how Radio Nepal's broadcasting is received among various professional groups. It helps identify whether certain occupations show a higher preference for multilingual broadcasts and whether the content caters effectively to specific professional interests.

Table 1 shows the social demographic characteristics of respondents. Out of a total of 460 respondents, 60.87% are male and 39.13% are female. The maximum number of respondents falls under the age range of 25 to 35 which is 28.26%. Respondents above 55 years of age are the lowest represented age group which is 9.56%. 36 to 45 and 46 to 55 age group respondents are represented in the survey in almost equal percentages of around 23%. As far as the concern of the level of education of respondents is concerned, the majority is of SLC/SEE level 23.61%, a second big number of respondents i.e. 21.30% have an intermediate level of education, 15.21% of respondents have bachelor level, 10.87% have masters level education and interestingly only one respondent which is equal to 0.21% has Ph.D. level education. 12.61% of respondents are generally literate while 3.04% are illiterate. A remarkable number of respondents 12.83% didn't disclose their education level. Respondents are from various occupations and professions, among which entrepreneurs and social workers are 32.83%, 16.08% are from agriculture, 12.60 % are from service, students 10.43%, and housewives 4.56%. Around 23 percent didn't specify their professions.

The table shows the province-wise representation of listeners, in which province 1 has the maximum representation of listeners i.e. 22.39%, Bagmati 18.91%, Gandaki 9.31%, Madhesh 15.65%, Lumbini 16.30%, and Sudur Paschim 17.39%. The respondents varied in number from one province to another because some province has more language broadcasting and some have less. The language-wise respondents are also presented in the Table.

The socio-demographic analysis of the respondents is crucial in understanding the reach and impact of Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting. The diverse representation of linguistic communities indicates that the station is making a concerted effort to address the inclusive characteristics of the country. Broadcasting in various languages helps in reaching out to a wider audience and fostering a sense of belonging among different linguistic communities.

Analyzing the responses based on gender allows for the identification of any disparities or preferences specific to male and female listeners. Additionally, understanding the preferences of different age groups helps Radio Nepal cater to the interests of various generations, adapting its programming accordingly.

Examining the listeners' education level and occupation provides insights into the engagement and effectiveness of Radio Nepal's broadcasting among different segments of the population. This information can be used to tailor content and improve the overall quality of the programs, ensuring they resonate with the target audience and serve their information, education, and entertainment needs effectively.

Overall, the socio-demographic analysis of the respondents enriches the study's findings and helps Radio Nepal make informed decisions to further enhance its multilingual broadcasting to better serve the diverse and dynamic audience of the country.

Results

Figure 1
*The Listening Trend of News and Programs of Different Languages*
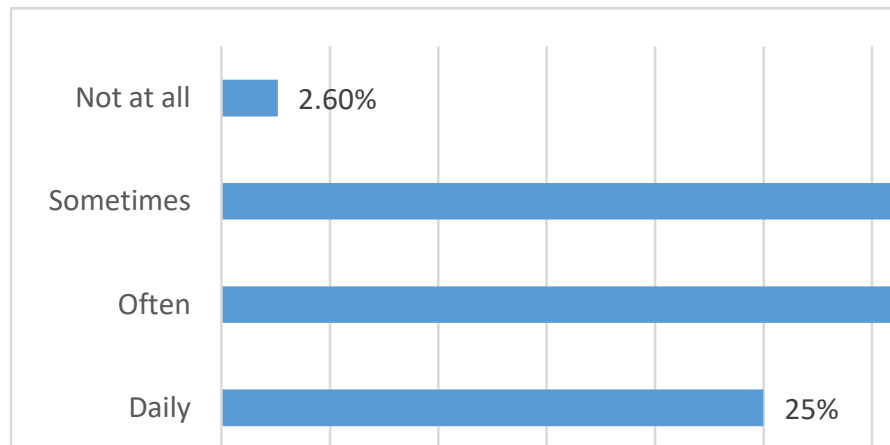
Source: Field Study 2022

Figure 1 shows the listening trend of news and programs among the listeners from various linguistic communities. 25% of them say they listen to news and programs in their native languages daily, 36.52% say they listen often, 36.30% say they listen sometimes and only 2.60% of them say they don't listen. Thus, the figure indicates that almost 90 percent of the sample respondents listen to the news and programs broadcast by Radio Nepal in their native languages.

Figure 2
*Understandability of multilingual news and programs*
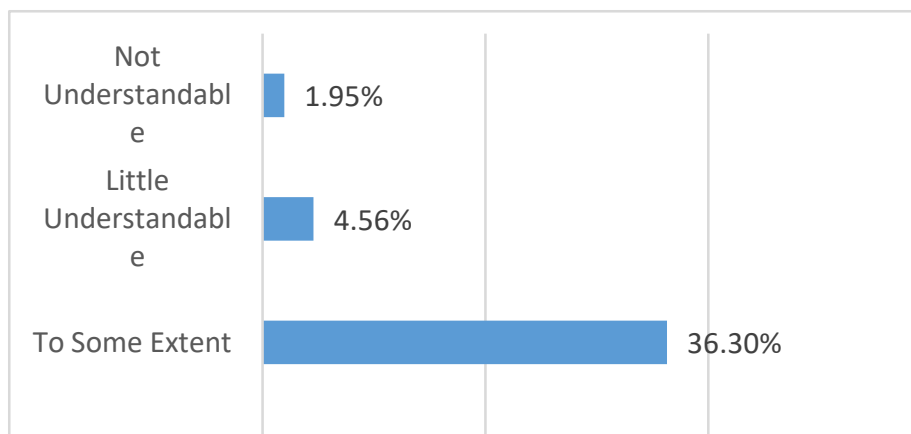
Source: Field Study 2022

Figure 2 shows the understandability of the languages used in native language news and programs to respective communities. almost 60% said that the languages of the program and news in their native language are very understandable, 36.30% said they understand to some

extent, 4.56% said they understand little and only 1.59% said they didn't understand. This indicates that the majority of listeners understand the languages that are used in their native language news and programs. However, 36.30 % said they understood only to some extent, this means there is room to make the language clearer for targeted community listeners.
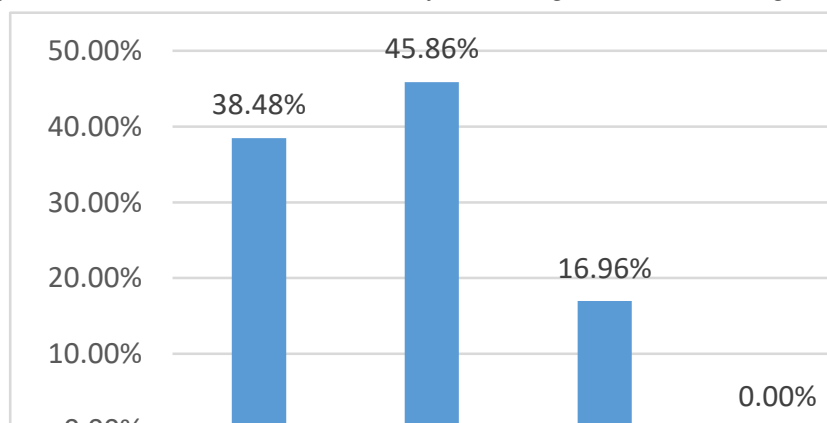
Figure 3
Availability of Community Contents
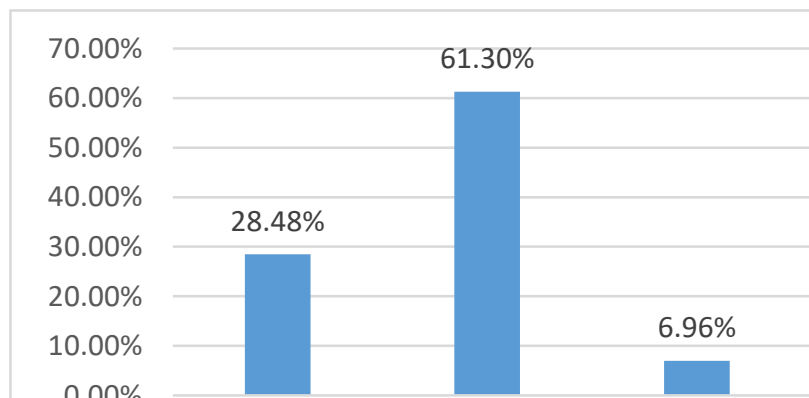
Source: Field Study 2022

Figure 3 shows the availability of the contents of their communities in news and programs. 61.30% of sample respondents said they found very much content of their communities, 61.30% said they found the content of their communities to some extent, and 6.97% said they didn't find any content of their communities in the news and programs of their native languages. This indicates that almost 90% of respondents said they found the contents of their communities in Radio Nepal's broadcasting in their native languages.

Figure 4
*The Quality of the Contents and Presentation of Multilingual Broadcasting*

Source: Field Study 2022

Figure 4 shows the quality of the contest and presentation of multilingual broadcasting. 38.48% of sample respondents said that the quality of the contents and presentation of

multilingual news and programs is very good, while 45.86% said it is good, 16.96% said that the quality of the news and programs is at a moderate level and there is not one to say the quality of the contents and presentation of the multilingual broadcasting of Radio Nepal is not good. Thus, the majority of sample respondents found the quality of their native language broadcasting to be good.
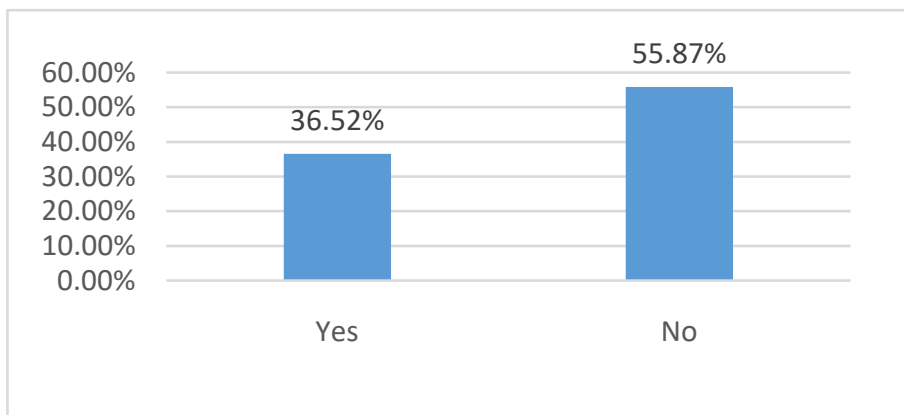
Figure 5
Credibility of the contents
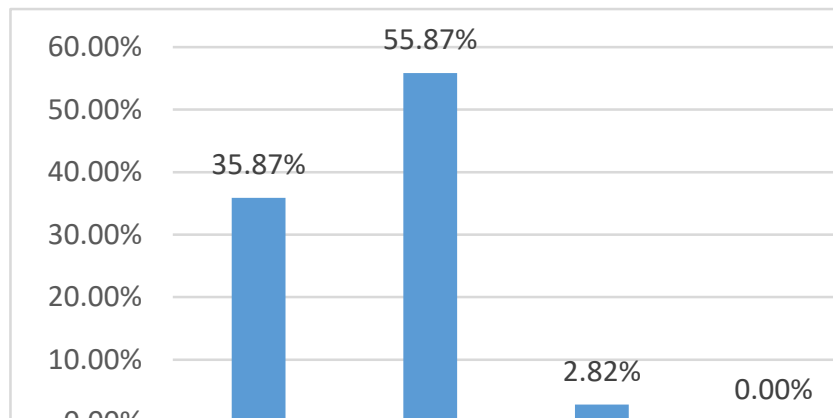
Source: Field Study 2022

Figure 5 shows the credibility of the contents of multilingual news and programs. 35.87% of sample respondents found it is very credible, 55.87% said it is credible while only 2.82% of them found it is not credible. Thus, the majority of listeners found the radio Nepal's broadcasting of native-language news and programs credible.

Figure 6
*Sufficiency of Multilingual Broadcasting for News and Information*

Source: Field Study 2022

Figure 6 shows whether the multilingual language broadcasting of Radio Nepal is sufficient or not for news and information. 55.87% of sample respondents said not sufficient and

36.52% said sufficient. Thus, the majority of them found it was not sufficient to fulfill their demands for news and information. This indicates that there is more to do. More news bulletins and programs should be added to rely solely on the Multilanguage news and programs.

Figure 7

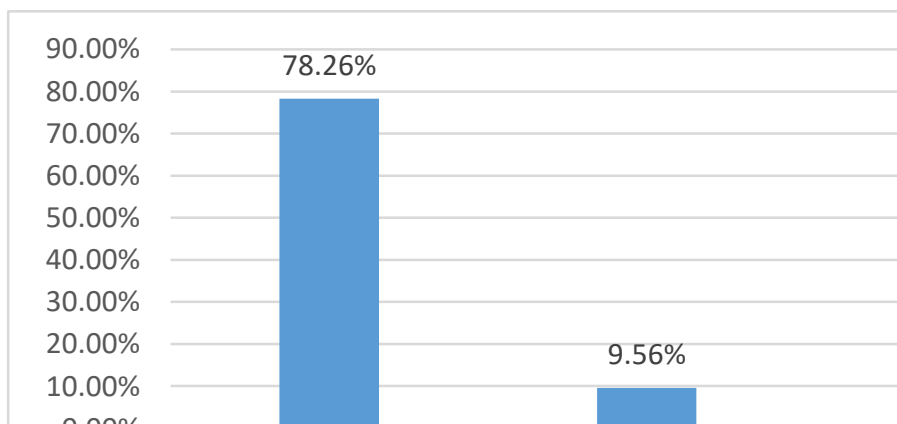*Benefits to Listeners by Listening to News and Programs in their Languages*
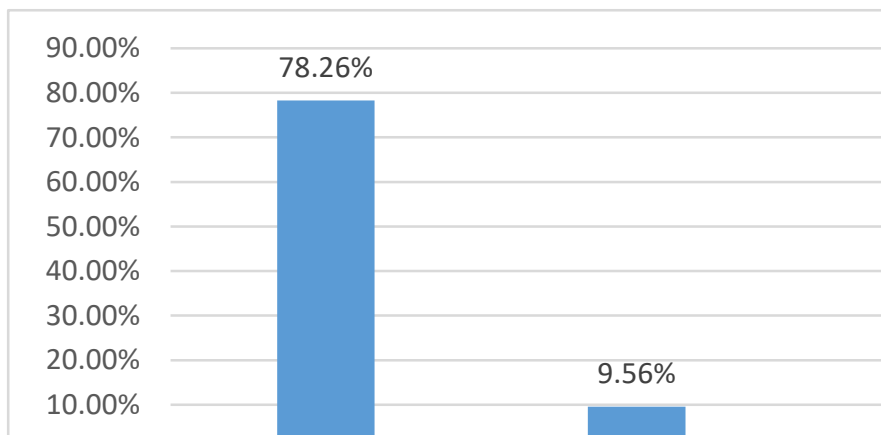
Source: Field Study 2022

Figure 7 shows whether Multilanguage listeners are benefited through news and programs in their language or not. 78.26% of sample respondents said they were benefited and only 9.56% of them said they were not benefited. Thus, this indicates that the broadcasting is beneficial for those communities that are receiving Radio Nepal's news and programs in their languages.

Figure 8

*Benefits to Listeners by Listening to news and programs on their Tongues*

Source: Field Study 2022

Figure 8 shows the benefits of listening to news and programs in the listener's tongue. 78.26% of them said they benefited from such broadcasting of Radio Nepal while 9.56% of

them said they did not benefit. Getting news and information in their tongue is more beneficial for those people who are illiterate and don't understand Nepali languages perfectly.

Figure 9
The listeners favor Broadcasting for News and Information
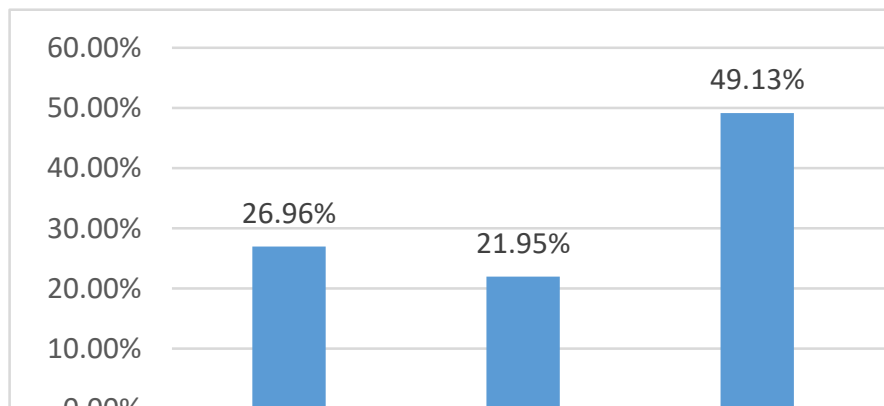
Source: Field Study 2022

Figure 9 shows the most favored news and programs for news and information. 49.13% of sample respondents said they listen to both Nepali language broadcasting and multilingual broadcasting for news and information, 29.96% said they listened to news and programs only in their languages while 29.95% said they listened to Nepali language broadcasting for news and information. This indicates that the majority of native-language listeners do rely both on Nepali and native language broadcasting for news and information, however, a remarkable number of listeners find only to listening news and programs in their languages is sufficient to fulfill their information demands.

Findings

The study's parameters to measure the effectiveness of Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting have provided valuable insights into the impact of native-language and inclusive broadcasting on the target audience. The findings reveal that people from different linguistic communities actively listen to news and programs broadcast in their languages. This positive listening trend indicates a strong interest in Radio Nepal's multilingual content, despite the availability of various media options in today's new media landscape.

Contrary to previous research suggesting that certain linguistic communities may not listen to content in their language due to internal variations and dialects (Maung & Ghimire, 1997, this study indicates that over 90 percent of listeners understand the language used in the broadcasts, finding them clear and understandable. This result is encouraging, as it suggests that Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting effectively targets its audience, ensuring comprehensibility and accessibility for diverse linguistic communities.

Moreover, the study highlights that the quality of the broadcasting contents and presentation is generally well-received, with a minor percentage of respondents suggesting room for improvement. To maintain and enhance the positive perception of broadcasting quality, further efforts should be invested in refining and elevating the content and presentation of programs.

Listeners' testimonials affirm the benefits of Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting, with respondents acknowledging the importance of receiving news and information in their native languages. This aspect makes understanding the news more accessible and aids in preserving and respecting their languages. The broadcasting's positive influence extends beyond linguistic communities, reaching marginalized and illiterate populations who solely rely on Radio Nepal for news, information, education, and entertainment.

Overall, the study's comprehensive evaluation showcases the effectiveness of Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting in informing, educating, persuading, and entertaining people from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The broadcasting's impact on the target audience is evident, and the positive feedback from respondents highlights the value of native-language and inclusive broadcasting in fostering a sense of unity and inclusivity in Nepal.

Conclusion

The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting service, targeting various linguistic communities across the country. Through a comprehensive listenership survey encompassing 17 out of the 21 languages in which Radio Nepal broadcasts its news and programs, the study successfully assessed the impact of multilingual broadcasting on its target audience.

The findings unequivocally demonstrate that Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting is highly effective. Listeners from diverse linguistic communities actively engage with the broadcasts, reflecting a strong interest and preference for news and programs in their native languages. This inclusivity is especially important for marginalized and illiterate populations who heavily rely on Radio Nepal as their primary source of information, education, and entertainment.

The study highlights that multilingual broadcasting has fostered a sense of unity and inclusivity among different linguistic communities. The availability of news and programs in their languages allows them to understand the content more easily, contributing to language preservation and respect. The positive listenership trends indicate that Radio Nepal's efforts to reach out to various linguistic communities are successful, even amidst the presence of numerous media options in the digital age.

However, the study also uncovers certain concerns voiced by listeners. Respondents suggested extending the allocated time for broadcasting in different languages to accommodate more news bulletins and programs. Additionally, they emphasized the need for more locally relevant content while ensuring the inclusion of national news and events. Respondents' suggestions for improved presentation are valid, as an engaging and appealing

presentation is crucial in attracting and retaining listeners in the competitive media landscape.

To enhance the effectiveness of multilingual broadcasting, respondents advocated for the incorporation of more languages into Radio Nepal's broadcasts, ensuring a broader representation of linguistic communities.

In conclusion, Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting is a commendable initiative that has effectively connected with diverse linguistic communities, providing them with vital information and entertainment in their native languages. By addressing listeners' suggestions and continuously striving for improvement, Radio Nepal can strengthen its position as a vital national broadcaster, contributing to national unity, language preservation, and community engagement. Embracing the cultural diversity of Nepal through inclusive broadcasting will further reinforce the station's significance and relevance in the evolving media landscape.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations can be made to further improve and strengthen Radio Nepal's multilingual broadcasting:

Continuous Quality Improvement: Despite positive feedback on content and presentation, Radio Nepal should engage in continuous quality improvement efforts to ensure the highest standards of broadcasting.

Enhanced Engagement: Radio Nepal can further engage with its audience through interactive programs, discussions, and participatory content, encouraging active listener involvement.

Increased Coverage: To reach even more linguistic communities and marginalized populations, Radio Nepal should explore ways to expand its coverage and accessibility, particularly in remote areas.

Diverse Content: Broadcasting can diversify its content to cater to various interests and preferences within linguistic communities, ensuring a broader appeal.

Language Preservation: Radio Nepal can actively contribute to language preservation efforts by incorporating traditional cultural elements and promoting linguistic diversity.

Regular Surveys: Conducting periodic surveys and audience feedback assessments can provide valuable insights into the evolving needs and preferences of listeners, guiding future content planning.

By implementing these recommendations, Radio Nepal can continue to be a vital national broadcaster, serving as an effective medium for information dissemination, cultural preservation, and community engagement across Nepal's linguistic landscape

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