

## Chapter V

### 5.1 Shumang Leela: Change, Acceptance and Prospects

Shumang Leela is termed as a form of an integral traditional media, which is very popular in the Meitei Society, nurtured by the common people who have a taste of it in a simple way and yet it is the most effective medium to reach out to the target audience through its creative performance without losing its entertainment values. Since the origin of Shumang Leela, this art form has come across various phases of the society and has always extended its interest in reflecting the society, along with its sense of humor.

The Shumang Leela presentation has varied since its origin, during the early period; the props used by the artiste are limited. The artiste used the stick as a source of elements such as horse, elephant, etc. additional used of props could be observed such as table, two chairs a flower vase and telephone sword or spear were the elements used as a prop. There is no screen in Shumang Leela. With the evolution of time the utilization of props had increased such as used of guns, mobile phone etc.

A huge wave of modification was made in the journey of Shumang Leela with the incorporation of modern technology, in terms of costume, dialogue and presentation. The Shumang Leela is not able to stick to its own originality with the evolving changes in the society, the influences of theatrical form accustom by the school of the institution and individual gave a change to this art form. Broadcast of films through televisions and other modern modes of entertainment have made the task more competitive. The Shumang Leela has replicated its approach like cinema, the influence of Bollywood has brought a new wave to the Meitei society where the audience is inducing to this medium and perceived it in every way.

The user of more sophisticated music and sound instruments and techniques has made the plot more realistic such as the background score of the gun firing, sounds of animal, humming of birds, thunder, moving vehicles, airplanes, and water movement.

The sound effects are given during the climax scene, opening and closing of door, etc. Dholak, Krital and Ramtal were used as a musical instrument in the early period. At present, the music orchestra used in the Shumang Leela consists of tabla, flute, harmony, keyboard, guitar, Marcus, violin, organ, mandolin, drum. Loudspeakers are installed at the venue to have more sound clarity and audible for the audience, through the used of a microphone which is dangled at the performance space. Earlier one or two lamps or patromax was dangled from the poles assemble at the centre of the performance space but it have been replaced by tube lights.



Fig: 5.1 The orchestra of the Shumang Leela seated beside the stage of the performance. Photo Credit: Thokchom Roshini

There was no set up of stage for a Shumang leela play earlier, it is performed in space of the courtyard, open playground or mandap of a temple surrounded by the audience leaving only the space of the performance, but today, most of the performance space have a proper stage set up, which consist of an area of 10/12 to 15/20 and height of 3 feet. Theories has been established according to the context of presentation style, according to Brijit Ngangomba, one of the eminent director's of Shumang Leela, has divided the Shumang space into sixteen sections; the sections were dived into strong areas, weak areas, romantic, etc. When an actor enters the performance space he should take a semi- circular part to meet the other actor and delivered the dialogue. His exist should complete the circle. The structure of the stage consists of theater-in-the-round or arena theatre (also referred as central staging), in which the stage is the centre with the audience surrounded on all the sides and it is commonly rectangular. The microphones are left hanging from the bamboo poles which lay parallel across the above portion of the stage, just a few inches above the actor's head. The electric bulbs also dangle in the center of the stage along with the other four corners



Fig: 5.2 The stage of the Shumang Leela, microphone are dangle from the pole above the stage along with the electric bulbs. **Photo Credit: Thochom Roshini Devi**

Initially, during the early period of Shumang Leela, the artist had to travel by cycle for almost 50/60 miles for performance; they had to carry their props along with them. They have to start since early morning for the show to reach the venue on time due to lack of public transportation, today it has been replaced by other modes of transportation.

The Shumang Leela troupes from the rural areas have also shifted their offices at Imphal areas in rented rooms. The first troupe that was shifted was Meitei Leima Jatra Cum Drama Association at Paona International Market. The artist of the troupes practiced their play at their respective offices. Each of the troupes has its governing bodies which consist of Secretary, President, and Cashier etc.

The funding of the monthly rent is paid from contributions made by the artists and through the performance fee. The troupe has to pay around 6-7 thousand for the

script, the troupes hired its own script writer and director, the directors also receives its share of contribution to the play.

But still the troupe, face a hardship in financing it due to inflation, increased of director fees, the writer fees, travel expenses, costume and make up, monthly rent of the office, hoarding and set up for the office musical and sound equipments, etc.

The makeup used by the artist consists of natural ingredient such as powder, zinc, shoot, sandalwood paste, vermilion, mustard oil, today, there has been more upgrade in makeup more cosmetic are used by the Nupi Sabi, the artist puts their own make up by taking up training courses, workshop to make the artist look more appropriate to the demanding role. The costume of the historical play used by the artist wears simple with traditional attire, male actor wears dhoti and Kurta while the female actors wear the traditional outfit of Meitei women, depending upon the trend of the society in today's world the costume makes the play more realistic, reflecting the society. The costume and the approach of the play show a great influence on western culture and eastern culture. Male actors' wears casual outfits such as jeans, shirt and also blazer and suits while the female actors (Nupi Sabi) also wear modern outfits along with the traditional attire. In the present trend, the costume for the female artist are sponsored by the small scale handloom firms such as Indrani handloom, Ketawn, Ibemhal collection etc. as for their own promotion purpose. The hairstyle and the costume depict the current fashion of the society, which is in fact the imitation of the western country and a big influence of the Korean culture.

By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, there was a big impact of Korean culture in the Meitei society, due to the conflict situation of the region, Bollywood was banned in the State by the insurgent groups. The Manipuri digital films and albums made a huge entry for the audience; it was more commercialized marking its replacement of Bollywood. The youngsters watch other mainstream foreign film and serial, Korean film and serial became a trend to the youth. It was also well reflected in the Shumang Leela plays.

The dialogue and the script of the play show a great influence on western culture and Bollywood culture, such as Ema (mother) and Pabung (father) have been replaced by dad and mom, Khura/Kaka by uncle, Ene/Nene by aunty. Even the names of the characters are found using the name of Hindu and western names, used by English language in the dialogue on various occasions. Later, after some restriction imposed by indigenous organization and the insurgency groups the script writers have stick to the originality of the vernacular language.

With the raging popularity of radio and television the prospect of Shumang Leela was more expanded. The scope of reaching to more people could be achieved, apart from showing a live performance it had gained its popularity through the various modes of the medium. The first Shumang Leela play aired on the radio was Heikru Hidongba in the year 1964, since then it had been aired as a radio program scheduled for the rural development on the weekend 6:45 pm and also it is aired on Sangai channel at weekdays 12 pm -12:30 pm. The Doordarshan Kendra Imphal had also broadcast the Shumang Leela on television, even broadcast in the private cable operators ISTV (Information Service Television) and Impact Television daily which is the leading cable operators of Manipur. Manipuri films have also produced many films made from the adaptation of the Shumang Leela story, example: Eegi Mahao, Mantri Dolansana, Pizza, Leikang Thambal, Liklai, etc. Shumang Leela play can also be accessed at our convenient modes through the internet at any globe of the world and anytime. The platform of Shumang Leela is able open to various channels through the various modes of modern media through mobile phones, CDs and DVDs. The exposure and its means of gaining popularity have increased rapidly.

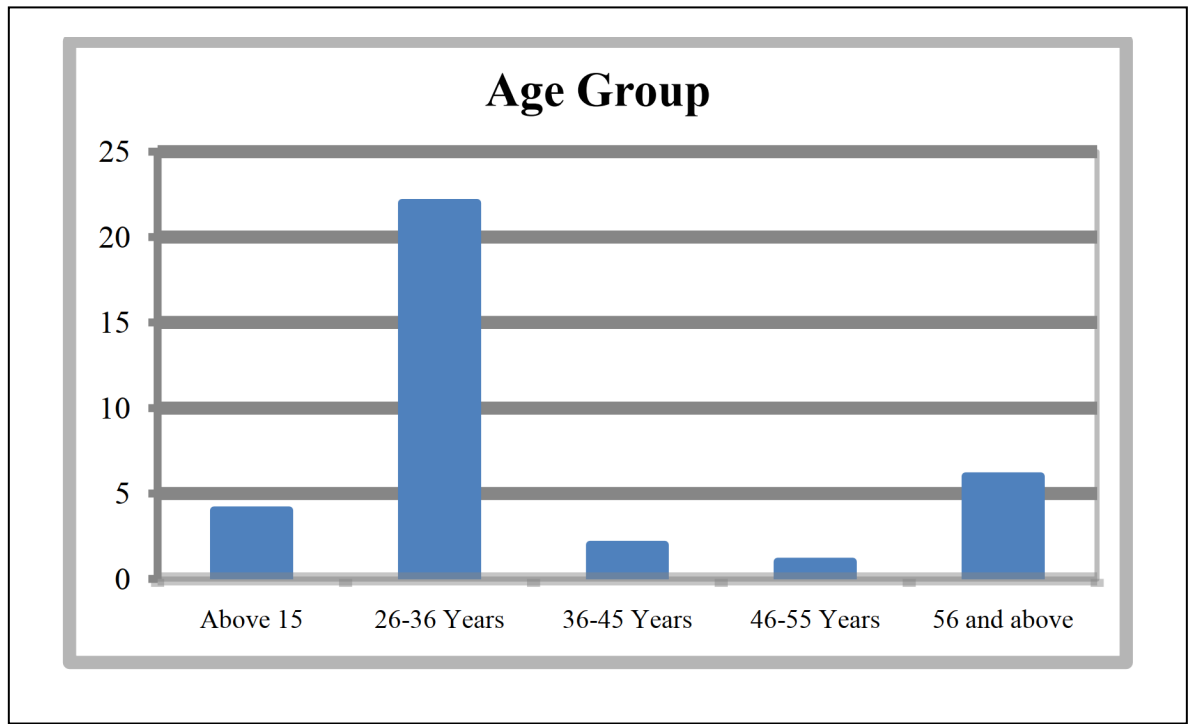
The overall publics are the audience of the Shumang Leela. When it comes to entertainment in Manipur, Shumang Leela is the best and effective tool with the right component in entertaining the people. It is performed during the harvesting season such that, the audience could enjoy their leisure time and forget their hardship. This traditional media are observed by every individual by the state in every community,

the most important ingredient of this medium is the involvement of the comic character some of the well known artists are Oja Hemanta known as Tolhan, Guna, Santosh, Manglem, etc.

The popularity of Shumang Leela always maintains its placed throughout its ages and till date the taste of Shumang Leela could be seen among the audience. It is very much important to know the acceptance and the support of the public. A study has been conducted to gain more knowledge and feedback from the Shumang Leela viewer, a sample of 35 respondents was taken with a set of question regarding on the Shumang Leela play and the nature of the approach. The sample consists of male and female from the age group of 15 years till 55years and above. The study was conducted on the audience of Shumang Leela both from rural and urban areas; and it focuses more on the youth, to know the acceptance and support of the public, the responsible factors of Shumang Leela and the future prospects of Shumang Leela.

The Age Group of the sample:

**Fig: 5.3**

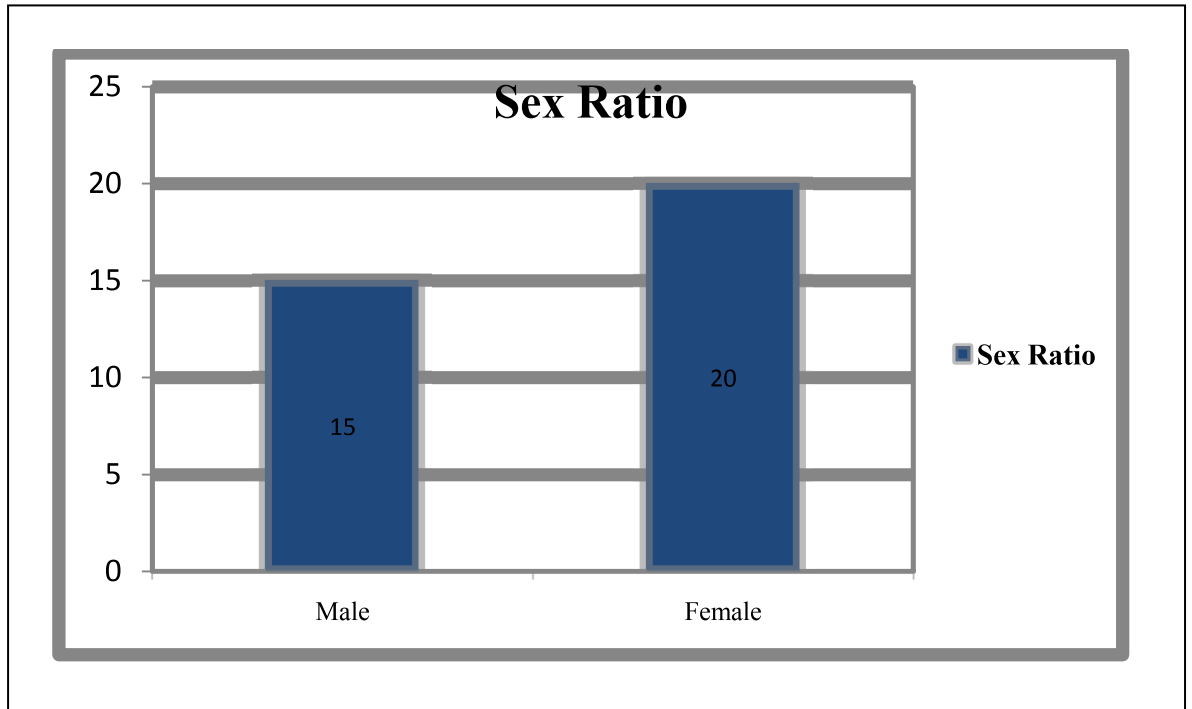


The chart represents the demographic structure of the age group conducted for the study. It represents the age group who are more interested in Shumang Leela. According to the study it shows that the age group of 26-36 years watches Shumang Leela more than the rest of the age group.



The Sex ratio of the sample is given below:

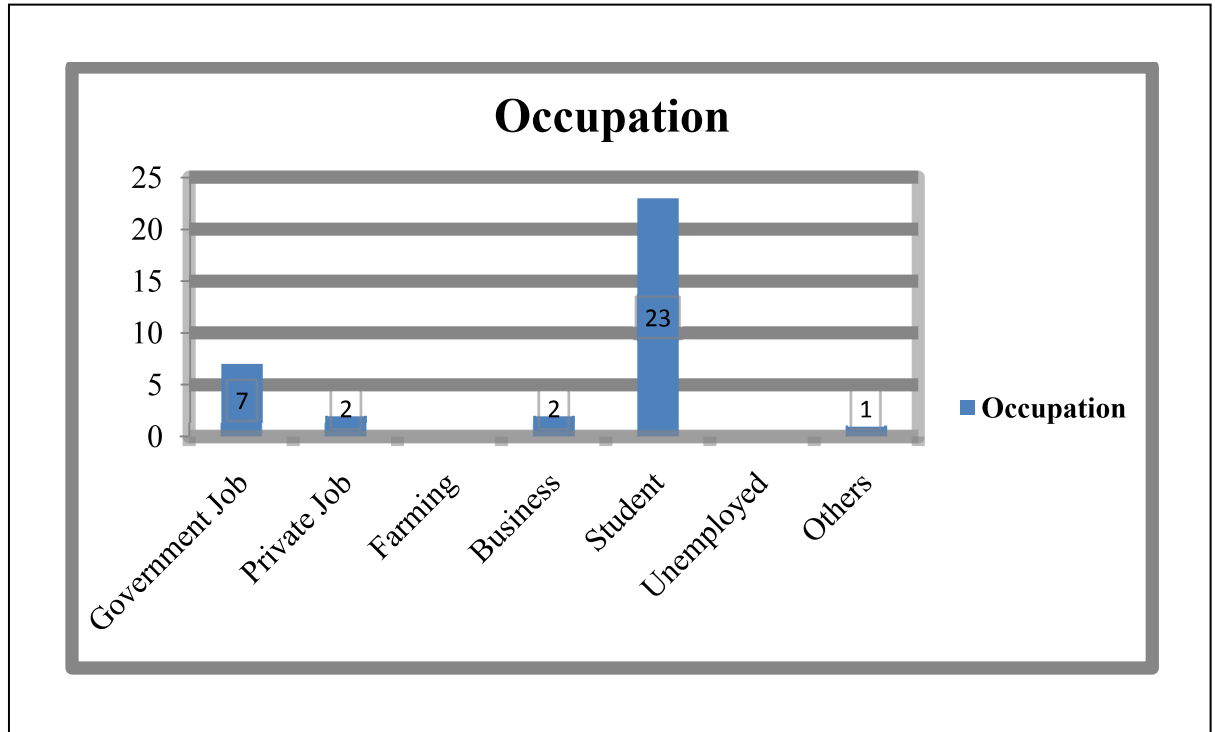
**Fig: 5.4**



The overall sex ratio of the sample is presented through the help of this column. It is found out that the female ratio has more interest on Shumang Leela and response more in these traditional media.

The study was classified according to the occupation of the sample, so that the study could find out the group of people who have more interest in Shumang Leela.

**Fig: 5.5**



The above chart indicates the occupation of the Sample. It shows that students watch this art form more than the other group of audience. It also shows that the youth are more influential to this art form.

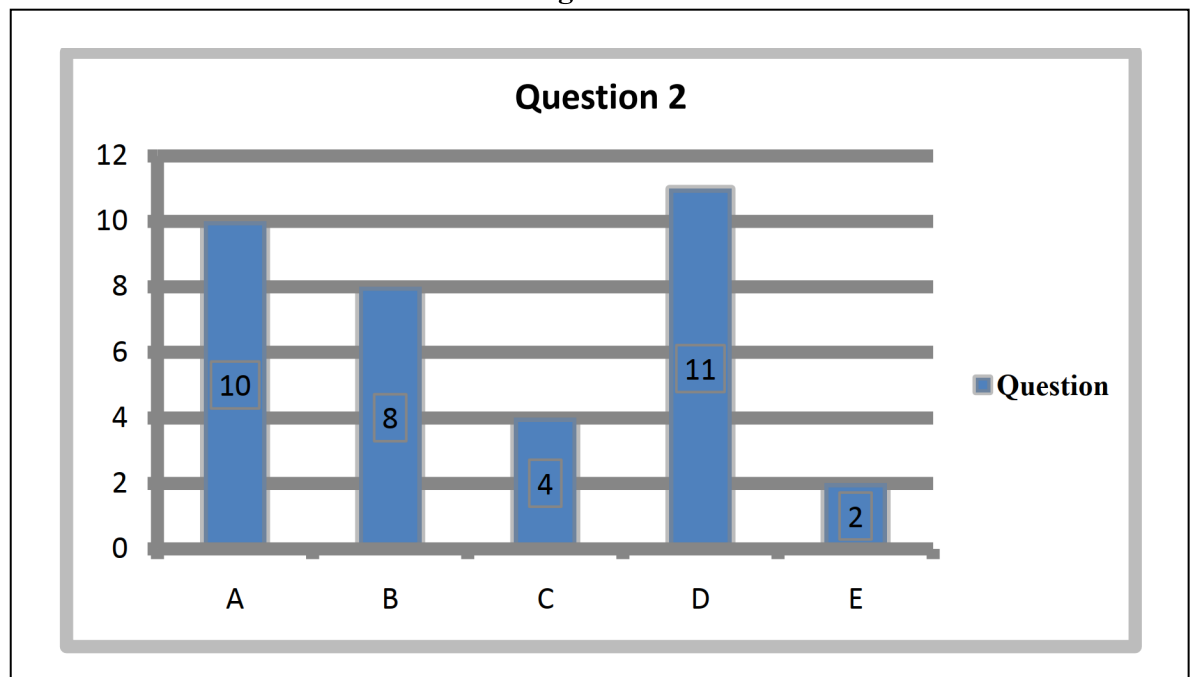


2) Why do you like Shumang Leela?

- a) Because, it entertains me
- b) I have loved the acting, and the plot of the play
- c) My family watched it so I was exposed to it since childhood.
- d) Part of the traditional festival as an entertainment

Other reason,

Fig: 5.7

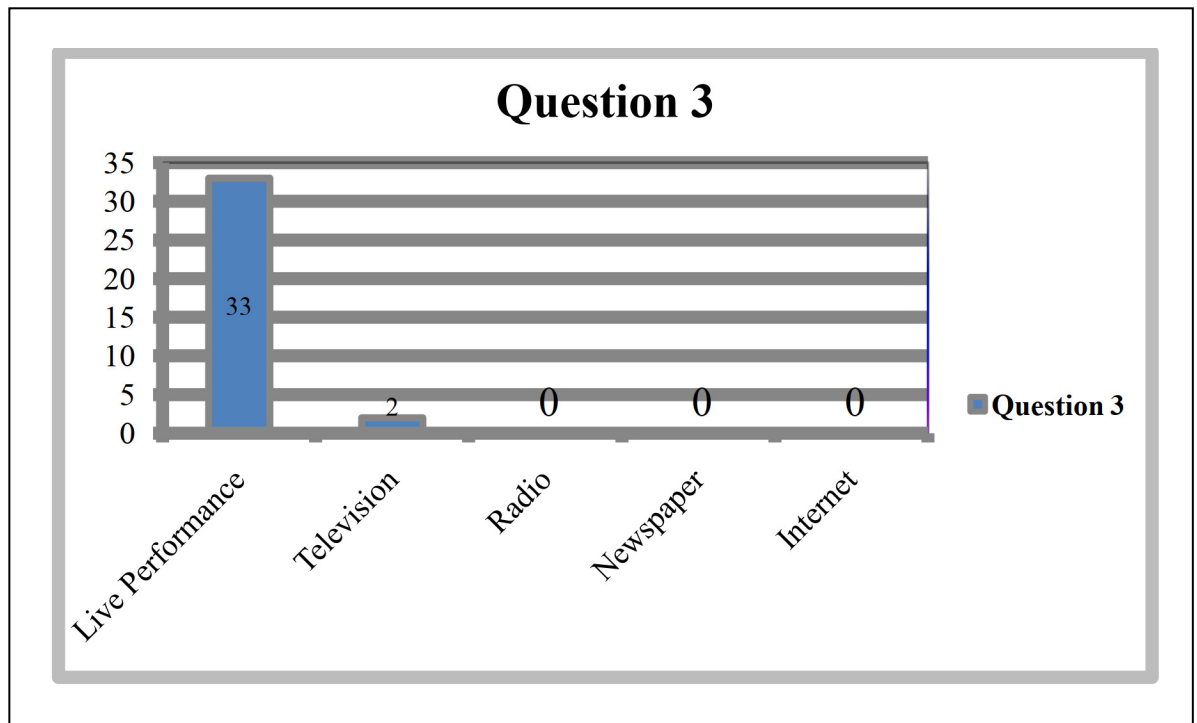


The column represents the opinion of the respondents on the basis of why they like Shuman Leela, 31 percent of the respondents have opined that they like Shumang Leela as they believed; it is part of the traditional festival as an entertainment. 29 percent like it because it entertains them, while 23 of the respondents like Shumang Leela as they love the acting and the plot of the play, 11 per cent of the respondents like it since they had been exposed to this media since childhood by the family and 6 per cent of the respondents have other reasons. Viewers prefer to watch the traditional

media performance because of its entertainment and drama value. Some respondent preference is affected by exposure of such media from their childhood they believe that it have been handed down for generations and this medium is a part of the Manipuri culture.

- 3) How did you come to know about this traditional art form? Through
- a) Live Performance
  - b) Television
  - c) Radio
  - d) Newspaper
  - e) Internet

**Fig: 5.8**

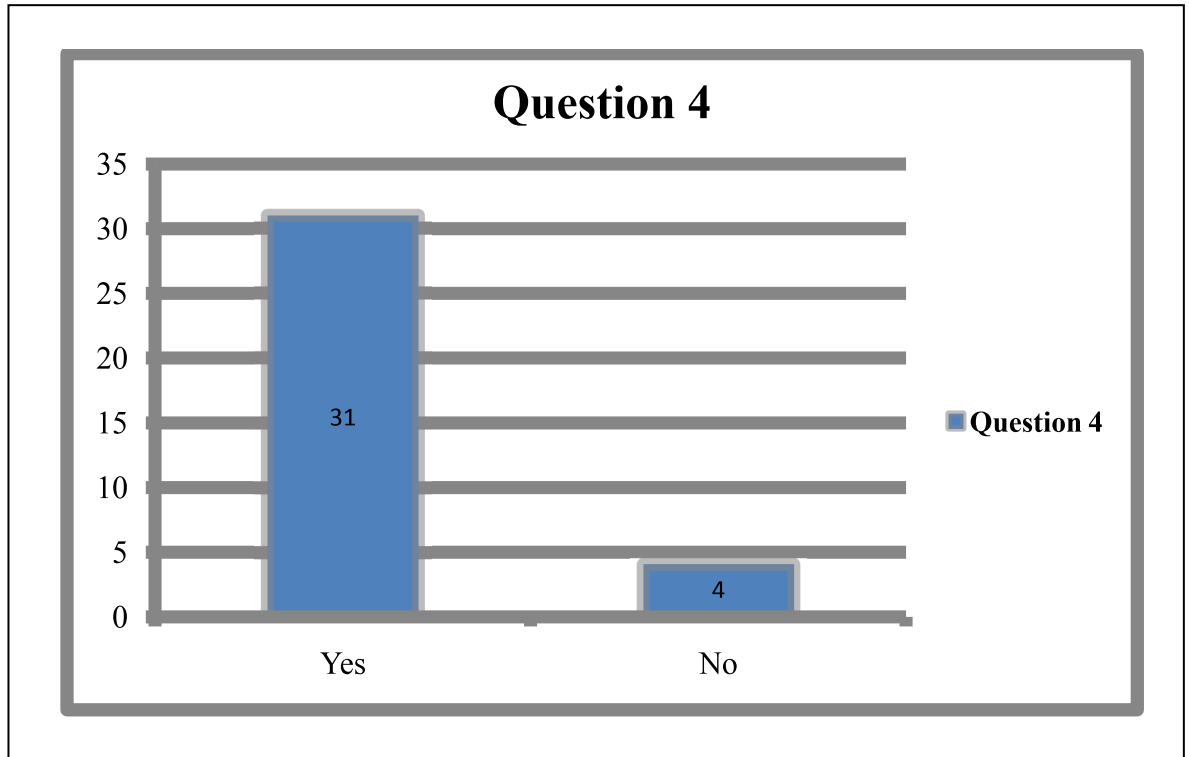


The column shows that 94 percent of the respondents have come to know about this art form through watching it as a live performance and they find a direct correlation between the regularity of performance and acceptance. Hence it shows the closeness of the medium towards the audience.

4) Does it motivate you?

- a) Yes                      b) No

**Fig: 5.9**



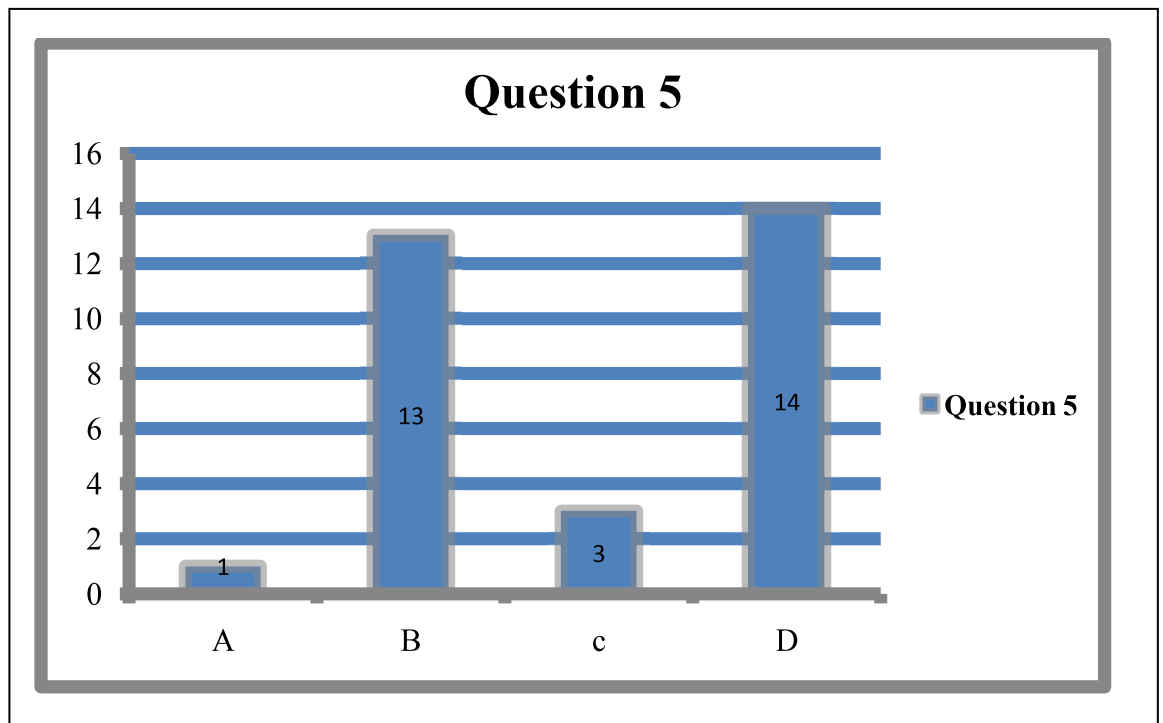
The chart shows that 88 percent of the respondents have been motivated by the Shumang Leela in various ways, making it an integral part of life.

5) If yes, how does Shumang Leela motivates you? ( If no, leave the question)

- a) It is simple to understand
- b) It highlights the important issues of the society
- c) It is entertaining and updates the current fashion trends in terms of costume and also the dialogue used in the play.
- d) The theme of the play is able to convey the message to all ages of people in the society

Other Reasons,

**Fig: 5.10**

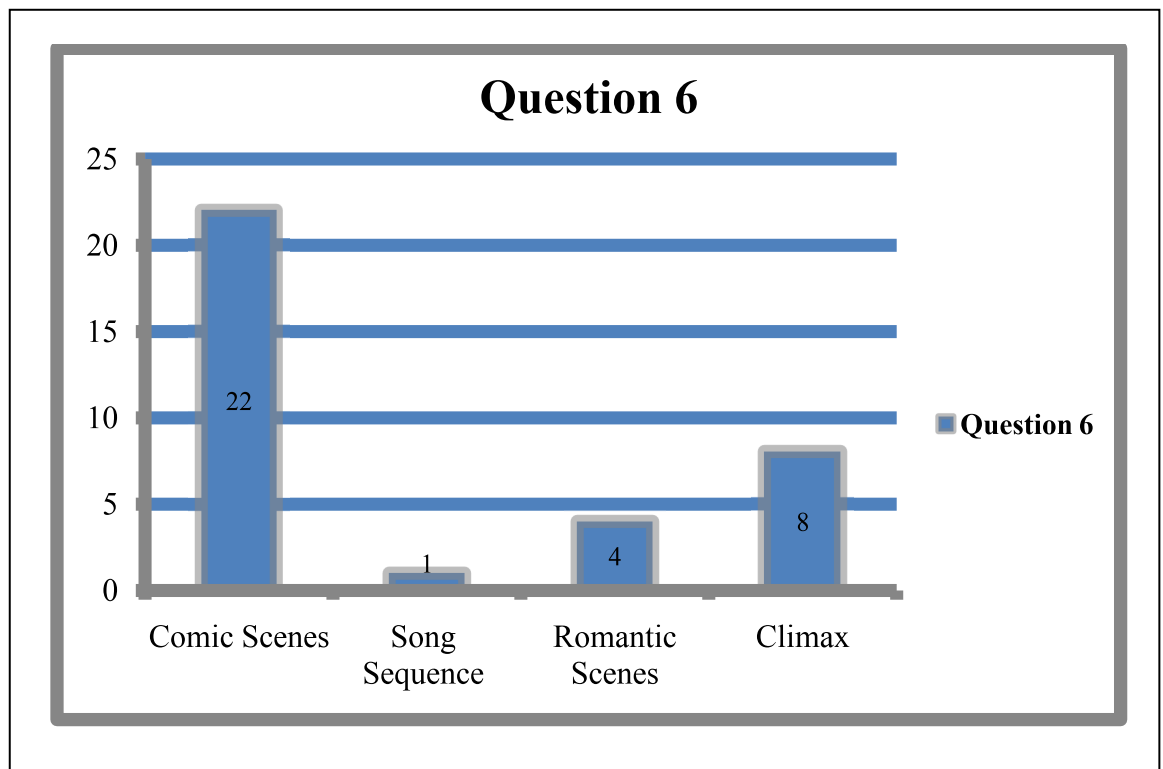


The column represents how Shumang Leela has motivated them, 40 per cent of the respondents have responded that the theme of the play is able to convey the message to all age of people in the society, 37 percent of the respondents have responded that it highlights the important issues of the society, 8 percent responds that it is entertaining and updates the current fashion trends in terms of costume and

also the dialogue used in the play. 2 percent responded that Shumang Leela is simple to understand.

- 6) Which part of the Shumang Leela performance you like the most?
- a) Comic scenes
  - b) Song sequence
  - c) Romantic scenes
  - d) Climax

Fig: 5.11



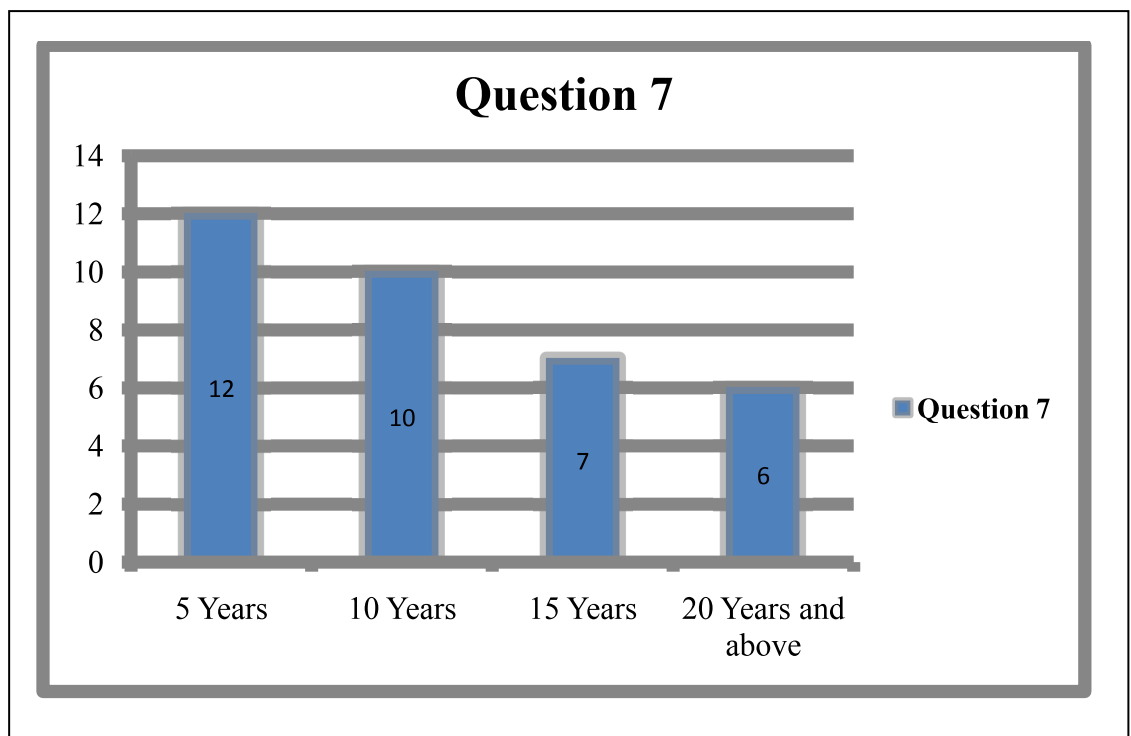
The chart represents that 64 percent of the respondent likes the comic scenes of the Shumang Leela play, while 22 percent of the respondents like the climax of the play, 11 percent likes the romantic scene and 2 percent of the respondents like the song sequence. It shows that the main ingredient of Shumang Leela survives till dated, as the audience still enjoys the humor made the play.



7) Since when did you start watching Shumang Leela?

- a) 5 years
- b) 10 years
- c) 15 years
- d) 20 years and above

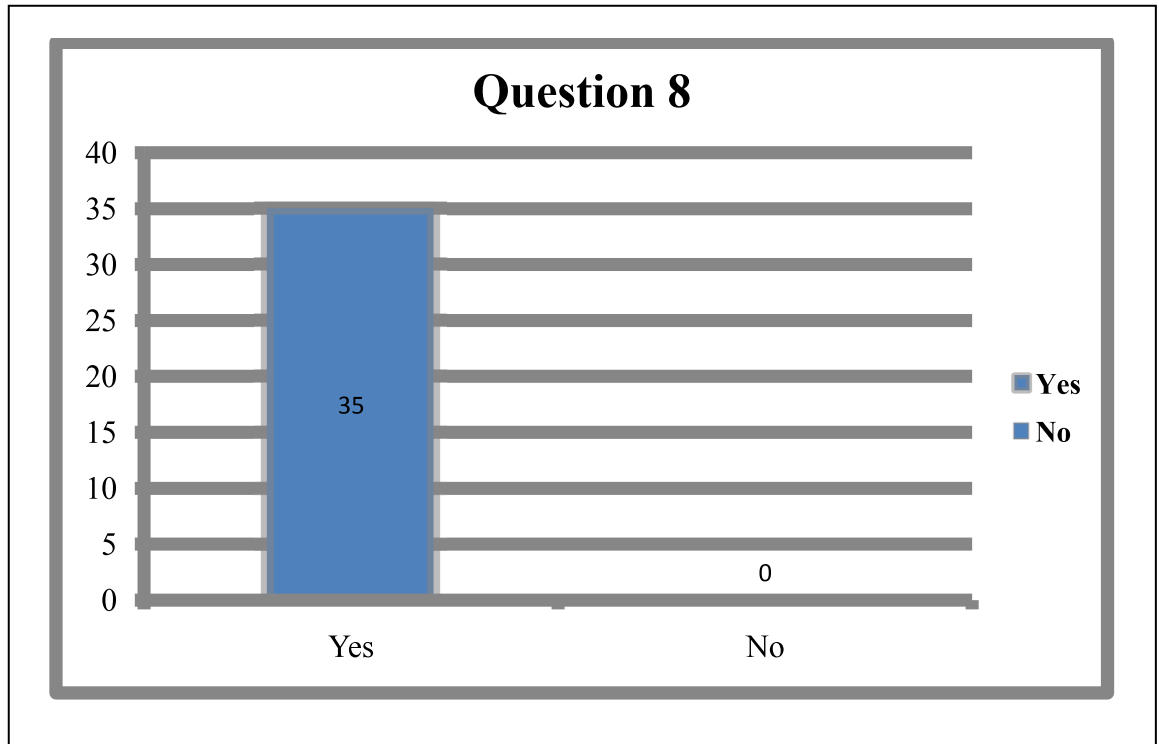
**Fig: 5.12**



The above column represent that 34 percent of the respondents have started watching Shumang Leela since the age of 5, while 29 percent have started watching Shumang Leela since the age of 10, as 20 percent of the respondents have watched since the age of 15 and 7 percent of it have started watching since the age of 20 and above.

- 8) Do you think that Shumang Leela as an art form or medium can reach out to the audience at the grassroots level?  
a) Yes      b) No

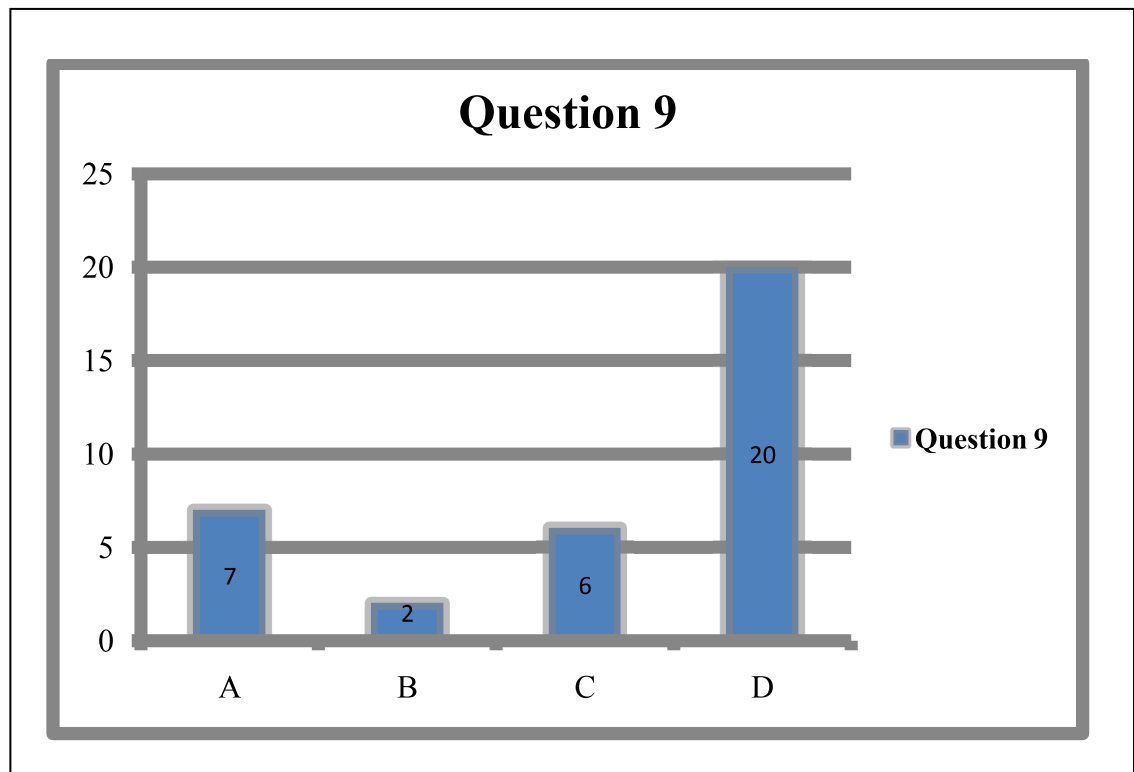
**Fig: 5.13**



The column that represents, all the respondents think that Shumang Leela as an art form or medium which can reach out to the audience at the grassroots level.

- 9) If Yes, why
- a) Shumang Leela is an integral traditional media, which is very popular in the Meitei society.
  - b) Shumang Leela has been nurtured by the common people who have a taste for it in a simple ways.
  - c) Most effective performance of reaching the audience, in terms of innovation and education
  - d) It can reach the target audience through its simple and creative performance without losing its entertainment values.
- Other reasons,

**Fig: 5.14**

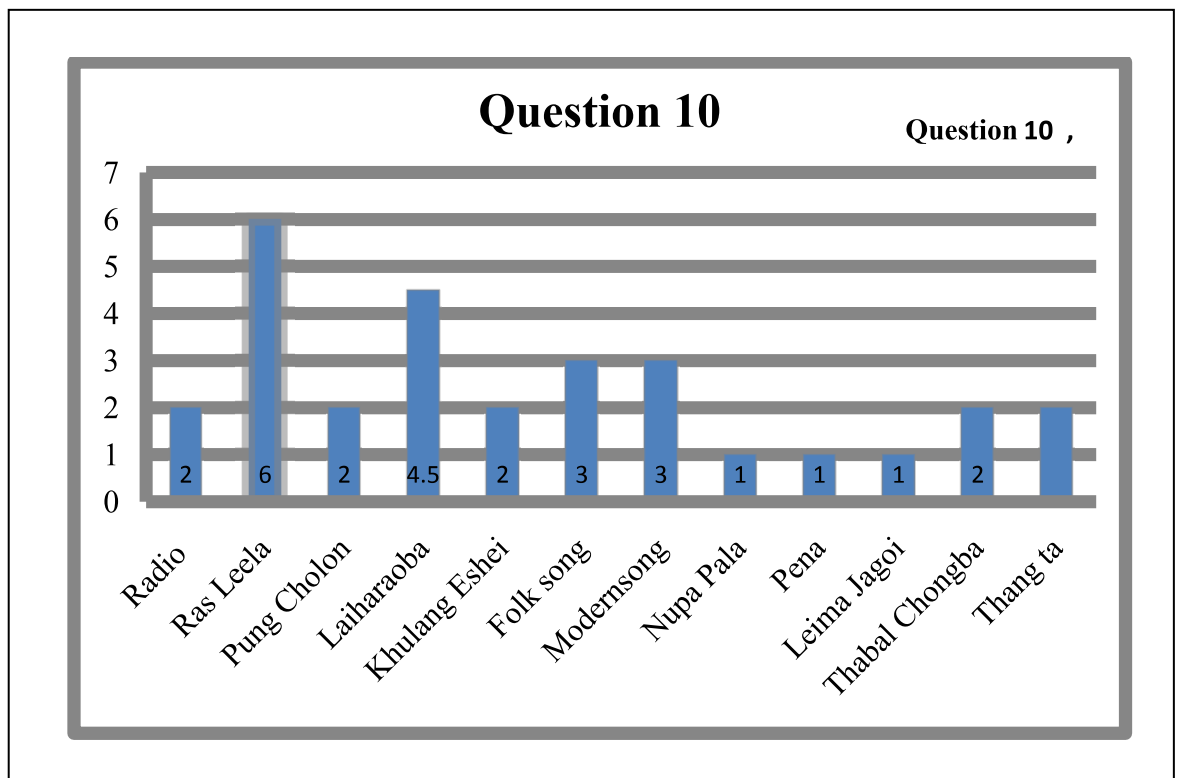


The 57 percent of the respondent's thinks that Shumang Leela as an art form which can reach out to an audience in grassroots level as it can reach the target

audience through its simple and creative performance without losing its entertainment values, 20 percent of the respondents thinks that it is the integral traditional media which is very popular in the Meitei society. 17 percent of it thinks that Shumang Leela is the most effective performance of reaching the audience, in terms of innovation and education and 6 percent of the respondents think that Shumang Leela has been nurtured by the common people who have a taste for it in a simple ways.

10) Name any types of Traditional Media/art form of Manipur that you know other than the Shumang Leela?

Fig: 5.15

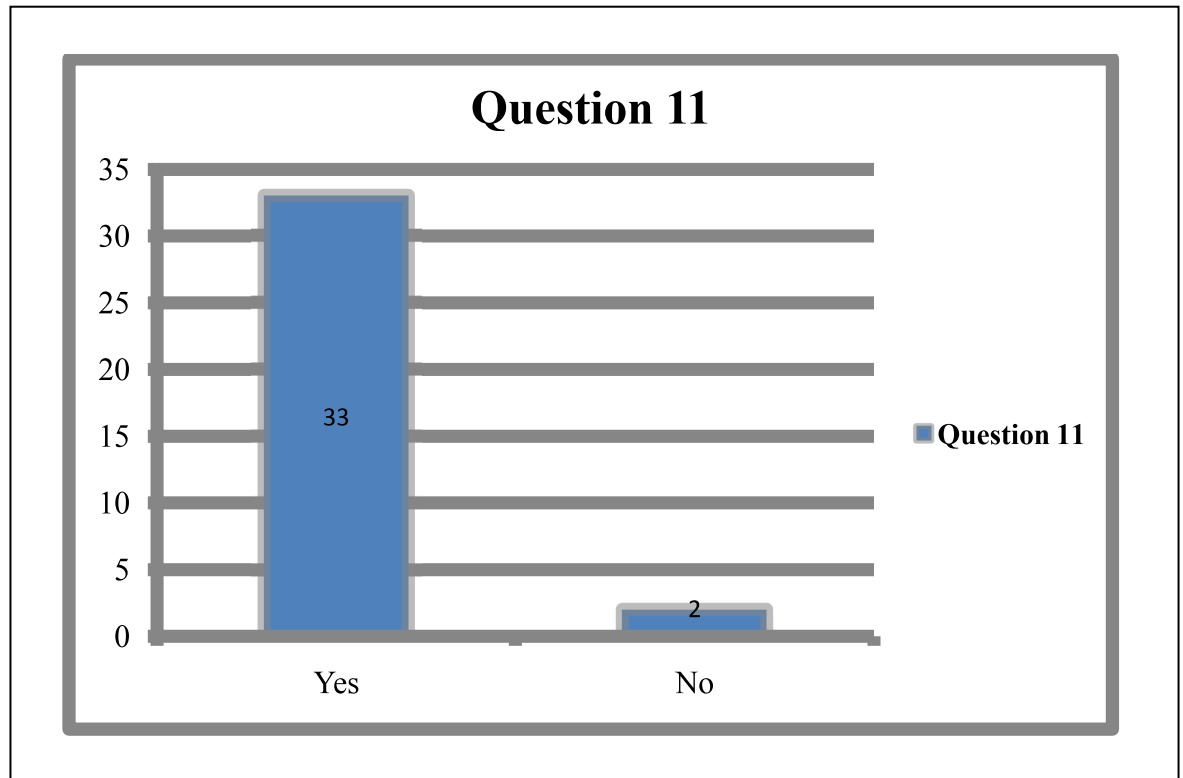


The name of some types of Traditional media or art form is mentioned by the respondents among it the most well know performance is Ras Leela, Laiharaoba, folk songs and modern songs.

11) Are you able to relate to Shumang Leela easily?

- a) Yes                      b) No

**Fig: 5.16**

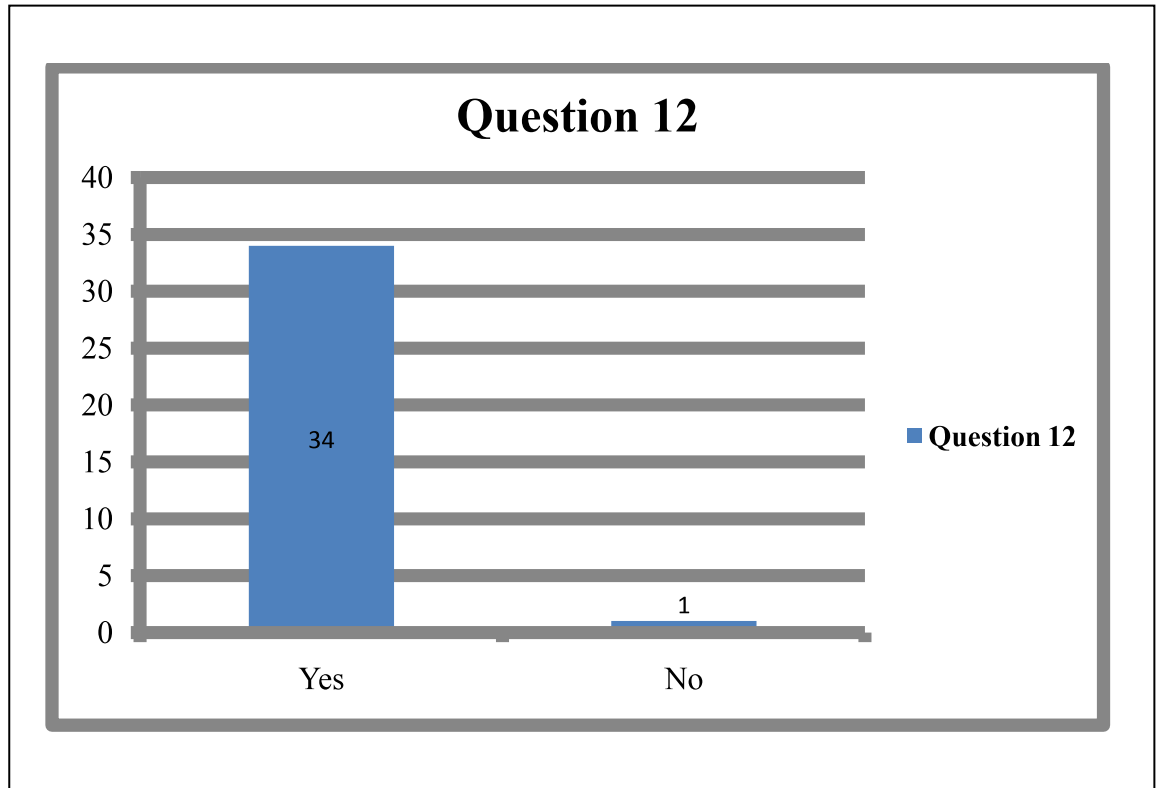


The above column shows that 94 percent of the respondents think that they can relate to Shumang Leela easily, and 6 per cent of the respondents are not able to relate.

12) Do you think Shumang Leela can address the important issues of Manipuri society?

- a) Yes                      b) No

**Fig: 5.17**

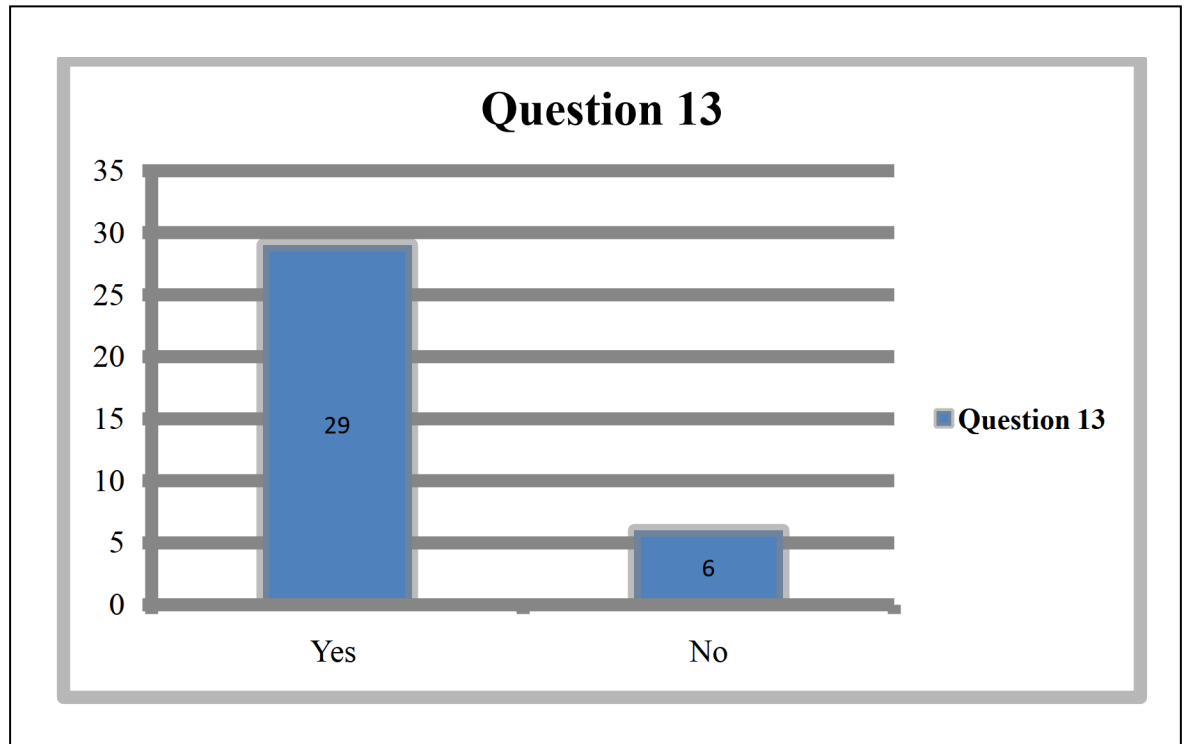


97 percent of the respondents think that Shumang Leela can address the important issues of the Manipuri Society while the rest of the 3 percent do not think so.

13) Do you think Shumang Leela is gaining its popularity despite stiff competition from other modern modes of entertainment?

- a) Yes            b) No

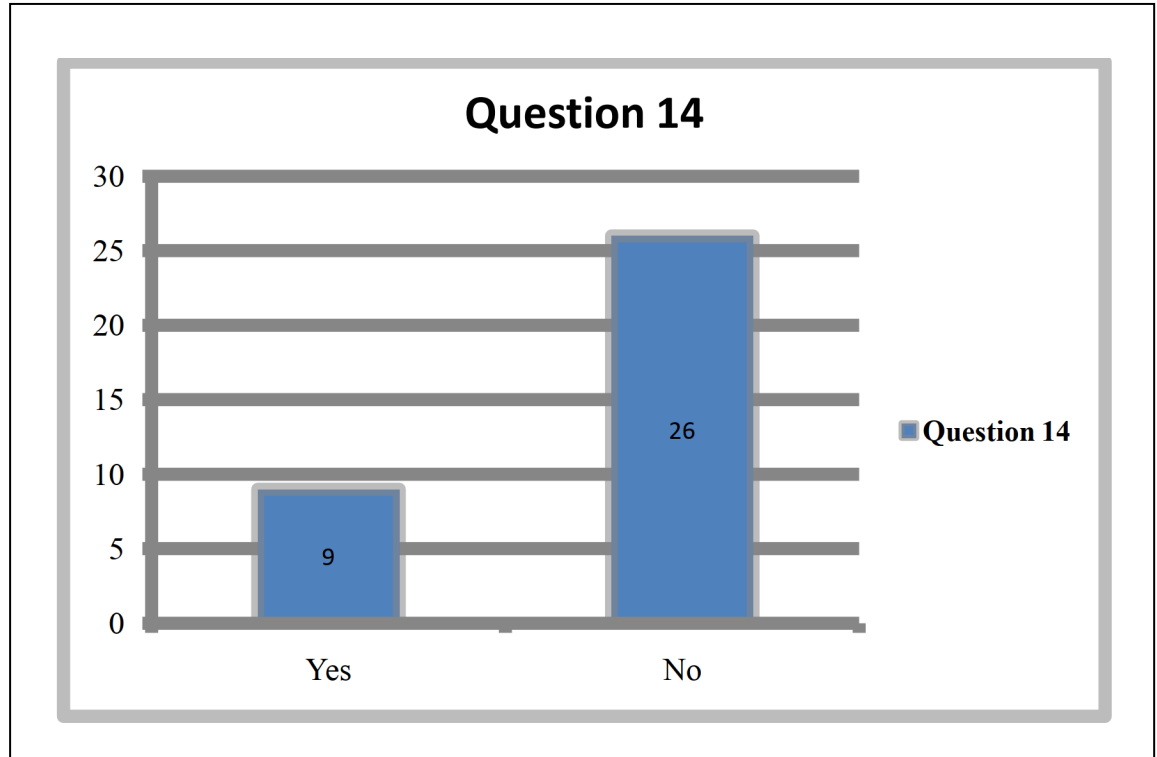
**Fig: 5.18**



The above column shows that 83 percent of the respondents think that Shumang Leela is gaining its popularity despite stiff competition from other modern modes of entertainment and the rest 17 percent thinks that the popularity of Shumang Leela cannot compete with the modern media.

- 14) Do you think that Shumang Leela has lost its popularity over the years?  
a) Yes      b) No

**Fig: 5.19**

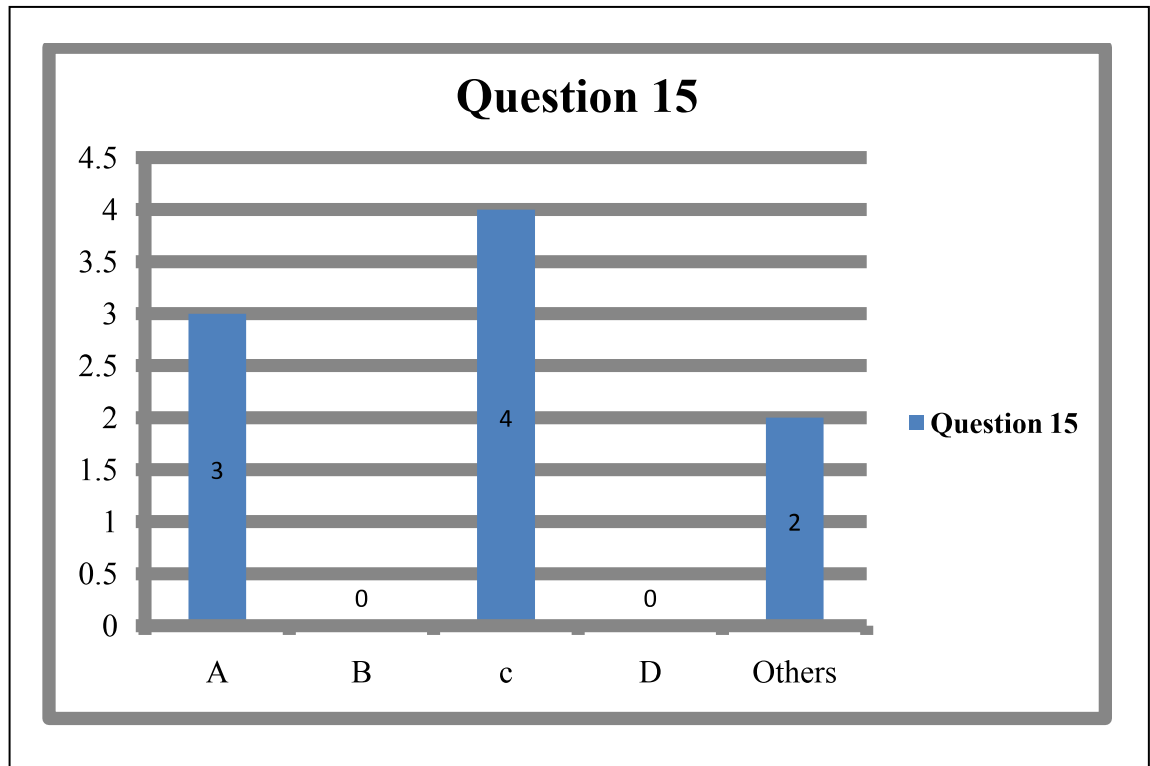


The column show that 74 the percentage of respondents think that Shumang Leela have not lost its popularity over the years, and 26 percent of the respondents thinks that it has lost its popularity.



- 15) If yes, Why do you think Shumang Leela has lost its popularity
- a) It cannot compete the other modern media
  - b) It is too tradition, no upgrade of the stage set up
  - c) Other modern media are more entertaining
  - d) Lack of socialized, due to busy schedule and less connection.
- Other reason,

**Fig: 5.20**

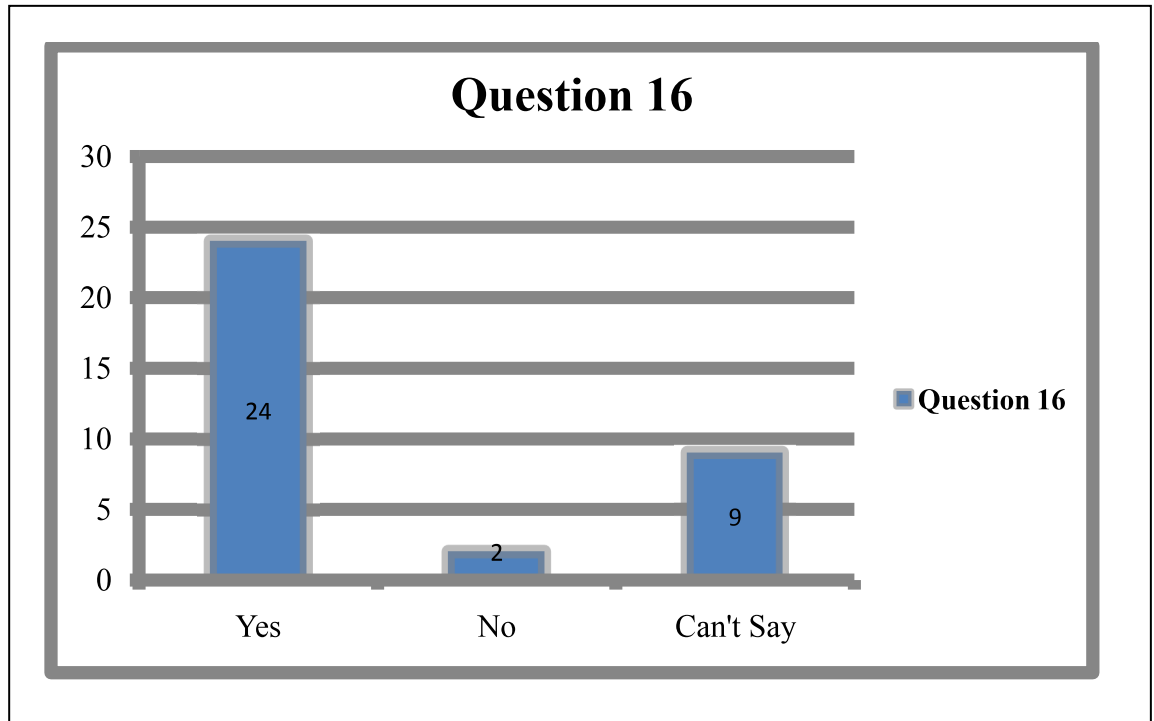


The above column represents the percentage of the respondents who thinks that Shumang Leela has lost its popularity.

16) Do you think Shumang Leela has been able to adapt or evolve with the changing times?

- a) Yes                      b) No                      c) Can't say

**Fig: 5.21**

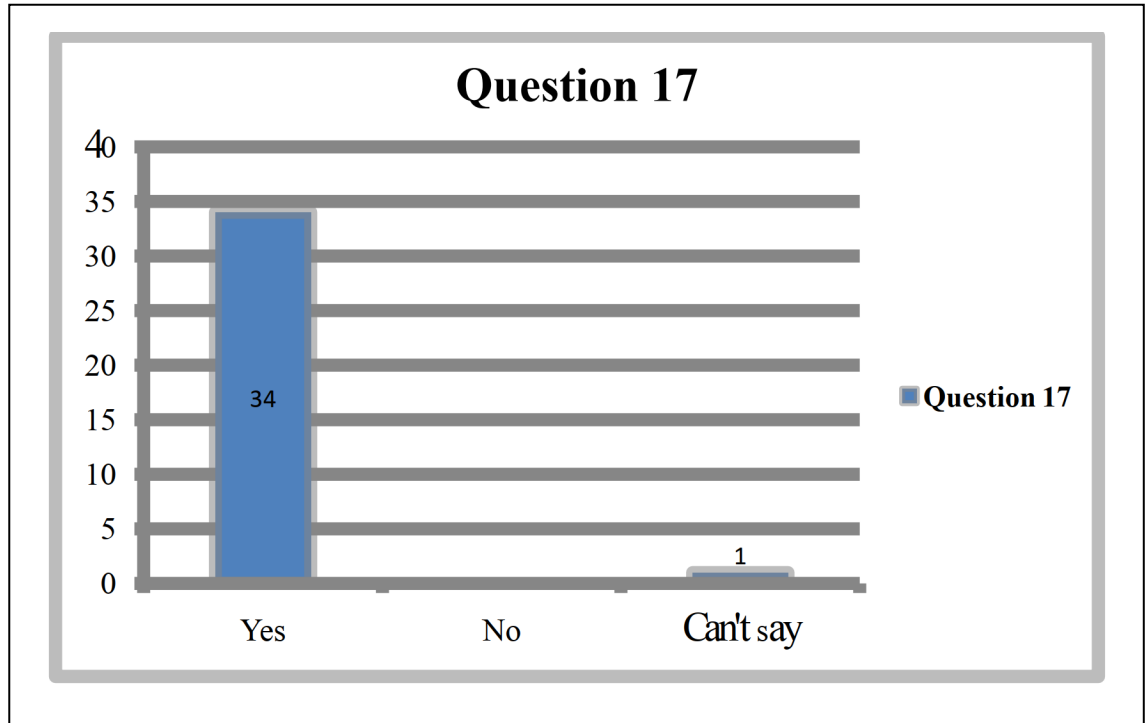


68 percent of the respondents think that Shumang Leela has able to adapt or evolve with the changes of time, while 26 percent of it can't say or decide if Shumang Leela is able to adapt or evolve and 6 percent of the respondents do not think that Shuman Leela has able to adapt or evolve with the changing times.

17) Do you think that Shumang Leela as an art form is effective/successful in highlighting social issues such as HIV/AIDS, leprosy, rural development and family planning?

- a) Yes            b) No            c) Can't say

**Fig: 5.22**

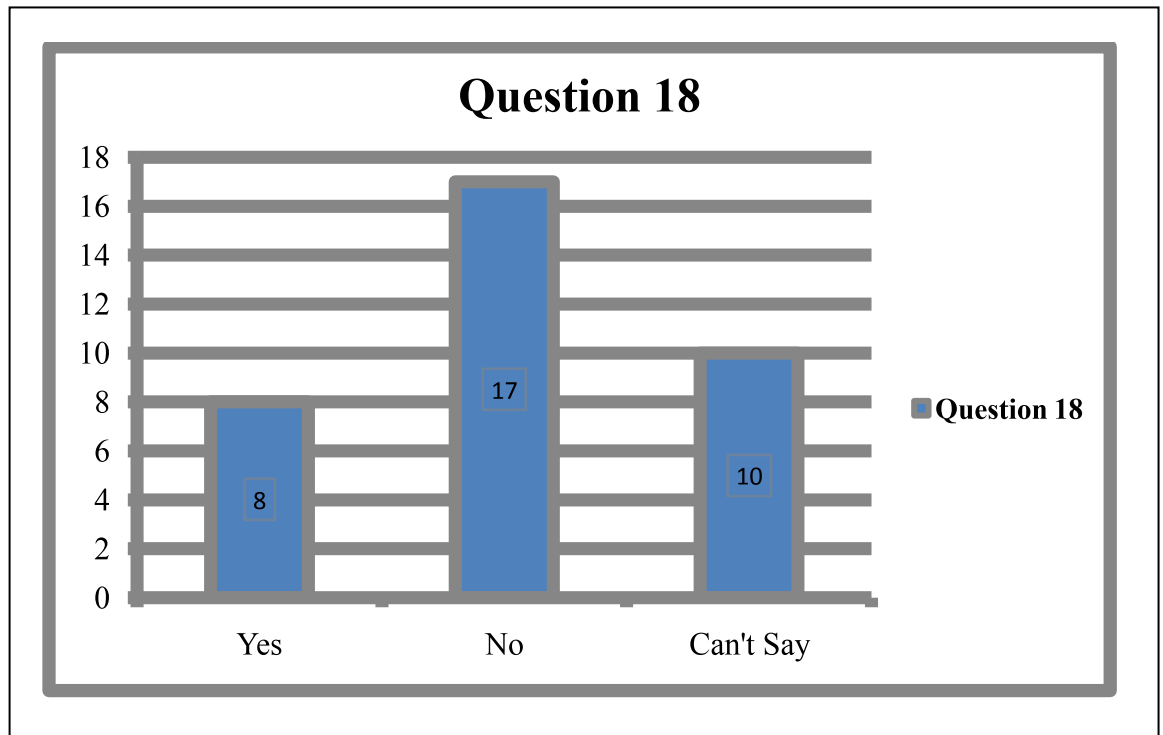


It shows that 97 percent of the respondents think that Shumang Leela as an art form is effective or successful in highlighting the social issues and 3 per cent are not able to say.

18) Do you think the costume used in the Shumang Leela play is degrading the cultural aspect of the society such as the Korean influence?

- a) Yes      b) No      c) Can't say

Fig: 5.23

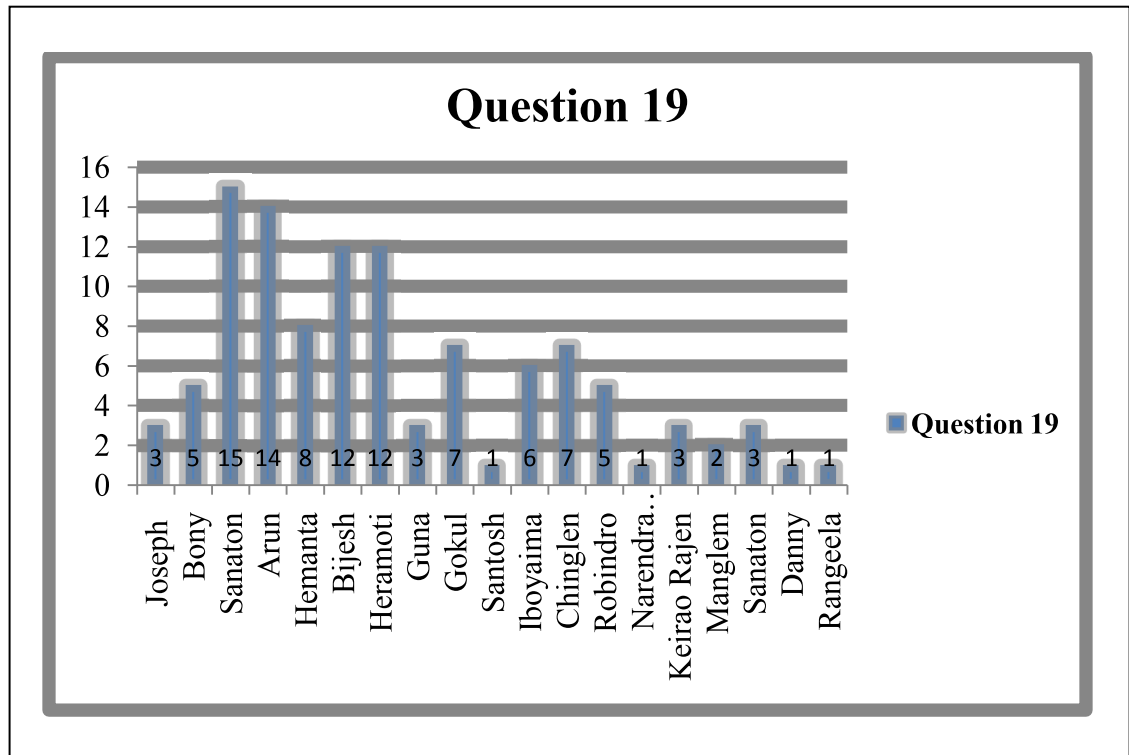


The column shows that 49 percent of the respondents, do not think that the costume used in the Shumang Leela has degraded the cultural aspect of the society, while 22 percent thinks that it do degrade the cultural aspects and 29 percent can't decide.

19) Name some of the present popular Shumang Leela actor male and female (Nupi Sabi)? Two male, two female actors, can also include comedian.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

Fig: 5.24

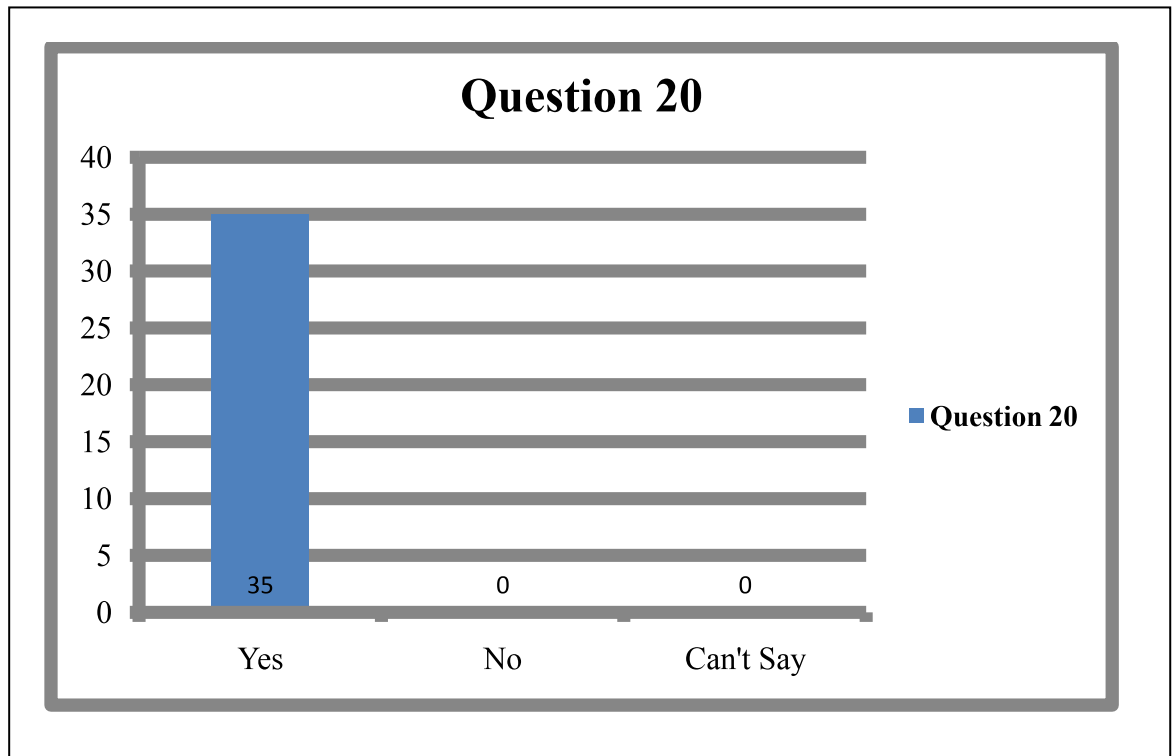


Here are some of the famous names of the Shumang Leela artiste, among them Sanaton, Heramoti, Bijesh, Robindro are the popular Nupi Sabi, while Hemata is the most popular comedian of Shumang Leela.

20) Do you think the government should take up certain steps to safeguard Shumang Leela for the future and generate some certain consideration for the Shumang Leela artist?

- a) Yes                      b) No                      c) Can't say

**Fig: 5.25**



The respondent thinks that the government should take up certain steps to safeguard Shumang Leela for its future prospect.