



Election Monitoring of TV Channels

News Releases

May 24 - June 14, 2014

In connection to the local elections of 2014, CRRC Georgia continues its media monitoring within the frameworks of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by the EU-UNDP program. The monitoring started on April 15 and will last until June 30, inclusive. Main evening news releases are monitored on the following channels: Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, Adjara TV, Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro, Kavkasia, TV3. This report contains the media monitoring results from May 24 through June 14.

Monitoring of main evening news releases on televisions revealed following key findings during this period:

- Majority of the channels prepared critical stories about the government and the officials. Negative attitude towards the government was more observed in the news releases of Rustavi 2. Such patterns were not that evidently observed on other channels.
- There was quite high rate of positive tone observed for the Prime Minister on most channels during this monitoring period, which was caused by his election activities, press conferences and official closure of the campaign.
- Most of the channels often covered the activities of election candidates. However, the election topic was discussed in a more general political context on Rustavi 2 and Maestro, and it was less focused on daily coverage of candidates.
- One of the topical issues for this period was the incident of Gardabani, which was reported by all the channels (except the Adjara TV). It is notable that this case was reported differently on various channels. After watching different news releases, the viewer would get different impression about what happened in Gardabani and why it happened. Some channels laid emphasis on political considerations and labeled the incident with political confrontation. Some channels provided neutral coverage and discussed several versions in the stories.

- Adjara TV allocated more time to the Batumi mayoral candidates, as before.

The monitored main evening news releases intensively reported the election events during this monitoring period. Campaigns and speeches of the candidates, election statement of the government and opposition parties, etc., many other actualities and important topics were covered in connection to the events taking place in the country. For example: May 26, Association Agreement and related details, foreign relations and official visits, court trials, press conference of the Prime Minister, NATO integration and MAP, marijuana decriminalization, viral meningitis, natural disasters in various regions of Georgia, world championship, etc.

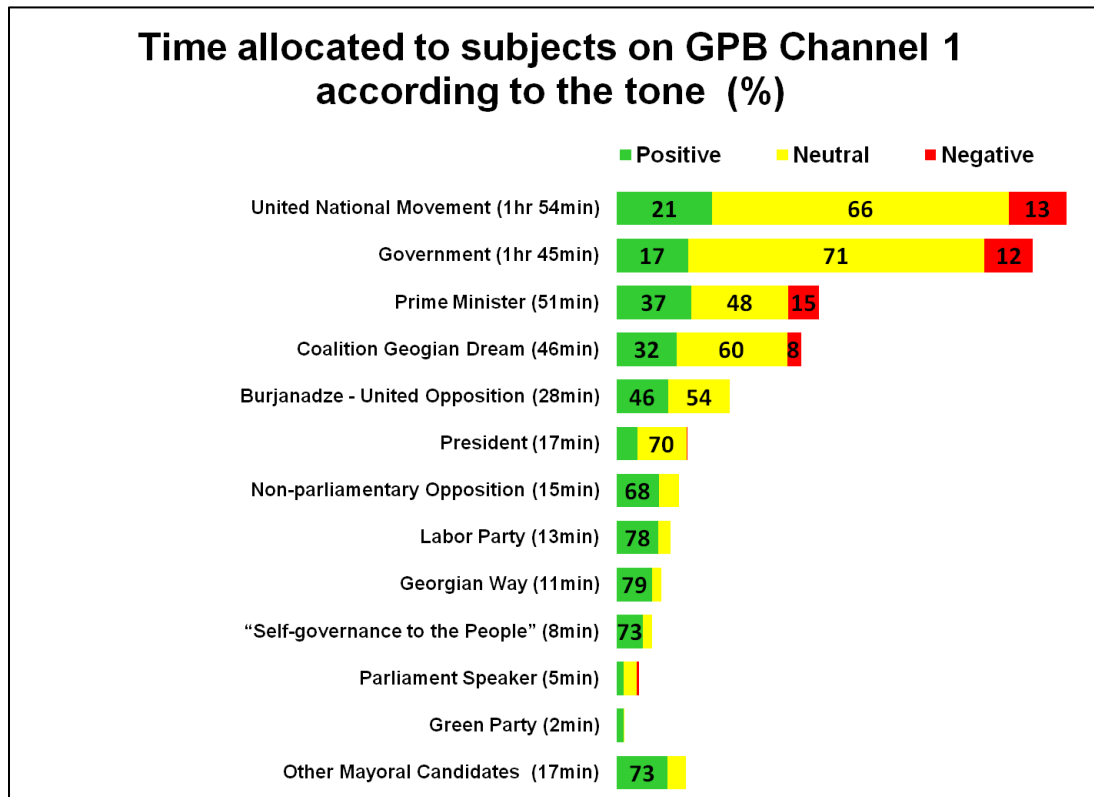
Channel One of the Public Broadcaster

Almost all the stories were balanced in the main evening news releases of the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster during the period from May 24 through June 14. Majority of the reports highlighted the opinions of the government, the opposition of experts as well. However, there were some cases in the election reports, where some particular parties were talking about the influence and the position of the other party was not presented. The stories broadcasted via the main news releases of the Channel One were mostly informative and analytical, and the delivered information was exhaustive. Court trials of the members of the former government were covered quite intensively. In addition, there were many stories about the visits of Georgian government and foreign diplomats.

The Gardabani incident was reported in a quite neutral way. The journalists said that there were several versions about what had happened – some explained the incident with political motivations, others – with ethnic ones. However, the stories also mentioned that it was just a trivial fight among the youth. Comments of the governor and the Gardabani candidate of the United National Movement were shown. Besides, opinions of the representatives of the Coalition Georgian Dream and the parliamentary minority were also reported, and opinion of the local population was shared as well. In total, the story was quite balanced and neutral. The viewer had an opportunity to hear the opinions of various parties.

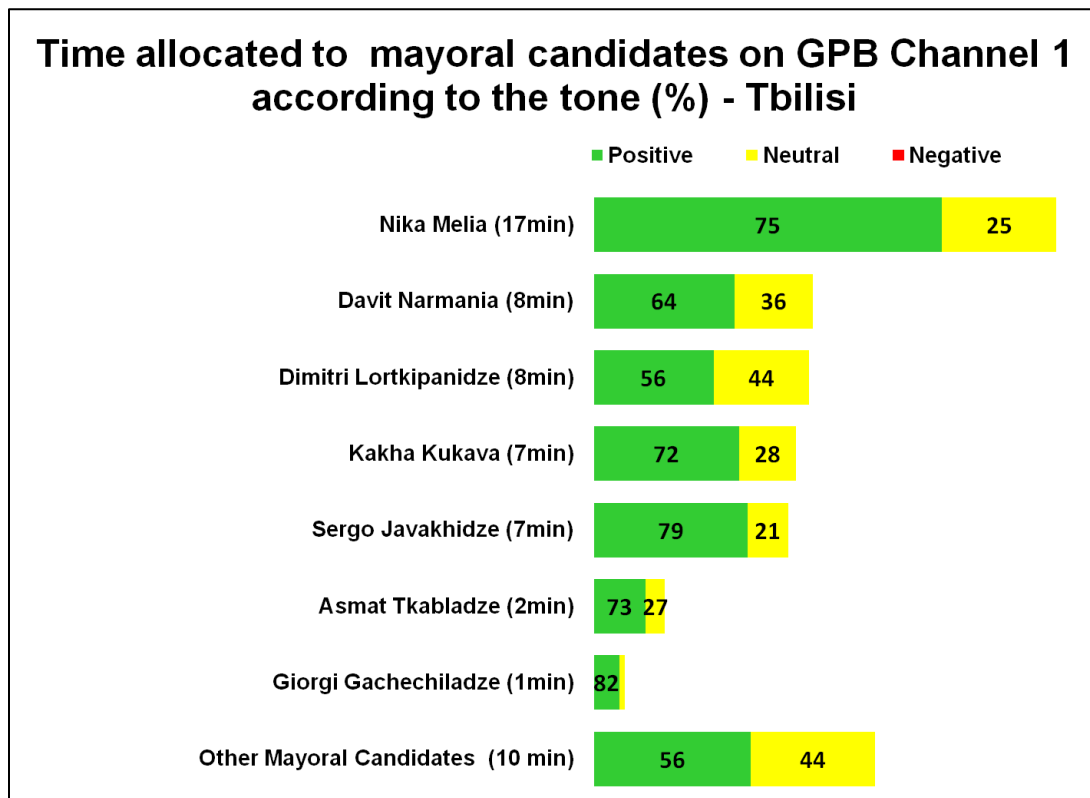
Journalists of main evening news releases of the Channel One are quite neutral, and there is no bias observed in their texts ever. However, the programs broadcasted at weekends are slightly different, where the host's text was a bit more judgmental.

As for the time allocated to the subjects, quite equal time was allocated to the United National Movement (26%) and the government (24%). They are followed by the Prime Minister with 12 percent and the Coalition Georgian Dream with 11 percent. Other subjects got 7 percent and less. Like the previous monitoring period, here the share of positive tone is quite high in regards to all the subjects, which was due to the election themes.



As for the coverage of mayoral candidates, Channel One of the Public Broadcaster had quite intensive reports about the election campaigns not only in Tbilisi, but also in other self-governing cities. This topic was more emphasized in the programs at weekends. There were live broadcasts in the talk shows, also there were some stories about the mayoral candidates of various self-governing cities. Election meetings were highlighted as well. In total, news releases of the Channel One allocated 1 hour and 4 minutes to the Tbilisi mayoral candidates during this monitoring period. Nika Melia is ahead of others according to the allocated time (17 minutes). Davit Narmania, Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Kakha Kukava and Sergo Javakhadze have almost same time indicators – 8 and 7

minutes. Other candidates got less than 2 minutes. As for the share of tones, the positive tone is more than 56% in case of all the candidates. It is noteworthy that none of the candidates were covered with negative tone.



Adjara TV

According to the results of this monitoring period (May 24 – June 14), main evening news releases of Adjara TV were balanced and objective. The journalists did not try to portray any of the sides negatively or positively, and they were focused on fact reporting.

With the elections got closer, the Adjara TV provided even more active coverage of the election campaign. The stories about the electoral subjects were distinguished by being balanced and informative. The channel provided information to the audience almost every day about the election activities of various candidates. In these stories the journalists were trying to show the candidates’ promises and discuss their election programs. Other than the key political subjects, representatives of other political forces

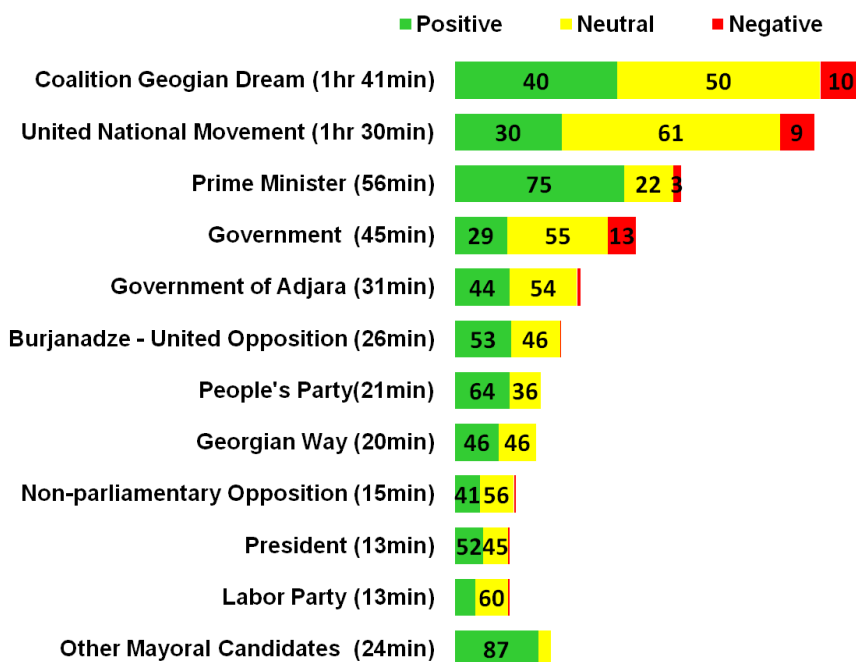
and independent candidates were actively covered as well¹. There was much attention allocated to the coverage of social problems, local and infrastructure issues.

It is noteworthy that the Adjara TV often did not respond to some important events taking place throughout Georgia. For example, there was no coverage of the confrontation in Gardabani on May 28, or the incidents related to the members of the National Movement in Marneuli and Zugdidi. However, there was a report about the similar incident that took place in Batumi and they invited Gigi Ugulava to speak about this issue in the evening release on June 7.

As for the time allocated to the subjects, here the most time was dedicated to the two political parties - the United National Movement (22%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (19%). Besides, the Prime Minister (12%), the government (10%) was also among the top-four subjects based on the allocated time. Together with the increased number of stories on election topics, almost all the subjects had high rates of positive tone. Among the above-mentioned subjects, the Prime Minister has the highest rate of positive tone - 75%. The negative tone was reported basically for the most often covered subjects, where the government has the highest rate (13%).

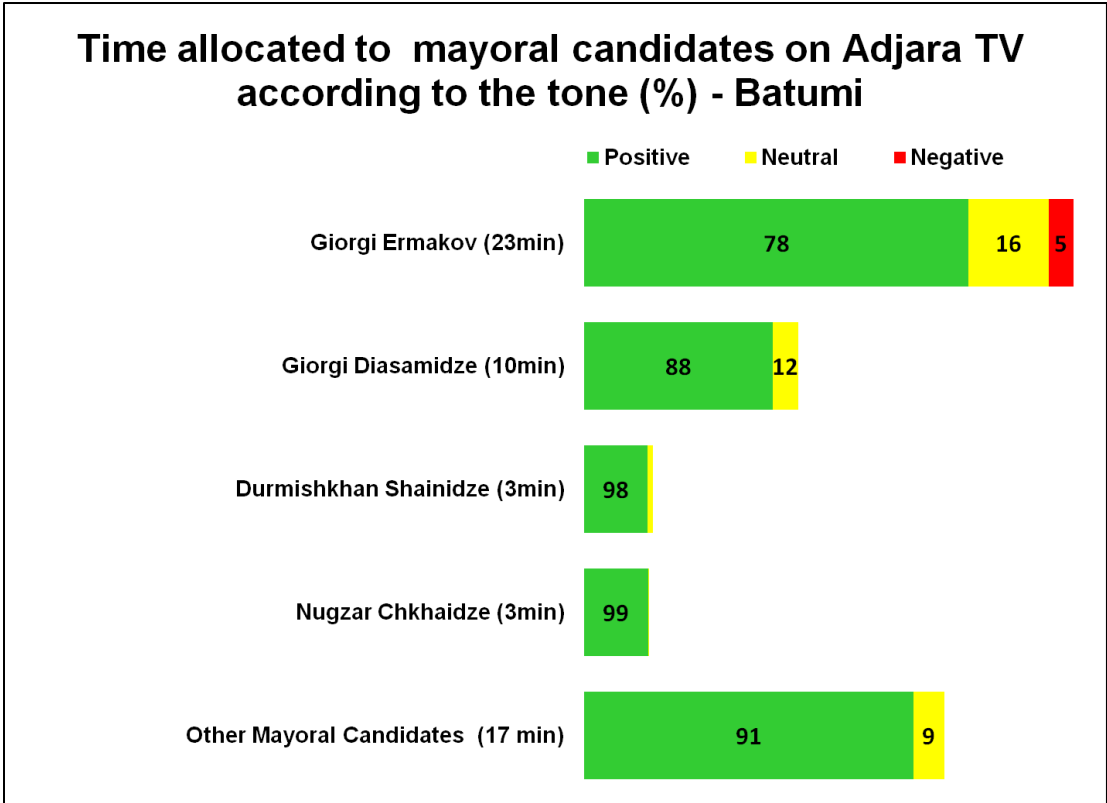
¹ For example, they invited Irakli Ghlonti, leader of “Irakli Ghlonti - Reformers” to the studio on June 1.

Time allocated to subjects on Adjara TV according to the tone (%)



Like the previous monitoring periods, the Adjara TV most actively covered the Batumi mayoral candidates from May 24 until June 14, inclusive. In total, 59 minutes were allocated to the candidates. Among them Giorgi Ermakov has the highest rate (39%). Other mayoral candidates were also broadly covered, getting 29% of the total time.² While reporting about the election campaign, the candidates were mostly covered positively, which found its reflection on the high rates of positive tone. It is noteworthy that we observed the negative tone only in case of Giorgi Ermakov – 5%.

² There was a candidate from the People's Party – Jumber Tavartkiladze invited to the program on June 2, and also a broad story was dedicated on June 5 to Teimuraz Melkadze, mayoral candidate of the Patriots Alliance.



Rustavi 2

Main evening news releases of Rustavi 2 were mostly broad, informative and analytical during the monitoring period. The stories were often preceded with the overview of previous details linked to the case, which made the contents of the story clearer to the audience.

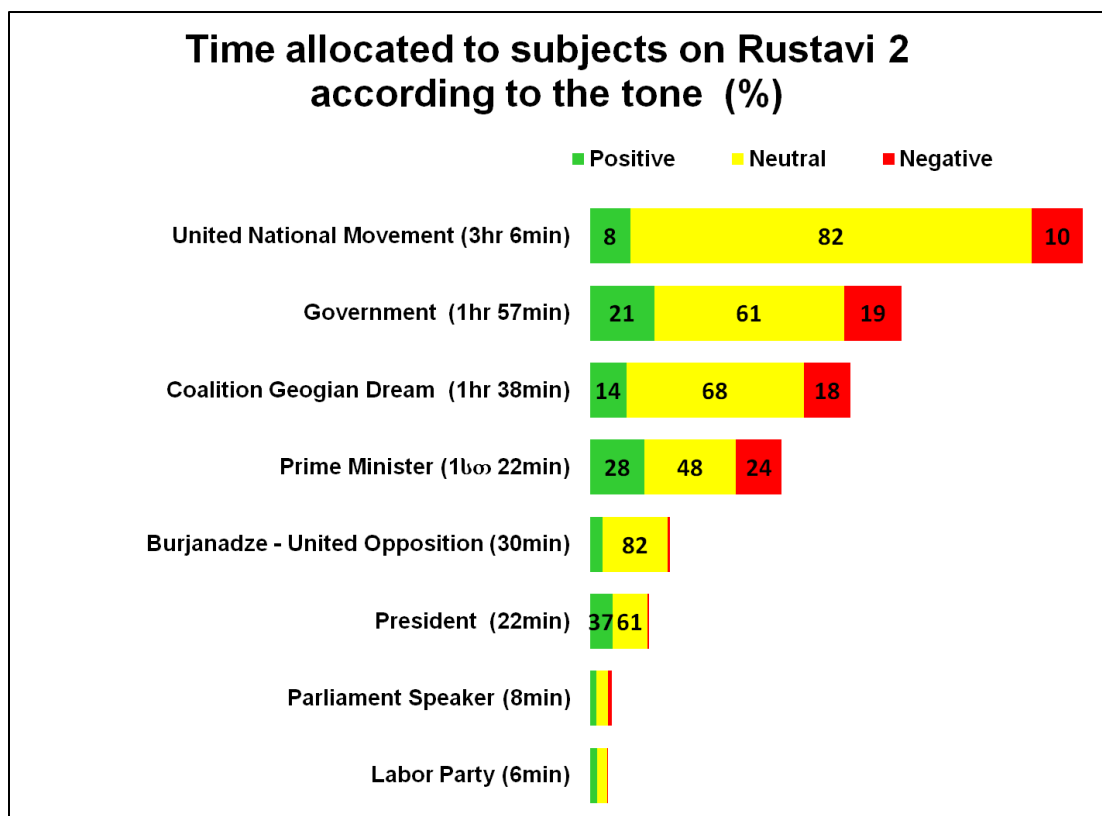
The stories laid main emphasis on the government, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement. There were critical stories about the government and the authorities that stood out in the main releases, as they were loaded with negative context. They emphasized the tension between the Prime Minister and the President. The Prime Minister’s press conference had very detailed coverage. Main focused was targeted to several particular issues raised by the Prime Minister. There were comments of experts and opposition representatives after covering each issue. In total, the report about the press conference was critical and at the same time contained negative tone towards the Prime Minister.

On the other hand, the United National Movement and their activities were quite intensively and positively covered in most cases. For example, there was a report about

Giorgi Margvelashvili's visit to the inauguration of the Ukrainian President on June 7, also his meetings and comments. Besides, Mikheil Saakashvili's visit to the same ceremony was also shown in a quite positive context, where he came with his family, showing the people gathered around him, chanting "Gruzia" (Georgia).

Like other channels, Rustavi 2 also covered the confrontation in Gardabani (May 29, the story number one). The Gangebeli was speaking about the provocation arranged by the United National Movement. However, the candidate of the United National Movement rejects this. The local population and the incident participants reject any political consideration and they are saying that this was just a casual fight and misunderstanding. Despite this, the journalist made such an introduction to the story: "The fight started between the representatives of the Georgian Dream and the National Movement. This is another fact of physical attack before the elections, but this time with many people involved." the journalist related similar text during the story again.

As for the subject coverage time, in total 9 hours and 12 minutes were dedicated to them from May 24 until June 14. 34% of this time was allocated to the United National Movement, which was followed by the government - 21%, the Coalition Georgian Dream - 18% and the Prime Minister - 13%. Other subjects got 5 percent and less. As for the coverage tone, the Prime Minister had the highest rate of negative tone - 24 percent. However, it is noteworthy that at the same time he had the highest rate of positive tone among all the four subjects - 28 percent.

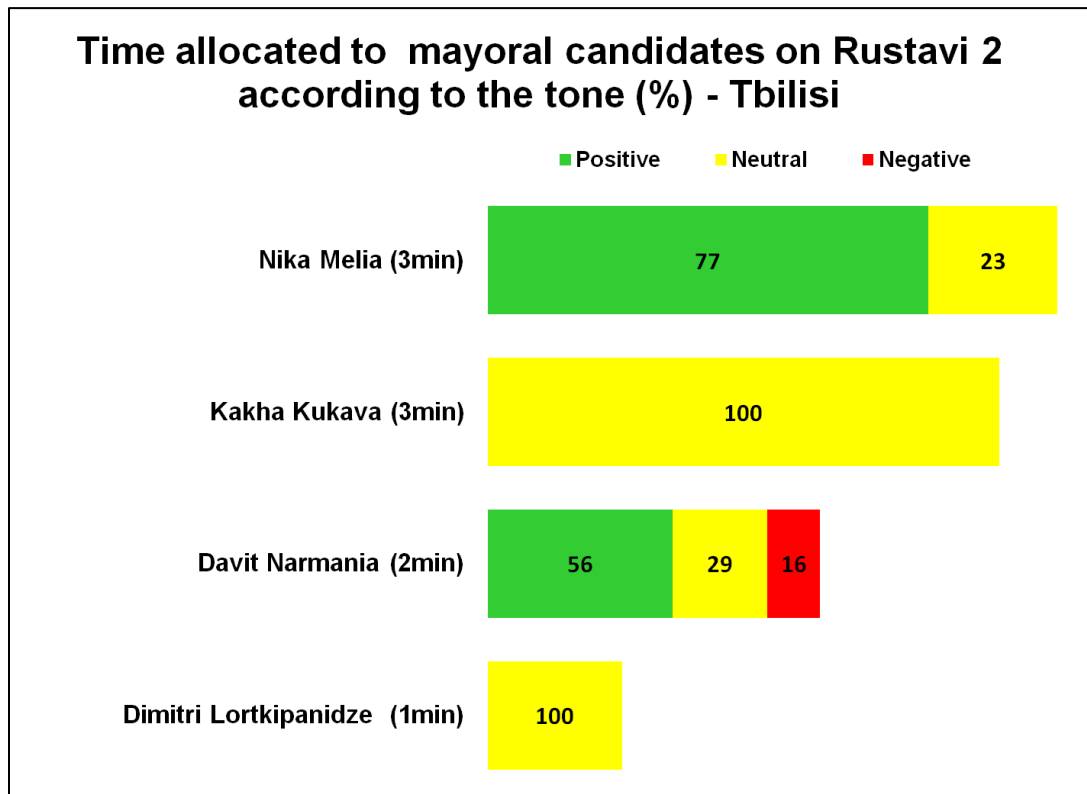


The election topics were discussed mostly in the context of general politics. There were fewer reports about the activities and campaigns of candidates. The emphasis was laid on the election pressure and physical assault, basically against the United National Movement.

During this period there was quite much time dedicated to the deregistration of Akmamed Imamkuliev, candidate of the United National Movement. The main context in the stories was constructed on the unlawful removal of his candidacy, where the CEC was presented quite negatively. In this respect they invited a lawyer of the Transparency International – Georgia about this issue. Despite she was trying to clarify why the CEC made such a decision, the host Giorgi Gabunia often interrupted her, drew his own conclusions and said that it was an unlawful decision.

As it was mentioned above, quite little time was dedicated to the mayoral candidates in main evening news releases on Rustavi 2, in total 9 minutes. The allocated time was distributed like this: Nika Melia and Kakha Kukava – 3-3 minutes, Davit Narmania – 2 minutes and Dimitri Lortkipanidze – 1 minute. Kakha Kukava and Dimitri Lortkipanidze were covered in a completely neutral context. As for Melia and

Narmania, they have quite a big share of positive coverage. It is noteworthy that only Davit Narmania had negative coverage – 16%.



Imedi

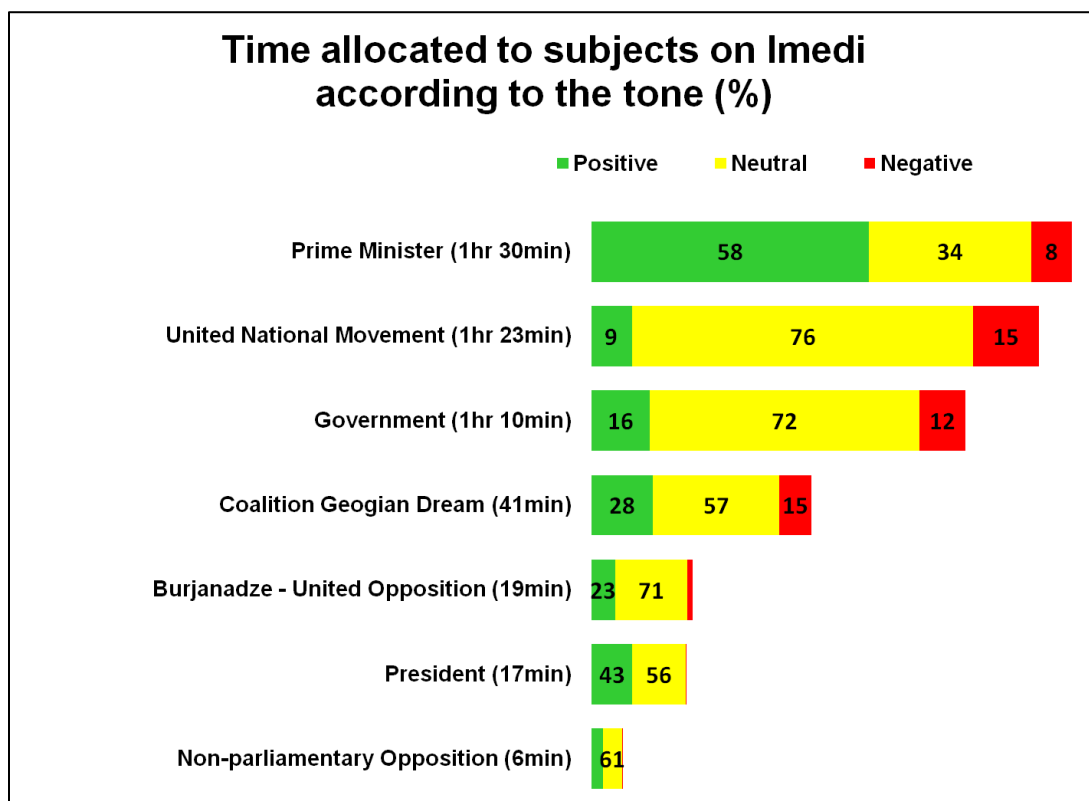
During the period of May 24 until June 14, inclusive, the news releases on Imedi were distinguished by being balanced, with its broad spectrum of covered topics and balance among the represented sides. The journalists tried to be as objective and neutral as possible. Even when the politicians criticized their activities, Imedi’s journalists reported it in a quite neutral and balanced way (for example, Prime Minister’s acute criticism of journalists on June 4, and Nino Burjanadze’s evaluation on May 27).

Imedi reported the Gardabani incident of May 29 without providing any evaluation. The story discussed the confrontation in details, showed both sides of the conflict and also their versions of what has happened. It was clearly seen even from the story that

the local population was happy with cohabitation and that this incident was free from political considerations.

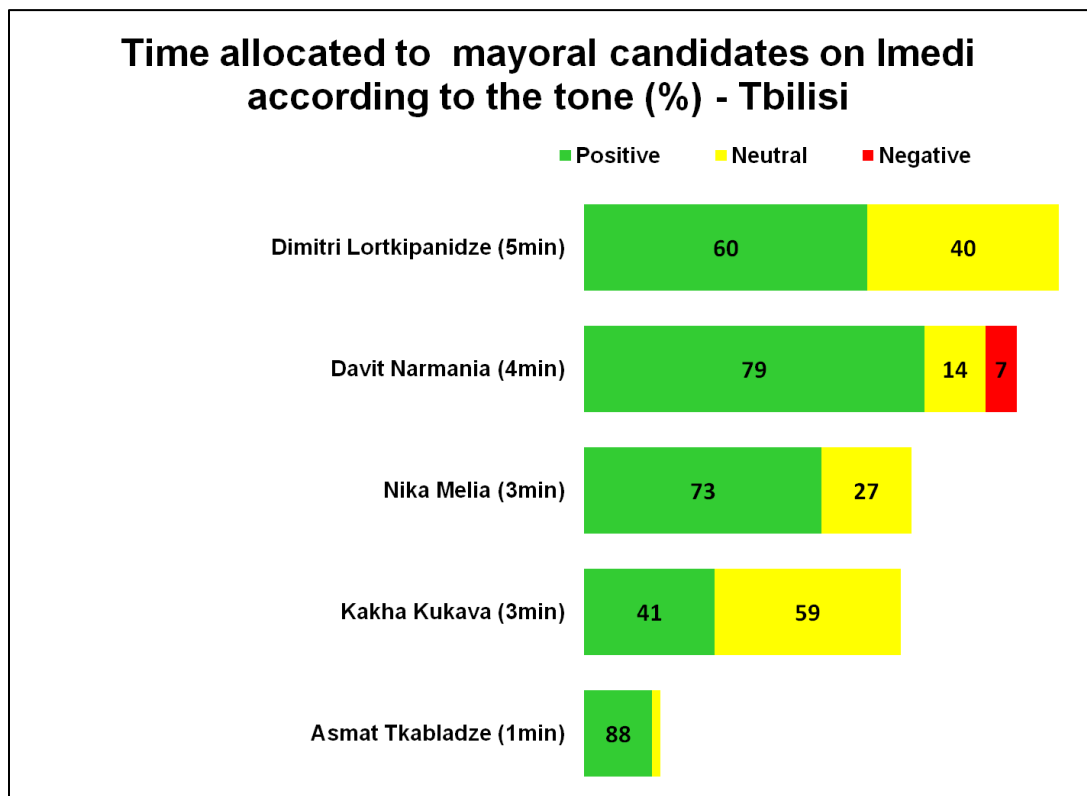
Imedi allocated quite much time to the coverage of Irakli Gharibashvili during May 24 until June 14; namely, he was brought live while presenting the candidate Gangebelis on June 9 in Adjara, and summarizing the election campaign of the Georgian Dream at the Sports Palace on June 13. It is worth noting that there was also the similar event of the United National Movement, though less time was dedicated to its coverage.

The time allocated to the Prime Minister’s live broadcasts found its reflection on the time allocated to the subjects, where Irakli Gharibashvili had 27% of the total time. Significant time portion was also dedicated to the United National Movement (25%) and the government (21%). The Prime Minister’s live broadcast, where he was speaking about the election program and promises, resulted in the highest rate of positive tone, which totaled 58%. The highest rate of negative tone was used for the United National Movement and the Coalition Georgian Dream – 15%.



As for the mayoral candidates, the most time was dedicated to the Tbilisi Mayoral Candidates – 18 minutes in total. We need to point out the high rate of positive tone, which was characteristic to the mayoral candidates, as it was caused by the coverage of

election campaigns. As for the negative tone, it was observed only in case of Davit Narmania - 7%.



Maestro

Maestro responded to all the actualities and main events of the country in its main news releases from May 24 until June 14. It is possible to say that basically we did not observe any bias to any political side. Critical stories were made about the current and former authorities, though without any negative context. There were many analytical stories about various issues. Despite the severity of covered topics, the journalists did not try to aggravate the issue even more; neither did they attempt to present any side in a negative or positive context.

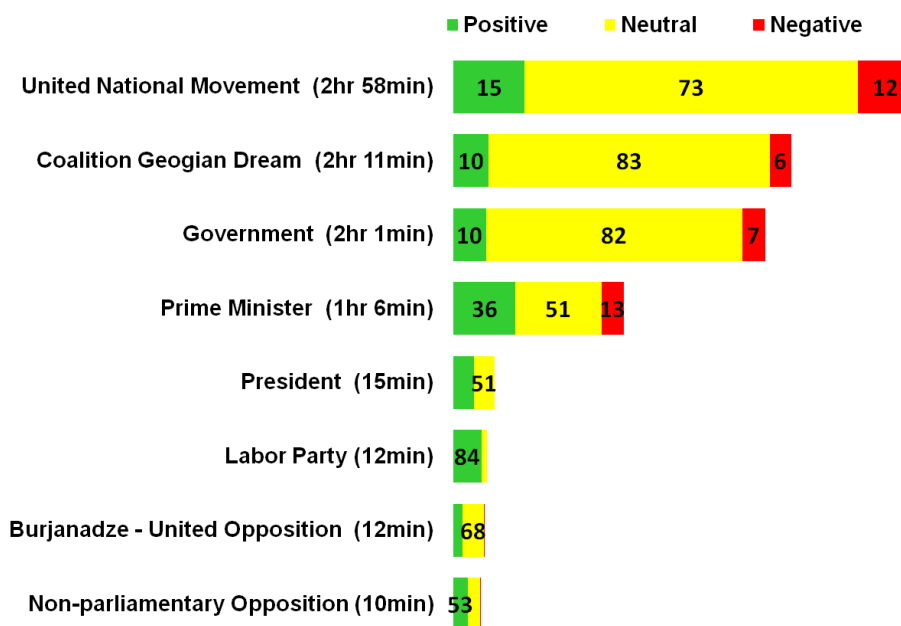
Maestro provided a balanced and neutral coverage about Gardabani incident. They did not lay emphasis on political or ethnic confrontation. Comments of the local population were reported, who were saying that this happened because of a trivial argument.

Daily actualities were discussed more broadly and in details together with the guests invited to the studio. The journalists were quite demanding and critical to all the guests in this part of the program. They tried to act in opposition to them and to discuss various positions in the program.

We need to point out the program of June 7, hosted by Khatia Kvatadze, where Mikheil Saakashvili was brought live. The live broadcast lasted for a quite long time. The journalist mentioned in the beginning of the live broadcast that the conversation would be about the foreign policy, as asked by the respondent. However, many questions were asked about the home affairs, current government and the situation during Mikheil Saakashvili's presidency. The journalist often interrupted him, and her questions and tone was extremely ironical.

As for the time allocated to the monitoring subjects, 9 hours and 25 minutes were allocated to them from May 24 until June 14. The time was distributed basically among 4 subjects the following way: the United National Movement - 32%, the Coalition Georgian Dream - 23%, the government - 21%, and the Prime Minister - 12%. Other subjects got 3% of the total time or less. Neutral tone prevails on Maestro. The highest rate of positive tone was reported for the Prime Minister - 36% out of these four subjects. As for the negative tone, the United National Movement and Irakli Gharibashvili got almost equal - 12 and 13 percent.

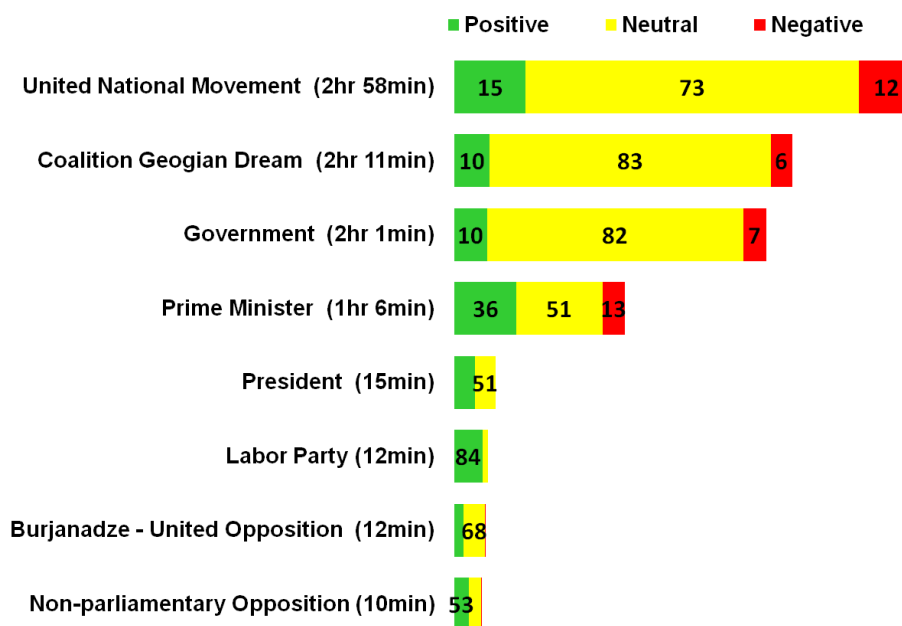
Time allocated to subjects on Maestro according to the tone (%)



As for the mayoral candidates, main news releases on Maestro did not provide daily coverage of candidate activities and meetings. However, there were stories presenting the plans of mayoral candidates in various cities, and election environment was also highlighted. There was a story broadcasted on May 30 and 31 about mayoral candidates of Telavi and Ambrolauri. All the candidates and their programs were shown. Besides, there was a summary story about the election campaigns of main parties on June 13, 2 days before the elections.

The time allocated to the Tbilisi mayoral candidates during this period (in total 36 minutes) was allocated basically among 4 candidates. These are: Asmat Tkabladze (9 minutes), Kakha Kukava (8 minutes), Nika Melia (7 minutes) and Davit Narmania (7 minutes). Positive tone prevails in all these cases, and three of them also had small share of negative tone except Asmat Tkabladze.

Time allocated to subjects on Maestro according to the tone (%)



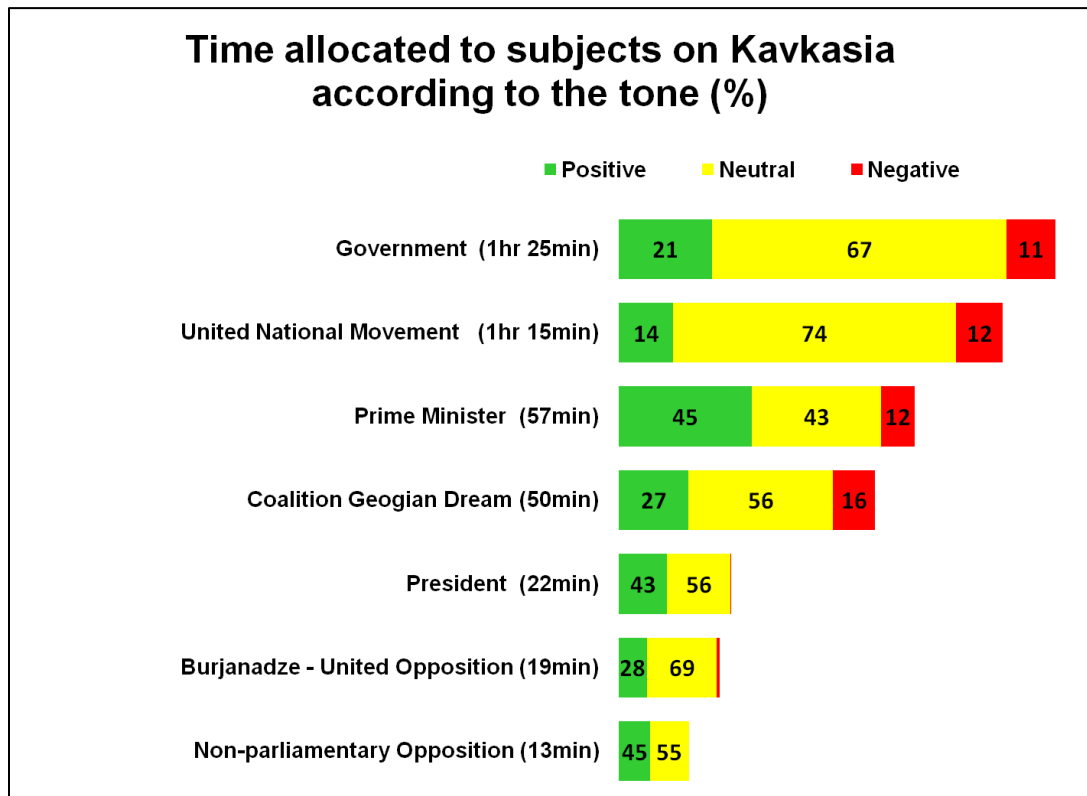
Kavkasia

Main news releases on TV Kavkasia were neutral, informative and balanced from May 24 until June 14, inclusive. The journalists were trying to present all the sides involved in the fact, and to report all the details exhaustively. Despite this, majority of programs was distinguished with the delivery of dry facts and analytical stories were less observed. Intensive reports were provided about the election campaign and meetings of various candidates with population.

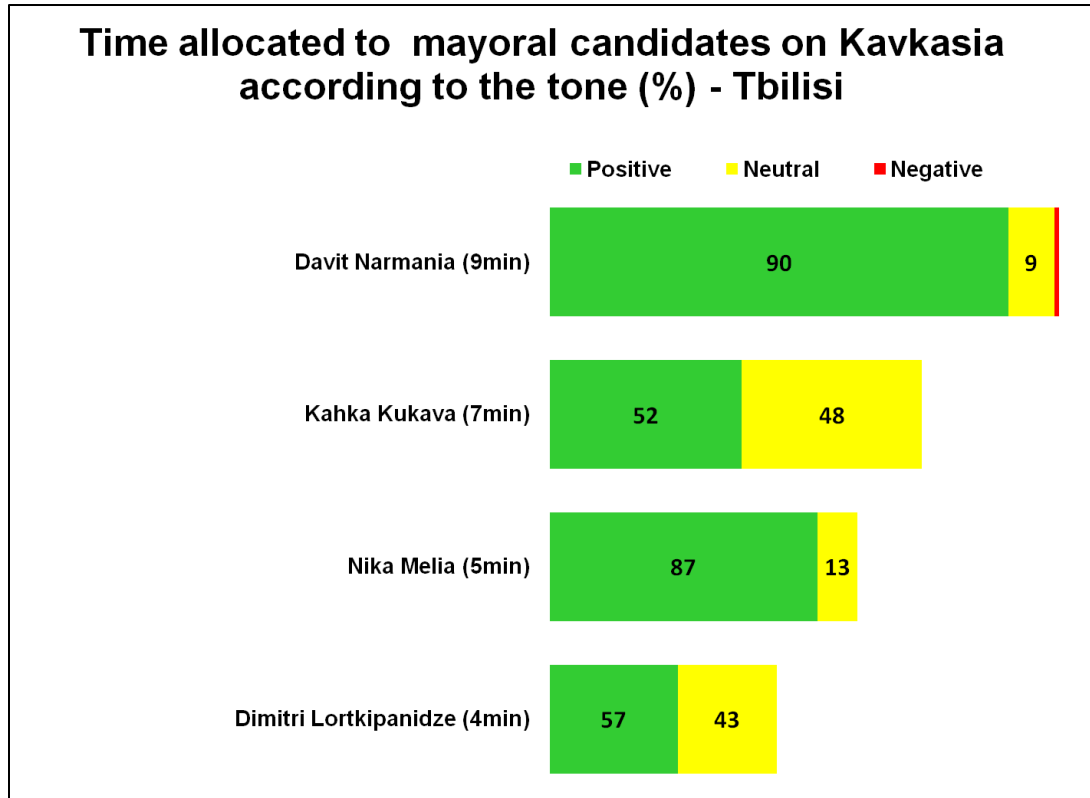
The Gardabani incident was reported in the news releases on Kavkasia without political bias. The journalists were trying to cover this event with many facts and comments, and they did not make judgmental statements about the confrontation.

Like the previous reports, the list of most frequently covered stories remains unchanged. Almost equal time portions were dedicated to the government (25%) and the United National Movement (22%). They are followed by the Prime Minister (17%) and the Coalition Georgian Dream (15%). The Prime Minister has the highest rate of positive tone among these four subjects – 45%, and the lowest – to the United National

Movement - 14%. As for the negative tone, it is almost the same for the first three subjects (11%-12%), and it reaches 16% in case of the Coalition Georgian Dream.



The news releases most often reported about the Tbilisi mayoral candidates, to which 30 minutes were dedicated in total. Increased direct coverage of election campaign and candidates resulted in the high rates of positive tone. The most time was allocated to Davit Narmania (32%) among the mayoral candidates, who also had the highest rate of positive tone - 90%. Nika Melia also had quite high rate of positive tone - 87%.



TV3

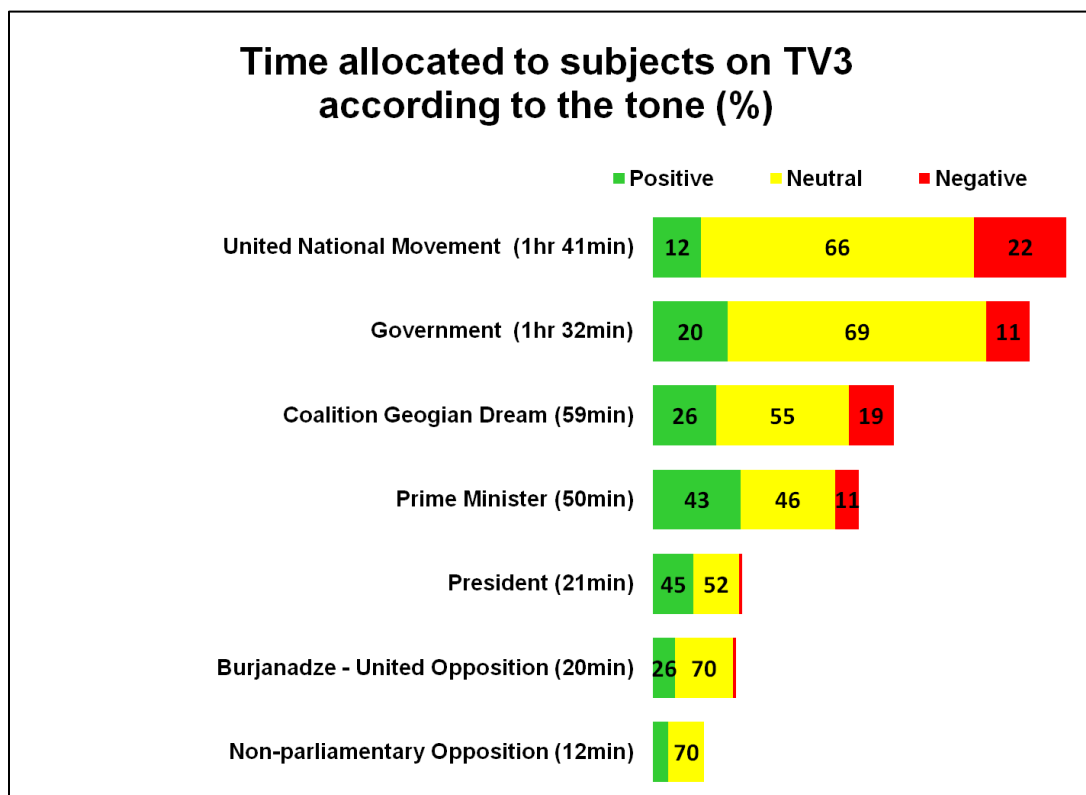
Evening news releases of TV3 were distinguished with active and critical coverage of the national events from May 24 until June 14, inclusive. Much time was allocated to the election campaign, meeting of candidates with the population and election violations. TV3 was equally critical in these stories towards the representatives of the government, the Coalition Georgian Dream, also the United National Movement. Besides, there were analytical stories about influencing the electoral subjects, usage of administrative resources during the elections and about the Tbilisi mayoral candidates.

While covering the Gardabani incident, the host of the TV3 referred to it as a politically biased confrontation, which has something to do with the National Movement.³ However, it was clarified in the story that the confrontation started on ethnical grounds between the Azeri and Georgian youth. However, the local population was aggressive to the journalists because they gave political coloring to the incident. The story also

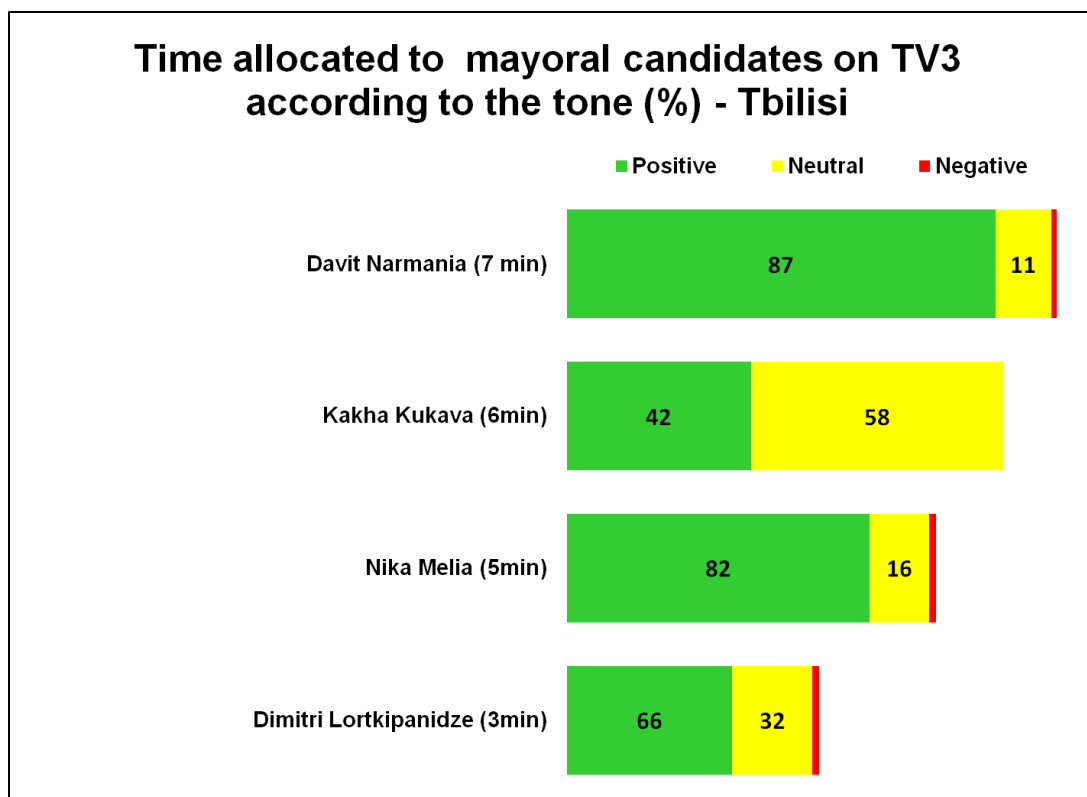
³ Story about May 29 – “Confrontation on political grounds lasted late at night. This morning the protest rally of one part of the ethnic Azeris was announced by the National Movement, but later this was said to have been an ethnic confrontation”.

showed the mutual allegations of the representatives of the National Movement and the Georgian Dream, as they were blaming each other of provoking the conflict.

The most time was allocated to the United National Movement (27%), the government (25%), the Coalition Georgian Dream (16%) and the Prime Minister (13%) during this monitoring period. The highest rate of positive tone was reported for the Prime Minister - 43%, and the lowest one - for the National Movement - 12%. High rates of negative tone were observed for the Coalition Georgian Dream (19%) and the National Movement (22%).



As for the mayoral candidates, the biggest shares of time were allocated to the Tbilisi mayoral candidates - in total 26 minutes. The most coverage was provided about Davit Narmania, Kakha Kukava, Nika Melia and Dimitri Lortkipanidze. Stories about the mayoral candidates were mostly focused on election meetings, which were reflected in high rates of positive tone.



Conclusion

The majority of channels prepared critical stories about the government members and officials during the period of May 24 until June 14, inclusive. Unlike other channels, negative attitude towards the government was observed at a larger extent in main news releases on Rustavi 2.

There were quite high rates of positive tone observed for the Prime Minister during this period, which was basically caused by his activities. His press conference and official closure of the election campaign coincided with this monitoring period.

As for the election environment and activities of candidates, majority of the channels often highlighted their activities. However, some channels, for example, Rustavi 2 and

Maestro discussed the election topic in a more general political context, and they were less focused on daily coverage of the candidates.

Gardabani incident was one of the most topical issues on all the channels during this period. This fact is interesting because various channels covered it differently. The viewers would have different impressions about what happened in Gardabani and why after watching the news release on various channels. Some channels reported this incident quite neutrally, but others called it a political confrontation.