



Election Media Monitoring of Talk Shows

September 3 - 28, 2012

Election monitoring of talk shows is performed for all the talk shows, which are broadcasted during the prime time and are dedicated to political topics. As far as not all the channels have the programs like that, only the following channels and talk shows fell under the monitoring:

On the First Channel of the Public Broadcaster - "Dialogue with David Paichadze" and "Accents with Eka Kvesitadze";

On Maestro - "Subjective Opinion", hosts: Shalva Ramishvili and Diana Trapaidze; "Politmeter" - Nino Zhizhilashvili; "Arguments" - Thee Sichinava and "Us" - Tamar Chikovani;

On Kavkasia - "Studio Spectrum" - Davit Akubardia, "Barrier" - Alexander Elisashvili and "Hotline", which is hosted by Alexander Elisashvili, Zviad Koridze and Natia Orvelashvili in turn;

On the Ninth Channel - "Akhalkatsi's Matrix", "Counseling with Vasil Maglapheridze" and "Eka Beridze's Main Question".

Methodology and Analysis

Election media monitoring of talk shows consist only of a qualitative component. Only the journalists are monitored based on various criteria during the monitoring. The evaluation is focused on the role and involvement of journalists during the program; whether a journalist is a moderator only, who is managing a process, or is s/he trying to state her/his position; whether the talk shows' host lets the guests express their opinions and when s/he interrupts them. Besides, it is also monitored how equal conditions the journalist is creating for the guests; how equally demanding/permissive the questions of a journalist are towards all the guests, and how much the journalist is trying to get in-depth information from the guest through probing. The monitoring is also observing the usage of hate speech

in talk-shows (insulting or abusive phrases/statement) by the journalists, and their reaction on the cases if their guests are using the hate speech.

The report covers the period from September 3 – 28, inclusive, and provides the analysis of programs broadcasted during this period per channels.

The First Channel

Two programs became the monitoring subjects on the First Channel. These are: “Dialogue with Davit Paichadze” and “Accents with Eka Kvesitadze”. Davit Paichadze’s program has been broadcasted twice a week – on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and “Accents” have been broadcasted only once a week, every Sunday. During the monitoring period, there were 3 programs of Eka Kvesitadze’s talk show broadcasted on the First Channel, and Dialogue with Davit Paichadze was broadcasted 6 times.

Members of the ruling team, also the opposition representatives and experts were invited to both programs. Both journalists are pretty actively involved in the talk show. They are trying to get exhaustive answers to their questions and they give opportunity to the guests to fully state their opinions.

In case of Davit Paichadze, often it is easy to observe that the host is asking more demanding questions; in frequent cases there is more criticism and even irony too towards the guests who represent the opposition party or express opposition-like attitudes towards the authorities.

Besides, in case of both journalists, there were moments when they openly stated their personal opinions in regards to various issues.

As for Eka Kvesitadze, there were only 3 programs that fell under the monitoring during this period, which does not let us generalize the results. However, It is noteworthy that all her programs are quite different from one another in regards to the invited guests and topics of the discussion. In the program, when Bidzina Ivanishvili was invited, the host was quite demanding and critical, and she was laying more emphasis on the drawbacks of the guest’s political team and she did not ask even a single question that would enable Ivanishvili talk about the party’s political program. However, when the videos of prisoners torture videos were discussed in the program, Kvesitadze’s attitude was quite different towards the guests.

Maestro

There were 4 talk-shows monitored on Maestro: "Subjective Opinion" by Shalva Ramishvili and Diana Trapaidze, "Politmeter" hosted by Nino Zhizhilashvili, "Arguments" with Tea Sichinava and "Us" hosted by Tamar Chikovani. The first three talk shows are broadcasted via Maestro every day. However, the program "Us" is broadcasted only once a week.

In most cases, the "Subjective Opinion" hosts the guests who are disloyal to the authorities. Among the invited guests there was a relatively bigger prevalence of the members of the Georgian Dream. During the program both of the journalists are quite actively involved in the discussion. However, as the polling day gets closer, the journalists have become even more active. Due to the talk show's headline, the hosts do not conceal their subjective opinion and openly state them many times during the program. Shalva Ramishvili states his political sympathies more often and more openly, but Diana Trapaidze is relatively moderate. It is notable that the guests with various affiliations are presented in unequal situation in the program, and the hosts' critical attitude is biased in this respect.

During the monitoring period, Politmeter allocated time to various representatives of the opposition and also to the ruling team as well. It is worth mentioning that unlike the Subjective Opinion and the Arguments, Politmeter is mostly distinguished with its diverse spectrum of opposition, and the host expressed equal criticism towards the government and opposition parties as well. The host tries to act in opposition to the guest and state a different position. However, she states her position very rarely, and she does it in a hidden or indirect way. The journalist's behavior changes based on who is the host and what topic is discussed. The host is more critical towards the representatives of the ruling team and the authorities. At the same time, she is quite loyal towards the opposition representatives. This trend has been revealed especially after publicizing the prisoners torture video and the wiretapped recordings of the members of the Coalition Georgian Dream.

In September, there was another program with different format – Arguments of the Week broadcasted together with the Arguments. In the Arguments of the Week, representatives of one political party were invited in each program, and the whole program was dedicated to this party and its program. Both in the Arguments and the Arguments of the Week, not only the members of the ruling party, but also the members of the opposition parties were invited to the program. Other than the different format, the host's behavior is different in "Arguments" and "Arguments of the Week". In "Arguments" Tea Sichinava is acting in opposition to the guests more than in "Arguments of the Week", where she is playing the role of a moderator. However, she is actively involved in the program of both formats, asks topical questions to the guests, such questions being often more

demanding than loyal, and also probes in order to verify information. The host's attitude towards the pro-government guests is distinguished with more criticism. Tea Sichinava never states her position openly, but sometimes her position is visible in the questions asked by her.

As for the program "Us", only 3 programs were broadcasted during the monitoring period. The hosts were the members of the Coalition Georgian Dream and Iago Kachkachishvili. The journalist and the guests mostly share one and the same position, which is distinguished with critical attitude towards the authorities. The journalist is loyal to them, does not interrupt, lets them finish their opinions and rarely asks in-depth questions about a certain issue. Besides, there are some cases, when the host openly states her opinion in regards to various issues.

Kavkasia

There are three talk shows monitored on Kavkasia. These are: "Studio Spectrum", hosted by Davit Akubardia, "Barrier" hosted by Alexander Elisashvili and "Hotline" led by three different hosts in turn: Alexander Elisashvili, Zviad Koridze and Natia Orvelashvili.

Davit Akubardia regularly states his own opinions and political sympathies in his programs. He is very active during the program and often starts polemics with the guest, if he has a different opinion. However, if the guest shares the same opinion with the host, Akubardia lets him/her freely speak during the live transmission and fully state his/her opinion. In addition, the journalist often uses insulting phrases and hate speech in reference to the representatives of the authorities and the government. Akubardia's attitude got even more intensified in the programs where the prisoners torture videos were discussed.

As for the programs "Barrier" and "Hot Line", the guests' political balance is more or less observed. In both programs: Barrier and Hot Line, Elisashvili often states his opinions, often mentions the authorities and the ruling team ironically and cynically. The host is even more demanding towards the representatives of the authorities. This trend has been intensified even more after publicizing the facts of prisoners torture at prison. The journalist often reports unverified information and gives it to the audience as a fact.

It is noteworthy that other two hosts of the Hot Line, Natia Orvelashvili and Zviad Koridze mostly act as moderators and they do not openly state their own opinions.

The Ninth Channel

Three programs were monitored on the Ninth Channel. These are: “Akhalkatsi’s Matrix”, “Counseling with Vasil Maglapheridze” and “Eka Beridze’s Main Question”. All the three talk shows are broadcasted every business day during the week. It is notable that none of the talk shows, which were being monitored on the Ninth Channel, invited any guests from the government or the ruling party. In all the three cases the guests were mostly those people who were disloyal to the authorities. Correspondingly, the majority of topics were selected in a biased way, and mostly they were dedicated to the discussion of the president, the ruling team and the government in a negative context.

Unlike Gogi Akhalkatsi and Vasil Maglaperidze, Eka Beridze very rarely states her own position during the program. Her questions are quite demanding and exhaustively cover the topic of the discussion. It is Vasil Maglaperidze who states his opinion in the program most often, which is often accompanied with irony and cynicism towards the authorities and the President. Besides, he does not try to act in opposition to the guests. While speaking with the invited guests, Akhalkatsi does not clearly state his position. However, his attitude is seen through his rhetoric questions and his reaction to what the guest has said. It is notable that as the polling day gets closer, the host started to provide his bold evaluations more frequently towards the current authorities. We should say that Akhalkatsi often asks more probing questions to the guests in order to get more specific answers. Gogi Akhalkatsi has a monologue for several minutes at the beginning and ending of the program (remark and the word of the day), during which the host’s position is even more visible and also the irony is often felt as well.