



Election Monitoring of TV Channels

July 17 – August 17, 2013

In connection to the presidential elections of 2013, CRRC renewed its media monitoring within the frameworks of the project “Professional Media for Elections”, funded by the EU-UNDP program. The monitoring will continue from May 15 until November 15 and will cover the main evening news programs on the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster, Adjara TV and the following private channels: Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro, Kavkasia and Channel 9. This report contains the media monitoring results from July 17 until August 17, inclusive.

Following key findings were identified as the result of monitoring of main evening news releases on televisions during this monitoring period:

- From July 17 until August 17, inclusive, the channels started a more frequent coverage of presidential candidates compared to the previous monitoring periods. At this stage, however, the time dedicated to them is still quite small in comparison to the time allocated to other main subjects.
- The situation was different in this respect on Adjara TV, where the presidential candidates and their activities were less covered. For example, there was almost no coverage of the primary of the United National Movement, and same stands for Giorgi Margvelashvili’s campaign. There were only 2 subjects covered out of presidential candidates, though for a little time: Giorgi Targamadze – 3 minutes and Nino Burjanadze – 2 minutes.
- The share of positive tone towards specific subjects increased more or less on all the channels during this period. To some degree, this is linked to the coverage of extensive speeches and statements of various subjects, which was caused by the events developed during this monitoring period and by the highlighted news, among them the coverage of presidential candidates, their activities and speeches.
- There was a trend identified on almost all the channels of presenting broader, informative and analytical stories in the beginning of news programs, which was

supported by the information provided by several sources. Shorter stories were presented in the second part of the programs, where the balance of provided sources was not observed and often the broadcasted information was not exhaustive.

- There were cases observed during this monitoring period, when various channels did not cover any news in their main evening news releases, or covered it in the second part, though quite briefly and unclearly.

Several quite significant events coincided with the period from July 17, until August 17, inclusive, which took place in the country and were actively covered in the main news releases of all the channels. These were: case of the staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, David Bakradze's victory in the primary, Bacho Akhalaia's trial, issue of party financing, hunger strike of inmates requesting their cases to be retried, country's economic growth indicator, 5th anniversary of the War of August in 2008, resignation of the CEC chairperson, Koba Davitashvili's decision to leave the Coalition, visit of the President and the Prime Minister to the American ship in Batumi, Densus opinion on the dispersal of the rally on May 26, 2011, etc.

Besides, the active coverage of presidential candidates and their campaigns started in August. However, this has not caused any changes in the distribution of the time allocated to subjects on any of the channels. 3 main subjects stood out while discussing these topics on all the channels, to which different time sequences were allocated in various news programs. These are: the government, the Coalition Georgian Dream and the United National Movement. The President and the Prime Minister are always among the top five. Adjara TV is an exception in this respect, where the Government of Adjara ranked second according to the allocated time.

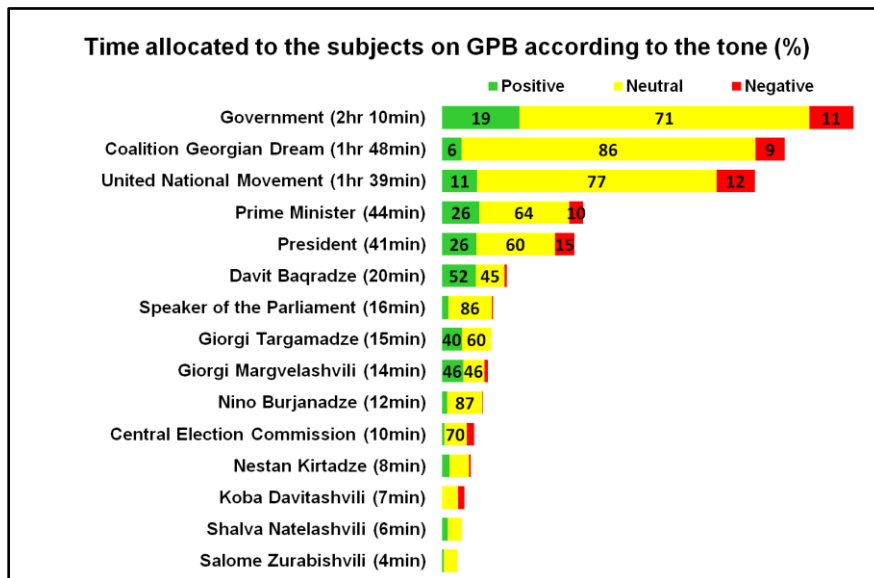
Channel One of the Public Broadcaster

News items on the Channel One of the Public Broadcaster were constructed mostly based on the facts in the second half of July and in the first half of August, and a precondition or a chronology of facts was presented. However, it seemed that the authors of stories tried to refrain from providing comments with their own evaluation. Correspondingly, there was less political bias felt towards any of the sides. Neither was

there any political implication when covering social topics, and these topics were not connected to any of the political forces.

Coverage of presidential candidates, candidates' visits to the regions and various activities became frequent on the Channel One. Usually, the candidates' campaigns are covered as a separate story, and sometimes the activities of several candidates are covered altogether. However, there is an interesting news item broadcasted on August 3 about Tushetoba, where it looked as if the traditional holiday in the mountains was covered apolitically. The story was presented in a quite positive way and with some music, and there was Giorgi Margvelashvili, presidential candidate of the Georgian Dream seen in the second half of the story, and he was presented positively as well.

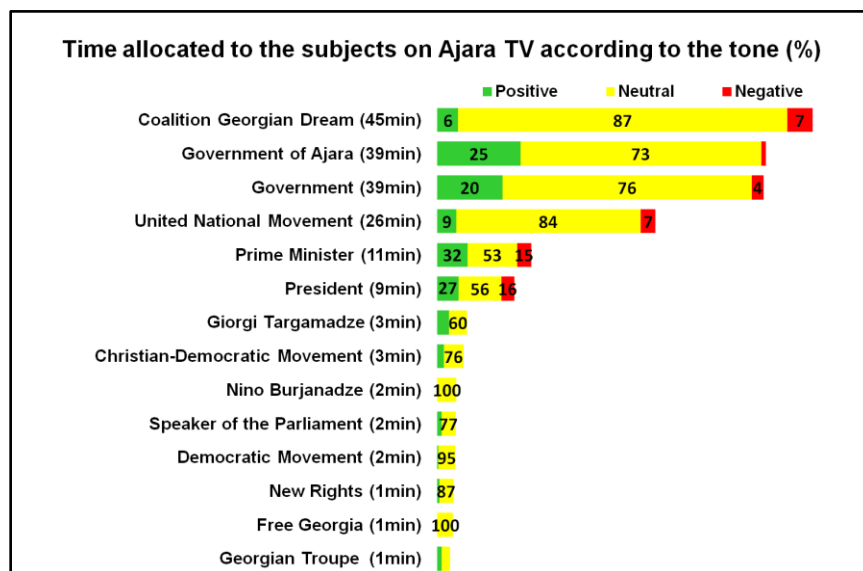
Tone of coverage of presidential candidates has been quite positive towards major candidates on Channel One. Almost half of the time dedicated to Bakradze and Margvelashvili was covered positively. Even in regards to other major subjects, such as the government, the Prime Minister, the President, a relatively high indicator of positive coverage was observed – 19-26 percent. To some extent, this was due to the activities and news items related to the topic of war in the beginning of August. Criticism and negative coverage is less observed.



Adjara TV

Adjara TV mostly covered the local news. Besides, they paid much attention to the social issues in their main evening news releases. A very frequent coverage was provided for the social issues such as road problems, or various problems connected to the residential houses of population, etc. During this period, often there were some stories prepared about tourism, and various problems related to this issue were discussed. Such stories were mostly extensive, analytical and balanced in regards to various opinions.

Other than the local news, Adjara TV also covered quite many national news or events during the period of July 17 - August 17, inclusive. Activities dedicated to the day of War of August 8 in 2008, Koba Davitashvili's decision to leave the Coalition Georgian Dream, resignation of the CEC chairperson, etc. However, it is noteworthy that during this period the activities of presidential candidates were less covered. There was almost no coverage about the campaign of any candidate or of the primary of the United National Movement. As for the subjects tone on this channel, it is noteworthy that the share of positive tone is more prevailing than the negative one.



Private TV Companies

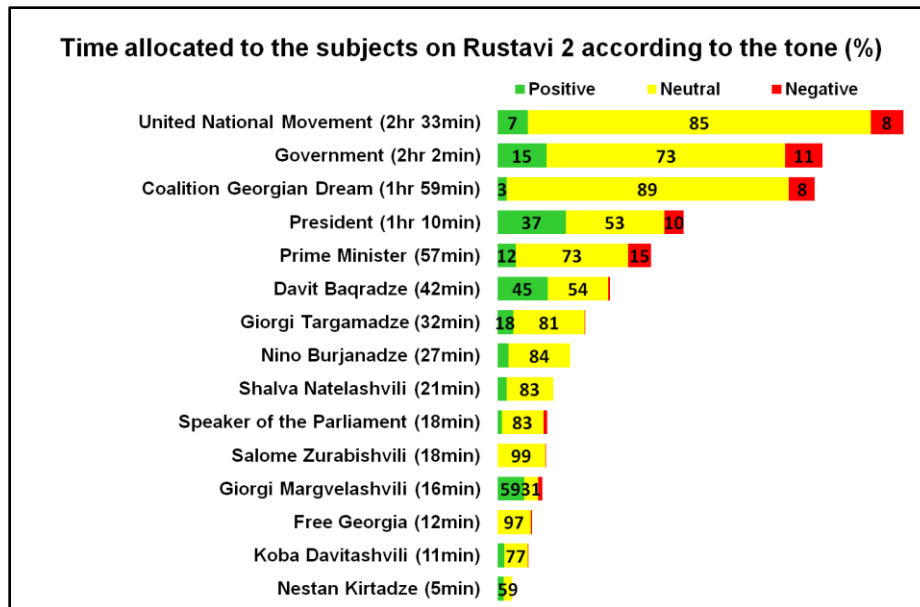
There was still no election tension felt in the news releases during July 17 – August 17. However, coverage of presidential candidates, their speeches and campaign increased. Correspondingly, the share of positive coverage increased during this period.

Rustavi 2

As for Rustavi 2, informed and balanced news items were more often observed in the main evening news releases during this reporting period, than during the previous one. However, especially positive attitude towards the President was yet felt again together the coverage of his visits and speeches with broad timing, and in a positive context. Parallel to this, the critical attitude towards the government was identified, and there was also an irrelevant and sometimes ironical coverage of the Prime Minister and the Coalition members.

Presidential candidates were invited to the 9 o'clock news program of Courier after every day, where they were answering to a journalist's questions for 15-20 minutes. The journalist would let all the guests express their ideas fully. The visit of David Bakradze, candidate of the United National Movement is interesting. Unlike other candidates, his interview was preceded with a big story about his political way and activities. The story was not done very positively, but the favorable disposition was felt.

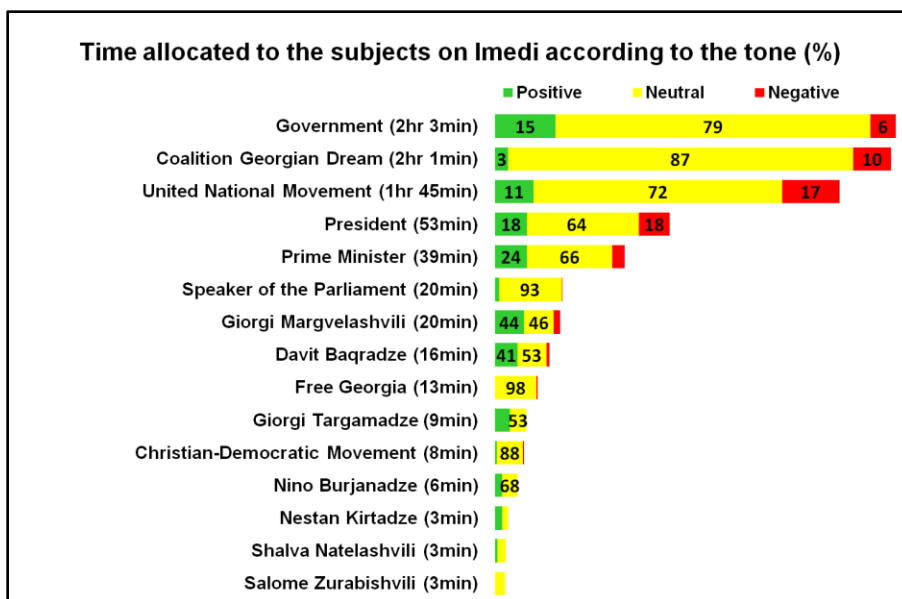
A big share of direct speech of presidential candidates left positive impression about them and this was indeed reflected on quantitative data as well. Out of other subjects, the President had the biggest share of positive coverage. There was not much negative coverage observed on Rustavi 2. However, among those subjects, to whom a bit more time was allocated, the Prime Minister had the highest indicator of negative coverage – 15 percent.



Imedi

A change was observed on Imedi during this monitoring period. There were many brief and dry news items in the second part of July, which were unbalanced in regards to the diversity of opinions and did not provide answers to the questions about the presented information. However, more informative and multi-sourced news items appeared since August, especially in the beginning of the news programs. Even in regards to the political bias, there was more ironic attitude observed towards the representatives of the United National Movement and the Mayor of Tbilisi. However, there was no bias felt in the news items about the War of August, where the activities of the government, the President and other political figures were covered. Despite this, there were some stories in August, which did not provide exhaustive information and were not balanced.

Activities of presidential candidates were actively covered. The candidates had an opportunity to make comments in the stories, and the coverage tone for major candidates were quite often positive. As for criticism and negative coverage, the President and the United National Movement had a relatively more share of negative coverage – 18 and 17 percent.



Maestro

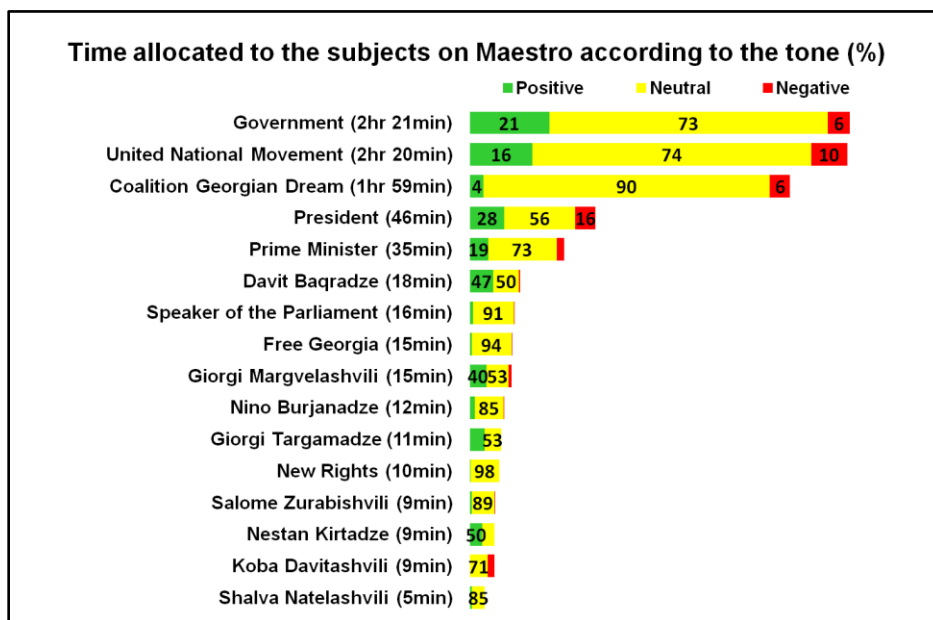
From July 17 until August 17, inclusive, the news was basically covered in a neutral way in main news releases on Maestro. The news items were mostly balanced, unbiased and analytical. The journalists did not lay any special negative or positive emphasis on specific subjects. There were many stories prepared on Maestro in August about the War of August in 2008. In total, the news items were quite balanced and there was no emphasis laid on accusing the President or the representatives of former authorities. The stories about the War of August mostly spoke about Russia negatively rather than the Georgian side or any Georgian politician.

There were cases during the main evening news releases of this period, when the balance of respondents was not observed in the stories, or the news was not presented exhaustively, leaving some questions behind. On July 17, after broadcasting one of the stories like this, the next day the journalist apologized to the audience and herself presented the position of the side, which was missing the previous day.

Sometimes the main topic of the day was covered in a very dry, brief and unclear manner. For example, the Prime Minister's and the President's visit to the reception held on board of the American military ship in Batumi on August 11, which was broadcasted as the second news in the program. As the journalists said in advance, the story would be about the details of the reception held on the military ship. However, the story was very short. There were no pictures of meeting the Prime Minister and the

President; neither was shown their official speeches. Only a comment of the Speaker of the Parliament was shown where he was saying that he had to apologize to the hosts because of the President. However, the story did not show and neither did the journalist clarify what it was all about, and it was unclear why the Speaker of the Parliament was criticizing the President. Thus, the story turned out to be unclear and superficial.

As for the coverage tone, one and the same subjects were covered on Maestro both positively and negatively. There were stories where the President was presented quite negatively and also there were stories where Mikheil Saakashvili was covered quite positively. Similar cases took place in regards to the Prime Minister. Presidential candidates and their activities were covered in the second part of the main news release, because of which there was a big share of positive tone.



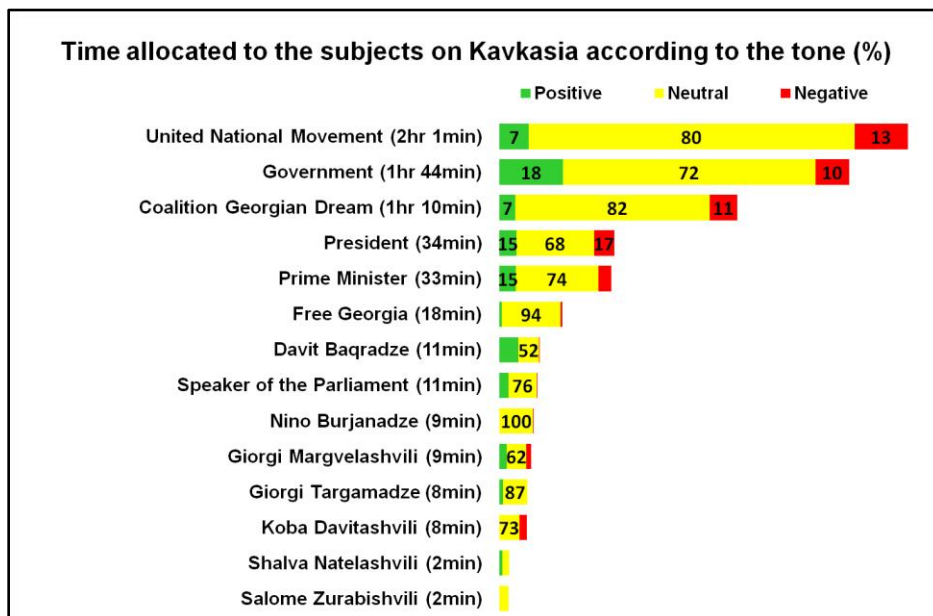
Kavkasia

The news was mostly covered in a balanced and neutral manner in the main evening news releases from July 17 until August 17, inclusive. Balance of respondents was observed almost in all the stories and various opinions and positions were presented around the topic of the discussion. Representatives of civil sector and experts of various fields were often invited as respondents in the stories. There were some stories where the information was presented exhaustively and fully so that there were no questions

left after the stories were over. However, there was also such news where the balance of respondents was not observed and the story was covered only from one side. This was the case, for example, of the interview with the President, which had a critical coverage at the expense of comments of other politicians; however, there was no comment of the United National Movement.

However, despite this, the lack of analytics was often observed in the news items broadcasted by Kavkasia. The journalists were only limited to the provision of dry facts and did not analyze the happenings. It is noteworthy that the stories broadcasted during the first part of the main evening news releases were more extensive and had more respondents, than the stories broadcasted in the second part of the program. Though, a big number of respondents and opinions could not compensate for the lack of analytics.

The subjects were mostly covered with neutral tone on Kavkasia. During the period of July 17 through August 17, the share of negative and positive tone used in regards to the subjects derived from the comments of respondents.



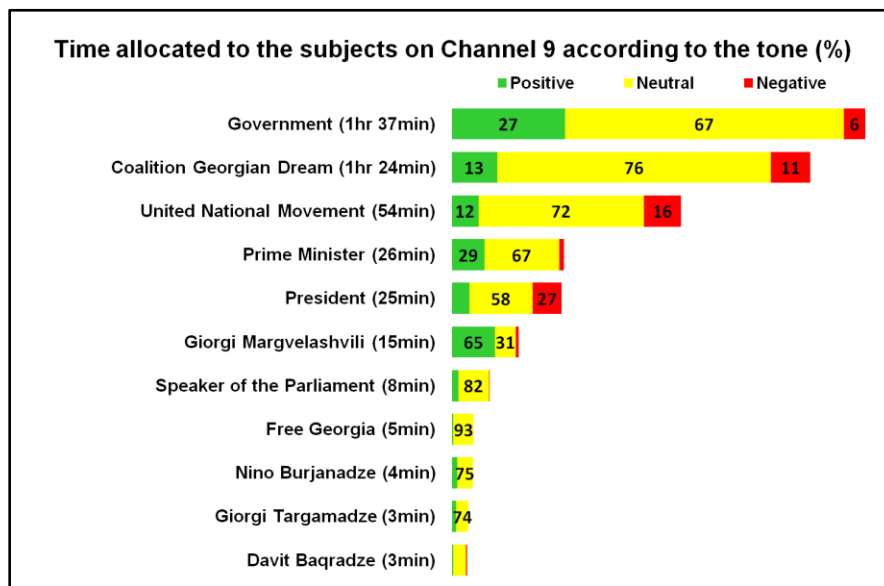
Technical problems occurred very often on Kavkasia: voice of a journalist or a respondent would be cut, nothing was seen on the screen and only the voice was heard, also there were some blunders while cutting, etc. Besides, the respondents name and

surname are almost never written and often it causes misunderstanding among the public.

Channel 9

Channel 9 broadcasted all the important news and events taken place in the country during July 17 through August 17. The stories were often analytical and provided exhaustive information to the public, but the analysis was mostly biased.

It is possible to say that the main trend for this period was the mostly positive coverage of the Prime Minister and government representatives, and negative coverage of the President and the members of the United National Movement. It was eye-catching in the main evening news releases that the journalists were trying not to criticize the government, and to present its members mostly in a positive context – despite the fact discussed in the story. Besides, the President and the members of the United National Movement were almost always shown in a quite negative context. There was an especially negative coverage of the President in the stories dedicated to the War of August in 2008. Often this derived from the journalists’ texts. However, there were cases when the overall context was created by the respondents in the story, because only the respondents with common opinions were represented and the audience did not have an opportunity to hear a different opinion. This trend is well seen in the diagram on tones.



Channel 9 used to cover presidential candidates and their activities. However, among the presidential candidates the largest portion of time was dedicated to Giorgi Margvelashvili (15 minutes), and 65% of this time was a positive coverage. Other candidates got 4 minutes and less.

Another trend that was observed in the main evening news releases during the monitoring period is about the sequence of news. The national events that used to be the number one news on all the other channels, often were not broadcasted as the first news in the program. Secondary or foreign news were covered more in the beginning of the programs.

Conclusion

Looking at the results of the period from July 16 until August 17, inclusive, it is possible to say that the TV companies have not shifted to the active election mode yet, but they have started to cover presidential candidates and their campaigns. The news related to the presidential candidates was covered on all the channels almost every day, but Adjara TV was an exception in this respect, where little time was allocated to the candidates and the events related to them were almost never covered.

The monitored TV channels covered mostly all the important events in their main news releases. However there were cases when the channels covered some stories from different angles and with different context based on their news policy. For example, this was the case for the stories dedicated to the 5th anniversary of the War of August in 2008. All the channels dedicated quite much time to this topic during this monitoring period. Like the general trend of the channels, specific subjects were covered differently while discussing this topic on various channels, which was reflected in the shares of positive and negative tone observed towards them. Some channels laid emphasis on the negative role of the President and the former authorities, and at some channels the events planned on this day were covered actively and emphasis was laid on the current speeches of politicians. There was an especially negative coverage provided for the President on the Channel 9 during this period. As for Maestro, the story on the War of August 8 was constructed based on the role of the Russian and Georgian sides, and none of the Georgian politicians were represented negatively in this context.

In conclusion, still the main political parties; the government; the President and the Prime Minister remain among the top-five according to allocated time. Positive tone of subjects increased during this period almost on all the channels, which to some extent was caused by the news covered during the monitoring period. The channels often showed the direct speech of the President, the Prime Minister, other representatives of the authorities and also the presidential candidates, and their appearances at various events were also frequently broadcasted, which mostly presented them in a positive light.