

MEDIA BEHAVIOR

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION
NOVEMBER 2005



**MEDIA UNIT
CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

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The Behaviour of the Sri Lankan Media in the Pre-Election Campaign Period

The Survey of Print and Electronic Media Presidential Election – November 2005

From 8th October to 16th November 2005

Media Unit
Centre for Policy Alternatives

Media Behaviour

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Background

The election to select the fifth president of Sri Lanka was held on 17th November 2005. Confusion as to whether the Presidential Election should be held in the year 2005 or in 2006 was presented before the Supreme Court which decided on 26th August 2005 that it should be held in the year 2005. Nominations for the Presidential Election was called on 07th October 2005. This media monitoring exercise was conducted from 08th October 2005 to 16th November 2005, the day before the election.

The two chief candidates for the presidential contest were the then Prime Minister Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse who contested from the United People Freedom Alliance (UPFA) and Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe, the opposition leader and leader of the United National Party. In addition there were 11 other candidates who contested for this Presidential Election.

This election was held under the condition of non-establishment of an independent election commission that should have been established according to the 17th Constitutional Amendment. Although nominations for the establishment of the Election Commission were sent twice by the constitutional committee to the then president, Ms. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge, she refused to establish the said commission. Under the circumstances Mr. Dayananda Dishanayake, the Elections Commissioner, was forced to function as a one-man election commission.

The overarching main themes ratcheted up during campaigning were questions of war and peace, the upliftment of public life, economic development, good governance, etc. The two chief candidates and a number of other candidates produced policy publications which were disseminated to the public.

From the commencement of the presidential campaign Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe who represented the UNP opposition in parliament stated that the government media should be independent of political bias. Issuing a statement after the date of the nominations the UNP stated that the Commissioner of Elections should take steps to ensure the independent conduct of government media.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse who represented the UPFA stated that laws would be enacted by the Government to support independent reporting not only for the government media but for all other private media as well.

The Elections Commissioner pronounced on 10th October 2005 his guide lines for reporting during the election campaign. They were as follows :

1. All information related to the conduct of the Presidential Election on November 17, 2005 may be published correctly without causing injustice to any candidate.
2. During the period of election nothing should be published partial to any candidate. Any news, partial to any candidate, published in foreign newspapers should not be reproduced in local newspapers.
3. The candidate concerned should be allowed to respond to any news published, provided the candidate thinks that the news had been published incorrectly or in a matter to defame him.
4. In the case of the interviews all information related to the organization sponsoring the interviews, organization or the person providing financial provisions, method of interviews etc should be specified.
5. The Head of State, Minister and political party leaders should have the right to reply and explain matters relating to statement made by them in public meetings when such statement are published.
6. News and current affairs should be published correctly and impartially.
7. These guidelines are general and media institution should observe codes conduct prepared voluntarily by them.

The Guide Lines of the Elections Commissioner were recommended to the independent private media by the Government but was made compulsory to the Government media. However, the Government media did not take any notice of these Guidelines. Furthermore, the Election Commissioner did not take any steps to enforce his guidelines until the final two days of the Election.

Approximate two days before the Presidential Election on 14th November 2005, Mr. Asoka Peiris, a Senior Administrative Officer and a former Election Commissioner was appointed as the Authority of the Government Media by the Elections Commissioner. But only the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation and the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation came under his Authority.

Although technically Government media, the Election Commissioner could not enforce any authority regarding the Independent Television Network (ITN), Lakhanda Radio and the Associated Newspapers Organisation (Lake House) as they functioned under the administration of the Finance Ministry.

It is mentioned in the Election Law that the last 48 hours of any Election should be devoid of any political campaign matters. Accordingly election meetings and house to house campaigning is prohibited in law during these two days. In the previous elections this period of 48 hours also prohibited campaigning through electronic media. But the Election Commissioner announced that there is no such prohibition in this Presidential Election for electronic media.

Considering the added significance by media played in the Presidential Election on account this decision, it resulted in the continuation of political campaigns literally up to very day of the Presidential Election. Under the Election Laws of Sri Lanka, expenses for elections are unlimited and therefore there is no way too to find out the funds spent on these political campaigns by individuals and political parties.

Another important factor seen in this Presidential Election was the war fears and instability in the political situation that prevailed in the North and East of Sri Lanka. The people who lived in the North and the East in the areas controlled by the LTTE did not get an opportunity to cast their votes. According to diktats given by the LTTE, the Tamil population of the North East did not participate in the Presidential Election. The people of the Jaffna District were forced to refrain from casting their votes. The Centre for Monitoring of Election Violence (CMEV) and the PAFFREL, election violence monitoring agencies, stated their unequivocal condemnation at the inability to exercise universal franchise by the people in the North and the East of Sri Lanka. Our media monitoring was conducted in tandem with the activities of the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence during the Presidential Election

This Presidential Election would be remembered for its result. Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse from UPFA's candidate, won with only a majority of 50.03%. Of the declared number of votes he got only 23,000 votes more than the required 50% of the total vote tally in order to become President. Further, the difference of the number of votes obtained by the two chief candidates was of a value of less than 2% of the entire valid number of votes. In this respect, it is vital to recognize the role played by the media in the run-up to the elections.

This media monitoring was made possible by funding from the United States National Democratic Institute (<http://www.ndi.org/>). We wish to thank them for their support.

A Survey of the
Behaviour of the
Print Media
during the
Presidential Election
Campaign period

Methodology

News items, editorials, feature articles, cartoons and photographs that appeared in news papers during the election period were categorized under the following headings:

1. Articles dealing with the activities of a candidate / his party or alliance have been categorized as advantageous to that candidate.
2. Articles critical of a candidate / his party or alliance are taken as disadvantageous to that candidate.
3. Articles flagging issues related to the people or their ideas and opinions about the election are taken as articles relevant to the people.
4. Statements made and interviews given by the Election Commissioner or any other official are categorized under Election Duty.
5. Instances of election related violence have been categorized separately.
6. Activities of organizations working against election malpractices and violence are categorized as Free and Fair Elections.
7. Reports on developmental work advantageous to the ruling party are taken separately.
8. Strikes, protests and articles on other social problems that could influence the election are categorized as Social Problems.
9. Articles on the election and the peace process are taken under Election and the Peace Process.
10. Other articles with election related reporting, which cannot be classified under the above headings, are categorized as Other Articles relevant to the Election.
11. 11 dailies and 17 weekend mainstream newspapers published in Sinhala, Tamil and English during the election period were included in the survey.
12. In all 476 issues of the daily papers and 102 issues of weekend papers were monitored.
13. Percentages of each category are calculated taking into consideration the space allocated for reportage other than the paid advertisements relevant to the election by each newspaper during the pre-election period.

Observations

State Media

- ❖ Majority of the front-page headlines and editorials in favour of one individual candidate appeared in the State Media. 31 of the front-page headlines and 13 editorials taken for the survey were in favour of Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, the Presidential candidate of the ruling UPFA coalition.
- ❖ 16 of the editorials in the Dinamina were unfavourable to Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe.
- ❖ In the four State - controlled newspapers the majority of the articles appeared in favour of Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa. Of these Thinakaran (62%), Thinakaran Varamanjaree (51%) and Dinamina (52%) took more than 50% of the total reporting in favour of Mr. Rajapaksa, while the Silumina took a value of 49.8%
- ❖ With the exception of *Lanka*, a weekend publication, it was the Dinamina (26%), Thinakaran Varmanjaree (25%) and Silumina (24%) that had published reports disadvantageous to Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe.
- ❖ The state owned newspapers other than the Daily News had taken less than 2% of their reporting on the elections and the peace process. The Daily News had taken 3%.
- ❖ The space allocated for candidates other than the two main ones was too negligible to be included in the survey.
- ❖ Of the space allocated for the category *Election Duty* the second highest value was taken by the Thinakaran (6.7%)
- ❖ Of the reporting on Free and Fair Elections, the second highest value (5.9%) was taken by the Daily News.
- ❖ The state owned print media had allocated little space for reporting Election Violence, one possible reason being that incidences of election violence were much lower than in previous elections.

Private Media

- ❖ The most disadvantageous reporting on a single candidate was by the *Irudina* newspaper. It was 64% unfavourable to the UPFA candidate Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa. The second highest was by the *Lanka* newspaper (63%) against the UNP candidate Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe.
- ❖ Reporting in all the Tamil medium newspapers was more favourable to Mr. Wickramasinghe than to Mr. Rajapaksa.
- ❖ The most unfavourable to Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa was reporting by the 3 weeklies published by the Leader Publication Group. The values are, *Irudina* 64%, *Sunday Leader* 47% and *Morning Leader* 33%. In these reports various alleged stories of corruption and malpractices had been highlighted. There were also reports unfavourable to the leaders of the parties supporting Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa.
- ❖ Though the favourable reporting in Ravaya on both Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa (9%) and Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe (11%) were well balanced, reports unfavourable to Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa took a higher value (22%). This was due to the publication of articles exposing the corruption and malpractices of MPs and Ministers.
- ❖ On the whole, the daily papers, *Lakbima*, *Divayina*, *The Island*, *Sunday Lankadeepa* and weekend papers *Sunday Lankadeepa*, *Sunday Lakbima* maintained balanced reporting. The difference between the advantageous and the disadvantageous reporting about the 2 candidates was less than 5%.
- ❖ It was the *Sunday Lakbima* that allocated the largest space for the candidates other than the two main (10.74%)
- ❖ *Sunday Lakbima* also gave the highest coverage to all groups coming under this survey.
- ❖ Though reporting by *Divayina* and *Sunday Lankadeepa* on both key candidates was equally balanced, there was a considerable discrepancy between the reporting disadvantageous to them.
- ❖ The daily paper *Lakbima* had published 7 articles dealing on Free and Fair Elections and 9 front page news items and 4 editorials on election duty.
- ❖ Front-page headlines and 4 editorials in the *Sunday Leader* were disadvantageous to Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa.
- ❖ The *Veerakesari* carried reports (41%) advantageous to Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe.

Total space allocated to news, feature articles, editorials, cartoons and photographs published between the period 8th October and 16th November 2005, in relation to the Presidential Election

Newspaper		Mahinda Rajapakse		Ranil Wickramasinghe		Other Candidates		LTTE	Voter Issues	Election Officials
		Favourable	Unfavourable	Favourable	Unfavourable	Favourable	Unfavourable			
Dinamina	Sq. cm	198833.50	6386.50	38126.75	98664.50	1351.50	76.00	2042.50	1549.25	6129.75
	%	52.25	1.68	10.02	25.93	0.36	0.02	0.54	0.41	1.61
Thinakaran	Sq. cm	90830.25	250.25	7566.75	16649.00	125.75	172.00	906.50	3430.75	9791.00
	%	62.16	0.17	5.18	11.39	0.09	0.12	0.62	2.35	6.70
Daily News	Sq. cm	56942.00	1540.75	13610.50	12112.00	2196.25	0.00	860.00	3382.25	3238.75
	%	37.91	1.03	9.06	8.06	1.46	0.00	0.57	2.25	2.16
Lankadeepa	Sq. cm	74102.00	44192.00	75749.25	8451.75	1923.50	0.00	5818.50	4457.75	16178.50
	%	24.88	14.84	25.43	2.84	0.65	0.00	1.95	1.50	5.43
Daily Mirror	Sq. cm	18534.50	20582.25	36420.50	3643.25	868.25	78.75	2983.00	5331.25	4000.25
	%	9.19	10.21	18.07	1.81	0.43	0.04	1.48	2.64	1.98
Divaina	Sq. cm	72409.25	16471.25	65719.50	22763.00	2122.00	0.00	5494.25	1836.50	9873.25
	%	29.66	6.75	26.92	9.32	0.87	0.00	2.25	0.75	4.04
The Island	Sq. cm	17507.00	11218.50	21270.50	5621.00	2673.50	273.75	315.50	8832.25	5789.00
	%	12.64	8.10	15.36	4.06	1.93	0.20	0.23	6.38	4.18
Lakbima	Sq. cm	82804.50	25902.00	87027.50	14244.75	7751.50	143.50	2526.25	1920.25	13057.75
	%	27.91	8.73	29.33	4.80	2.61	0.05	0.85	0.65	4.40
Thinakkural	Sq. cm	34461.75	17199.25	57219.75	6347.00	2173.25	169.00	5396.00	3468.75	12175.25
	%	17.39	8.68	28.88	3.20	1.10	0.09	2.72	1.75	6.15
Virakesari	Sq. cm	33252.25	15975.25	86039.25	7136.00	2720.25	0.00	1700.25	7734.00	13181.25
	%	16.02	7.70	41.44	3.44	1.31	0.00	0.82	3.73	6.35
Sudar Oli	Sq. cm	33110.00	25819.00	68190.25	6734.50	3588.50	94.50	5705.00	2446.75	9246.00
	%	15.01	11.70	30.91	3.05	1.63	0.04	2.59	1.11	4.19

Total space allocated to news, feature articles, editorials, cartoons and photographs published between the period 8th October and 16th November 2005, in relation to the Presidential Election

		Election Violence	Free and Fair Elections	Other Election Related	Development	Social Issues	Election and Peace Process	Total
Dinamina	Sq. cm	2262.00	4181.25	13637.75	4698.00	2228.50	345.00	380512.75
	%	0.59	1.10	3.58	1.23	0.59	0.09	100.00
Thinakaran	Sq. cm	1525.75	3767.25	8020.75	1512.00	0.00	1582.50	146130.50
	%	1.04	2.58	5.49	1.03	0.00	1.08	100.00
Daily News	Sq. cm	607.75	8842.00	38122.75	3644.75	345.50	4766.25	150211.50
	%	0.40	5.89	25.38	2.43	0.23	3.17	100.00
Lankadeepa	Sq. cm	11037.00	8230.25	42681.25	603.00	3067.00	1373.00	297864.75
	%	3.71	2.76	14.33	0.20	1.03	0.46	100.00
Daily Mirror	Sq. cm	3032.75	7631.00	77480.25	568.00	3379.50	17050.75	201584.25
	%	1.50	3.79	38.44	0.28	1.68	8.46	100.00
Divaina	Sq. cm	4642.00	9037.75	26855.00	1210.25	2504.25	3231.00	244169.25
	%	1.90	3.70	11.00	0.50	1.03	1.32	100.00
The Island	Sq. cm	2277.50	3859.75	45454.50	2908.00	3757.50	6702.50	138460.75
	%	1.64	2.79	32.83	2.10	2.71	4.84	100.00
Lakbima	Sq. cm	6606.50	6308.50	41421.25	2081.25	3594.00	1308.75	296698.25
	%	2.23	2.13	13.96	0.70	1.21	0.44	100.00
Thinakkural	Sq. cm	3936.25	9520.50	40260.50	1028.75	330.50	4430.00	198116.50
	%	1.99	4.81	20.32	0.52	0.17	2.24	100.00
Virakesari	Sq. cm	2087.75	7280.25	26608.00	1413.00	0.00	2475.00	207602.50
	%	1.01	3.51	12.82	0.68	0.00	1.19	100.00
Sudar Oli	Sq. cm	4362.50	4206.00	49190.25	363.75	719.25	6838.00	220614.25
	%	1.98	1.91	22.30	0.16	0.33	3.10	100.00

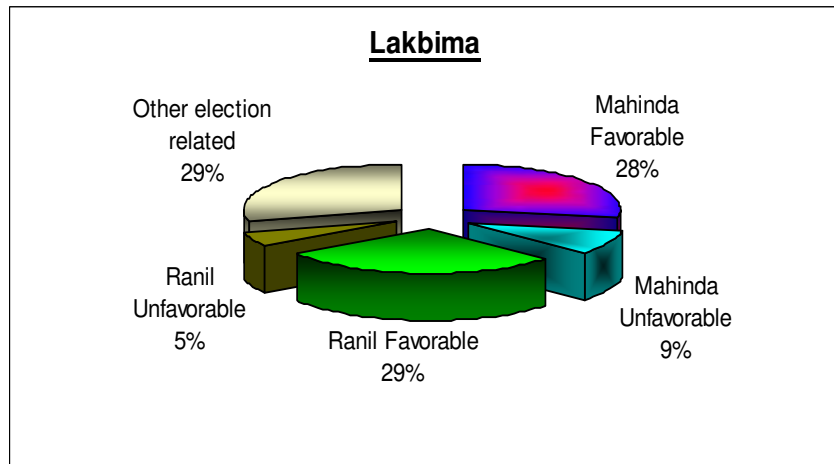
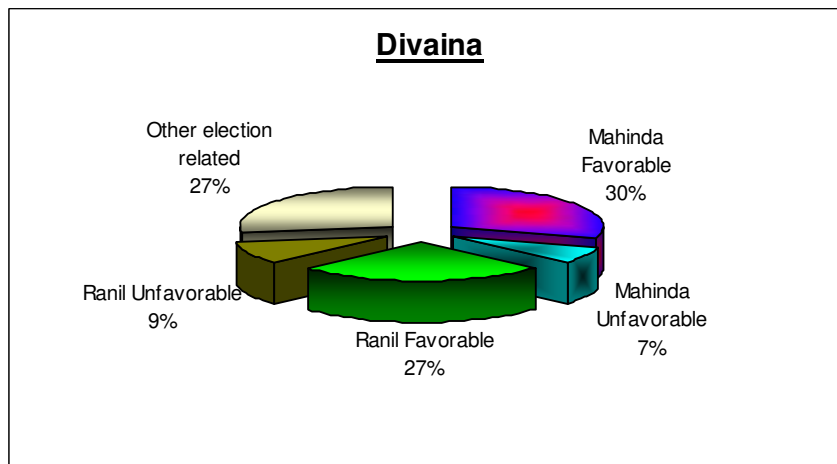
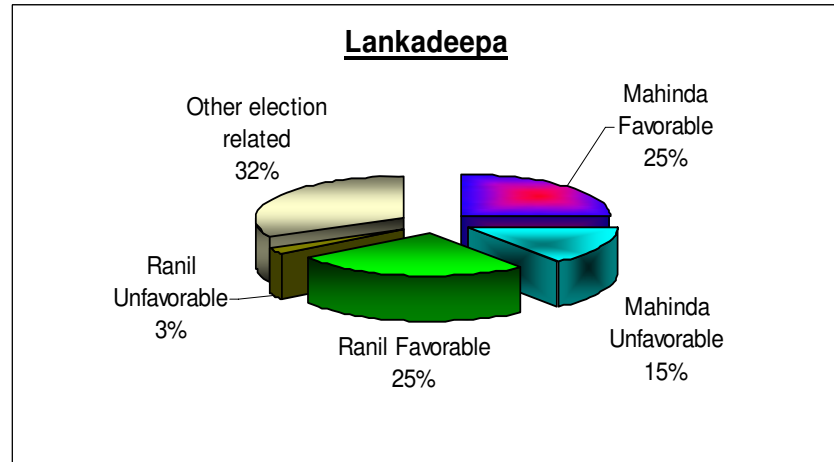
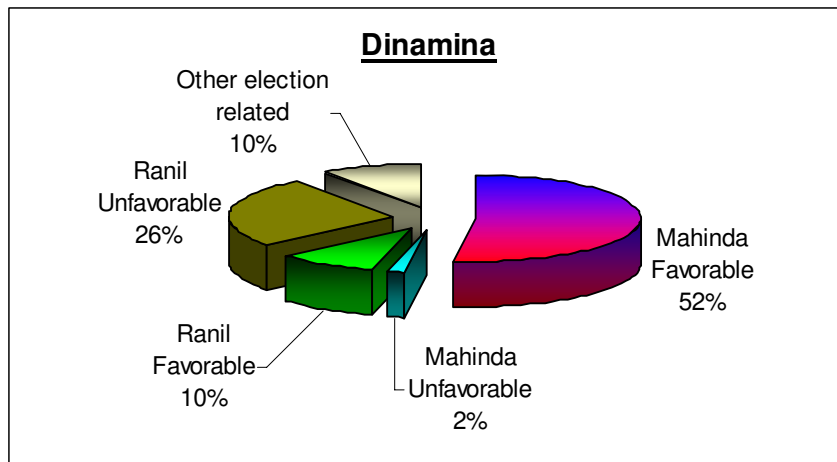
Total area used for Election-related News, Features, Editorials, Cartoons & Photos in weekly newspapers of 09th October to 16th November 2005

Newspaper		Mahinda		Ranil		Other Candidates		LTTE	Voter Issues	Election Official
		F	Uf	F	Uf	F	Uf			
Silumina	Sq.cm	32234.75	1351.25	6867.50	15954.75	641.25	52.00	0.00	240.00	2806.00
	%	49.80	2.09	10.61	24.65	0.99	0.08	0.00	0.37	4.34
Thinakaran Varamanjaree	Sq.cm	16459.00	0.00	1191.50	8005.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	80.00	625.00
	%	51.03	0.00	3.69	24.82	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25	1.94
Sunday Observer	Sq.cm	15786.50	962.00	3733.25	6074.25	632.00	192.00	1540.00	447.00	2077.75
	%	32.82	2.00	7.76	12.63	1.31	0.40	3.20	0.93	4.32
Irida Lankadeepa	Sq.cm	13937.00	7705.50	13425.00	4724.00	1423.50	0.00	1371.25	686.75	3044.25
	%	17.70	9.79	17.05	6.00	1.81	0.00	1.74	0.87	3.87
Sunday Times	Sq.cm	2984.00	8463.75	5269.50	1327.50	752.00	0.00	3885.50	773.00	2292.25
	%	5.92	16.80	10.46	2.64	1.49	0.00	7.71	1.53	4.55
Divaina Irida Sangrahaya	Sq.cm	18407.00	1452.25	10166.50	8702.00	1050.75	250.00	2194.00	2806.00	2339.75
	%	22.64	1.79	12.50	10.70	1.29	0.31	2.70	3.45	2.88
Divamina	Sq.cm	2546.25	188.00	2730.00	895.00	108.00	0.00	167.25	0.00	716.25
	%	20.75	1.53	22.25	7.29	0.88	0.00	1.36	0.00	5.84
Sunday Island	Sq.cm	640.50	5193.00	4453.25	571.00	600.25	187.50	1268.75	652.50	422.00
	%	1.26	10.19	8.74	1.12	1.18	0.37	2.49	1.28	0.83
Lakbima Irida Sangrahaya	Sq.cm	6728.00	1632.00	4706.00	4061.75	5515.75	297.00	1997.50	1433.25	4288.25
	%	13.10	3.18	9.16	7.91	10.74	0.58	3.89	2.79	8.35
Gnairu Thinakkural	Sq.cm	6021.00	4695.25	9326.50	808.50	3032.75	0.00	874.50	464.00	521.50
	%	11.53	8.99	17.86	1.55	5.81	0.00	1.67	0.89	1.00
Virkesari Vaaraveledu	Sq.cm	4715.25	5415.25	13551.75	1173.25	3052.50	0.00	1289.25	365.00	730.00
	%	7.99	9.18	22.97	1.99	5.17	0.00	2.19	0.62	1.24
Sunday Leader	Sq.cm	4388.50	49992.00	12212.25	108.00	296.25	0.00	2879.50	2691.75	3153.50
	%	4.16	47.39	11.58	0.10	0.28	0.00	2.73	2.55	2.99
Morning Leader	Sq.cm	2779.00	19227.50	5433.50	0.00	522.25	0.00	943.00	2822.75	886.50
	%	4.76	32.92	9.30	0.00	0.89	0.00	1.61	4.83	1.52
Irudina	Sq.cm	4444.25	61935.75	21158.50	307.00	1072.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1462.00
	%	4.59	64.00	21.86	0.32	1.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.51
Sudar Oli	Sq.cm	0.00	6226.00	2275.00	1537.00	0.00	0.00	253.50	0.00	0.00
	%	0.00	33.27	12.16	8.21	0.00	0.00	1.35	0.00	0.00
Ravaya	Sq.cm	4675.50	12139.50	5777.00	1302.50	3418.50	0.00	568.25	1052.00	778.00
	%	8.57	22.26	10.59	2.39	6.27	0.00	1.04	1.93	1.43
Lanka	Sq.cm	12134.50	1029.00	3338.25	39682.25	775.50	0.00	1212.50	90.75	0.00
	%	19.18	1.63	5.28	62.72	1.23	0.00	1.92	0.14	0.00

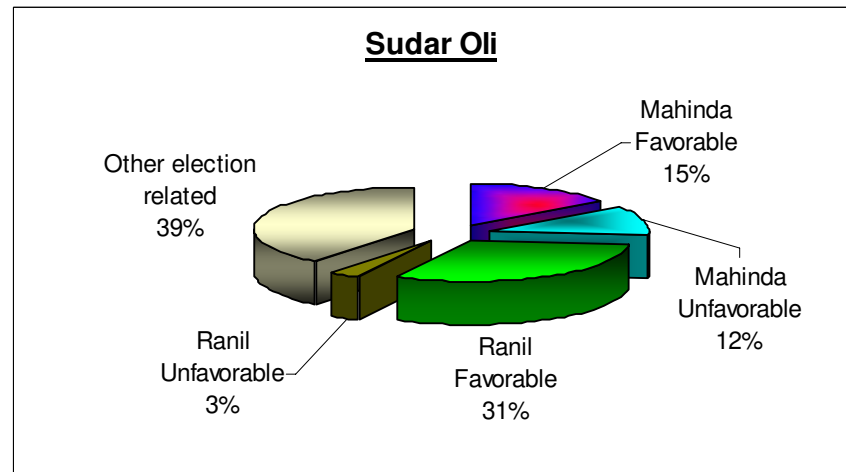
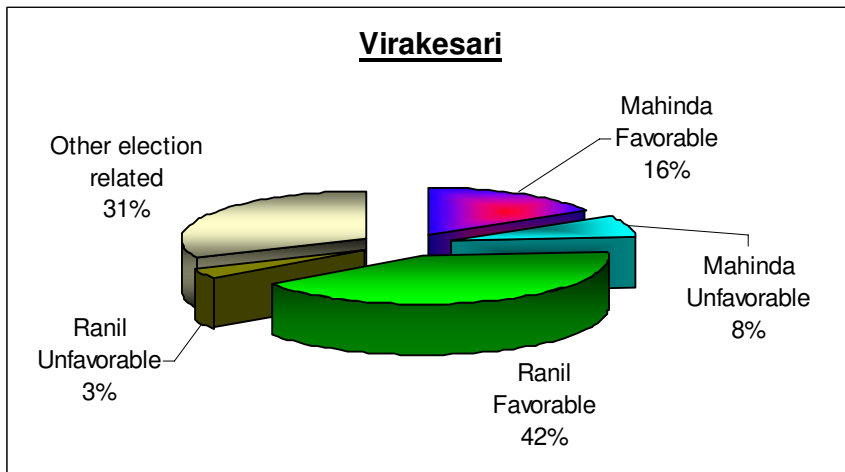
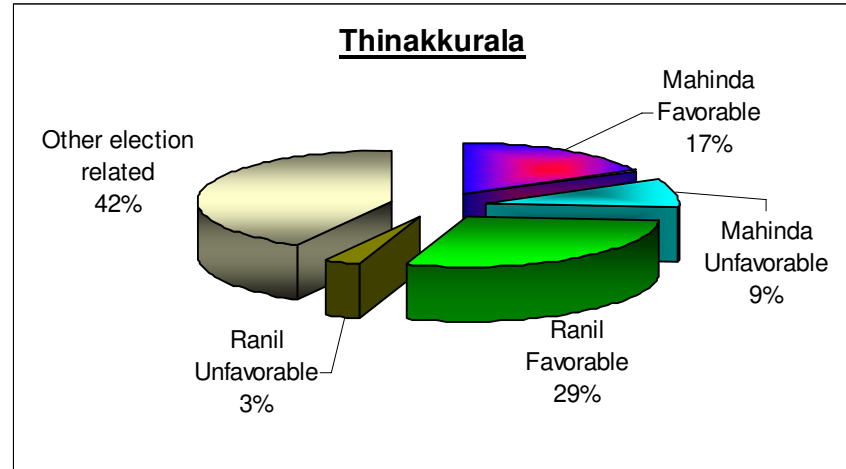
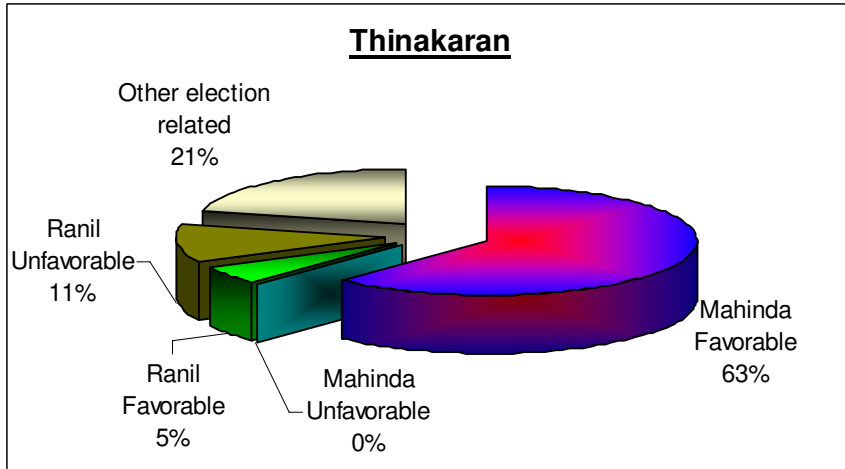
Total area used for Election-related News, Features, Editorials, Cartoons & Photos in weekly newspapers of 09th October to 16th November 2005

Newspaper		Election Violence	Free & Fair Election	Other Election Related	Developments	Social Issues	Election and Peace Process	Total
Silumina		0.00	342.00	3156.75	694.00	0.00	386.75	64727.00
	%	0.00	0.53	4.88	1.07	0.00	0.60	100.00
Thinakaran Varamanjaree	Sq.cm	0.00	173.25	5535.25	0.00	0.00	181.50	32250.50
	%	0.00	0.54	17.16	0.00	0.00	0.56	100.00
Sunday Observer	Sq.cm	65.00	1298.00	14474.75	35.75	0.00	786.50	48104.75
	%	0.14	2.70	30.09	0.07	0.00	1.63	100.00
Irida Lankadeepa	Sq.cm	599.75	1048.50	27226.25	1297.50	615.00	1641.00	78745.25
	%	0.76	1.33	34.58	1.65	0.78	2.08	100.00
Sunday Times	Sq.cm	160.00	902.75	22168.25	13.50	168.00	1216.00	50376.00
	%	0.32	1.79	44.01	0.03	0.33	2.41	100.00
Divaina Irida Sangrahaya	Sq.cm	208.00	2045.75	28912.75	348.00	0.00	2419.50	81302.25
	%	0.26	2.52	35.56	0.43	0.00	2.98	100.00
Divamina	Sq.cm	528.00	595.00	3390.50	408.00	0.00	0.00	12272.25
	%	4.30	4.85	27.63	3.32	0.00	0.00	100.00
Sunday Island	Sq.cm	0.00	460.25	31141.00	0.00	126.00	5243.75	50959.75
	%	0.00	0.90	61.11	0.00	0.25	10.29	100.00
Lakbima Irida Sangrahaya	Sq.cm	1548.25	2519.50	15370.00	0.00	859.75	396.00	51353.00
	%	3.01	4.91	29.93	0.00	1.67	0.77	100.00
Gnairu Thinakkural	Sq.cm	116.75	5321.50	16040.25	0.00	0.00	4992.25	52214.75
	%	0.22	10.19	30.72	0.00	0.00	9.56	100.00
Virkesari Vaaraveledu	Sq.cm	950.50	251.00	24667.00	0.00	0.00	2833.75	58994.50
	%	1.61	0.43	41.81	0.00	0.00	4.80	100.00
Sunday Leader	Sq.cm	353.50	1993.25	23941.75	418.00	231.00	2838.50	105497.75
	%	0.34	1.89	22.69	0.40	0.22	2.69	100.00
Morning Leader	Sq.cm	1002.50	3004.75	19166.00	150.00	840.00	1624.50	58402.25
	%	1.72	5.14	32.82	0.26	1.44	2.78	100.00
Irudina	Sq.cm	180.00	1672.00	3614.50	924.00	0.00	0.00	96770.00
	%	0.19	1.73	3.74	0.95	0.00	0.00	100.00
Sudar Oli	Sq.cm	0.00	0.00	5351.50	0.00	0.00	3069.50	18712.50
	%	0.00	0.00	28.60	0.00	0.00	16.40	100.00
Ravaya	Sq.cm	1891.75	781.75	20241.00	576.00	104.00	1222.50	54528.25
	%	3.47	1.43	37.12	1.06	0.19	2.24	100.00
Lanka	Sq.cm	996.25	165.75	3136.00	0.00	0.00	709.50	63270.25
	%	1.57	0.26	4.96	0.00	0.00	1.12	100.00

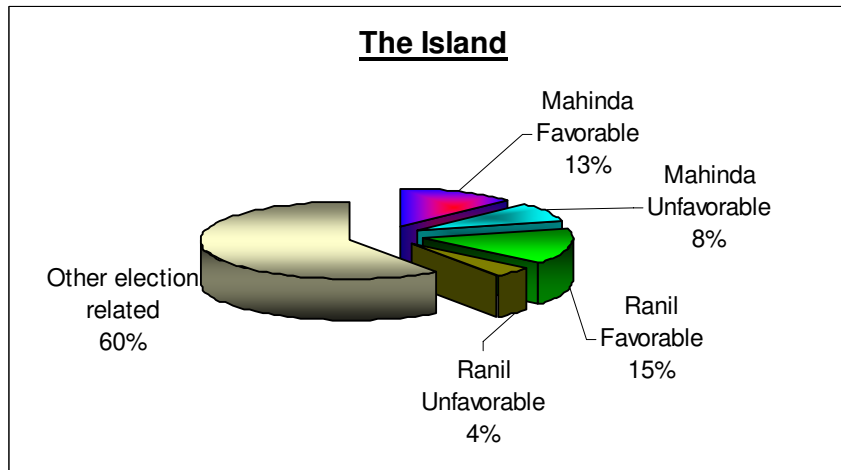
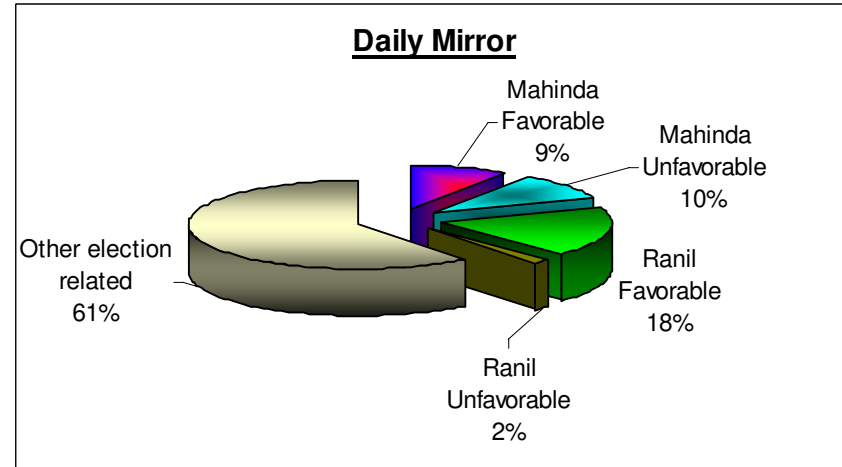
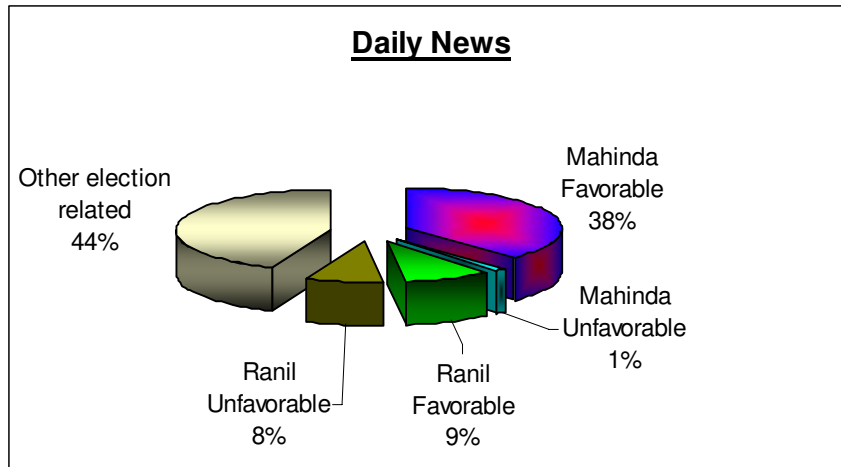
Space allocated by the Sinhala daily newspapers for the two main candidates and the reports regarding matters related to the election during the pre-election period

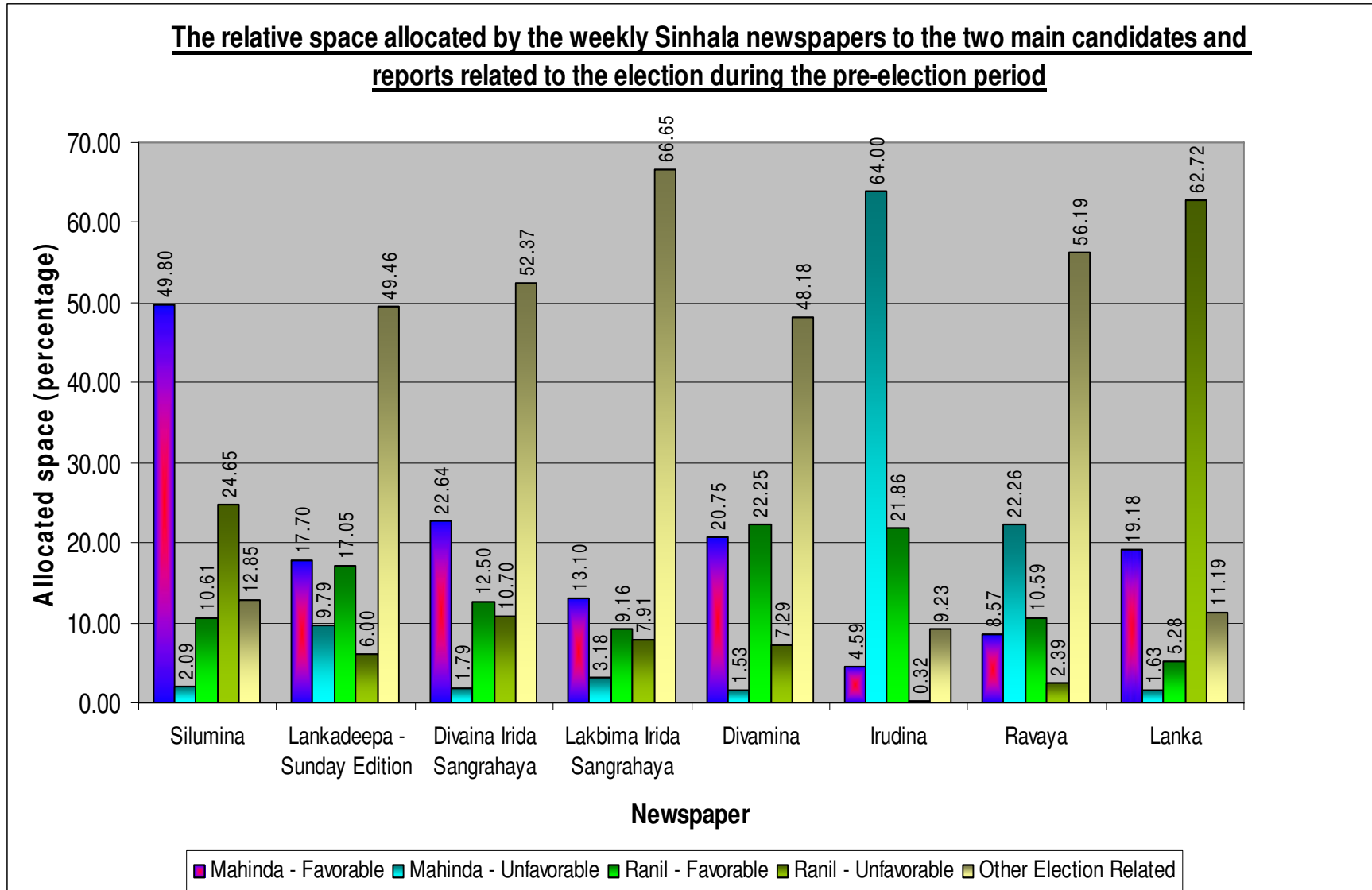


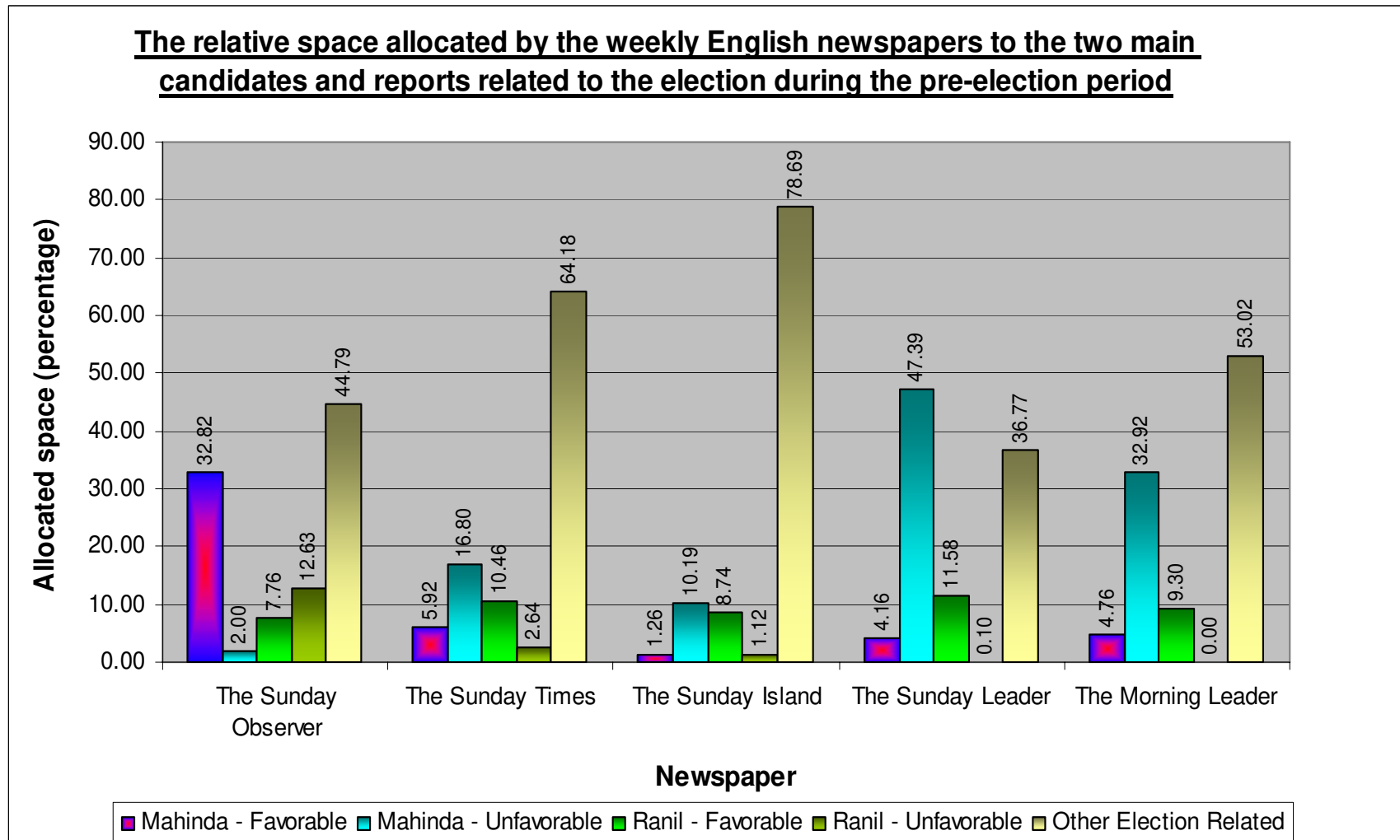
Space allocated by the Tamil daily newspapers for the two main candidates and the reports regarding matters related to the election during the pre-election period

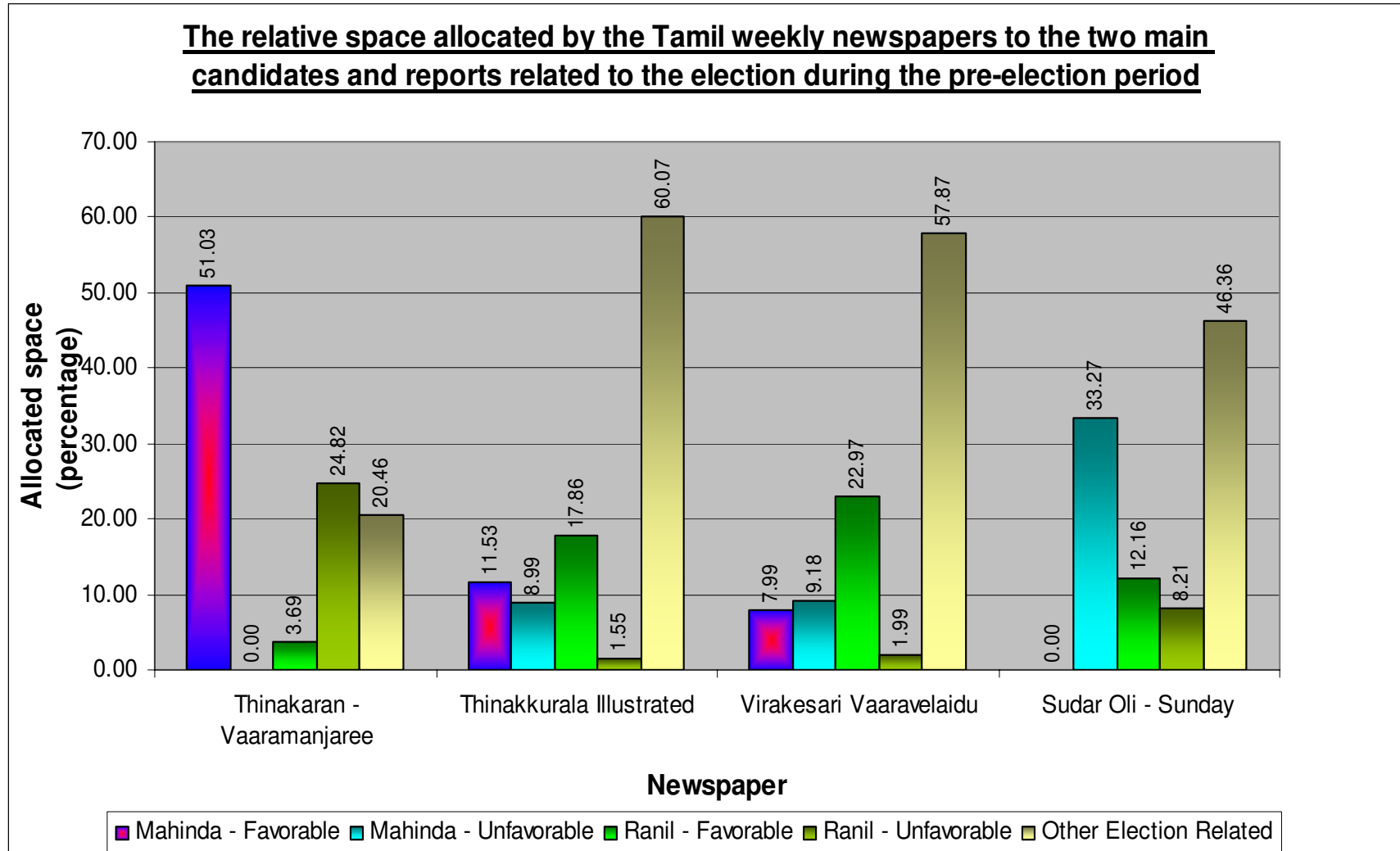


Space allocated by the English daily newspapers for the two main candidates and the reports regarding matters related to the election during the pre-election period









A Survey of the Conduct of the Electronic Media during the 2005 Presidential Election Period

Methodology

News items relevant to the election were grouped under the following headings;

1. News telecasts biased towards the activities of a particular candidate / his political party or his alliance are considered as favourable to that particular candidate.
2. News telecasts/broadcasts unfavourable to the activities of a candidate/his political party or alliance are considered as unfavourable to that particular candidate.
3. All categories taken into account in the classification of newspaper reporting are used in classifying the electronic media reports.
4. TV time allocated to each of the two main candidates and the number of news items relevant to each one of them was calculated separately.
5. The survey also covered the main news bulletins of Inhale media from the day after the date of nominations (October 08th) to the day prior to the election (November 16th).
6. Following TV channels were surveyed.

State Media:	Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC) Independent Television Network (ITN)
Private Media:	Sirasa TV Swarnavahini TNL
7. A total of 200 news telecasts on 5 TV channels during the 40 days in the pre-election period were monitored for the survey.

Observations

1. Allocation of air time on the two state owned TV channels, the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation and the Independent Television Network for news telecasts, were comparatively more favourable to Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa and unfavourable to Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe.
2. Allocation of airtime on the three private media surveyed, Sirasa TV, Swarnavahini and TNL was extremely favourable to Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe and unfavourable to Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa.
3. Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation allocated the highest airtime favourable to one individual candidate - 473 minutes and 7 seconds out of the total number of hours taken for the survey. The second highest was by the ITN and was 326 minutes. Both these channels had allocated time in favour of Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa. The third place taken by Swarnavahini, giving 243 minutes and 5 seconds in favour of Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe.
4. It Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation telecast the highest number of news items unfavourable to one individual candidate - 223 minutes and 48 seconds of news telecasts unfavourable to Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe. The second place was taken by ITN which allocated 162 minutes and 02 seconds of its news time unfavourable to Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe. The third place was by Sirasa TV taking 128 minutes and 52 seconds of its airtime unfavourable to Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa.
5. Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation telecast the highest number of news items in favour of one individual candidate. 214 news items were telecast in favour of Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa. Sirasa TV took the second place by allocating 151 news items in favour of Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe. ITN took the third place by telecasting 149 news items in favour of Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa.
6. Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation telecast 109 news items unfavourable to Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe, while Sirasa came second by telecasting 96 news items in favour of Mr. Wickramasinghe. The third place was taken by ITN with 38 news items unfavourable to Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe.
7. It is of special note that Swarnavahini channel didn't telecast any news items unfavourable to any candidate during the last week prior to the election. It also didn't telecast any news favourable to any of the candidates on the day prior to the election (Nov. 16th)
8. Taken as a whole, the lowest count of discrepancy between favourable and unfavourable reporting on the two main candidates was by Swarnavahini. Swarnavahini had maintained a balanced reporting compared with other channels.

Reporting on the last main rallies of the two main candidates.

Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC)

4 rallies in support of Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa were covered in this monitoring exercise.

Pictures of Mr. Rajapaksa addressing the rallies at Beliatta and Matara were telecast in medium size frames. Pictures of two popular film stars attending the meeting were also telecast alongside with Mr. Rajapaksa addressing the rally at Beliatta. Other rallies reported were ones held at Bandaragama and Campbell Place, Colombo. Messrs. Somawansa Amarasinghe and Wimal Weerawansa addressing the two meetings respectively were also telecast.

Time allocated for telecasting the proceedings of these four meetings was 88 minutes and 35 seconds.

The last rally attended by Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe at Maradana was reporting using a medium size frame presented him addressing the audience from a bullet-proof cabin. The frames were blurred as it was night-time and with the reflection of electric flash-bulbs further blurring his image.

Time allocated was 1 minute and 20 seconds.

Sirasa

The Matara rally in support of Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa was reported. It Held during daytime, Mr. Rajapaksa addressed the meeting from a bulletproof cabin. The frames were not clear as the shadows of the decorations in front of the stage were thrown on the bulletproof cabin. Time allocated was 2 minutes and 16 seconds, 10 seconds of which were taken by pan-shots to cover the people attending the rally.

The Maradana rally of Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe was reported. The pictures were telecast in medium size frames taken alongside with his supporters. Though he addressed the gathering from a bulletproof cabin, the pictures were clear and of high quality. The reflections of electric flash bulbs blurred the view but only slightly. During the telecast, which took 2 minutes and 50 seconds, 10 minutes were taken to telecast pictures of the people attending the rally in a joyous and celebratory mood. Pan and tilt shots were telecast to show how the UNP supporters were waving mini national flags enthusiastically.

Swarnavahini

Time allocated for reporting the two final rallies of the two main candidates was equal.

Medium size frames telecast the two candidates addressing the people. As Mr. Rajapaksa was addressing his supporters 4 news crawlers (news snippets that scroll horizontally at the bottom of the TV screen) were telecast which had little or no relevance to his speech. When Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe was addressing his supporters three crawler ads were telecast and they had a bearing on the promises made in his People's Agenda.

In telecasting these crawlers it was never mentioned that they were paid advertisements. As such, additional value was added to Mr. Wickramasinghe's address as the crawlers were telecast concurrently.

Independent Television Network

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa's Borella and Matara rallies were telecast. At the Borella rally it was announced that Mr. Rajapaksa would not attend the rally due to security reasons. But he addressed the gathering through the mobile phone of Mr. Bharata Laxman Premachandra who had organized the rally. As Mr. Rajapaksa spoke through the mobile phone it was placed near a microphone and the people could hear him.

4 minutes were allocated for this.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa's Matara rally had been given coverage of 2 minutes and 20 seconds. This meeting seemed well attended and though Mr. Rajapaksa addressed it from a bullet-proof cabin, the frames were quite clear.

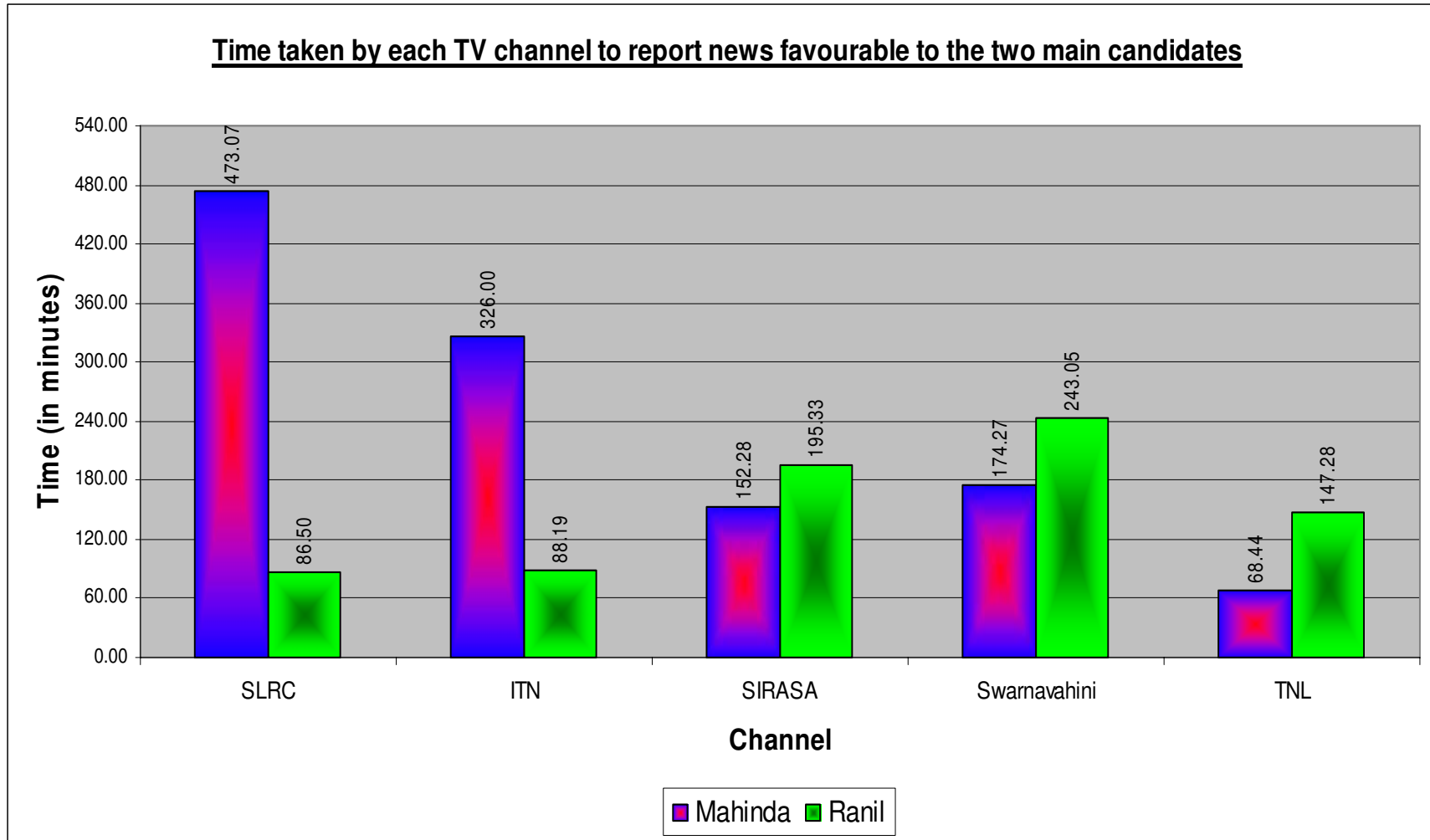
Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe's Maradana rally had been covered. At the start, a dance of a middle-aged woman created certain amount of sarcasm. It was followed by a young music troupe (Bhatiya and Santhush) responding to fast track music and a few elderly Buddhist monks on the stage, watching it.

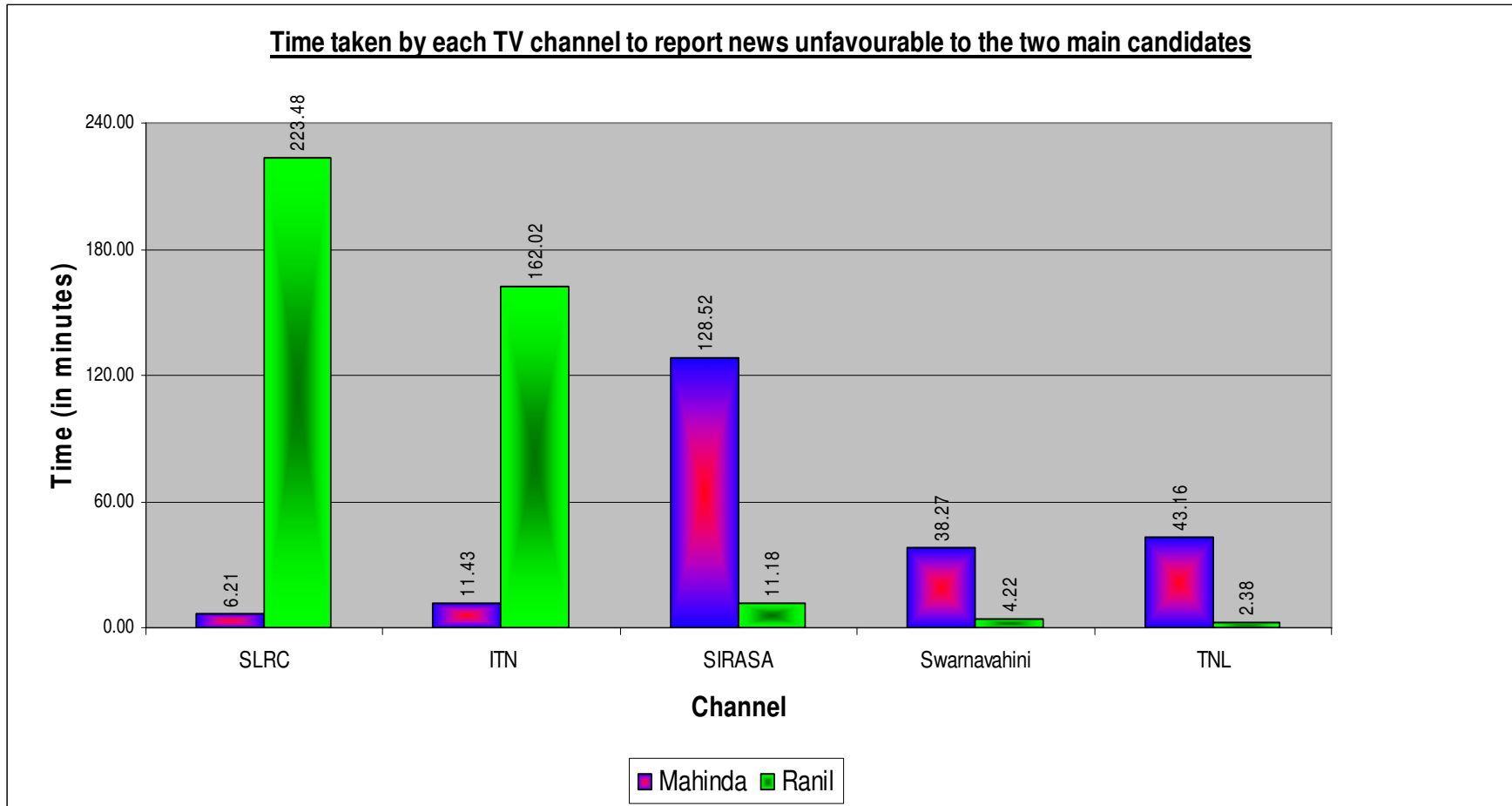
It was followed by Mr. Wickramasinghe's speech and 2 minutes and 20 seconds were allocated to it.

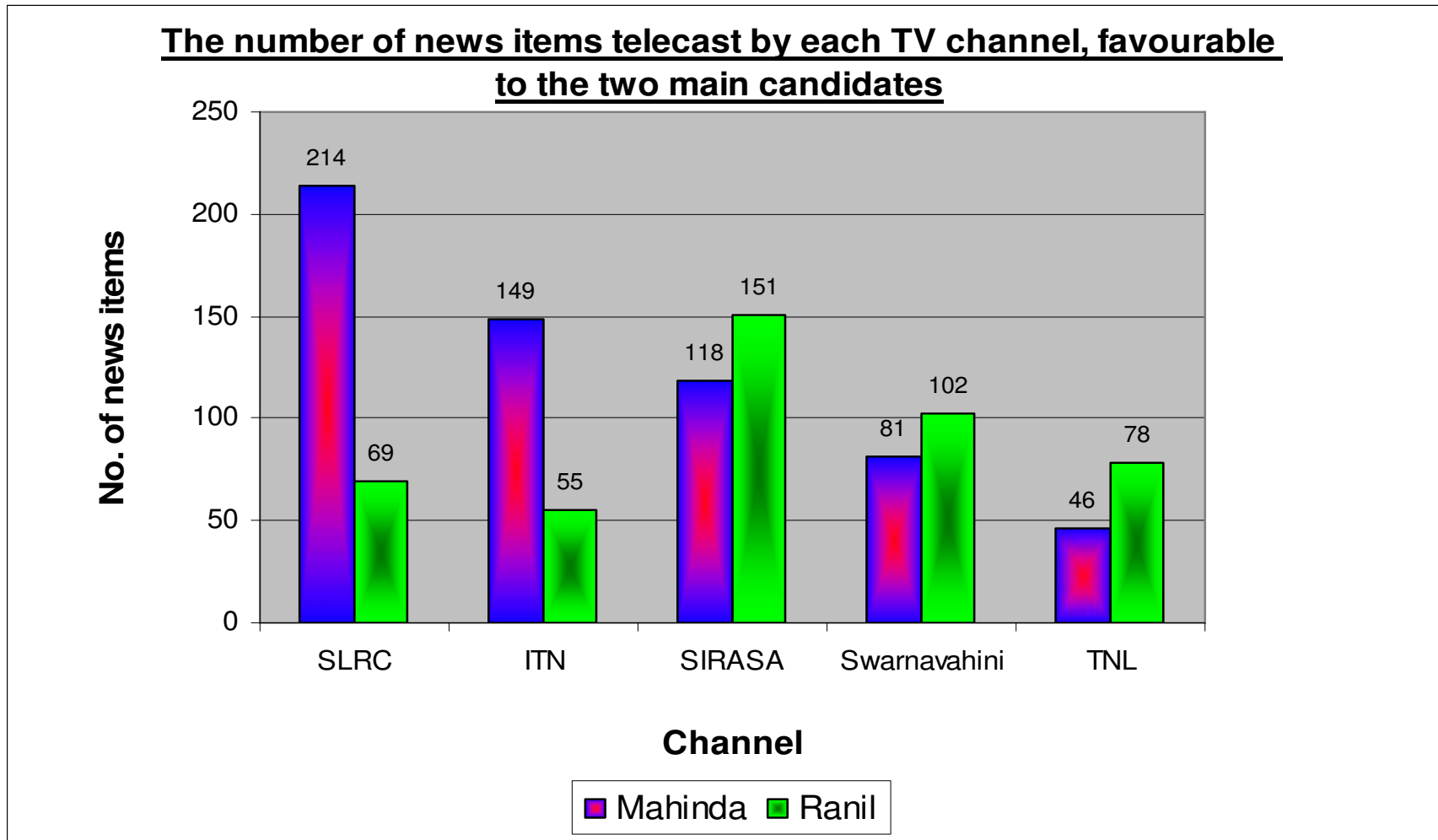
TNL

Last rally at Maradana in support of Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe was covered by two cameras. 4 close ups were from his right and 4 from front as he addressed the rally. During his speech 4 medium size frames and 4 remote ones covering the people attending the rally were telecast. This took 2 minutes and 50 seconds. 16 frames were telecast within that time.

None of Mr. Rajapaksa's final rallies were given coverage. The announcer gave the synopsis of his speech at Beliatta rally. This was given 1 minute and 44 seconds.







The number of news items telecast by each TV channel, unfavourable to the two main candidates

