



MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE CASE “TELECOM”

Assessment of the investigative journalism in some of the media in Macedonia in the period between 29 December 2011 and 10 February 2012

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Introduction

Subject of this analysis were the texts in some of the media in Macedonia on the “Telecom” case. The case involves a big company in Macedonia with combined foreign-national ownership, whose representatives at a given point of time, according to the facts established by both Macedonia and the United States so far, had undertaken unlawful and illegal actions with elements of corruption thus damaging both the shareholders and the citizens.

The case was once again in the centre of attention of the Macedonian media after the documents collected by the US authorities became available at the end of 2011. They clearly pointed out that Magyar Telecom in the period between 2005 and 2006 performed certain unethical financial operations aimed at bribing officials both in Macedonia and Montenegro in order for the owner to gain additional profit.

Our analysis concentrates on the story coverage by the Macedonian media in a period of about 40 days. Out of a total of 58 media, if we exclude the ones focused on culture or entertainment, the number of monitored media comes down to 40.

Methodologically, the analysis had been performed with the help of statistical indicators that were afterwards interpreted. The first segment deals with how many times the story was covered in the media in Macedonia; specifically in which media; and the frequency in covering this story and in which genre i.e. section they decided to cover this case. In the analysis’ statistics the media are also organised according to their character i.e. printed, electronic or online media.

In the second part of the analysis efforts are made to shed light on the qualitative approach to the texts i.e. how many and what kind of investigative tools were used in order for the public to get a clearer image of the whole case.

The analysis has no scientific aspirations or need for any similar verification. It should be a compilation of basic indicators and drawn conclusions that would stimulate further discussion on this topic. It was drafted strictly for the needs of this workshop dedicated to the role of media in the anticorruption struggle in Macedonia, organised by Transparency International – Macedonia.

The idea behind this paper was to acquire basic indicators on the media’s conduct in covering one of the biggest corruption stories with special emphases on the following issues:

- The informative capacity of the media in this specific case;
- The investigative capacity of the media in this specific case;
- The genre division of the texts on this case;

- Whether there are differences in the approach from the aspect of the media's character (printed, electronic or online).

The analysis also incorporates the columns of collaborating columnists. The reason for this is the fact that we treated this type of texts as enriching addition to the news on the specific topic, but also because in practice the given column in some cases tends to be agreed between the editor-in-chief and the columnist.

In assessing the investigative character of the text the basic investigative types or tools were taken into considerations such as: statement, interview, questions posed to institutions by applying or not applying the Law on Access to Public Information, use of anonymous sources, comparative analysis of the sources (crossing data), facts analysis and their additional examining, archive investigation, internet search...

Remarks: The analysis was done based on the media monitoring carried out by a professional press clipping agency and based on their views about the texts published by the Macedonian media. Due to lack of financial resources it was mainly the Macedonian language media that were monitored. There also might be media that covered the topic, but neither we nor the agency noticed it. However, we believe that at least 80 percent of the media coverage was registered.

When processing from the aspect of the genre form of the journalist product, we took into consideration the author's freedom in determining the combined genres, primarily because the genre forms that are used in the media in Macedonia are often mixed up and combined and it is difficult to establish them precisely.

Additionally, we also took into consideration the author's freedom in assessing the investigative methods used in the texts, in liberal direction, with the ultimate goal and the least professional effort such as the use of background when presenting the news or the report to be valorised as investigative in the analysis.

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Part 1.

Overall statistical indicators

Out of the 40 monitored media, a total of 27 media published some journalistic information about the Telecom case in the period between 29 December 2011 and 10 February 2012.

Printed: *Utrinski vesnik* covered the story 16 times in various journalistic forms where the report and the comment dominate. This overall number also incorporates columns of external collaborators. *Vecer* covered the case 8 times and the report

was the most dominant form they used. The *Fokus* daily is the next in line with 7 journalistic texts and the report and the comment as the dominant ones. *Dnevnik* until the above stated date covered the story 5 times and this also includes one column by an external columnist. They had a news story, an interview and a comment. *Vest* until the above stated date had only two journalistic information. They used the report as a form. *Nova Makedonija* had three news stories on the case. *Kapital* only published one agency report on its Internet web site. The *Fokus* weekly reported only twice. They had an analysis and in the second case it was at the borderline with an article.

Electronic media: The *Macedonian Radio* until the above stated date had only two journalistic stories. One was a news story and the second one was a more elaborate news story i.e. reporting extracts from an interview. *Radio Deutsche Welle* and *Radio Free Europe* had only one journalistic product each. A report and an interview. *MTV* had 3 information - news stories. *Kanal 5* had four news stories. Two on TV in the central news and two on Kanal 5 web site. The report dominates. *Sitel* had only one story on the case presented on TV in the central news. *Telma* until the above stated date covered the story 4 times. The report dominates. *Alfa* in the informative section of its programme covered the story on the case 4 times and the news story and the report dominate.

Online media: The *Kurir Agency* had 15 journalistic products published on their web site. They were all news stories. The *Net Press Agency* published 10 journalistic products on their web site and the news story dominates. The *Inpress Agency* published three materials and the news story dominates. The *Makfax Agency* had 10 journalistic products published on their web site. The news story and the report dominate. The *E-Reporter Agency* had three journalistic products published. They were in a form of a news story. The *Plus Info Portal* published 20 journalistic products. They were in a form of a news story and a report and a report with a comment. The web site *Sky Portal* published 5 products. They were in a form of a news story and a report. The web site/Agency *Press 24* published two journalistic products - a news story and a report. The *Portal Tocka* - 2 journalistic products, reports. The *Kirilica Portal* published one news story and one report. The web site *SE Times* published one report.

Medium	Genre classification							Total per medium
	N/R	RIE	C/R/C	AC	A	INT	AR	
<i>Printed:</i>								
Utrinski vesnik	5	2	6	2	1	0	0	16
Dnevnik	3	0	2	0	0	1	0	6
Vest	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Vecer	5	2	1	0	0	0	0	8
Fokus Daily	2	1	1	3	0	0	0	7
Kapital	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Nova Makedonija	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Fokus Weekly	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
Total Printed	22	6	10	5	3	1	0	47
<i>Electronic media:</i>								
Macedonian Radio	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Radio Deutsche Welle	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Radio Free Europe	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
MTV	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Sitel	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kanal 5	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
Telma	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
Alfa TV	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Total electronic media	14	5	0	0	0	1	0	20
<i>Online media:</i>								
Kurir	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
Net Press	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Makfax	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Inpress	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
E-Reporter	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Plus Info	18	2	0	0	0	0	0	20
Sky	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Press 24	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Kirilica	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Tocka	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
SE Times	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total online	71	2	0	0	0	0	0	73
Total	107	13	10	5	3	2	0	140

*N/R - News Story/Report

**RIE - Report with investigative elements

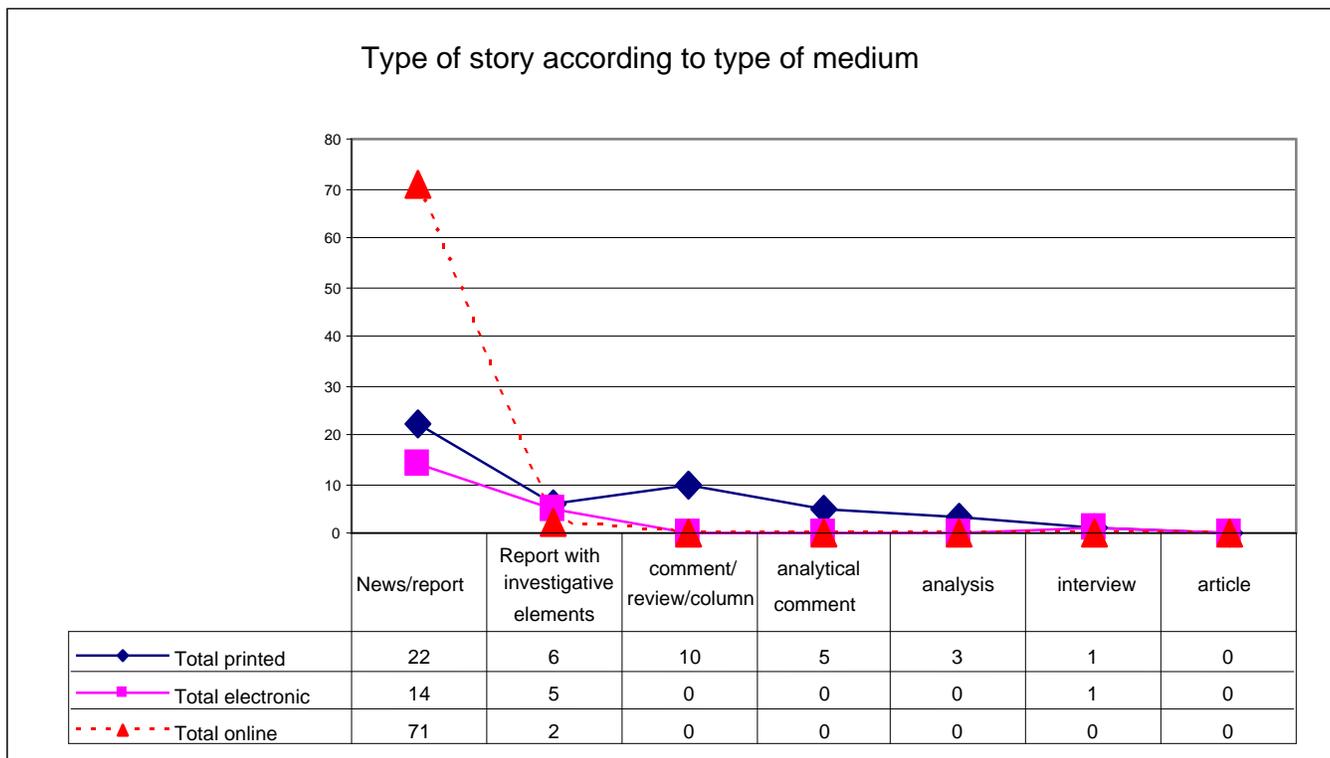
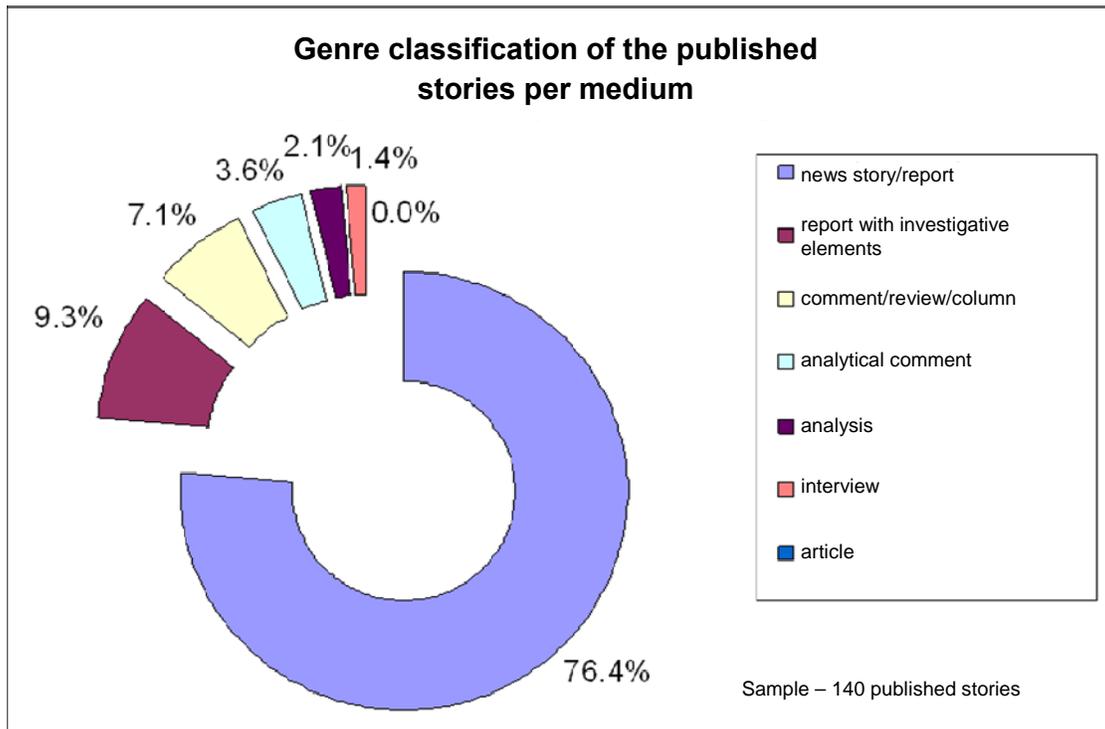
***C/R/C - Comment/Review/Column

****AC - Analytical Comment

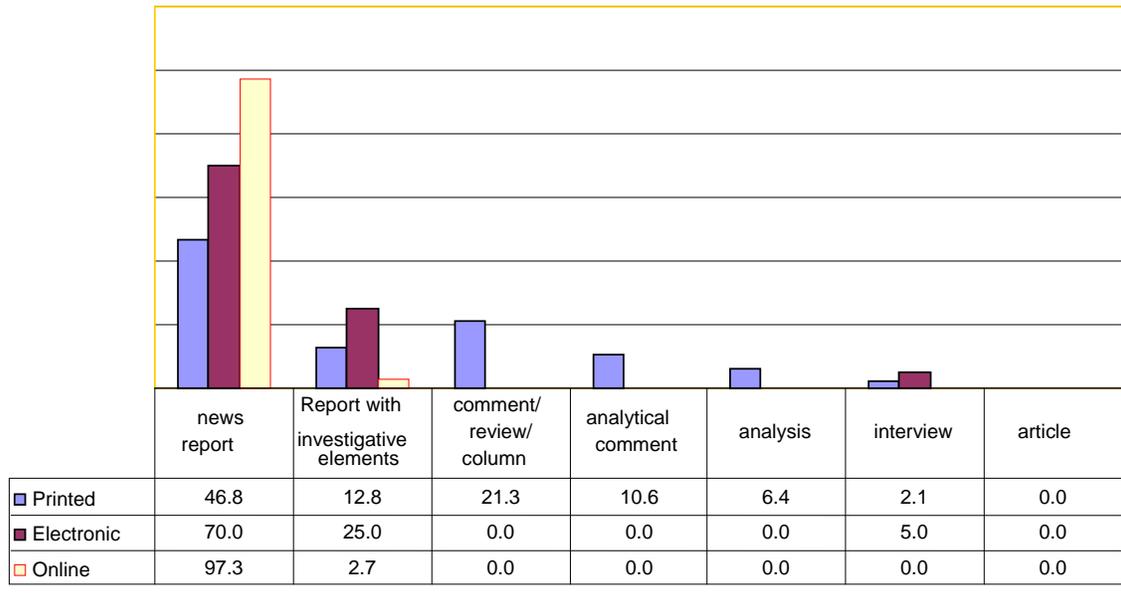
*****A - Analysis

*****INT - Interview

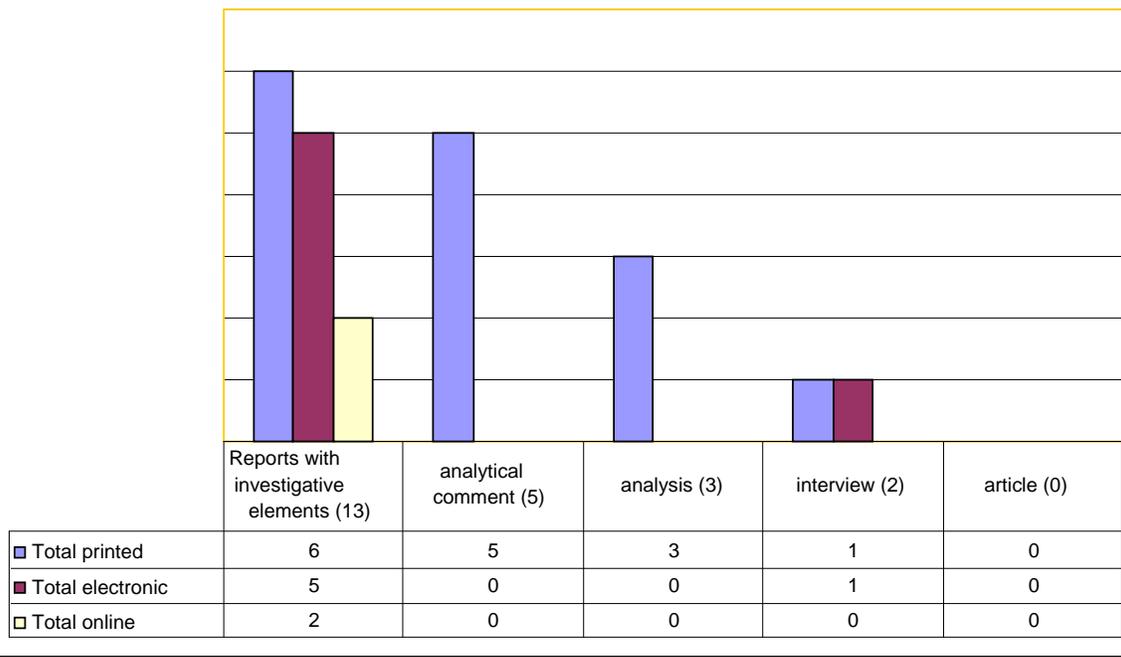
*****AR - Article



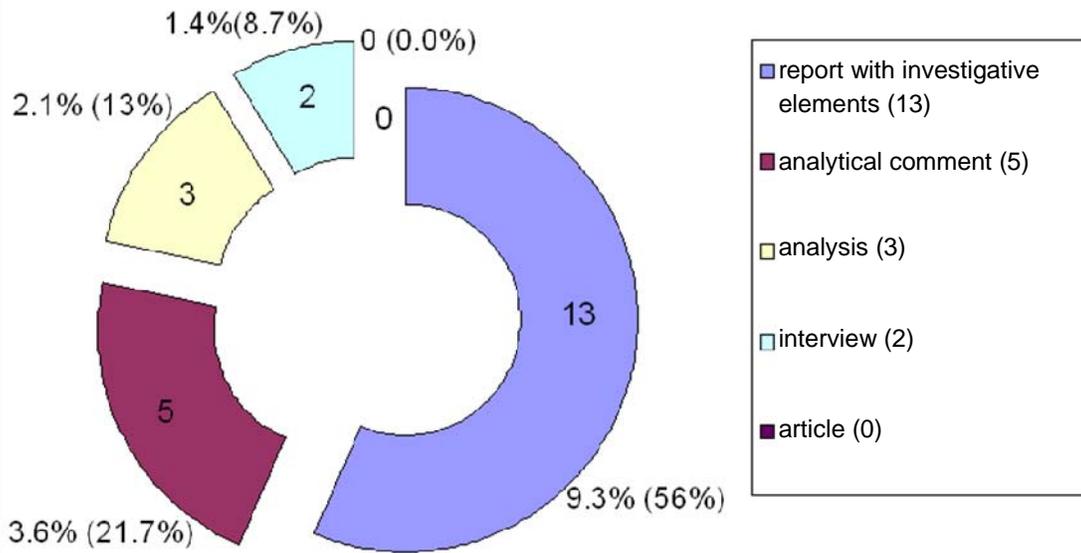
Genre classification of the published stories according to the media type (in percentage)



Genre classification of investigative stories according to the media type



Stories with investigative elements (in percentage)



The percentage in the brackets denotes the representation in the total number of 23 stories.

Part 2.

Conclusions

General conclusion

The media in Macedonia when covering the Telecom case with some small exceptions failed to show capacity to carry out comprehensive investigations that would have resulted in journalistic products that could have been treated as investigative journalism. In only three cases out of a total of 140 a text was published that could be classified as a product of comprehensive investigative journalism.

Separate conclusions

Out of the gathered statistical indicators one could also draw several separate conclusions on which the general assessment is founded.

- *“Information-watchful”, lack of continuity*

The media in Macedonia according to the number of published stories on the case could be called **“information-watchful”** i.e. they publish satisfactory number of news and other types of information on the case. That is also evident from the 140 published journalistic products. Still, there is no consistency in regard to the dedication of most of the media i.e. keeping the topic alive until a proper answer is found to the unanswered questions. One can assess freely that in regard to the dedication only four media kept the case as an active topic in the public. Those were Utrinski vesnik, Plus Info and partially Fokus, both the daily and the weekly publications. Vecer also had noticeable approach. The others have shown sluggishness in regard to the continuity and usually reacted only after some other medium gave a new impulse.

- *Investigative*

Regardless of the best intentions and the broad criteria one cannot really say that the media in Macedonia when it comes to the Telecom case have been **investigative** i.e. that they have been trying to find as many facts as possibly on the given case in order to present the public with a comprehensive picture about the actors and the way the corruptive venture was done and primarily the involvement of institutions and individuals, representatives of the government and of political parties. This is evident from the percentage of journalistic products in which some of the general investigative tools were used in order for the journalistic product to be classified as investigative journalism. Out of the total 140 published stories only 23 incorporated some kind of an investigative tool. Ultimately, this is also evident in the final result. *After 40 days of journalistic labour and efforts the media failed to make public any specific name of any official or representative of a political party in*

Macedonia that could be at least seriously indicated, suspected as involved in the corruptive venture of the Telecom case.

- Report and comment, dominant forms

The conclusion about the non-investigative character of the journalistic products on the Telecom case is also supported by the genre distribution of the stories that used investigative tools. According to these statistical indicators it is evident that **the report and the comment** dominate in the case of this case, which as a matter of fact are not proper and desired genres in investigative journalism.

Classical analyses, and interview and primarily the article are insignificantly or in a very small percentage present, which shows the attitude towards serious investigative journalism in this specific case of the Telecom case.

- Statements, dominant investigative tool

In regard to the investigative tools or methods used in the texts one can notice that **the statements** and the short interviews (with the sources) dominate and the crossing of sources, archive investigation and comprehensive analyses are missing. They dominate in the above mentioned three analyses we found in two media.

- The printed or the online media do not use the advantage of having space

Even though all the media in their general nature are open to investigative journalism we believe that the printed and online media are more open in this specific case, because in the case of the electronic media it was mainly the news programmes that were monitored and they are often limited in space from a production aspect. Still the printed and the online media failed to use this advantage even though the percentage is somewhat more favourable with the printed media. It is the news stories and reports that dominate, to be only followed by reports with investigative elements. There are only three analyses. The reports with investigative elements are followed by comments and reviews, which confirm that none of the printed or online media utilised the nature of their medium for investigative journalism. Exceptions are Utrinski vesnik and Fokus, both the daily and the weekly.

These are the media monitored by the agency “Press Clipping” and reviewed by us on which this analysis is founded:

Printed:

1. Dnevnik
2. Vest
3. Utrinski vesnik
4. Vecer
5. Nova Makedonija
6. Fakti

7. Fokus Daily
8. Zurnal Plus
9. Kapital Daily
10. Biznis
11. Fokus
12. Kapital

Electronic media:

1. MTV 1
2. Alfa TV
3. Sitel
4. Kanal 5
5. Telma
6. Alsat M
7. Macedonian Radio
8. Radio Free Europe
9. Radio Deutsche Welle
10. Kanal 77

Internet media:

1. Idi Vidi
2. Net Press
3. E-Reporter
4. Kurir
5. Makfax
6. Kirilica
7. MK Fondovi
8. Zurnal
9. Plus Info
10. Mnogoo
11. 24 Vesti
12. Kapital
13. Inpress
14. Ohrid News
15. Press 24
16. SE Times
17. Tocka
18. Sky