

Media influence over court rulings in traffic crime cases

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the way media report about traffic crimes and provide a comparison between cases that attracted media attention and cases that didn't. The author investigates the possibility that courts are influenced in their decision making by the general public, the opinion of which is shaped mostly by mass media outlets which unfortunately often release speculations as proven facts. To demonstrate the possibility of media influence to the reader, the author compares similar cases and shows how different the court ruling was when the case wasn't a subject of attention of mass media. Part of this analysis consists of a letter to the judge who presided over one of such cases, the incident on D1 motorway in 2010. The conclusion is that there's potential for such influence, but it's impossible to be absolutely certain that it already exists. The threat of such influence will, however, grow over time as new technologies are introduced, that make it very easy to spread information and consume it. In a newly forming information society, the ability to influence anything ranging from minor court battles to elections is considerably increased and poses a potential threat to the impartiality of courts, which is vital to a modern democracy. However, this potential loss in impartiality would not be the judges' fault. They're members of this society and recipients of information from the media as well. It's the responsibility of every single journalist to always correctly distinguish between facts and speculations, double-check his information and make sure his or her articles don't only tell one side of the story and if so, are properly marked as such. It's important that journalists understand the power and responsibility they have in their hands and suppress their economical interests in favor of impartiality and correctness.