

Trump Dominates Media Coverage, Especially Among Unreliable Media

pressrelations has published a report on the credibility of media outlets covering the US election campaign

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Although US President Trump falls well behind his challenger Joe Biden in current polls, he dominates international media coverage. Unreliable media outlets in particular report positively on Trump, as a current pressrelations study on the credibility of the media in the US election campaign has found. The qualitative analysis is based on more than 25,000 manually coded US, German, Austrian, and Swiss online articles and TV reports on the US election, and more than 3,000 tweets published by both presidential candidates.

The analysis shows that the reliability of a source is clearly related to the sentiment of its articles. The more trustworthy the outlet, the more neutral is its reporting on presidential candidate Joe Biden, and the more negative its coverage of President Donald Trump. In return, the lower the credibility of a source, the more negative is its tone towards Biden while more positive towards Trump. Media sources with high credibility also deal with false reports in a much more intensive and complex way, the study found. Less trustworthy media, on the other hand, tend to report one-sidedly and avoid fact-checking Trump's statements. Overall, US media report much more negatively on Biden than German, Austrian, and Swiss media. Across these countries, the reports in media sources classified as particularly trustworthy is neutral to positive on Biden and predominantly negative on Trump.

Over the last month, Joe Biden's share of exclusive coverage shrunk from 15 to only 9 percent. This means that Donald Trump currently has twice as many exclusive TV and online articles, and more than twice the reach of his challenger. The situation is very different when it comes to the candidates' activity on Twitter. With his tweets, presidential candidate Biden achieves on average 36 percent more interactions than the incumbent president — and that with less than an eighth of the followers of his rival Trump.

To evaluate the trustworthiness of media sources, this study relies on NewsGuard's ratings and scores as integrated into the media monitoring and analysis portal NewsRadar. The relevant sources are analyzed according to journalistic standards of credibility and transparency by NewsGuard's team of trained journalists and rated according to a corresponding point system from 0 to 100. Red or green labels — similar to a traffic light — provide analysts and end customers with orientation when it comes to differentiating unreliable from reliable information sources in an increasingly complex media world.

"The source classification of NewsGuard makes possible the development of new analysis metrics, which are becoming essential to dealing with the large challenges of our disinformation age and make reputation risks for our customers fast and easy to detect", determines pressrelations managing director Jens Schmitz. "In addition, it is particularly interesting for us as international media observers to highlight the differences between American and European election campaign coverage. We are curious to see what insights can be gained during the hot phase of the election campaign that has just begun!"

The comprehensive analysis for this study also serves as a data basis to further develop the joint project of pressrelations and the Fraunhofer Institute for Communication, Information Processing and Ergonomics FKIE — an AI system for identifying potential false reports. The current study is available for download at <http://pressrelations.news/election>. A final report covering the entire survey period from August 01 to November 03, 2020, will be published after the election.

About pressrelations

Founded in 2001, pressrelations GmbH, based in Dusseldorf and with further locations in Austin (Texas), Berlin, Dublin, Hamburg, Leipzig, Moscow, Singapore, and Sofia, is a service provider for cross-media monitoring and analysis services. The company combines proprietary NewsRadar® technology with the expertise of its news managers, analysts, and consultants. pressrelations provides more than 500 clients with practical insights and recommendations for planning, controlling, and evaluating their communications work.

About NewsGuard

NewsGuard offers a journalistic solution to misinformation by evaluating the reliability of news and information sites. NewsGuard's ratings are based on nine apolitical journalistic criteria. Each website is given a score from 0 to 100 - together with a corresponding green or red label, which indicates the reliability or unreliability of a website. The ratings, which are determined by a team of trained journalists, provide users with important background information for online sources. NewsGuard's ratings and labels can be licensed by internet service providers, browsers, news aggregators, social media platforms, and search engines, and can be used free of charge by libraries worldwide.

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