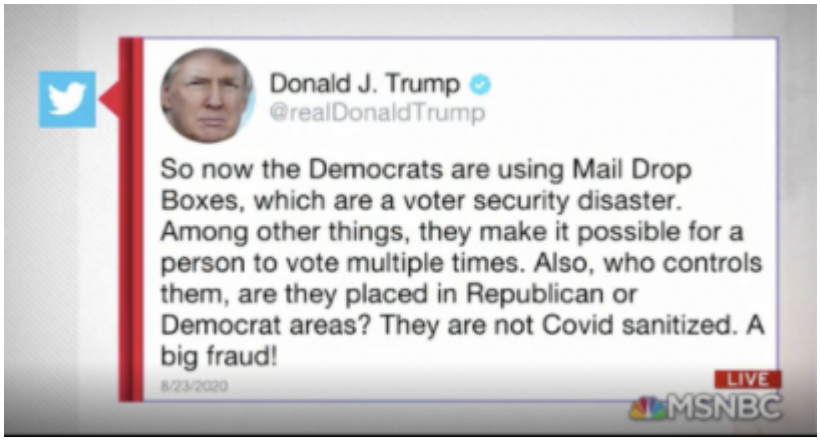
Twitter Thread by Claire Wardle



Claire Wardle
@cward1e

The question of how TV news amplifies disinformation is often discussed but we have little concrete research on this subject. So we partnered w/ @r_macdonald & @kalevleetaru to understand how cable TV amplified Trump's tweets. The results are interesting.

Between Jan 1 2020 and Jan 8 2021, CNN, Fox News and MSNBC spent 32 hours showing Trump's tweets on screen, eg. blowing them up full size. This doesn't include when anchors and correspondents mentioned things Trump had tweeted.



We then focused on the ways in which the three networks broadcast Trump's tweets that falsely claimed the election would be fraudulent (before Nov 3) and was actually stolen (after the election).

In the weeks after the election, the cable news networks broadcast nearly three times as many Trump tweets about election fraud than they had in the nine months leading up to it. They even broadcast Trump's old tweets after he was removed from Twitter in January.

4 points: 1) there was a drumbeat of tweets undermining the election throughout the summer. Many were broadcast & there were no labels from Twitter until middle of Sept. We need more research to understand how a foundation supporting the false narrative was laid by platforms & TV

2. While we weren't able to analyze every image, it was clear that many of these tweets were often shown on screen without chyrons and flags, meaning that with anyone watching without sound would have received no context or fact-checks.

3. While we're not making a causal claim. Tweets with labels received more coverage. The label became the 'news peg'. More research needed.

4. The differences between networks were not as stark as predicted

Total airtime given to both fraud-related tweets and all tweets

News channel	Airtime given to fraud-related tweets between Jan. 1, 2020-Jan. 19, 2021	Airtime given to all Trump tweets between Jan. 1, 2020-Jan. 19, 2021
MSNBC	98 minutes	710 minutes
CNN	95 minutes	632 minutes
FOX	66 minutes	582 minutes
Total	**259 minutes (4.31 hrs)**	**1924 minutes (32 hrs)**

The ways in which TV news broadcast false claims will continue to be an issue, so it seems that we need to think about (and test) innovations in on-screen flags, labels, chyrons to provide context when false information from social platforms are being broadcast.

This research is designed to be a jumping off point for additional qualitative analysis of the ways in which Trump's tweets were discussed, and the ways in which audiences responded to that content.