MA TE MATAURANGA KA MOHIO MA TE MOHIO KA TUTUKI

WITH KNOWLEDGE COMES UNDERSTANDING.

WITH UNDERSTANDING COMES APPLICATION

WORKING PAPER 1

SAMPLE CHARATERISTICS (TRUMP VOTERS)

IS DONALD TRUMP AUTHENTIC?

2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Disclaimer: The findings expressed about Donald Trump in this research are expressed through the analysis of a dataset collected from USA voters. They are the views expressed by these voters. These findings do not represent my personal views or the views of my employer or any organization with which I am affiliated. My statements are made in my research capacity, using my own time and resources. Titles and affiliations are provided for identification purposes only and do not imply endorsement for or by any organization. The political participation of the author of this research is in the New Zealand Electoral Voting system only.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to provide some initial evidence to determine voter perceptions of the authenticity of Donald Trump at the 2016 USA Presidential Election. The leadership brand Trump (DJT). This paper posits a model that authenticity is a voter experience. It is a cognitive event of a voter who consumes presidential leadership. Hence, authenticity can be manipulated in different contexts (e.g., digital environments). Authenticity, while believes in what is real and original; this is entirely real but also subjective. Subjectivity based upon the context of the voter as a hermeneutic interpretive state.

These series of papers will cover different aspects of the result in a phased output process. It is hypothesized that when consumers engage in the consumption behavior of the political brand (e.g., Trump), authenticity is a multidimensional experience conceptualized and defined as: iconic, identification, practical/impersonal, production/situation, social, moral, pure approximate and virtuous-self, forms of the authentic experience.

To test the hypothesized model, 600 usable responses were collected using a questionnaire with randomly randomized questions for each respondent, deployed through Qualtrics to their USA consumer panel who were voters in the 2016 USA Presidential Election. In the sample used for this analysis related to Donald Trump, 238 usable responses were used representing voters who indicated that "I VOTED FOR THE FOLLOWING Presidential Candidate in the 2016 USA Presidential Election", that is, Donald Trump. The macro dataset included the collection of data on both Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton. The data collection was funded by Massey University (New Zealand) and was approved by the Massey University Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval NO. 4000018813). The data collection and initial study was academic and non-commercial in nature. The data collection collaborated with Dr Suze Wilson.

This model and questionnaire is based on the conceptual and measurement model of authenticity published by Robert Davis, Kevin Sheriff, Kim Owen, Conceptualizing and Measuring Consumer Authenticity Online, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, Volume 47, 2019, Pages 17-31, ISSN 0969-6989, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2018.10.002.
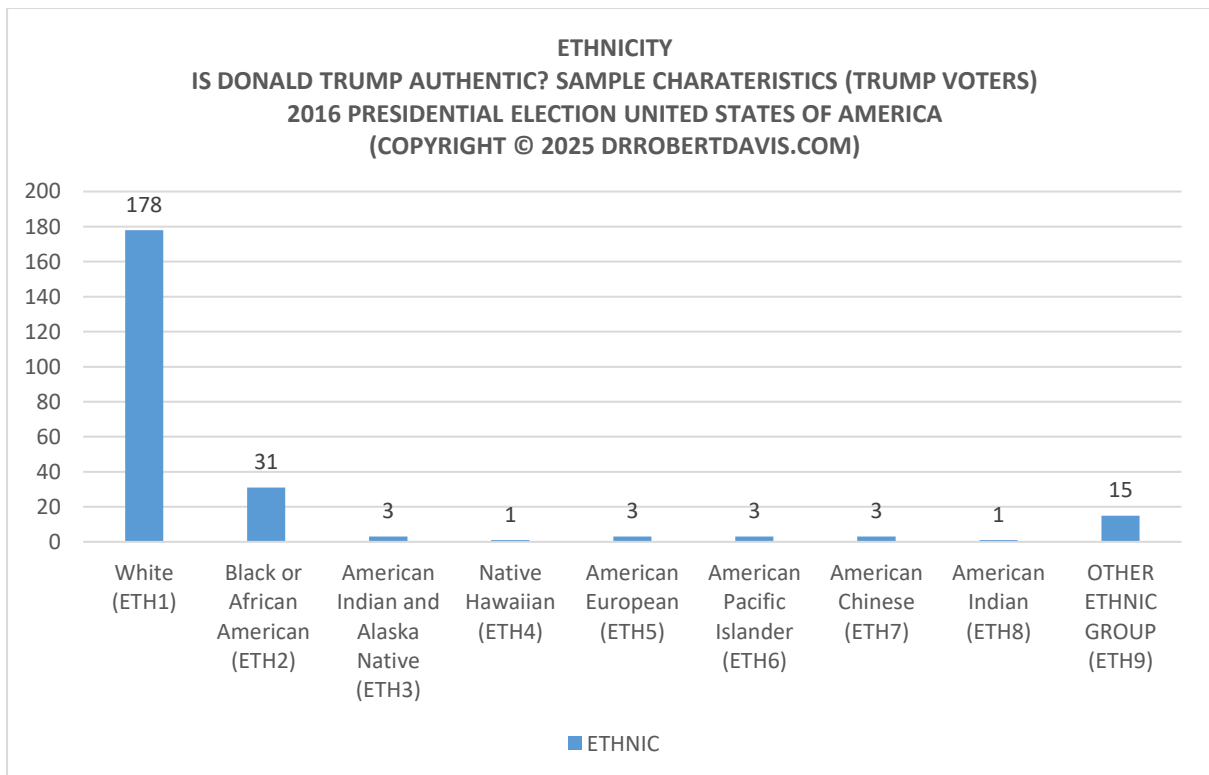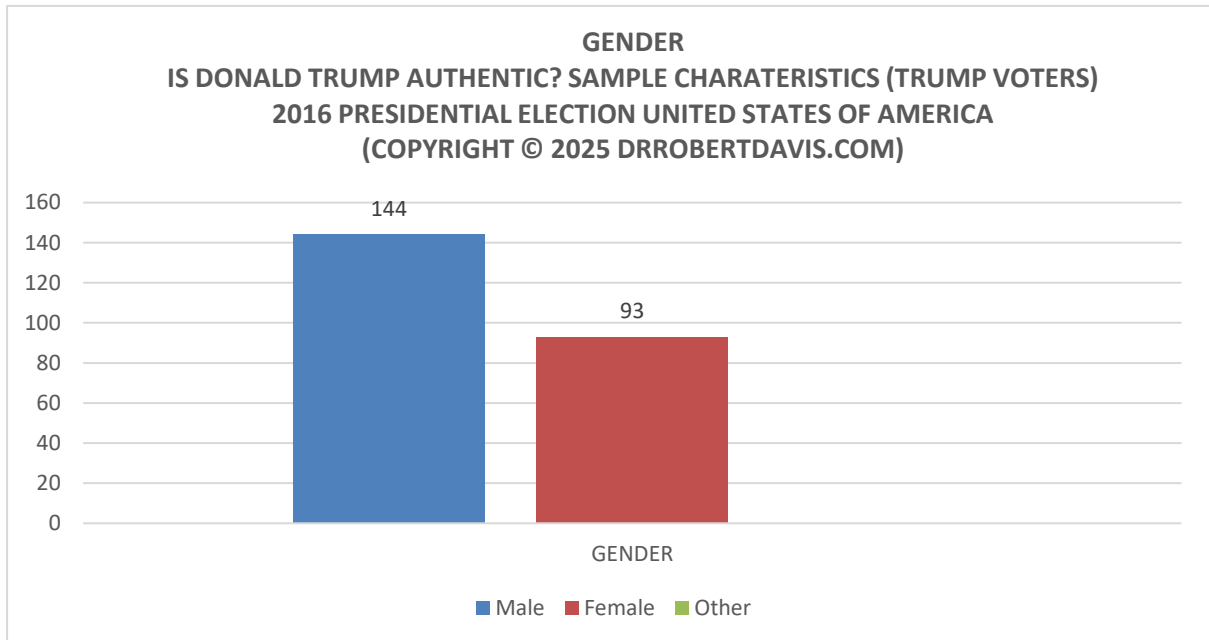
This model, data and measurement outcome using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) achieved and exceeded the required benchmarks for discriminant validity, convergent validity and GoF (Bagozzi and Yi, 2012, Hair et al., 2010, Baumgartner and Homburg, 1996; Bacon et al., 1995; Browne and Cudek, 1993, Bentler, 1990). In this study common method bias was measured using the Harman's single factor test (20–24% of the variance can be explained by the single factor). The test is below the accepted threshold of 50%. The common latent factor (CLF) approach was used to measure the common variance of all the model's observed variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The comparison of the standardized regression weights of the non-CLF vs CLF model computed that all were well below 0.200 with the exception of two observed items with differences of 0.253 and 0.212. Therefore, with an acceptable Harman's single factor test and a CLF test with 41 observed variables below the threshold, it is concluded that there is no common method bias.
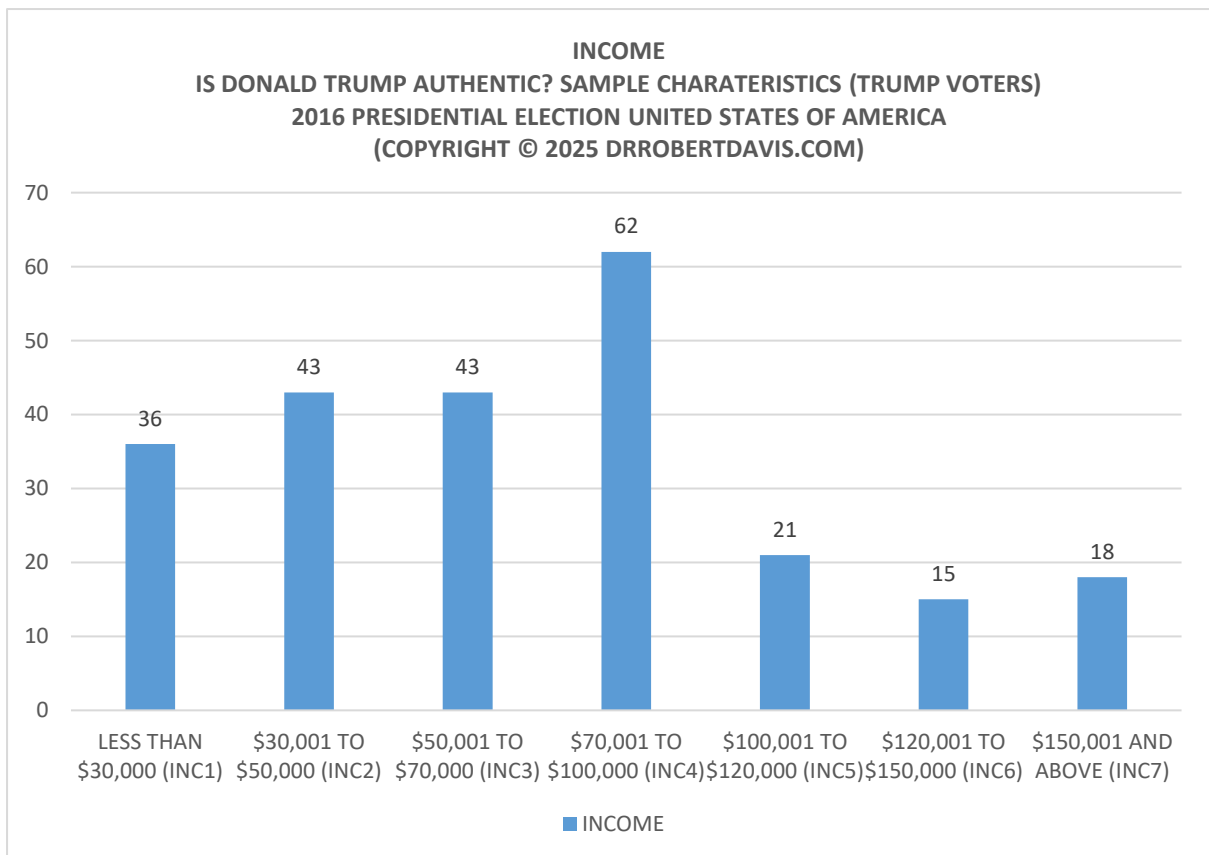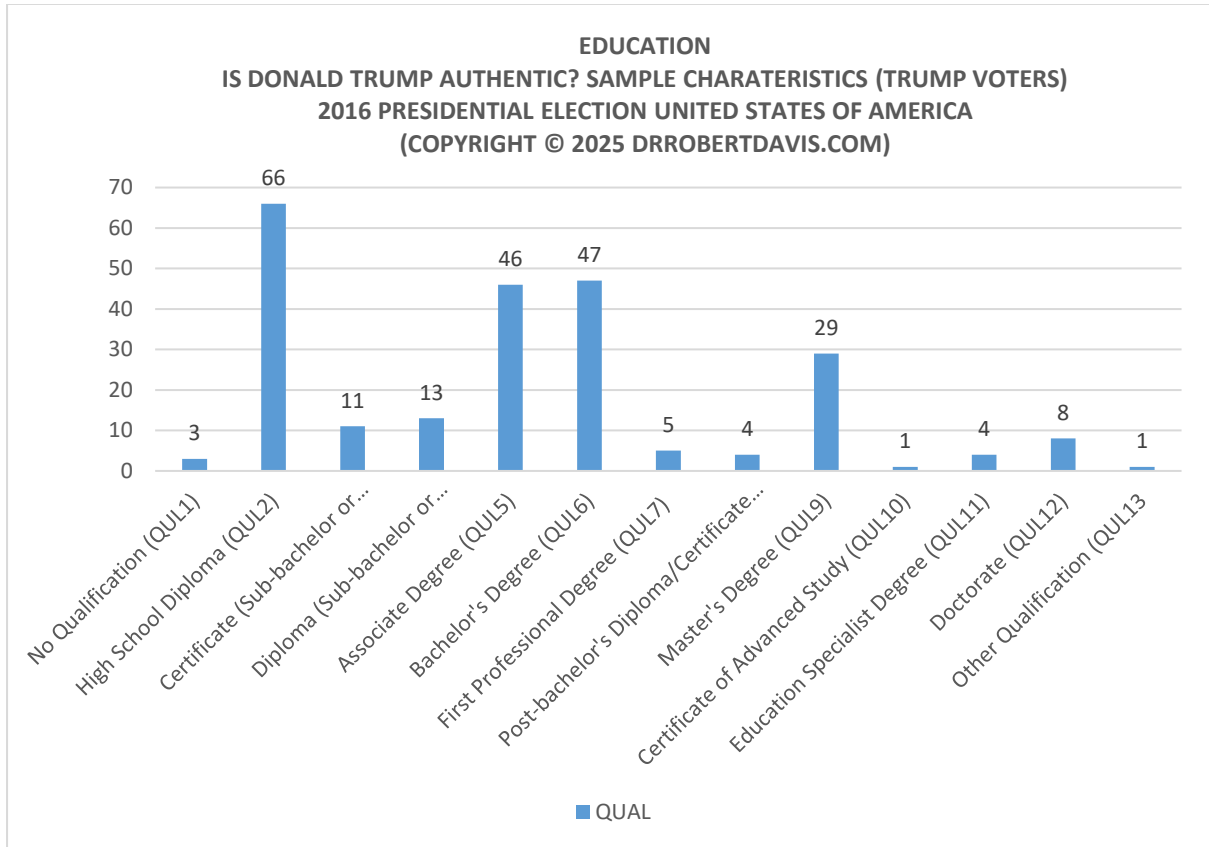
Key Words: Authenticity, Perception, Donald Trump, President, USA, Election, 2016.

RESULTS

SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

GENDER
IS DONALD TRUMP AUTHENTIC? SAMPLE CHARATERISTICS (TRUMP VOTERS)
2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
(COPYRIGHT © 2025 DRROBERTDAVIS.COM)

Male 144, Female 93, Other

ETHNICITY
IS DONALD TRUMP AUTHENTIC? SAMPLE CHARATERISTICS (TRUMP VOTERS)
2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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White (ETH1) 178, Black or African American (ETH2) 31, American Indian and Alaska Native (ETH3) 3, Native Hawaiian (ETH4) 1, American European (ETH5) 3, American Pacific Islander (ETH6) 3, American Chinese (ETH7) 3, American Indian (ETH8) 1, OTHER ETHNIC GROUP (ETH9) 15

ETHNIC

EDUCATION
IS DONALD TRUMP AUTHENTIC? SAMPLE CHARATERISTICS (TRUMP VOTERS)
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INCOME
IS DONALD TRUMP AUTHENTIC? SAMPLE CHARATERISTICS (TRUMP VOTERS)
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AGE
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VOTING EXPERIENCE AND FREQUENCY
IS DONALD TRUMP AUTHENTIC? SAMPLE CHARATERISTICS (TRUMP VOTERS)
2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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VOTER BEHAVIOR DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS STATISTICS IN THE USA [i]

The United States exhibits distinct patterns in voter participation across various demographic categories including age, gender, ethnicity, education, income, and voting frequency. This report examines these patterns based on recent electoral data, primarily focusing on the 2020 presidential election, which saw record-breaking turnout levels.

Age-Based Voting Patterns

Age is one of the strongest predictors of voting behavior in the United States, with participation rates following a clear pattern of increasing with age. In the 2020 presidential election, significant variations in voter turnout were observed across different age groups. Voter turnout was highest among those ages 65 to 74, reaching 76.0% of eligible voters in this demographic [4]. By contrast, young voters ages 18 to 24 had the lowest turnout at 51.4%, creating a 24.6 percentage point gap between the youngest and most politically active age groups [4]. The general pattern shows a steady increase in participation rates as age increases, with a slight decline only among those aged 75 and older [4]. This age-based voting pattern has remained relatively consistent across recent election cycles, though the overall participation rates have fluctuated. The relationship between age and voting behavior reflects differences in political engagement, life stability, and established voting habits that tend to develop over time.

Gender Differences in Voting Participation

Gender has emerged as a significant factor in American electoral participation, with women consistently outpacing men in voter turnout in recent elections. In the 2020 presidential election, 68.4% of eligible women cast ballots compared to 65.0% of eligible men [4]. This 3.4 percentage point gender gap represents millions of additional female voters participating in the electoral process. This pattern of higher female participation has been consistent in recent elections and represents a significant shift from earlier eras when men dominated electoral participation.

Ethnic and Racial Voting Patterns

Voting participation varies substantially across different racial and ethnic groups in the United States. The 2020 presidential election saw Asian American voter turnout reach an all-time high of 59.7% [4]. This represents a significant increase from previous election cycles, though still below the national average of 66.8% for all citizens [4]. Historical data shows that Hispanic and Asian voters have typically had lower turnout rates than Black and White voters in recent elections [19]. Various structural barriers contribute to these disparities, including language barriers, naturalization status, and varying levels of political outreach to different communities. A particularly concerning statistic is that approximately 13% of Black American males were reportedly ineligible to vote nationwide as of 2000 due to prior felony convictions [19]. In states such as Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi, disenfranchisement rates for Black American males reached approximately 30% in the 2000 election [19].

Educational Attainment and Voting Behavior

Education level strongly correlates with voting participation in the United States, with higher educational attainment consistently associated with higher voting rates. In the 2020 presidential election, Americans with a bachelor's degree had a turnout rate of 77.9%, while high school graduates had a turnout rate of 55.5% [4]. This represents a 22.4 percentage point gap in participation rates between these educational groups. The overall pattern shows that voter turnout increases steadily as educational attainment increases [4]. This pattern likely reflects several factors, including greater political knowledge, stronger sense of civic duty, higher income levels associated with education, and fewer practical barriers to voting among the more educated population.

Income and Voting Participation

Income level is strongly associated with voting participation in American elections, with higher-income Americans voting at significantly higher rates. For Americans with household incomes between $100,000 and $149,999, the 2020 voter turnout rate was 81.0% [4]. By contrast, those with incomes between $30,000 and $39,999 had a turnout rate of 63.6% [4]. This economic disparity in voting creates a significant representation gap between higher and lower-income Americans. The relationship between income and voting is nearly linear, with each increase in income bracket corresponding to higher turnout rates, with only minor exceptions noted between some lower-income brackets (specifically between the $10,000-$14,999 and $15,000-$19,999 ranges) [4].

Voting Frequency Patterns

Americans exhibit varying patterns of electoral participation over time, with some voting consistently and others participating only sporadically:

The Pew Charitable Trusts' Voting Frequency Survey conducted in 2016 categorized American voters into five distinct groups based on their self-reported voting habits [11]:

1. Frequent voters - Those who vote in "every election without exception"
2. Semi-frequent voters - Those who vote in "almost every election" but "may have missed one or two"
3. Occasional voters - Those who vote in "some elections"
4. Rare voters - Those who "rarely" vote
5. Non-voters - Those who "don't vote in elections"

These patterns of voting frequency reflect different levels of political engagement, interest, and habit formation among the American electorate [11].

Overall Turnout Trends

The 2020 presidential election saw historic levels of voter participation despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 election featured the highest voter turnout of the 21st century, with 66.8% of citizens 18 years and older voting [4]. This represented a significant increase from previous elections, with approximately 17 million more people voting than in the 2016 presidential election [5]. Despite these improvements, the United States still lags behind many peer democracies in voter participation. When comparing turnout among voting-age populations in recent national elections across 50 countries, the U.S. ranks 31st [14].

Voter behavior in the United States shows significant stratification across demographic lines, with age, gender, ethnicity, education, and income all strongly correlating with electoral participation. The 2020 election showed that while overall participation has increased, substantial gaps remain between demographic groups. These patterns of participation have important implications for representation and policy outcomes in the American democratic system.

WHY IS ATHENTICITY IMPORTANT IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP? [ii]

The aim of this research is to measure the perception of authentic political leadership (Singh, Ratchford, & Prasad, 2014; Ertimur and Gilly, 2012). In contemporary politics, perceived authenticity has emerged as a critical factor in political leadership, influencing voter trust, election outcomes, and democratic accountability. Research shows authenticity has become as important as traditional leadership qualities like competence and integrity in shaping public perception of politicians.

Perceived authenticity significantly influences voting behavior. When politicians are seen as authentic, voters are more likely to support them at the ballot box [3]. This author argues that:

1. This relationship is especially pronounced among voters who explicitly value authenticity as an important factor in their decision-making.

2. Recent elections demonstrate this effect: Donald Trump's perceived authenticity advantage contributed to his 2024 presidential victory, while Kamala Harris faced criticism for an "authenticity gap".

3. Similarly, Ed Davey's success in expanding Liberal Democrat representation in the 2024 UK election has been attributed to his authentic self-portrayal.

Political authenticity comprises three key dimensions that voters evaluate:

1. Consistency - Politicians appear authentic when their actions align with their stated views over time and they fulfill campaign promises regardless of political pressure [2] [5]. Research shows candidates who consistently implement their campaign promises are considered more authentic than those who renege under pressure [3].

2. Ordinariness - Leaders are perceived as authentic when they appear down-to-earth and unlike typical politicians [2] [4]. This dimension contradicts the image of calculated politicians acting on strategic motives rather than true convictions [5].

3. Immediacy - Authenticity is associated with spontaneity and actions driven by personal convictions rather than strategic calculation [5]. Politicians seem authentic.

Authenticity is particularly important for citizens with lower levels of political trust [4]. In an era of declining faith in political institutions, authenticity offers a pathway to reconnect with disillusioned voters. Those who distrust traditional politics place greater emphasis on politicians being "in touch with ordinary people" rather than displaying conventional political attributes like being "clever" or "dressing well" [4].

The growing importance of authenticity reflects a broader shift in political culture:

1. Rejection of traditional political performance - Citizens increasingly distrust polished, scripted political communication, preferring leaders who break with conventional political norms [4].

2. Rise of populism - Populist leaders like Trump, Duterte, and Bolsonaro have capitalized on authenticity by positioning themselves as political outsiders who represent "common folk" against corrupt elites [4].

3. Diversified authenticity styles - Different authenticity strategies can succeed, from populist outsiders to "everyday celebrity politicians" like Boris Johnson or Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez who cultivate relatable images through social media and casual presentations [4].

Authentic leadership enhances effectiveness by increasing followers' identification with leaders [1]. When politicians are perceived as true to themselves, it helps citizens connect with their message and vision, potentially improving governance outcomes through stronger leader-follower relationships. Perceived authenticity has become a crucial dimension of political leadership that can determine electoral success, enhance voter trust, and strengthen democratic accountability in an era of increasing political skepticism.

ONLINE INFLUENCES [iii]

It is crucial to develop a model of authenticity in political leadership that considers online voter behavior. Voters struggle to determine whether a leader is genuine through traditional

means. While offline, voters can directly interact with politicians at events and personally experience their authenticity through face-to-face engagement [4] [10], online they must rely on mediated experiences of authenticity-created through social media, videos, and digital interactions-to drive their political support [2] [3].

Although political authenticity has been extensively studied in political science literature, there's limited work conceptualizing and measuring authentic experience in digital contexts [3] [4]. Little is known about how online political authenticity relates to established concepts like voter decision-making and engagement behavior [7], including how candidates' personal brand, communication style, and community interaction affect perceptions. This knowledge gap creates confusion for both researchers and campaign strategists [3].

What's concerning is that misunderstanding digital authenticity creates opportunities for manipulation and misrepresentation in political spaces [11] [12]. Online, politicians and voters are separated physically and temporally, with limited opportunities to build genuine relationships [7]. The digital environment's anonymity gives rise to potential deception, making it difficult for voters to distinguish between truly authentic candidates and those merely performing authenticity [3] [7].

Research shows that citizens judge politicians' authenticity based on three key dimensions: ordinariness (appearing down-to-earth), consistency (alignment between actions and views), and immediacy (seeming unscripted) [4] [5] [10]. Perceived authenticity significantly influences voting intentions and is especially important to citizens with lower political trust [10]. In political contexts, authenticity is a multidimensional experience that emerges through various forms of engagement-including how candidates present themselves as ordinary people unlike typical politicians, demonstrate consistency in their values, and engage directly with voters through seemingly unscripted interactions [10]. Politicians increasingly use social media for self-presentation techniques to appear genuine to constituents [2], yet these efforts may be perceived differently based on factors like gender and communication style [2]. This complex relationship between political authenticity and voter behavior demands further investigation, particularly as AI and deepfake technologies threaten to erode trust in digital political communication [11] [12].

DEFINING AUTHENTICITY [iv]

Authenticity is defined as the consumers' experience of authentic consumption (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010). See Table 1. Beverland (2005) argues that consumers are offered authenticity through sincere messages to convince them rationally and experientially of the item's commitment to tradition, passion for craft, and production excellence. Authenticity is a subjective evaluation of genuineness attributed to an object by a consumer (Napoli, et al., 2013). Tourists collecting artefacts believe that the authenticity of an item is found in the article being constructed by a craftsman of a particular tribe and being for a specific purpose, whereas others find authenticity in mass produced (iconic) representations of the original object (Cohen and Cohen, 2012).

Authenticity may be based on sincerity, innocence and originality (Fine, 2003), or being simple, honest and natural (Boyle, 2003). It may be related to the genuineness, reality, or truth of the object or experience (Grayson and Martinec, 2004). It can be based on a product being true to its heritage, using traditional modes of production (Beverland, 2005). Furthermore, authenticity can infuse the item or experience with a set of values that differentiate it from other, more commercialized, brands. Grayson and Martinec (2004) demonstrate that, ultimately, consumers use different cues to assess different kinds of authenticity for different effects (p.297). For example, drawing on historical associations, authenticity has been shown to be central to consumer roles within subcultures, for example as experienced in classic car clubs (Leigh, Peters and Shelton, 2006). Historical

associations have also been found in communication strategies building brand authenticity with luxury wine makers (Beverland, 2005).

Therefore, the authentic consumption experience is a multi-dimensional construct made up concurrently of various states of consciousness (sub-constructs). For example: existential, (intra-personal and interpersonal) (Wang, 1999), iconic, indexical and hypothetical (Grayson and Martinec, 2004), self-referential and hyper-authentic (Rose and Wood, 2005), objective and constructive (Leigh, Peters and Shelton, 2006), pure, approximate and moral (Beverland, et al., 2008), control, connection and virtue (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010), and hot and cool (Cohen and Cohen, 2012). This definition is supported in different contexts, such as goods and services (Bruner, 1994; Grayson and Martinec, 2004), food and beverage (Beverland, 2005; Beverland, et al., 2008), tourism (Cohen, 1988; Cohen and Cohen, 2012; MacCannell, 1973; Wang, 1999), reality television (Rose and Wood, 2005), subcultures (Leigh, Peters and Shelton, 2006), and advertising (Chiu, Hsieh, and Kuo, 2012).

Table 1 shows the sub-constructs that define authenticity in the conceptual model. Based upon this table and citations it is summarised that in the online consumption experience consumers need to feel connection to the original time of manufacture through the brand (*Time Origin*). Online consumption experiences also revolve around connection and identification with everyday people through the community (*Everyday People*). Often consumers on and offline through the service will seek positive first hand experience of the item to assists them in achieving personal goals of practical self-authentication (*First Hand Experience*). The community's independent judgment will also assist this process of self-authentication (*Independent Judgment*). They are then able, through focusing on the brand consumption, to make judgements about performance or best value for money (*Instrumentality*) and community interactions to allow for required standards to be tested (*Verification*).

Personal self-authentication is achieved by focusing on the service market leader (*Ubiquity*), its community (*Brand Proximity*) and its shared laws of governance (*Communal Norms*). Consumers online tend to create experience from the brand situation and production through their experience of the brand's script (*Scripted Narrative*), fantasy image (*Situation Fantasy*) and product experience (*Self-Relevant Goals*). Online, consumers need to make judgements about the authenticity of the original article through the brand (*Objective*). The service helps in this process as it often projects onto the brand imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, and powers (*Constructive*). Consumers also project their own values onto the brand (*Consumer Values*) and brand values assist the consumer to achieve moral self-authentication (*Brand Values*). Authentic brand consumption experiences are enhanced when the consumer feels involved with the creators of the brand (*Commitment to Tradition*) and its place of manufacture (*Place of Origin*). Authenticity is supported if the brand is guaranteed to be genuine (*Guarantee of Being Genuine*) and often the online service itself has official laws of governance (*Universal Norms*) as well as community-based morals that are consistently applied (*Purity of Motive*).

TABLE 1.   DEFINING AUTHENTICITY

Type	Construct	Definition	Authors
Iconic: Authentic reproduction of the original.	Time Origin	A feeling of connection to the original time of manufacture.	Grayson and Martinec (2004)
Identification: Identifying elements of authenticity in fantasy.	Everyday People	Consumers connect/identify with everyday people.	Rose & Wood (2005)
Practical Self/ Interpersonal Self-Authentication: Where self-referential behaviors reveal the consumers true self.	First Hand Experience	A positive first hand experience of the item assists the consumer to achieve personal goals of practical self-authentication.	Beverland and Farrelly (2010)
	Independent Judgment	The independent judgment of other consumers of the item assists the consumer to achieve personal goals of practical self-authentication.	
	Instrumentality	Best performing or best value for money item or experience assists the consumer to achieve personal goals of practical self-authentication.	
	Verification	Testing to establish that required standards are met assists consumers to achieve personal goals of practical self-authentication.	
	Ubiquity	Mainstream, mass brands, or a "market leader" assist the consumer to achieve goals of inter-personal self-authentication.	
	Brand Proximity	Being close to you or part of your social community assists the consumer to achieve goals of inter-personal self-authentication.	Leigh, Peters, & Shelton (2006)
	Communal Norms	Laws that govern the community's Behaviour in everyday life assist the consumer to achieve goals of inter-personal self-authentication.	
	Scripted Narrative	Scripted narrative assists the consumer to construct production authenticity.	

Production/Situation: Consumers blend situations and production to construct authenticity from fantasy.	Situation Fantasy	Fantasy situations provide the consumer indexical elements with which he/she can construct situation authenticity.	Rose & Wood (2005)
	Self-Relevant Goals	Self-relevant goals of a product/experience assist the consumer to construct situation authenticity.	
Social: Use of product symbolism or self-efficacy to construct authentic personal or social identities.	Objective	Objective authenticity refers to the authenticity of the original article.	Leigh, Peters, & Shelton (2006)
	Constructive	Constructive authenticity refers to the authenticity projected onto objects in terms of their imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, powers, etc.	
Moral: Iconicity or indexicality to show higher moral status.	Consumer Values	Consumer values mirrored in the brand.	Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink (2008)
	Brand Values	Brand values assist the consumer to achieve moral self-authentication.	
Pure Indexical: A factual or spatio-temporal connection to history and commitment and feeling to the original place of manufacture.	Commitment to Tradition	Love of the craft, process, or the involvement of the creators in the production process.	
	Place of Origin	A commitment too, and feeling for, the original place of manufacture.	Grayson and Martinec (2004)
	Guarantee of Being Genuine	An in-situ guarantee of genuineness provided by a recognized authority.	Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink (2008)
Virtuous Self: Personal goals of virtuosity in self-authentication	Universal Norms	Laws that govern societies, these standards override other considerations.	Beverland and Farrelly (2010)
	Purity of Motive	Consistent application of a set of morals.	

RECENT WORK [v]

Several recent academic papers have explored different aspects of authenticity across various disciplines:

1. 2024 Papers:

    - "Identifying AI-Generated Research Papers: Methods and Considerations" examines techniques for distinguishing between human-authored and AI-generated academic content, including textual analysis, metadata examination, and content evaluation methods [1].

    - "Brand Authenticity: A 21-Year Bibliometric Review" analyzes 880 articles (2003-2023) showing increasing publication trends and identifying research clusters in tourism, food/retail, and marketing/management [2].

    - "AI vs. AI: The Detection Game" evaluates the capabilities of AI content detection systems in identifying whether texts were written by humans or AI, with particular focus on academic integrity applications [3].

2. 2023 Papers:

    - "From authentic assessment to authenticity in assessment" discusses conceptual challenges in assessment planning within education [5].

    - "Always-on authenticity: Challenging the BeReal ideal of 'being real'" examines the social media app BeReal and questions its claims of providing a uniquely authentic platform experience [6].

3. 2022 Papers:

    - "Craving alter real authenticity through the post-postmodern lens" investigates tourists' attitudes toward "alter real authenticity" (altered reality) from a post-postmodern perspective [7].

4. 2021 Papers:

    - "The Essence of Authenticity" expands the "3C-view" of authenticity (consistency, conformity, and connection) by adding a fourth dimension-continuity-creating a "4C-model" that approaches authenticity as a developmental process rather than a static state [8].

ENDNOTES

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