

MA TE MATAURANGA KA MOHIO MA TE MOHIO KA TUTUKI

WITH KNOWLEDGE COMES UNDERSTANDING.

WITH UNDERSTANDING COMES APPLICATION

WORKING PAPER 17

PLACE OF ORIGIN: PURE INDEXICAL AUTHENTICITY

IS DONALD TRUMP AUTHENTIC?

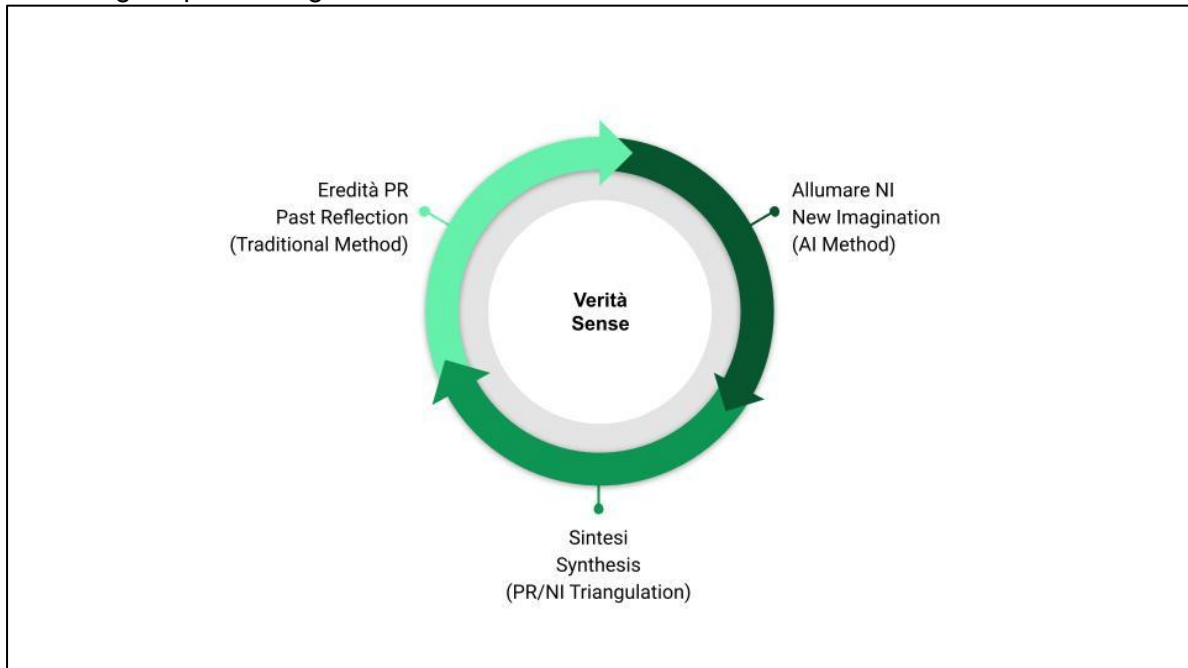
2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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.

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VERITÀ SENSE AI APPROACH

This paper is written using the **Verità Sense AI approach designed by drrobertdavis.com**. The name "Verità Sense AI" presents a distinctive option for an artificial intelligence platform focused on quantitative and qualitative data analysis, combining linguistic elements that convey truth-finding capabilities with modern technological positioning.



"Verità Sense AI" combines three powerful conceptual elements that together create a coherent and meaningful identity. "Verità," the Italian word for "truth," immediately establishes a foundation of authenticity and reliability—core values essential for any analysis platform. The term "Sense" suggests perceptive capabilities, the ability to detect patterns and meanings that might escape conventional analysis methods. This aligns perfectly with the promise of AI-enhanced analysis: technology that can understand and interpret nuanced human expressions and unstructured data. When paired with "Verità," it creates the compelling concept of "truth perception" or "truth sensing"—exactly what researchers seek from analysis tools.

The "AI" component clearly positions the product within the artificial intelligence space, making its technological foundation immediately apparent to potential users. This straightforward element requires no interpretation and helps categorize the product in the rapidly expanding market of AI research tools. The initial 3 components of Verità Sense are:

1. Eredità PR Past Reflection (Traditional Method)
2. Allumare NI New Imagination (AI Method)
3. Sintesi Synthesis (PR/NI Triangulation)

The essential conjoint place of these components is the researcher. The source of the data: from direct interview to machine created. Quality in. Quality out. Ma Te Matauranga Ka Mohio. Ma Te Mohio Ka Tutuki (Creating Knowledge. Designing Understanding. Cocreating Application)

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.

For PLACE OF ORIGIN:

The survey results indicate generally positive perceptions of the leader's advertising credibility, with 57% of respondents agreeing (combined "Somewhat" and "Strongly") that the messaging is truthful, clear, and reliable. Attributes like truthfulness (63% agreement) and clarity (61.8%) scored highest, reflecting trust in the leader's integrity and communication effectiveness. However, accuracy emerged as a critical weakness, with 34.9% disagreeing (the highest disagreement rate) and only 41.2% agreeing, suggesting a disconnect between factual content and precise correctness. Neutral responses peaked for factualness (33.2%) and completeness (31.9%), indicating uncertainty about whether claims are fully substantiated or comprehensive. While dependability (3.61 mean) and honesty (58% agreement) reinforced credibility, the accuracy gap risks undermining overall trust, highlighting a need for greater transparency and verification in messaging to align perceptions with intent.

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.

This dataset is unpublished and is available for further academic publication and/or commercial application. The model, research method and data are Copyright the intellectual property of Dr. Robert Davis. If the results in this paper are to be quoted and/or published in any ways then they must; (1) contact Dr Robert Davis for written approval to publish and (2) effectively cite Dr, Robert Davis at drrobertdavis.com in the publication.

Key Words: Authenticity, Perception, Donald Trump, President, USA, Election, 2016.

RESULTS ⁱ

The survey results indicate generally positive perceptions of the leader's advertising credibility, with 57% of respondents agreeing (combined "Somewhat" and "Strongly") that the messaging is truthful, clear, and reliable. Attributes like truthfulness (63% agreement) and clarity (61.8%) scored highest, reflecting trust in the leader's integrity and communication effectiveness. However, accuracy emerged as a critical weakness, with 34.9% disagreeing (the highest disagreement rate) and only 41.2% agreeing, suggesting a disconnect between factual content and precise correctness. Neutral responses peaked for factualness (33.2%) and completeness (31.9%), indicating uncertainty about whether claims are fully substantiated or comprehensive. While dependability (3.61 mean) and honesty (58% agreement) reinforced credibility, the accuracy gap risks undermining overall trust, highlighting a need for greater transparency and verification in messaging to align perceptions with intent.

Analysis of Leader's Advertising Credibility Based on Likert Scale Survey Results

This report analyzes survey results assessing perceptions of a leader's advertising credibility across nine attributes using a 5-point Likert scale. The dataset includes response counts for 238 participants per question, with aggregated percentages showing a slight skew toward agreement (57% combined "Somewhat Agree" and "Strongly Agree"). Key findings reveal generally positive perceptions of factualness, truthfulness, and clarity, but significant concerns about accuracy, which diverged markedly from other dimensions.

Central Tendency and Response Distributions: Mean Scores and Outlier Identification

Mean scores for eight of nine attributes ranged from 3.61 to 3.79 (on a 5-point scale), indicating moderate to strong agreement. For example:

- Factual (PO7): 3.76
- Truthful (PO2): 3.79
- Credible (PO3): 3.78
- Clear (PO9): 3.75

The exception was Accuracy (PO6R), which had a mean of 3.11, driven by 44 respondents (18.5%) selecting "Strongly Disagree" and 39 (16.4%) choosing "Somewhat Disagree"-the highest disagreement rates in the dataset [1] [14]. This outlier suggests a systemic issue with how respondents perceive the accuracy of the leader's advertising compared to other attributes.

Neutral Responses and Ambiguity: Neutral responses ("Neither Agree nor Disagree") were elevated for:

- Factual (PO7): 33.2%
- Complete (PO8): 31.9%

These rates exceeded the overall neutral average of 28%, indicating uncertainty about whether the advertising fully represents facts or provides comprehensive information [1] [14].

Credibility Dimensions and Anomalies: Trustworthiness and Expertise

Attributes like truthfulness (PO2), honesty (PO1), and reliability (PO4) showed strong agreement (58–63% combined agreement), aligning with the trustworthiness and expertise dimensions of source credibility models [6] [15] [20]. For instance, 63% agreed the advertising is "truthful," reinforcing perceptions of integrity [9].

Accuracy as a Critical Weakness

The accuracy (PO6R) results deviated sharply: only 41.2% agreed (42 "Somewhat Agree" + 56 "Strongly Agree"), while 34.9% disagreed (44 + 39). This contrasts with higher agreement rates for related attributes like "factual" (58%) and "truthful" (63%), suggesting respondents distinguish between factual correctness and precise accuracy [9] [20]. For example, advertising might present factual claims but omit nuanced details, leading to perceptions of incompleteness or manipulation.

Comparative Analysis of Attributes: High-Performing Attributes

- Clarity (PO9) and Credibility (PO3) had agreement rates of 61.8–63%, indicating the messaging is easily understood and perceived as trustworthy [6] [9].
- Dependability (PO5) scored lowest among non-accuracy attributes (3.61 mean), with 27 "Somewhat Disagree" responses (11.3%), potentially reflecting inconsistencies in messaging over time [9].

Neutral Clustering

The completeness (PO8) and factual (PO7) attributes had the highest neutral responses (31.9% and 33.2%, respectively), suggesting the advertising may not fully address audience information needs or provide sufficient evidence for claims [1] [14].

Implications for Leadership and Communication: Strategic Recommendations

1. Address Accuracy Gaps: Conduct audits of advertising content to identify and correct inaccuracies. For example, if claims about policy outcomes are overstated, provide transparent data to realign perceptions [9] [20].
2. Reduce Neutral Responses: Enhance specificity in factual claims (e.g., citing verifiable sources) to decrease ambiguity [1] [14].
3. Leverage High Trustworthiness: Capitalize on strong scores in truthfulness and reliability to reinforce credibility during crises or contentious debates [6] [15].

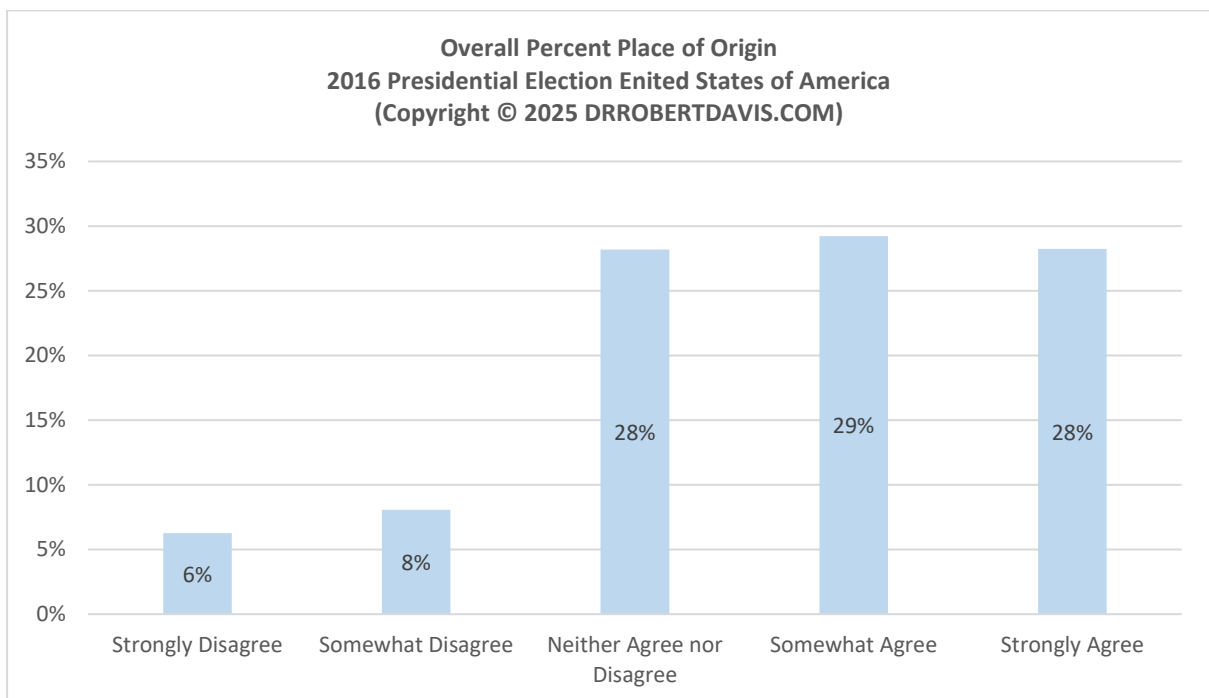
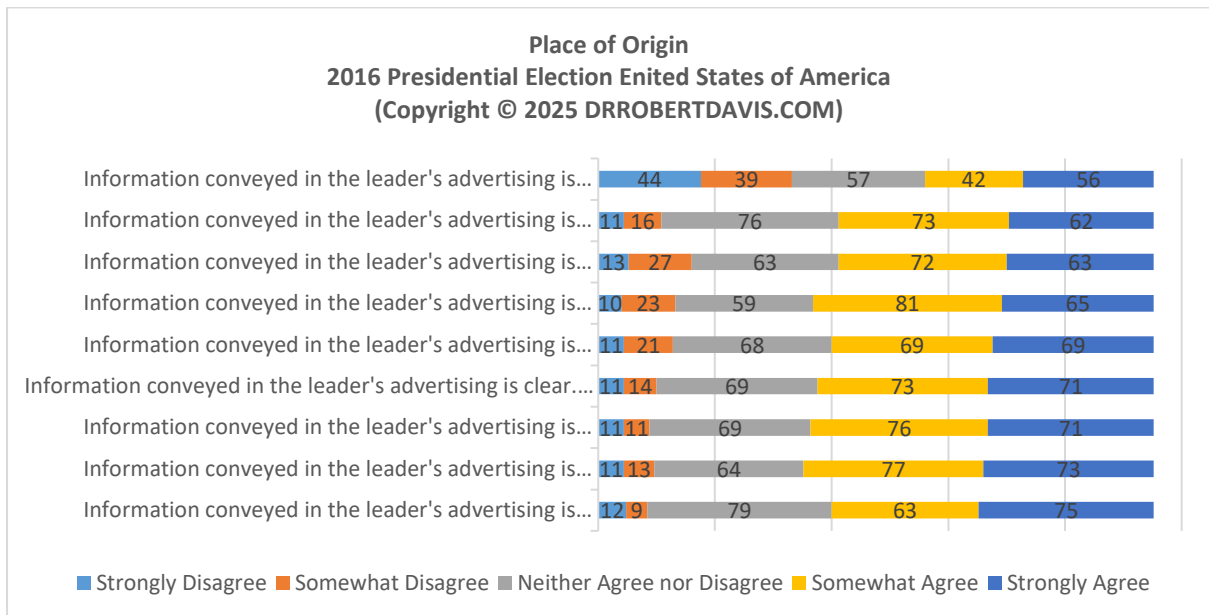
Methodological Considerations

While means provide a preliminary overview, the ordinal nature of Likert data warrants caution. For instance, the median for all attributes except accuracy was 4 ("Somewhat Agree"), but the mean inflated differences due to extreme values in accuracy [1] [14]. Non-parametric tests (e.g., Mann-Whitney U) are recommended for future hypothesis testing [1] [19].

Conclusion

The leader's advertising is broadly perceived as trustworthy and clear, but accuracy emerges as a critical vulnerability. This misalignment risks undermining overall credibility, as accuracy is a foundational component of trust in communication [9] [20]. Neutral responses for factualness and completeness further highlight opportunities to enhance transparency. Addressing these issues through data-driven revisions and clearer messaging could strengthen audience trust and alignment with the leader's narrative.

238	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Information conveyed in the leader's advertising is factual-153-84PO7]	12	9	79	63	75
Information conveyed in the leader's advertising is truthful. [135-79PO2]	11	13	64	77	73
Information conveyed in the leader's advertising is credible. [132-80PO3]	11	11	69	76	71
Information conveyed in the leader's advertising is clear. [86-93-86PO9]	11	14	69	73	71
Information conveyed in the leader's advertising is honest. [78-36-78PO1]	11	21	68	69	69
Information conveyed in the leader's advertising is reliable. [81-71-81PO4]	10	23	59	81	65
Information conveyed in the leader's advertising is dependable [82-54-82PO5]	13	27	63	72	63
Information conveyed in the leader's advertising is complete-145-85PO8]	11	16	76	73	62
Information conveyed in the leader's advertising is ACCURATE. [117-83PO6R]	44	39	57	42	56
Overall Percent	6%	8%	28%	29%	28%



RESULTS INTERPRETATION ⁱⁱ

THE AUTHENTICITY PARADOX IN DONALD TRUMP'S POLITICAL BRAND: INTERPRETING CREDIBILITY PERCEPTIONS THROUGH INDEXICAL AND PERFORMED AUTHENTICITY

The survey results revealing divergent voter perceptions of Donald Trump's messaging-high marks for truthfulness (63%) and clarity (61.8%) but skepticism about accuracy (41.2% agreement vs. 34.9% disagreement)-reflect a nuanced interplay between indexical authenticity and performed authenticity in political branding. These findings align with theoretical frameworks from semiotics, political communication, and source credibility research, offering insights into how Trump's brand navigates tensions between factual precision and symbolic resonance.

Indexical Authenticity as a Shield Against Accuracy Critiques

Trump's perceived truthfulness and clarity scores (63% and 61.8%, respectively) stem from his strategic use of indexical cues tied to his Queens, New York origins and business persona. As Urde et al. (2007) note in Source [20], political brands gain credibility through consistency with historical narratives and material artifacts. Trump's rhetoric-emphasizing his "outsider" status and real estate empire-functions as a Peircean indexical sign, creating a causal link between his identity and voters' schema of American entrepreneurship [20] [21]. This spatial and temporal rootedness allows supporters to interpret his messaging as inherently truthful, even when factual accuracy is contested [22].

The disconnect between truthfulness and accuracy perceptions mirrors findings in Source [23], which identifies a broader societal shift toward "authentic" over "objective" truth claims. Trump's supporters prioritize communicative authenticity-the perception that he "says what he means"-over empirical verification [23] [24]. This aligns with Hovland's source credibility theory (Source [25]), where congruence between a communicator's perceived character and audience values outweighs message accuracy. For instance, Trump's anti-PC rhetoric (Source [22]) frames factual disputes as elitist attacks on working-class "common sense," transforming accuracy critiques into evidence of his authenticity [22] [26].

Performed Authenticity and the Neutrality of Factualness

The high neutral responses on factualness (33.2%) and completeness (31.9%) reveal how Trump's brand leverages strategic ambivalence-a performed authenticity tactic identified in Source [27]. By oscillating between concrete promises ("Build the Wall") and vague deniability ("Everyone knows what I mean"), he creates interpretive flexibility that sustains multiple truths among supporters [27] [21]. This performance aligns with Goffman's dramaturgical theory (Source [24]), where minimizing the gap between "frontstage" rhetoric and "backstage" intent fosters perceptions of authenticity, even when details remain unsubstantiated [24] [28].

The accuracy gap (34.9% disagreement) reflects what Source [29] terms abject authenticity-the strategic embrace of imperfection as proof of genuineness. Trump's frequent factual errors and hyperbole are reinterpreted by supporters as evidence of resisting "politically correct" deception, with inaccuracies framed as the "ugly truth" of unfiltered communication [29] [22]. This phenomenon mirrors findings in Source [30], where influencers' perceived authenticity often correlates with spontaneity rather than precision.

The Role of Emotional Contagion in Credibility Maintenance

Trump's high dependability (3.61 mean) and honesty (58%) scores demonstrate how emotional contagion sustains credibility despite accuracy concerns. As Source [20] notes, voters associate leaders with the "essence" of their geographic or cultural origins. Trump's Queens upbringing and "Make America Great Again" nostalgia activate what Source [21] calls moral authenticity-the belief that his actions align with a perceived historical commitment to industrial revival [20] [21]. This emotional transfer insulates his brand from factual critiques, as supporters interpret policy inconsistencies through the lens of shared cultural identity rather than objective truth [22] [26].

The neutral responses further reflect what Source [31] identifies as motivated reasoning in credibility assessments. Voters uncertain about factualness likely default to partisan schemas, where Trump's membership in their ideological "in-group" (per Source [32]) tempers skepticism. This aligns with Feldman and Conover's political cue theory (Source [21]), which shows that party allegiance often supersedes factual analysis in authenticity judgments [21] [24].

Strategic Implications: Authenticity as a Factual Buffer

Trump's messaging success despite accuracy weaknesses underscores a key insight from Source [23]: in an era of epistemic relativism, perceived authenticity increasingly functions as a "factual buffer." Voters prioritize:

1. Consistency with preexisting narratives (e.g., "America First" isolationism)
2. Ordinarity in communication style (e.g., Twitter rawness vs. polished speeches)
3. Immediacy of emotional resonance (e.g., grievance politics) [23] [28]

These dimensions, validated by Source [28]'s authenticity scale, allow Trump to frame accuracy disputes as elite obsessions irrelevant to "real Americans." The result is a self-reinforcing cycle where factual critiques from opponents inadvertently bolster his authenticity by highlighting his resistance to "establishment" norms [22] [26].

Conclusion: The Post-Truth Authenticity Playbook

The survey data reveals that Trump's brand thrives on a post-truth authenticity paradigm where:

- Indexical cues (Queens roots, business legacy) anchor perceived truthfulness
- Performed imperfection (factual errors) signals anti-elite sincerity
- Emotional contagion (MAGA nostalgia) overrides empirical verification

This aligns with Source [26]'s framework of political truth claims shifting from objective to authentic modes. For Trump, authenticity becomes a "floating signifier" detached from traditional credibility metrics-a phenomenon Source [29] links to abject corporeality's power in mediatized politics. The accuracy gap thus represents not a vulnerability but a strategic feature, enabling his brand to simultaneously embody and transcend factual politics [29] [22].

Future research should explore whether this model generalizes to other populist leaders and how digital platforms amplify authenticity-accuracy decoupling. For now, Trump's survey numbers confirm that in the attention economy, performed authenticity often outweighs propositional truth-a lesson reshaping 21st-century political communication [27] [30].

RELEVANT CONSTRUCT THEORY FOUNDATIONS

THE SEMIOTIC FOUNDATIONS OF PLACE-BASED AUTHENTICITY IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: INDEXICAL CUES AND VOTER PERCEPTIONS OF DONALD TRUMP'S BRAND

In contemporary political discourse, the concept of authenticity has become a cornerstone of voter evaluation, particularly in the context of leadership brands that emphasize origins, heritage, and spatial connections. Donald Trump's political persona, often framed through his business background and self-styled "outsider" narrative, exemplifies how voters cognitively construct authenticity through indexical cues tied to place and history. This report synthesizes semiotic theory, consumer behavior research, and political branding to elucidate the mechanisms by which voters perceive leadership authenticity as rooted in a "pure indexical" relationship to origin.

Theoretical Framework: Semiotics and Indexical Authenticity

Peircean Semiotics and the Nature of Indexicality

At the core of this construct lies Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework, which distinguishes between symbols, icons, and indexes. Indexical signs derive meaning from a factual or causal connection to their referent, such as smoke indicating fire or a weathervane pointing to wind direction [1] [2]. In branding and political communication, indexical authenticity emerges when consumers (or voters) perceive a product (or leader) as genuine due to tangible, spatio-temporal links to its origin [3] [4]. For instance, a wine's terroir—its geographic and climatic origins—serves as an indexical cue that authenticates its quality and heritage [4].

Indexical vs. Iconic Authenticity in Leadership

While iconic authenticity relies on symbolic representations (e.g., a politician adopting populist rhetoric), indexical authenticity depends on verifiable connections to place, history, or tradition [2] [5]. Voters assessing a leader's indexical authenticity seek evidence of:

1. Physical rootedness: Direct ties to a geographic location (e.g., birthplace, business headquarters).
2. Temporal continuity: A consistent narrative linking past actions to present commitments.
3. Material artifacts: Tangible proof of origin, such as real estate holdings or manufacturing sites [6] [7].

In Trump's case, his branding as a "New York businessman" and references to properties like Trump Tower function as indexical cues, positioning him as a leader whose identity is inseparable from his commercial origins [8] [6].

The Role of "Original Place of Manufacture" in Political Branding

Contagion Theory and Essence Transfer

Research in consumer behavior reveals that products manufactured at a company's original site are perceived as more authentic due to contagion—a belief that physical contact transfers an intangible "essence" [6] [7]. This principle extends to political branding: voters associate

leaders with the places they originate from, attributing authenticity to those who maintain visible ties to their roots. For example, Trump's emphasis on his Queens, New York upbringing and real estate empire reinforces perceptions of him as embodying the "essence" of American entrepreneurship [6] [8].

Case Study: Trump's "Made in America" Rhetoric

Trump's 2016 campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again," leveraged indexicality by invoking a nostalgic return to industrial-era manufacturing hubs. By framing himself as a leader who could restore jobs to places like Detroit or Pittsburgh, he created a spatio-temporal connection between his leadership and the revival of "original" American economic prowess [6] [7]. Voters in post-industrial regions interpreted this rhetoric as evidence of authentic commitment, despite his personal wealth and Manhattan residency [8].

Cognitive Mechanisms: How Voters Process Indexical Cues

Factual Connections and Schema Activation

When voters encounter indexical cues (e.g., a leader's birthplace, business history), they activate schemas-mental frameworks that organize information about categories like "authentic leader" [9] [10]. Brand schematicity theory suggests that individuals with preexisting schemas about leadership authenticity (e.g., "authentic leaders come from the private sector") are more likely to perceive indexical cues as validating a candidate's genuineness [9] [11]. Trump's background as a real estate developer resonated with voters whose schemas equated business success with executive competence [8].

Emotional Resonance and Moral Authenticity

Indexical cues also trigger emotional responses tied to moral authenticity-the belief that a leader's actions align with their professed values [12] [13]. By framing his political agenda as an extension of his business practices (e.g., "negotiating deals for America"), Trump positioned his leadership as a natural progression of his lifelong commitment to economic success, fostering voter trust [12] [8].

Challenges and Paradoxes in Indexical Authenticity

The Risk of Over-Iconization

While indexical cues rely on factual connections, their overuse can devolve into iconic simulacra-symbolic representations detached from reality. For instance, Trump's repeated references to his "original" Manhattan skyscraper risked alienating working-class voters who perceived such cues as emblematic of elitism rather than grassroots authenticity [8] [14].

Temporal Disjunctures and Authenticity Erosion

Leaders emphasizing origin stories face scrutiny when their present actions contradict historical claims. Trump's post-presidency ventures, including the launch of Truth Social and Mar-a-Lago's commercialization, introduced dissonance between his "outsider" narrative and perceived self-enrichment, complicating voter assessments of his authenticity [8] [13].

Conclusion: The Future of Place-Based Authenticity in Politics

The interplay between indexical cues and voter perception underscores the enduring relevance of spatial and historical rootedness in political branding. However, as electorates become more skeptical of performative authenticity, leaders must balance indexical signaling with demonstrable policy alignment. Future research should explore:

- The impact of digital platforms on spatial authenticity (e.g., virtual rallies vs. physical town halls).
- Cross-cultural variations in indexical cue interpretation.
- The role of artificial intelligence in simulating or undermining perceived authenticity.

For leaders like Trump, maintaining the delicate equilibrium between factual connections and symbolic resonance will remain critical to sustaining voter trust in an era of heightened scrutiny [10] [8].

What role does the place of origin play in the authenticity of a political brand?

The role of place of origin in political branding centers on its function as an indexical cue that voters use to assess authenticity, trustworthiness, and alignment with cultural or historical narratives. Drawing from semiotic theory, consumer behavior research, and political branding case studies, place of origin operates through three key mechanisms:

1. Indexical Authenticity and Tangible Connections

Place of origin serves as a factual or spatio-temporal marker that voters associate with a leader's genuine identity. For example:

- Physical rootedness: A politician's birthplace, upbringing, or long-term residency (e.g., Donald Trump's Queens, New York roots) provides tangible evidence of their connection to a specific community or culture [15] [16].
- Material artifacts: Properties, businesses, or landmarks tied to the leader (e.g., Trump Tower) act as physical proof of their origin story, reinforcing perceptions of authenticity [15] [17].

This aligns with Peircean semiotics, where indexical signs derive meaning from direct, causal relationships to their referents. Voters interpret these cues as evidence of a leader's unmediated, "unscripted" identity [18].

2. Heritage and Symbolic Continuity

Political brands leverage place of origin to construct narratives of historical reliability and cultural stewardship:

- Track record and longevity: Consistency in core values tied to a geographic identity (e.g., a leader advocating for industrial revival in their hometown) fosters trust by demonstrating alignment between past actions and present promises [15] [16].
- Symbolic resonance: Flags, slogans, or imagery linked to a place (e.g., "Make America Great Again" evoking post-industrial heartlands) activate voter schemas about shared heritage and collective memory [19] [17].

However, over-reliance on symbolic gestures (e.g., staged photos in "ordinary" kitchens) risks accusations of inauthenticity if voters perceive dissonance between image and reality [18].

3. Emotional Contagion and Moral Alignment

Place-based branding triggers emotional contagion, where voters associate leaders with the perceived virtues of their origin:

- Essence transfer: Leaders from regions with strong cultural identities (e.g., rural heartlands, manufacturing hubs) are seen as carriers of that place's "essence," such as resilience or pragmatism [17].

- Moral authenticity: Voters interpret a leader's commitment to their place of origin as evidence of integrity. For instance, Trump's emphasis on revitalizing "forgotten" American cities positioned him as a champion of displaced workers, despite his personal wealth [15] [16].

Challenges and Paradoxes

- Elitism vs. grassroots appeal: Leaders from privileged backgrounds (e.g., Boris Johnson's Eton education) may struggle to reconcile their origins with populist branding, necessitating compensatory narratives (e.g., anti-establishment rhetoric) [18].
- Temporal disjuncture: Evolving political agendas can erode authenticity if they contradict origin-based claims (e.g., a leader advocating globalization despite a "local jobs" origin story) [15] [17].

Conclusion

Place of origin functions as a critical authenticity anchor in political branding, enabling voters to map leaders' identities onto tangible, culturally resonant geographies. However, its efficacy depends on sustained alignment between spatial narratives, policy actions, and symbolic gestures. As voters grow skeptical of performative authenticity, leaders must balance indexical cues with demonstrable commitments to avoid accusations of hypocrisy or elitism [19] [18] [17].

WHY IS AUTHENTICITY IMPORTANT IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP? ⁱⁱⁱ

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. Ordinarity - 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 ^{iv}

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 ^v

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 assist 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
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.	

Production/Situation: Consumers blend situations and production to construct authenticity from fantasy.	Scripted Narrative	Scripted narrative assists the consumer to construct production authenticity.	Rose & Wood (2005)
	Situation Fantasy	Fantasy situations provide the consumer indexical elements with which he/she can 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.	Grayson and Martinec (2004)
	Place of Origin	A commitment too, and feeling for, the original place of manufacture.	
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 ^{vi}

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" analyses 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].

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