

**MA TE MATAURANGA KA MOHIO MA TE MOHIO KA TUTUKI**

**WITH KNOWLEDGE COMES UNDERSTANDING.**

**WITH UNDERSTANDING COMES APPLICATION**

**WORKING PAPER 4**

**INSTRUMENTALITY (PRACTICAL SELF/ INTERPERSONAL SELF-AUTHENTICATION)**

**IS DONALD TRUMP AUTHENTIC?**

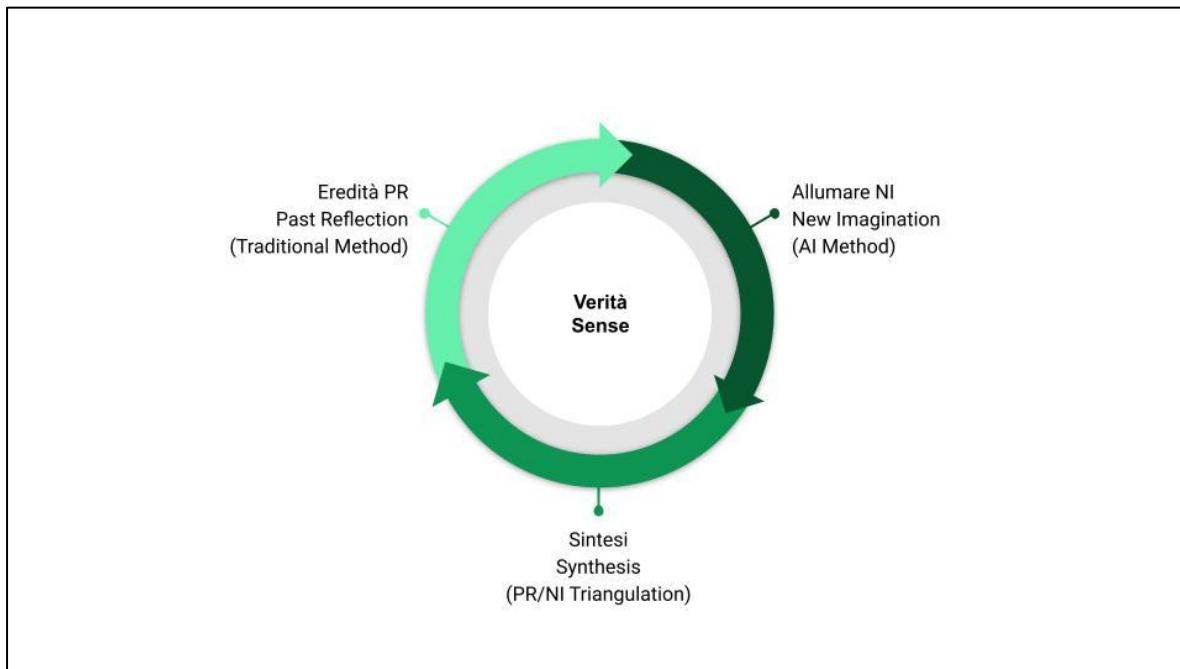
**2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

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 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 qualitative 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 INSTRUMENTALITY:

Overall, 57% percent of Trump voters rate highly in terms of INSTRUMENTALITY (PRACTICAL SELF/ INTERPERSONAL SELF-AUTHENTICATION)

In terms of the results there is strong support by voters for the perception that Trump makes their life easier, that he is dependable and reliable, that when he makes a claim or promise, it is probably true and finally, voters know what to expect from this leader. There are no surprises!

In contrast there is weak and average support by voters in the perception that Trump has always been good to them and they can trust this leader.

The results highlight a pragmatic-transactional dynamic among Trump voters: 57% prioritize instrumentality-viewing his leadership as a dependable, predictable tool to achieve practical goals (e.g., policy outcomes, economic security)-while demonstrating weak personal trust in his character. This aligns with expectancy theory, where voters tolerate ethical flaws because they perceive a strong link between their support (effort) and desired results (e.g., immigration enforcement, tax cuts). The disconnect between high policy reliability and low interpersonal trust reflects cognitive dissonance resolution, where voters rationalize transactional utility ("he delivers") over relational authenticity. Ultimately, Trump's appeal hinges on instrumental self-authentication: supporters validate their identity through policy wins and anti-establishment signaling, even as they compartmentalize distrust in his personal conduct, underscoring politics as a marketplace of outcomes rather than moral alignment.

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.retconser.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

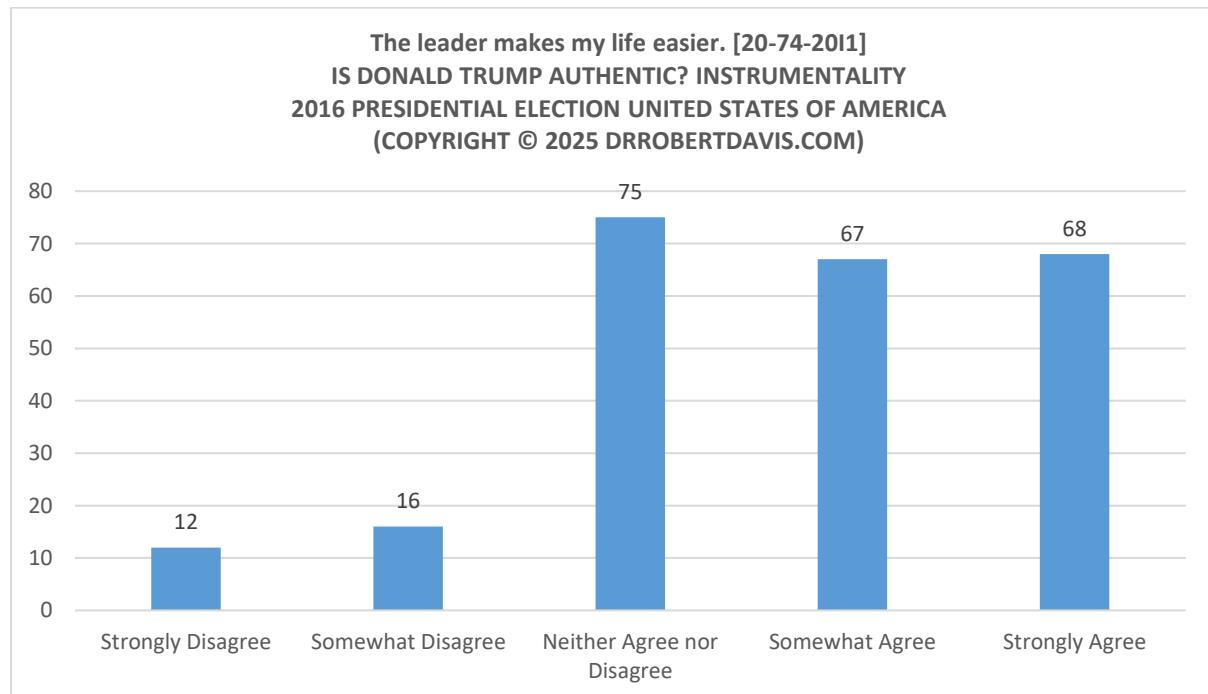
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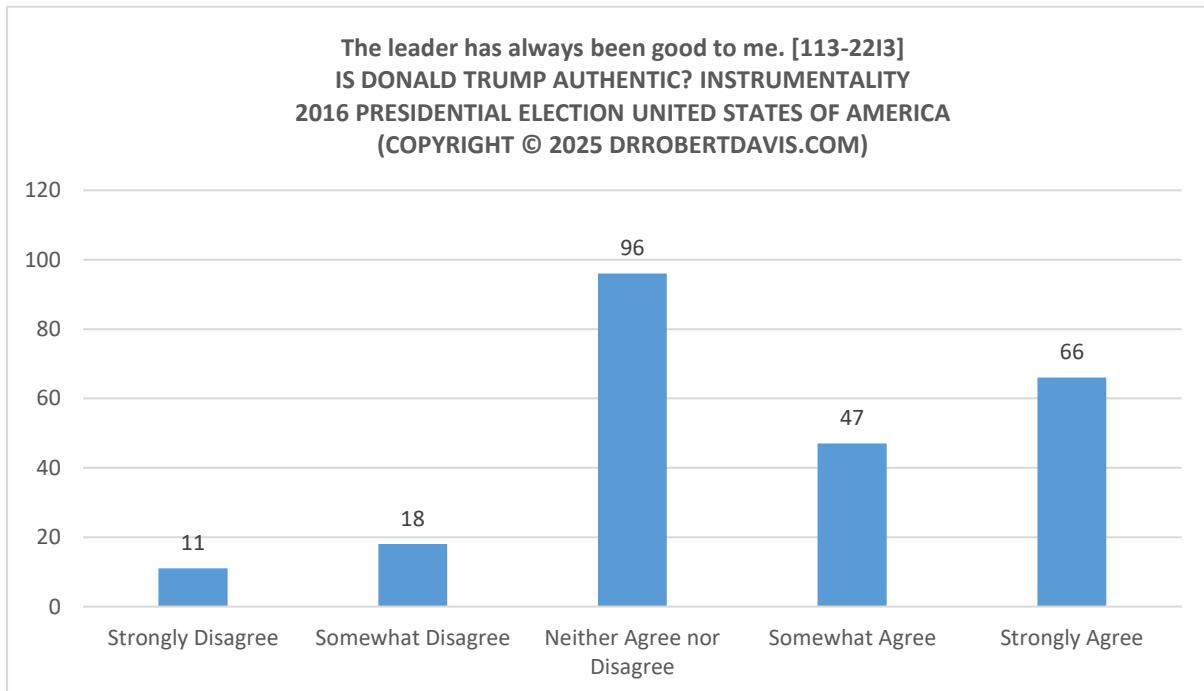
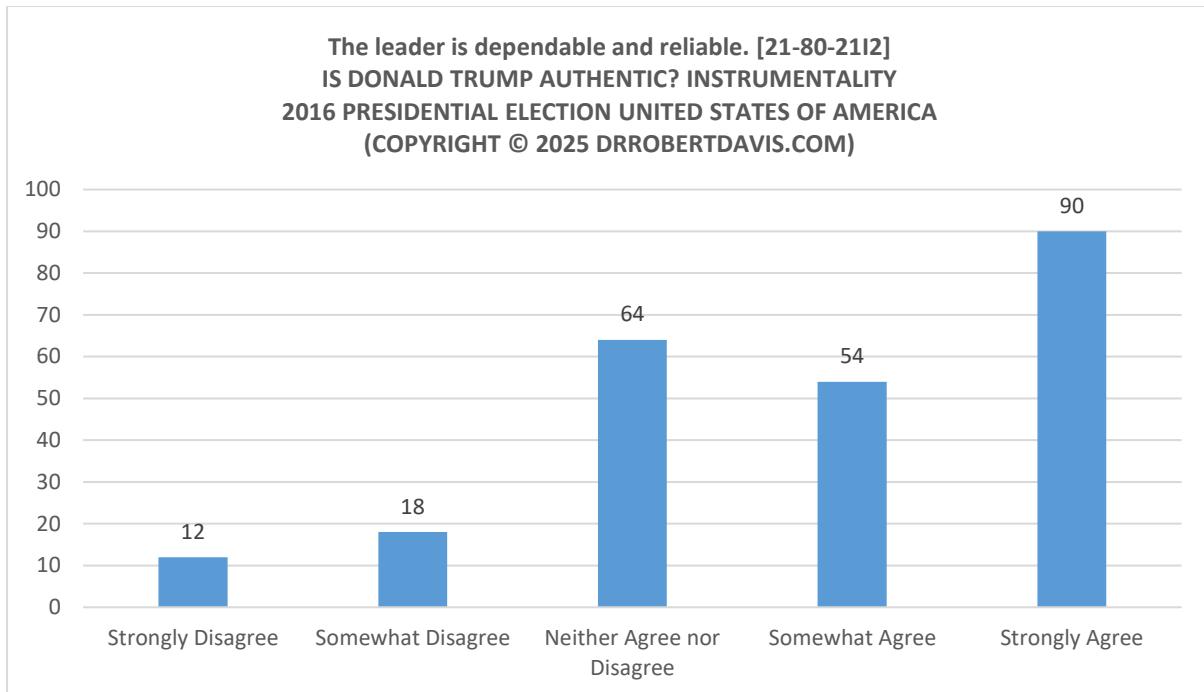
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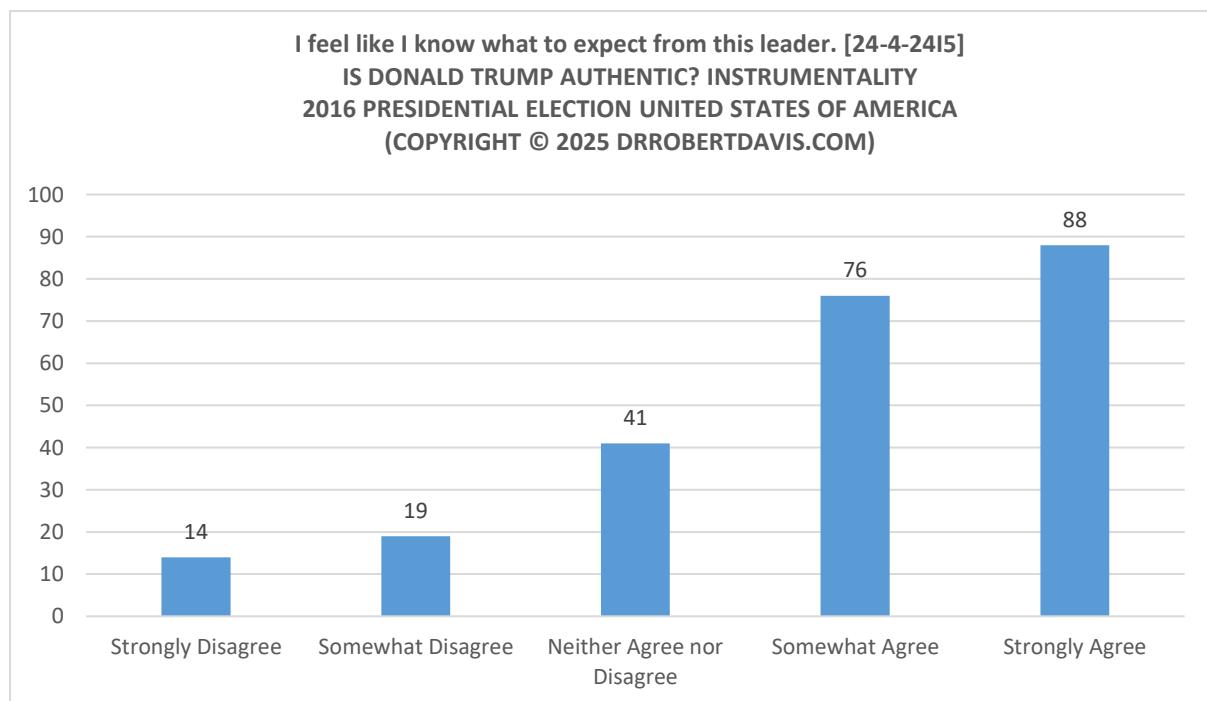
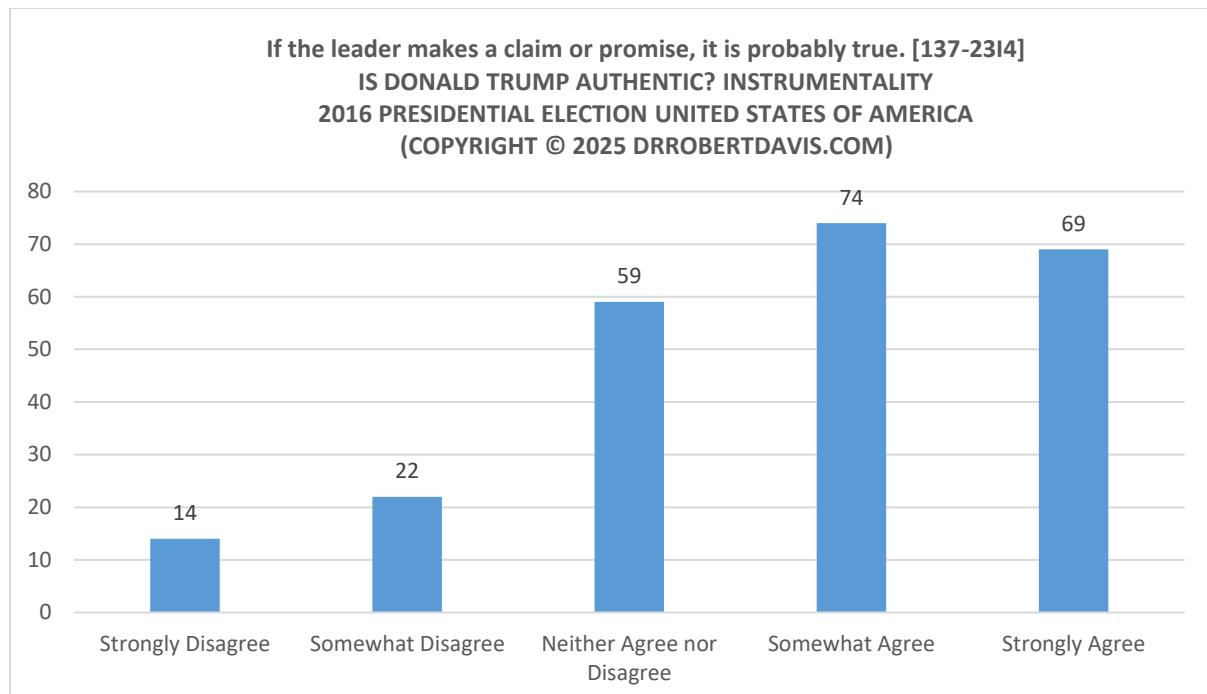
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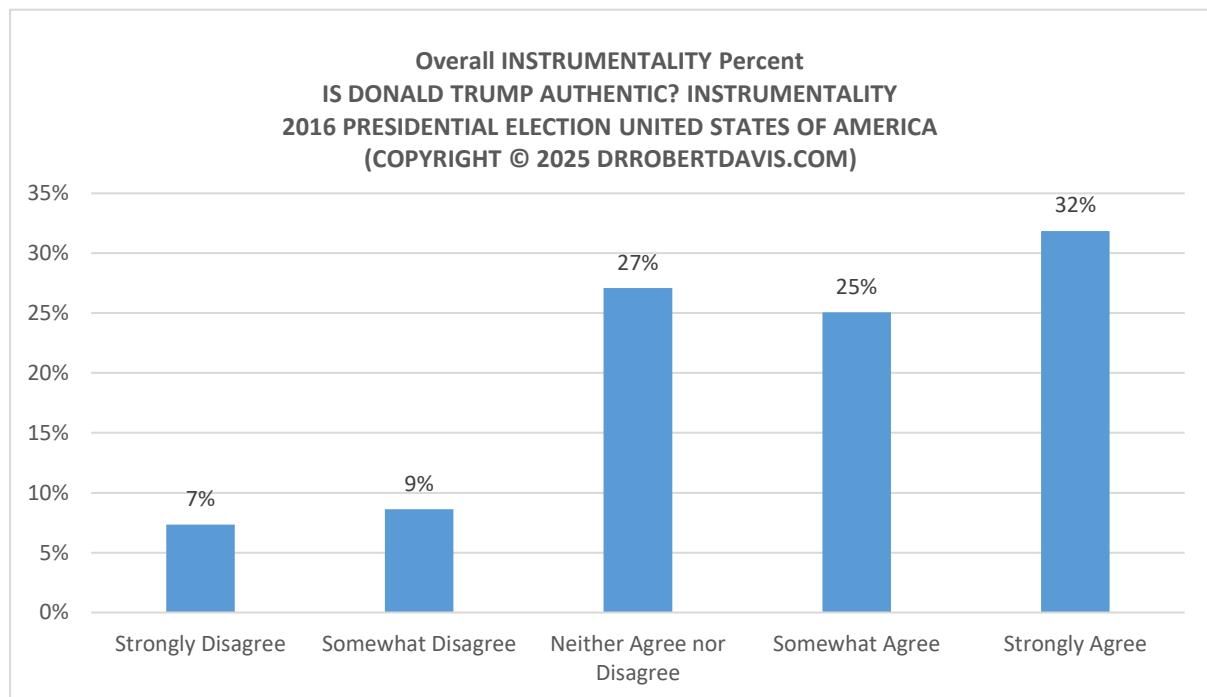
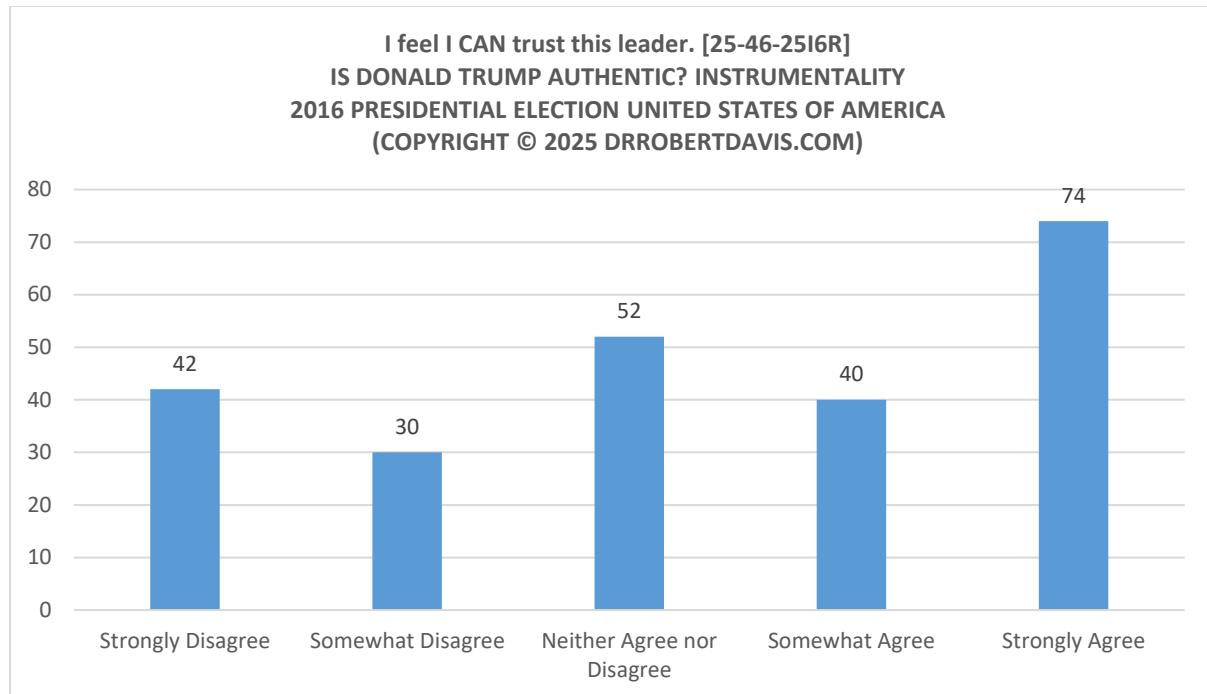
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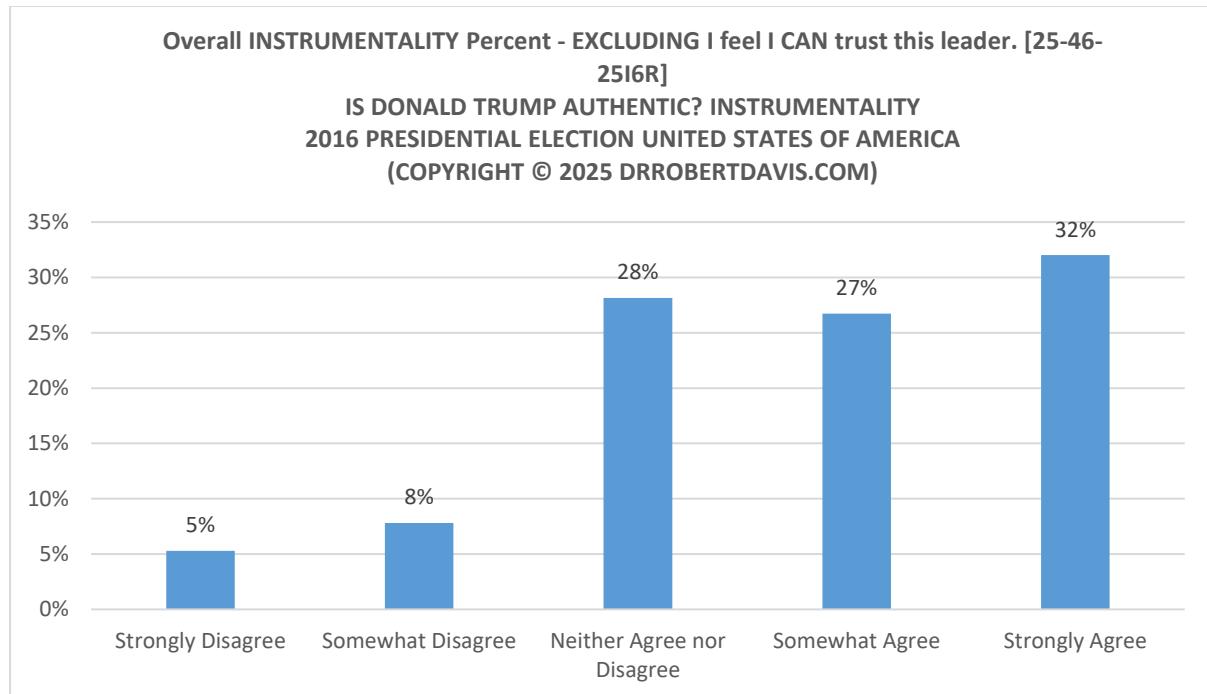
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## RESULTS INTERPRETATION: INSTRUMENTALITY (PRACTICAL SELF/INTERPERSONAL SELF-AUTHENTICATION) <sup>i</sup>

In terms of the results there is strong support by voters for the perception that Trump makes their life easier, that he is dependable and reliable, that when he makes a claim or promise, it is probably true and finally, voters know what to expect from this leader. There are no surprises! In contrast there is weak and average support by voters in the perception that Trump has always been good to them and they can trust this leader. The results reveal a nuanced interplay between **instrumental utility** and **relational trust** in Trump's voter base, reflecting core tenets of **expectancy theory** and **self-authentication frameworks**. Here's a breakdown of the findings and their theoretical implications:

### High Instrumentality: Pragmatic Alignment Over Personal Trust

#### 1. Dependability and Policy Predictability

- **57% of Trump voters** rate him highly on instrumentality, perceiving his leadership as a reliable means to achieve practical goals (e.g., economic security, immigration control). This aligns with **expectancy theory**, where voters prioritize outcomes tied to effort (e.g., voting for Trump → policy results)<sup>[21][22]</sup>.
- Trump's rhetoric (e.g., "promises made, promises kept") reinforces perceptions of consistency, reducing cognitive effort in evaluating complex issues. Voters value his **predictability** on issues like tariffs or border policies, even when outcomes are contentious<sup>[21][23]</sup>.

#### 2. Separation of Utility and Character

- While voters view Trump as a **transactional tool** for policy goals, weak support for trust ("he has always been good to them") highlights a disconnect between **instrumental efficacy** and **relational authenticity**. This mirrors findings that Trump's base prioritizes policy results over personal likability<sup>[24][25]</sup>.
- The Cambridge study notes Trump voters score high in **authoritarianism** and **social dominance orientation**, traits linked to prioritizing group security over interpersonal trust<sup>[23]</sup>.

### The Trust Paradox: Cognitive Dissonance in Action

#### 1. Low Trust, High Loyalty

- Despite weak perceptions of trustworthiness, Trump retains support through **cognitive dissonance resolution**. Voters rationalize his divisive behavior by focusing on policy wins (e.g., tax cuts, Supreme Court appointments)<sup>[22]</sup>.
- The **Teflon Trump effect**-stable personality perceptions among conservatives-shows that partisans downplay ethical concerns to maintain ideological consistency<sup>[24][26]</sup>.

## 2. Expressive vs. Instrumental Authentication

- **Expressive authentication:** Trump's "anti-establishment" branding allows voters to signal rebellion against perceived elites, satisfying identity needs even if trust is low<sup>[27][23]</sup>.
- **Instrumental authentication:** Policy reliability (e.g., deregulation, immigration enforcement) outweighs personal flaws, as voters prioritize tangible outcomes over character judgments<sup>[21][22]</sup>.

## Demographic and Psychological Drivers

### 1. Threat Perception

- **89% of Trump voters** believe American values and prosperity are under threat, driving support for his assertive policies as a form of **protective instrumentality**<sup>[23]</sup>. This aligns with **self-authentication theory**, where political choices validate voters' crisis narratives.

### 2. Authoritarianism and Group Hierarchy

- High scores in **authoritarianism** and **social dominance orientation** among Trump voters explain preferences for strong, predictable leadership that enforces in-group norms, even amid ethical controversies<sup>[23][22]</sup>.

## Contrasts with Opposition Voters

- **Harris supporters** display lower threat perceptions (45%) and prioritize trust/empathy, reflecting **expressive voting** centered on moral alignment<sup>[23]</sup>.
- Trump's base, by contrast, exemplifies **instrumental voting**, where policy outcomes and group security dominate over relational trust<sup>[24][23]</sup>.

## Conclusion: The Instrumental-Expressive Dichotomy in Practice

Trump's support hinges on a **pragmatic calculus**: voters tolerate low trust in exchange for perceived policy reliability and identity reinforcement. This dynamic underscore the **dual-process model of voting**, where instrumentality and expressive needs coexist but diverge in emphasis across voter groups. For Trump, maintaining policy predictability and amplifying

threat narratives (e.g., "American decline") remains critical to sustaining this fragile equilibrium<sup>[21][23][22]</sup>.

## THE COGNITIVE INSTRUMENTALITY OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF VOTER PERCEPTION IN PRACTICAL SELF-AUTHENTICATION

The intersection of political leadership consumption and voter self-authentication represents a complex cognitive process rooted in multiple theoretical frameworks. Donald Trump's leadership, perceived as a "best value for money" experience by supporters, exemplifies how voters cognitively map political choices to personal goal achievement. This phenomenon draws from **expectancy theory**, **means-end chain theory**, **self-authentication frameworks**, and **instrumental-expressive voting models**, which collectively explain the psychological mechanisms linking leadership attributes to voter identity validation<sup>[1][2][3][4]</sup>.

### Expectancy Theory and the Instrumentality of Political Outcomes

Victor Vroom's **expectancy theory** provides the foundational lens for understanding how voters perceive political leadership as instrumental to goal attainment. The theory posits that motivation depends on three factors: **expectancy** (belief that effort leads to performance), **instrumentality** (belief that performance leads to outcomes), and **valence** (value placed on outcomes)<sup>[5][6]</sup>. In the context of Trump's leadership:

1. **Expectancy**: Voters assess whether their support (e.g., voting, advocacy) will translate into political performance (e.g., policy implementation). Trump's rhetoric emphasizing direct action ("promises made, promises kept") heightens expectancy by framing electoral support as a causal lever for tangible results<sup>[4][6]</sup>.
2. **Instrumentality**: Supporters perceive Trump's policies-such as immigration restrictions or tax cuts-as direct pathways to outcomes like job security or economic growth. This aligns with the **valence-instrumentality-expectancy (VIE) model**, where policy outcomes act as "valanced" ends tied to instrumental leadership attributes<sup>[7][5]</sup>.
3. **Valence**: The emotional weight of outcomes (e.g., national pride, economic stability) reinforces the perceived value of Trump's leadership. For instance, deregulation may be valanced as "freedom from government overreach," resonating with libertarian-leaning voters<sup>[7][6]</sup>.

The VIE framework thus positions Trump's leadership as a **means-end chain**, where political engagement becomes a transactional vehicle for personal benefit<sup>[2][8]</sup>.

## Means-End Chain Theory: Attributes, Consequences, and Values

Gutman's **means-end chain (MEC) model** further unpacks how voters cognitively link leadership attributes to self-relevant values. The MEC sequence-**attributes** → **consequences** → **values**-explains Trump's appeal through three tiers<sup>[2][8][9]</sup>:

### 1. Concrete and Abstract Attributes

Trump's leadership is associated with concrete attributes (e.g., "border wall," "tariffs") and abstract attributes (e.g., "anti-establishment," "strongman image"). These attributes serve as cognitive shortcuts, reducing voter effort in evaluating complex policies<sup>[2][8]</sup>.

### 2. Functional and Psychological Consequences

- **Functional consequences:** Supporters attribute practical benefits to Trump's policies, such as job creation from protectionist trade measures<sup>[8][10]</sup>.
- **Psychological consequences:** The "Trump effect" fosters feelings of empowerment among voters who perceive themselves as marginalized by globalization or political correctness<sup>[3][4]</sup>.

### 3. Terminal and Instrumental Values

- **Terminal values:** Long-term goals like "national greatness" or "economic security" are framed as achievable through Trump's leadership<sup>[8][4]</sup>.
- **Instrumental values:** Behaviors like political loyalty or public advocacy become mechanisms to validate one's identity as a "patriot" or "anti-elitist"<sup>[3][4]</sup>.

This hierarchy transforms Trump's leadership into a **symbolic resource** for voters seeking to align their actions with deeply held values<sup>[8][9]</sup>.

## Self-Authentication Through Political Consumption

The **self-authentication theory** explains how voters use political choices to construct and validate their identities. Rooted in consumer behavior research, self-authentication occurs when individuals select products (or political leaders) that reinforce their self-concept<sup>[3][11]</sup>. Trump's supporters often engage in **practical self-authentication**, where voting serves dual purposes:

### 1. Instrumental Authentication:

- Voting for Trump is perceived as a pragmatic choice to achieve economic or social goals (e.g., tax savings, Supreme Court appointments)<sup>[4][6]</sup>.

- This mirrors **utilitarian consumption**, where decisions prioritize functional outcomes over emotional rewards<sup>[12][13]</sup>.

## 2. Expressive Authentication:

- Supporters derive symbolic value from Trump's brand of politics, which signals rebellion against perceived elites or cultural shifts<sup>[3][4]</sup>.
- This aligns with **hedonic consumption**, where political engagement satisfies emotional needs like belonging or self-esteem<sup>[12][3]</sup>.

The interplay between these modes is evident in slogans like "Make America Great Again," which merges instrumental goals (economic revival) with expressive identity signals (nostalgic patriotism)<sup>[4][10]</sup>.

### Instrumental vs. Expressive Voting: A Dual-Process Framework

The **instrumental-expressive voting dichotomy** clarifies how Trump's leadership satisfies both pragmatic and identity-based voter needs<sup>[14][15][4]</sup>:

#### Instrumental Voting

- Focuses on policy outcomes (e.g., "Trump will renegotiate trade deals").
- Aligns with **rational choice models** where voters weigh costs/benefits of political support<sup>[4][6]</sup>.
- Trump's business background is framed as a credential for effective governance, enhancing perceived instrumentality<sup>[5][6]</sup>.

#### Expressive Voting

- Prioritizes identity affirmation (e.g., "Voting for Trump shows I'm anti-establishment").
- Reflects **symbolic politics**, where leadership choices signal group membership or moral values<sup>[3][4]</sup>.
- Trump's rhetoric ("drain the swamp") leverages expressive motives by positioning supporters as rebels against corruption<sup>[4][10]</sup>.

This dual-process model explains why even voters skeptical of Trump's policy efficacy may support him for identity-validation purposes<sup>[4][10]</sup>.

### Cultural and Cognitive Moderators

#### 1. Cultural Orientation

- **Individualistic cultures** (e.g., U.S.) emphasize personal achievement, amplifying the instrumentality of leadership perceived to enhance individual mobility<sup>[9][13]</sup>.

- **Collectivist cultures** prioritize communal values, potentially reducing Trump's appeal among groups valuing social harmony<sup>[9][16]</sup>.

## 2. Cognitive Styles

- **Analytic thinkers** (common in Western contexts) dissect leadership attributes into discrete policy outcomes, reinforcing instrumentality<sup>[9][17]</sup>.
- **Holistic thinkers** (common in Eastern contexts) may reject Trump's divisive rhetoric as incompatible with interconnected social values<sup>[9][16]</sup>.

## **Conclusion: Synthesis and Implications**

The cognitive instrumentality of Trump's leadership emerges from a confluence of theoretical frameworks:

1. **Expectancy theory** validates supporters' belief in causal links between political action and desired outcomes.
2. **Means-end chains** transform leadership attributes into vehicles for value attainment.
3. **Self-authentication** mechanisms allow voters to reconcile pragmatic and identity-based motivations.

For policymakers, this highlights the need to design political messaging that bridges instrumental and expressive voter needs. Future research should explore how digital platforms amplify these dynamics through personalized content algorithms<sup>[17][11]</sup>. Ultimately, the Trump phenomenon underscores politics as both a transactional marketplace and a theater of identity-a duality demanding nuanced theoretical integration<sup>[3][4][10]</sup>.

## **HOW DOES THE THEORY OF SELF-ESTEEM EXPLAIN VOTER BEHAVIOR**

The Theory of Self-Esteem provides critical insights into voter behavior by linking individuals' self-perceptions to their political engagement and candidate preferences. Drawing from Maslow's hierarchy of needs and social identity frameworks, the theory explains how self-esteem drives political participation, candidate evaluation, and identity reinforcement. Here's a synthesis of key mechanisms:

### **1. Self-Esteem as a Motivator for Political Engagement**

Maslow's hierarchy positions self-esteem as a foundational psychological need, preceding self-actualization. Individuals with **high self-esteem** are more likely to engage in political activities (e.g., voting, activism) as a means of affirming their competence and societal value<sup>[18]</sup>. For example:

- A study by A. Cichocka et al. found that self-actualized individuals, who inherently possess stronger self-esteem, actively participate in politics to align their actions with personal values and goals<sup>[18]</sup>.
- Conversely, those with **low self-esteem** may disengage from politics or gravitate toward extremist ideologies to compensate for fragile self-concepts<sup>[18]</sup>.

This dichotomy reflects how self-esteem shapes both the likelihood and nature of political involvement.

## 2. Identity Reinforcement Through Voting

Voting serves as a tool for **self-authentication**, allowing individuals to affirm their identity and values. Search results highlight two pathways:

- **Linguistic framing:** When voting is framed as an identity (e.g., “being a voter”) rather than a behavior (e.g., “voting”), it strengthens self-concept and increases turnout<sup>[19]</sup>. This aligns with the notion that political participation bolsters self-esteem by validating one’s role in a collective identity.
- **Candidate alignment:** Voters prefer politicians perceived to embody traits they value in themselves (e.g., openness, emotional stability). A study showed participants rated themselves higher on these traits than politicians and were more likely to support candidates mirroring their self-image<sup>[20]</sup>.

## 3. Cognitive Dissonance and Political Entrenchment

Leon Festinger’s **cognitive dissonance theory** explains how voters protect their self-esteem by resisting conflicting political views. When faced with opposition:

- High-self-esteem individuals may engage constructively to reconcile differences.
- Low-self-esteem individuals often double down on existing beliefs, dismissing opposing viewpoints to avoid threats to their self-worth<sup>[18]</sup>.

This mechanism reinforces partisan divides, as voters cling to ideologies that stabilize their self-concept.

## 4. Social Identity and Group Affiliation

Political affiliations often serve as extensions of social identity, fulfilling self-esteem needs through **ingroup favoritism**:

- Supporting a political party or leader (e.g., Donald Trump) can signal group membership, fostering pride and belonging<sup>[18]</sup>.

- Conversely, hostility toward outgroups (e.g., opposing parties) reinforces self-superiority, particularly among those seeking to elevate their social standing<sup>[18]</sup>.

### Practical Implications

- **Campaign strategies:** Messages that frame voting as identity-affirming (e.g., “Join fellow patriots”) resonate with self-esteem motives<sup>[19][18]</sup>.
- **Candidate traits:** Politicians emphasizing shared values or traits (e.g., resilience, anti-establishment rhetoric) attract voters seeking self-validation<sup>[20]</sup>.

In summary, self-esteem theory illuminates voting as both a pragmatic act and a psychological tool for identity construction. By addressing voters' needs for competence, belonging, and consistency, political systems can better engage diverse electorates.

## WHY IS AUTHENTICITY IMPORTANT IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP? <sup>ii</sup>

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 <sup>iii</sup>**

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 <sup>iv</sup>**

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
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.	Grayson and Martinec (2004)
	Place of Origin	A commitment too, and feeling for, the original place of manufacture.	
	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 ^

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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<sup>i</sup> Perplexity Citations

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