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Political Communication

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Social Media Analysis

Social media in our society today is ever growing and changing. At the same time it is also getting increasingly more important. Not only is the social media app Instagram a fun photo and video sharing platform to keep up with friends, family, and your favorite celebrities, it is also a very crucial form of communication for politicians. For this analysis I have chosen to analyze Vivek Ramaswamy's fifty most recent Instagram posts. Vivek Ramaswamy is a member of the Republican Party. He is an entrepreneur who founded a pharmaceutical company, Roivant Sciences. Ramaswamy is decently favored by members of the Republican Party and is stated to be the second most popular Republican candidate behind Donald Trump. For this analysis I went through all 50 of Vivek Ramaswamy's most recent Instagram posts and categorized them into which of the four authenticity elements they belong to. Overall Ramaswamy had 10 posts that presented intimacy, 8 that presented immediacy, 16 that presented ordinariness, and 10 that presented consistency, making that 44 total appeals over 50 posts.

When it comes to politics, authenticity is one of the most important aspects for a candidate to have since authenticity is so widely sought out by American citizens when seeking a President or person in power. However, that can mean something very different in the political communication aspect than in real life. As long as a candidate can look authentic on their social media platforms, or while out taking part in public events, they will be seen as authentic, even if they really are not in real life. There are four elements of authenticity that Simon Lubke

discusses in his article. The first element is consistency which Lubke explains as pertaining to two things, “correspondence between politicians’ actions and others’ expectations of them” and “politicians performance” (Lubke, 8). The second element is intimacy, seeking intimacy is seeking the knowledge of politicians personal life, real personality, and how they live life when away from their role as a politician (Lubke 9). Next is ordinariness which is the politician showing they handle things and go through things just as any regular person would. For example, making mistakes (Lubke 10). The last element of authenticity is immediacy. Immediacy can be explained by using the example of Donald Trump’s tweets that are very obviously coming directly and genuinely from him. It is also defined as politicians doing things or posting things that are driven by emotion (Lubke 12).

To analyze the authenticity of 2024 presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy’s social media, I looked at his 50 most recent instagram posts. To analyze them I made a list of 1-50 on a google doc and listed which authenticity element in which I thought each post used. I also included a short, few words long, description of why I thought that post presented that element(s) of political authenticity.

Vivek Ramaswamy’s instagram account, based off of the posts that I analyzed, seemed to include a decently even amount of photos to videos. I also noticed that most of Ramaswamy’s posts were positive, even when posting about people who disagree with him and his ideas. To show my findings on which of Lubke’s Authenticity elements were present in Ramaswamy’s Instagram account, I created this chart:

Authenticity on Vivek Ramaswamy’s Instagram Page (September 12 2023- November 26 2023)	
Intimacy Appeals	10

Immediacy Appeals	8
Ordinariness Appeals	16
Consistency Appeals	10
TOTAL APPEALS	44

Intimacy

As the chart shows, 10 of Ramaswamy’s most recent instagram posts presented intimacy in them. An example that that I noted was this post:



I thought that this post was a great example of intimacy because it shows a detail about his personal life and what he does with his family. Another example of intimacy that I found on Vivek Ramaswamy’s instagram page was a video of a news segment that was talking about many details about his personal life including where his parents are from, how and where he grew up, and things he enjoyed doing when he was younger.

Immediacy

Vivek Ramaswamy's Instagram page included 8 posts out of 50 that incorporated the authenticity factor of immediacy in them. A post that included immediacy on Ramaswamy's Instagram was this:



This post was a segment from a talk show where they were talking very poorly about Vivek Ramaswamy. In his caption he says "Joy Behar embodies the modern left's playbook: talk a big game, name-call, and then cower from actual debate. I'm sure it'll be pretty easy to take on a "dumb" guy. Try sometime and see how it goes". You can tell by his response that the things Joy Behar and the other people on the talk show said about him affected him. His emotions played a role in his choice to make this post.

Ordinariness

Ordinariness was the most prevalent element of authenticity in Vivek Ramaswamy's Instagram. A post that I thought included ordinariness in it was this:



This photo is a good example of Ramaswamy showing ordinaryness because it is proof that he is a “normal person” in a coffee shop who can talk to other normal people about issues going on in our country. Another example of ordinaryness that I found on Ramaswamy’s instagram is this:



This post shares photos of Ramaswamy visiting what he calls a “forgotten city” in the US. This is an example of ordinaryness because it shows that he can connect with American citizens from small towns.

Consistency

Over Vivek Ramaswamy’s 50 most recent Instagram posts, I noted consistency 10 times. Overall I thought that Ramaswamy was very consistent with the topics he talks about. Almost all of his posts where he brings up issues going on in America or his ideas are all presented in the same way, with a very professional video of him talking.



He also seemed very consistent with the captions on his posts. The captions on his posts all sound as if he wrote them himself, they are not too formal but not too informal at the same time. The logos and color scheme used in his posts were also consistent with using red, white, and blue.

In conclusion, 2024 presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy's Instagram page includes all four of Lubke's elements of authenticity which include: immediacy, intimacy, ordinariness, and consistency. The most prevalent element of authenticity within his posts was ordinariness. One limitation to the analysis that I conducted includes the number of posts that I looked at. Overall, Vivek Ramaswamy has 1,095 posts on his Instagram account and I only looked at 50 of them. Another limitation of my analysis is that I analyzed only one social media platform of Vivek Ramaswamys. Different forms of posts are appropriate for different social media platforms. For example, I may have found more examples of immediacy on a platform such as Twitter rather than Instagram. An idea that I have for future research about political use of social media and political authenticity that may be more in depth than my research is comparing the two primary candidates for the 2024 presidential election instagram accounts. Looking at and comparing at least 200-300 posts would give better insight on those politicians and how they use their social media platforms would be interesting. I think comparing the results in a chart or graph similar to the one I used in this analysis would be a great way of presenting that information. In short, doing the same analysis that I did, just on a much larger scale.