Trump's Twitter communication style shifted over time based on varying communication goals

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The linguistic and discursive style of Donald Trump's tweets varied systematically before, during, and after the 2016 presidential campaign, depending on the communicative goals of Trump and his team, according to a study published September 25 in *PLOS ONE* by Isobelle Clarke and Jack Grieve at University of Birmingham.

While many journalists and academics have analysed the topics and sentiment of Trump's tweets, the range of different rhetorical strategies and discursive styles deployed by Donald Trump is not well studied. The authors of the study downloaded the corpus of tweets sent from the @realDonaldTrump Twitter account from 2009 and 2018 preserved in the Trump Twitter Archive. By analysing patterns of grammatical co-occurence, the authors were able to identify four general style variations of Trump's tweets: 1) conversational; 2) campaigning; 3) advisory; 4) engaged, and to observe how these stylistic patterns shifted over time.

The data suggest different communication strategies underlying Trump's use of Twitter, particularly during the 2016 campaign depending on his communication goals, such as appealing to different audiences, defending criticism against Trump and his campaign, deflecting controversies, and attacking opponents. The authors note that tweets sent from the account of @realDonaldTrump may not all have been composed by a single author, as different members of the campaign likely had access to the account, nor is it possible to ascertain the amount of thought and care given to the composition of an individual tweet.

According to the authors, "Regardless of one's political persuasion or

one's opinion of Donald Trump, we believe it is of critical importance to understand the unique and ultimately effective communication strategy Trump and his team implemented on <u>social media</u> during the 2016 campaign".

Grieve adds: "This study presents the first detailed linguistic analysis of the style used on the Donald Trump Twitter account. We find that the account shows clear patterns of stylistic variation over time and argue that these results provide a window into the communication strategy of Trump and his team during the campain."

More information: Clarke I, Grieve J (2019) Stylistic variation on the Donald Trump Twitter account: A linguistic analysis of tweets posted between 2009 and 2018. *PLoS ONE* 14(9): e0222062. <u>doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0222062</u>

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