Public communication and leadership: A study of Trump and Harris' public speeches

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Article Info	Abstract
	This article analyzes the impact of the different leadership styles of Trump and Harris on American public opinion, with a special focus on the speeches of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris between 2016 and 2024, concentrating on four key speeches from each of them. The main objective of this research is to examine how public communication is used to shape leadership roles and influence audiences. This study employs a qualitative content analysis method to evaluate the speeches of both politicians, as well as related statistical data to measure their effects. The findings indicate that Trump and Harris employ distinctly different public communication styles, leading to notable differences in how their messages are received and how audiences react. Trump utilizes a straightforward rhetorical style, relying on message repetition to evoke emotions and capture attention, while Harris adopts a more complex and emotionally charged approach, focusing on issues such as social justice and racial equality. These stylistic differences play a crucial role not only in the content of their messages, but also in the extent of their influence on various societal groups. Ultimately, the study concludes that public communication in political leadership serves as a powerful tool that can shape perspectives and garner public support. However, the effectiveness of this tool heavily depends on the leader's personality traits and communication strategies. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of public communication in the success of political leaders and its impact on voter behavior.

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Extended Abstract
Introduction
Political communication shapes leaders' public images, influences voters, and conveys policies. In democracies like the U.S., public speeches are essential for sharing ideas and defining identities. This research compares Donald Trump's blunt, populist rhetoric, which resonates widely through social media, with Kamala Harris's formal, policy-focused style appealing to progressive audiences. By analyzing their distinct communication approaches, the study explores how rhetorical choices affect public influence and contribute to broader political discourse in contemporary American politics.

Significance of the Topic
The rise of social media and digital platforms has transformed the nature of political communication. These platforms provide political leaders with immediate and direct access to vast audiences, enabling them to shape public opinion and discourse in real-time. While this expansion of communication channels offers unprecedented opportunities for politicians to amplify their messages, it also introduces new challenges. Digital platforms favor simplicity, emotional resonance, and virality, often at the expense of nuance and complexity.

In this evolving media landscape, the communication strategies of leaders like Trump and Harris serve as important case studies. Their distinct approaches—Trump's emotive, repetitive style and Harris's detailed, policy-oriented rhetoric—reflect the broader strategic decisions political figures must navigate in an age of instantaneous communication.

Aims
The research aims to address the following question: How do the different leadership styles of Trump and Harris impact American public opinion?

Objective and Hypotheses
The objective of this study is to analyze and compare the public communication styles of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, focusing on their public speeches and statements. The primary hypothesis posits that Trump's simple, direct language is more effective in reaching a broad audience and generating immediate responses. In contrast, Harris's formal and detailed rhetoric is likely to have a stronger, long-term appeal to a more focused, progressive audience.

A secondary hypothesis suggests that Trump's language, characterized by slogans and repetition, is more successful in creating viral content on social media platforms. In contrast, Harris's language, with its emphasis on themes such as justice, equality, and unity,

encourages deeper engagement, particularly from socially conscious audiences, though with a narrower reach.

Methods
This research utilizes qualitative content analysis to study public speeches delivered by Donald Trump and Kamala Harris. The analysis focuses on linguistic elements such as the frequency of key terms, sentence structure, and rhetorical strategies. To further understand the impact of these communication styles, social media engagement metrics- such as likes, shares, and comments- are analyzed to gauge audience response.

Speeches from significant moments in their political careers, including campaign rallies, party conventions, and major public addresses, are examined. Social media data, collected from platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, are used to assess the reach and sustained impact of their rhetorical strategies on public engagement.

Results and Findings
The analysis revealed significant differences in how Donald Trump and Kamala Harris communicate with their audiences. These distinctions are evident both in the language they use and in the responses they elicit from the public.

Table 1 highlights the frequency of key terms in the speeches of both politicians.

Table 1. the frequency of key terms in the speeches of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris

Keyword	Trump's Frequency	Harris's Frequency
Greatness	150	50
Justice	80	120
Security	130	60
Unity	60	140
Change	55	130

Trump's language revolves around terms like "greatness" and "security", underscoring his nationalistic and populist agenda. These terms evoke a sense of pride and safety, appealing to a wide range of supporters. In contrast, Harris focuses on "justice". "unity". and "change", signaling her commitment to addressing social issues such as racial justice and civil rights.

Table 2 provides an overview of the communication styles and social media engagement generated by both politicians.

Table 2. The overview of the communication styles and social media engagement generated by Donald Trump and Kamala Harris

Leader	Total speeches	Main keywords	Linguistic style	Social media reactions
Trump	30	"America", "Greatness", "Wall"	Simple & Repetitive	Higher engagement
Harris	25	"Justice", "Equality", "Change"	Formal & Complex	Moderate engagement

Trump's speeches are characterized by simple, repetitive language, making his rhetoric easily digestible for broad audiences. He often employs emotionally charged phrases like "Make America Great Again" and "Build the Wall", which resonate strongly with his base and generate substantial social media traction. His communication strategy excels in fostering engagement, as his slogans are easily shared and provoke immediate reactions.

In contrast, Harris's speeches are more formal and focused on policy. Her rhetoric delves into nuanced discussions of justice and equality, appealing to audiences interested in social reform. However, this approach is less viral on social media, as her messages require more thoughtful reflection and are not as readily shareable as Trump's emotionally charged soundbites.

Table 3 compares keyword usage during national party conventions.

Table 3. Keywords usage during national party conventions

Candidate	Number of speeches	Average word count	Number of keywords uses	Linguistic style	Social media engagement
Trump	10	3,500	150	Simple & Repetitive	1.2 million likes
Harris	8	4,000	180	Formal & Complex	950,000 likes

Trump's preference for short, direct sentences and emotionally appealing slogans contributes to his success on social media, where engagement thrives on simplicity. Meanwhile, Harris's more nuanced and complex speeches may appeal to progressive voters who prioritize social justice, though they tend to generate lower levels of immediate engagement.

Conclusion

The comparison between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris reveals two

distinct political communication styles. Trump's approach, marked by simplicity, repetition, and emotional appeal, is highly effective at generating widespread social media engagement and immediate reactions. His use of memorable slogans and focus on nationalistic themes suits the fast-paced digital media landscape.

In contrast, Harris adopts a more formal and detailed communication style, appealing to a progressive, socially conscious audience. While her focus on justice and equality resonates deeply with certain groups, her speeches lack the viral impact of Trump's rhetoric.

Ultimately, both styles underscore the importance of tailoring communication strategies to specific audiences and media platforms. Trump's method ensures broad, instant engagement, while Harris's approach fosters more meaningful connections with targeted voter groups. These insights highlight how political rhetoric adapts to the demands of the digital age.

Conflict of interest
The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contributions
All authors contributed to the original idea, study design.

Ethical considerations
The authors have completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc.

Data availability
The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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