Notes on numerologist Sandy Smith's response to Africa Check

Africa Check contacted Sandy Smith with several questions about numerology's predictive ability. Importantly, she gave no explanation of the methods she used, or evidence that they produced accurate predictions. She did provide several examples of cases in which she supposedly made correct predictions, which we have broken down here.

Keep in mind that entirely coincidental details can easily be interpreted as predictions. A single or very occasional correct prediction accompanied by many incorrect predictions should not be confused with evidence of effectiveness.

So, what predictions did Smith quote as evidence of her predictive abilities?

"The years prior I made the prediction of the exact date president Zuma would resign."

Jacob Zuma resigned from his position as president of South Africa on 14 February 2018. Smith did not share evidence of her predicting Zuma's retirement.

However, in a December 2015 interview for BizNews, Alec Hogg asked Smith to predict the events of 2016. In that interview, she predicted that Zuma would not see out his term as president. She said: "He might still remain in the ANC [African National Congress] but he will not remain as president."

But in the same interview Smith predicted that South Africa's current president, Cyril Ramaphosa, "will never be a president either".

Smith also told the Daily Voice in a January 2016 interview that Zuma "may even not see his term through, citing health as a reason", without giving a date for Zuma's resignation.

Zuma did not resign for health reasons, instead referring to a resolution taken by the ANC national executive committee to recall him as president.

"I predicted in the People magazine about [the] September 11th 2001 catastrophe and [that] the ripple effect would be global – writing it in April and printed in the July 2001 issue pre the event."

This refers to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the US.

In the July 2001 issue of People magazine, Smith wrote: "There could be some kind of car, plane, boat or train accident around [then US president George W. Bush]." Presenting this as accurate means selectively interpreting the

prediction after the fact so that it fits with the events that have already taken place (known as confirmation bias).

Smith's prediction was also vague. It did not refer specifically to a terrorist attack and claimed the "accident" would take place "around" Bush. He was in the state of Florida when the attacks took place on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Virginia, and one of the hijacked planes crashed in Pennsylvania.

Interpreting Smith's prediction as accurate here could also be an example of the Barnum or Forer effect, in which vague generic predictions are interpreted as if they were very specific. The prediction "there could be some kind of car, plane, boat or train accident" is extremely vague. It could apply to many different situations and does not include any details which tie it specifically to the 9/11 attacks.

"I also gave lotto numbers in a People magazine for a particular week and it was won by a reader, something that is too pressuring for me to do."

We could not confirm this claim using publicly available information. Smith gave no indication of whether this happened on more than one occasion.

"My prediction in January 2020 about the closing of doors, collapse of jobs, how education would change, etc, pre the knowledge of Covid … is available on my YouTube [channel] for anyone to see. Many people could not fully understand what I was saying until lockdown happened."

We discuss this claim in our full report. But Smith did not make specific predictions which could be tied to the Covid-19 pandemic. Nor did Smith predict the pandemic itself.

Other analysts had predicted a continued rise in unemployment rates, but motivated these claims with clear reasoning.

We asked Smith directly: "*Is there reliable, publicly available evidence that your predictions are more accurate than predictions made by analysts who do not rely on numerology?* "

In response, she said: *"Yes, there is a lot of available evidence. Nobody predicted how well [Kaizer] Chiefs [soccer team] would do in 2021 because of their previous 'bad coach' spell, but evidence of my predictions was on the Robert Marawa sports show on 7 January 2021 and they had a brilliant year. And many did not believe it was going to happen."*

Predicting that a football team will do "well" is vague. Smith did not make accurate, specific predictions about the team's performance.

"I do predictions on heads of state and predicted Trump would fail and Biden would come in, and I have heads of state as clients."

The prediction that Joe Biden would beat Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election in the US was made not only by Smith. Smith has given no evidence that she made her prediction based on numerology rather than more sound methods.

In comparison, US-based polling and analysis website [FiveThirtyEight](#) said in [its earliest analysis](#) that Biden was favoured to win in 2020. Unlike Smith, FiveThirtyEight explained how it made its forecasts [in exhaustive detail](#), explained why and in what ways its forecasts [were unreliable](#), and was able to provide much more specific details.

FiveThirtyEight [forecast](#) exactly how many states and electoral college seats Biden was likely to win, and updated this information as the election drew closer and votes were counted.

Smith has declined to provide evidence that her methods produce reliable predictions. None of her claimed predictions include:

- Specific details which tie the prediction to a particular event.
- Evidence of how the prediction was made so that it could be repeated and tested.
- Evidence that the prediction was based on Smith's numerology system, and not more scientifically sound methods available to anyone with the same available information.

In contrast to analysts like FiveThirtyEight, Smith does not explain her methods, make them available for others to view and critique, or explain why and in what ways they might fail to prove accurate.

When asked about her methods by Africa Check, Smith wrote: "My predictions rely on the accurate information that I require to make them accurate, whether it is a stock, stock market, country, company or a person. I require a legally registered name and date of birth. If the information is correct the prediction is correct." - *Keegan Leech*