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# The Question That Answers Everything About the Election (and America, too)



By Marty Kaplan

A polling firm looking for America's top consumer brands stumbled across something that I think comes as close as anything to explaining what ails this American moment.

According to *Advertising Age*, YouGov asked people about a bunch of brands' quality, value, their satisfaction with it, their willingness to recommend it and their general impression of it, and they came up with an overall index of favorability.

And then they sorted the answers according to the political party of the respondents. (We did something like that in the 2008 election, when we worked with Zogby to figure out how entertainment preferences correlate with political preferences.)

The number one most favored brand among Democrats appears nowhere among the top ten most favored brands among Republicans. Ditto the reverse: Republicans' favorite brand is nowhere among Democrats' top ten.

If you look at what those two brands are, you can infer a lot about America right now.

Republicans' top brand: Fox News Channel. Democrats: Google.

Fox News: a hermetically sealed bubble of unquestionable absolutes, with sacred sages, approved opinions, official history, bright-line boundaries, party-line facts.

Google: the cacophony of the crowd, the contest of contradictions, the boundless wild west, the jumble of truth and rumor, the burden on its users to sort science from fiction — with all the anxiety, uncertainty, tentativeness and humility that comes along with that obligation.

On a good day for the network, a couple million or so Americans watch Fox News. On an average day, a couple hundred million or so Americans use Google or some other search engine. It's odd that the media frame the battle lines as Fox vs. MSNBC, when the real fissure may be the one between the zealots and the searchers.

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