

**THE BLOG**

Tell Me What You Watch (And Listen To, and Read), And I'll Tell You How You Vote

By Marty Kaplan

11/11/2007 08:46 pm ET | Updated May 25, 2011

Are Americans' entertainment tastes as polarized as our political views? The Norman Lear Center teamed up with pollster John Zogby to find out.

Our findings, hot off the press, may give candidates some ideas about where to advertise. But the big picture is especially interesting. It turns out that — just as there are conservatives, liberals and moderates — there are people with red, blue and purple taste.

People with red taste think a lot of entertainment programming is in bad taste and doesn't reflect their values. They think that fictional TV shows and movies are politically biased.

They don't like a lot of things on TV, but their two favorite channels are Fox and Fox News. They like sports, especially football and auto racing, and they watch news and business programming. They don't like most contemporary music, and they don't watch VH1 or MTV. They don't much like late-night TV. They like to go to sporting events, and when they do go to the movies, which is rarely, they seek out action-adventure films. They're not big book readers, but when they do read, they prefer non-fiction. When they read fiction, they often select mysteries and thrillers. They're more likely to listen to country and gospel than other people, but their favorite music is classical. They don't play a lot of video games, but when they do, *Madden NFL* and *Mario* are their favorites.

People with blue taste like a lot of different types of entertainment, even if it doesn't reflect their taste or values. They shy away from a lot of primetime programming, especially game shows and reality TV, but they like comedies, drama, documentaries, news and arts and educational programming. They love *60 Minutes*, PBS, HBO, Comedy Central and *The Daily Show*. They go to the movies, where they often see comedies, and they like to go to live theater and museums and galleries. They read books more often than most people; they prefer fiction to non-fiction, but their favorite genre is politics and current events. They enjoy entertainment with political themes, and they feel like they

learn about politics from entertainment. Sports are less interesting to them, but football is their favorite, and they're more likely to follow soccer than other people. They like lots of different kinds of music (except country), and they watch MTV and VH1. They play video games a lot more than other people; *Mario* and *The Sims* are favorites.

People with purple taste like all the broadcast networks and a lot of primetime programming, including police procedurals, game shows and reality programming. They watch a lot of Fox News and they like daytime and children's programming more than other people. They like to read non-fiction, including self-help books and biographies, but they like mysteries and thrillers best. Rock music is their favorite — they don't like classical or folk music as much as other people. Their favorite video games are *Mario*, *Donkey Kong* and *Madden NFL*. They don't seek out entertainment with political themes, and they're far less likely to read books about politics or current events than other people.

Red audiences make up 37% of the nation; blues, 39%; purples, 24%. It's those purple eyeballs — the smallest segment of the American audience, under a quarter of the country — that primetime network entertainment programmers seem to be fighting over. Maybe the Big Three broadcast networks should take a lesson from Fox. While ABC, CBS and NBC attract purples to their primetime programming, Fox has managed to appeal to an even larger demographic — conservatives — without sacrificing its moderate audience. Which broadcast network will be the first one to drop the gloves, give up the effort to attract everyone, and instead focus unapologetically on a liberal audience? Currently, the one that comes closest — though, unlike Fox, it looks to be by accident rather than by design — is NBC. Twenty-seven percent of conservatives (compared to 8% of all other respondents) report that they never watch NBC, making it their most hated broadcast network. Of course it's the one liberals like best: almost 70% watch the peacock on a daily or weekly basis. Moderates like all the broadcast networks, and, like liberals, NBC is their favorite, with 37% watching daily.

You can find out all about the poll's findings here and here. But here's what struck me the most: when it comes to entertainment, conservatives are way more PC than liberals.

People on the right — and that characterization of them comes from their answers to 24 questions designed to reveal their political values — don't like to consume entertainment that doesn't reflect their worldview, and they feel that way about a lot of it. But people at the other end of the political spectrum are voracious in their entertainment consumption. They enjoy watching, reading and listening to plenty of stuff that runs counter to, even offends, their political values. Over 80 percent of liberals say they're entertained by material that's in bad taste, but over 40 percent of conservatives say they're never entertained by it.

So the next time a Fox News fan tells one of you liberals how PC you are (and it won't be a compliment), try pointing out that you listen to Rush for entertainment — and just ask him or her the last time they watched Jon Stewart.

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