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#Contrast: Kanye West & LeBron James (August-September)

[Throughout the month of July and early August, Hip-Hoppreneur conducted and independently commissioned an analysis of public discussions regarding Kanye West and LeBron James in the swing states of Arizona, Ohio, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Below are key insights found. Sample size: 45,000 individual social media users for Kanye/6,700 individual social media users for Kanye]

- People are going to vote for Kanye. Despite the overwhelmingly negative reaction to it, some are drawn to Kanye's candidacy, either because they like what they see or simply because he is neither Biden nor Trump. Those who are sick of the political system are happy to vote for an outsider, safe in the knowledge that he won't win.
- The political Right sees LeBron as a threat. Much of the opposition to him may stem from his efforts to increase voter turnout in Florida through his commitment to help pay outstanding fines and fees for previously incarcerated individuals seeking to vote in November.
- Despite the fact that some are convinced that Kanye's main objective is to create a spoiler campaign in order to help Trump get re-elected there is significant disagreement as to *which* of the two main candidates will benefit most from Kanye's campaign. The big unanswered question seems to be, *'are you more likely to be attracted to Kanye if you previously leaned toward Biden or toward Trump?'*
- There are consistent questions about authenticity where LeBron is concerned. He is widely seen as engaging in 'virtue signalling,' being selective about the issues he engages in and doing so purely based upon his commercial interests.
- So far, Kanye has rarely gotten people to think beyond his presence and personality. However he clearly can do so, if he chooses. A small discussion on abortion proved that he is capable of creating conversation with a policy focus. And his recent call for both Biden and Trump to focus on Black economic development is another example of this.
- Called out by Right and Left activists, LeBron's voice and opinion is nevertheless in high demand, suggesting that many who criticize him for his political views still desire to convert him to their own. Those passionately tied to wedge issues and policies that are underattended to by the major parties especially covet LeBron's attention.
- A significant level of attitudes toward Kanye's political positioning are *apolitical* and are more expressions of concern for his well-being. They don't see his campaign as therapeutic and fear it will damage his health. This suggests that Kanye can remain a sympathetic figure throughout the heated political discourse. On the flip side much of the anger directed by many towards Kanye is intense. These voters feel he is making a mockery of the presidential election and undermining the political process. They feel that the country is in a perilous state and this is no time for celebrities to be playing games.

- LeBron has grown beyond the perception of him being *only* an athlete and into a leadership profile. The image of him as a child prodigy is long gone and individuals who previously felt no connection to him through sports are being persuaded favorably by his evolving emphasis on causes important to him. This though is parallel to a still sturdy sentiment from a core group of sports fans and conservatives who firmly believe 'politics' is not the place for LeBron. A lot of this is aggravated shouts for him to 'do his job' and 'stick to what you are paid to do'.

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