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## Reality Show in Modern System of Mass Communication (Based on Ukrainian Reality Shows)

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### ABSTRACT

The **purpose** of our study was to understand the nature of the *reality show* phenomenon in the system of mass communication through analysis of Ukrainian media market of reality shows.

For this purpose we have used a broad **methodological** base: a descriptive method for identifying the features of reality show and journalism, a bibliographic method for processing scientific sources, an inductive method to determine the functioning of reality show, the method of comparative analysis to understand relationship between journalism and reality show, historic-typological method to classify reality shows, methods of generalization and structuring to develop a modern structure of mass communication.

The main **results** of the research are the following: we found that reality show is a product of journalistic activity; the concept of "reality show" and "reality television" is clearly determined. Reality show is a format of a television product in which the actions and emotions of true people in real-life or in specially modelled situations are observed, characterized by accomplishment of unusual actions and constant commentary on everything that happens to them. This category includes competitions, dating, makeover, etc. Reality TV is a type of television program that demonstrates non-played situations in which real people, whether ordinary citizens or politicians and stars of show business, find themselves. The value of our research is that the correlation between reality show, its types and reality TV is clearly established. Reality TV consists of: 1) reality shows; 2) studio/gaming shows (talk show, late night show, game show), 3) broadcasting events (sports, music events, awards ceremony, etc.). Reality TV belongs to the category of entertainment television.

In this study the classification of reality shows has been improved, a whole series of functions of the reality show programs has been identified (entertainment, information, recreation, education, social integration and public control), it is proved that reality show has a great potential in the context of mass communication.

**KEYWORDS:** reality show; reality TV; television; journalism; mass communication.

## Реаліті-шоу в системі сучасної масової комунікації (на прикладі українських реаліті-шоу)

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### Резюме

Мета нашого дослідження – зрозуміти природу феномену реаліті-шоу у системі масової комунікації (аналізуючи український ринок реаліті-шоу). Для досягнення цієї мети ми використали широку методологічну базу: описовий метод (фіксація особливостей реаліті-шоу та поняття «журналістика»), бібліографічний (опрацювання наукових джерел), індуктивний (виявлення закономірностей функціонування реаліті-шоу), компаративний аналіз (чи є зв'язки між журналістикою та реаліті-шоу), історико-типологічний (класифікація реаліті-шоу), узагальнення та структуризація (розробка сучасної структури масових комунікацій). Основні результати дослідження: виявлено, що реаліті-шоу – це продукт журналістської діяльності; чітко детерміновано поняття «реаліті-шоу» та «реальне телебачення», встановлена кореляція цих двох категорій; вдосконалено класифікацію реаліті-шоу. Проведене нами дослідження виявило цілий пласт функцій програм реаліті-шоу, з чого можна зробити висновок, що реаліті-шоу має великий потенціал у контексті масової комунікації.

**Ключові слова:** реаліті-шоу; реальне телебачення; телебачення; журналістика; масова комунікація.

### Філоненко А. Ю. Реалити-шоу в системе современной массовой коммуникации (на примере украинских реалити-шоу).

Цель нашего исследования – понять природу феномена реалити-шоу в системе массовых коммуникаций (анализируя украинский рынок реалити-шоу). Для выполнения этой цели мы использовали широкую методологическую базу: описательный метод (фиксация особенностей реалити-шоу и понятия «журналистика»), библиографический (обработка научных источников), индуктивный (выявление закономерностей функционирования реалити-шоу), компаративный анализ (есть ли связи между журналистикой и реалити-шоу), историко-типологический (классификация реалити-шоу), обобщения и структурирования (разработка современной структуры массовых коммуникаций). Основные результаты исследования: выявлено, что реалити-шоу – продукт журналистской деятельности; четко детерминировано понятие «реалити-шоу» и «реальное телевидение», установлена корреляция этих двух категорий; усовершенствована классификация реалити-шоу. Проведенное нами исследование показало целый пласт функций программ реалити-шоу, из чего можно сделать вывод, что реалити-шоу имеет большой потенциал в контексте массовых коммуникаций.

**Ключевые слова:** реалити-шоу; реальное телевидение; телевидение; журналистика; массовая коммуникация.

## 1. Introduction

In the scientific discussion on the phenomenon of reality show, some scholars are sceptical that this is the phenomenon of journalism. We agree that in a nowadays postmodern society reality shows are hybrid and convergent. Scientists Anders Fagerjord and Tanja Storsul describe convergence as a result of digitalization, which “has levelled out the technological differences between media, and as a result, the typical genres of the different media may be mixed”. [1] Journalist has to be a writer, a photographer and a video editor simultaneously. This is a nowadays trend which offers people new kinds of media products. As for reality show, the director puts frames in order to be artistically beautiful, the operator shoots details and storyboard, the editing is not monotonous-sleepy, but musical and dynamic. But does that mean that reality shows are not a product of journalism proficiency?

In the prime time segment of the leading television channels of Ukraine, reality shows occupy almost the same segment as the information programs. And if to combine categories reality shows and talk shows and compare them with the categories of information and analytics, the number of reality / talk shows is bigger than all information and analytical programs together. So, in order to understand the nature of this phenomenon, it is necessary to understand its basic algorithms of work. This determines the relevance of this study.

Review of literature. V. Yushko in her thesis investigated the role of emotional elements in influencing the audience, K. Melezhyk studied the morph syntactic, lexico-semantic and phonetic features of the Big Brother project. There are also a number of tangent to our topic researches: O. Nevmerzhytska’s “Entertaining programs of central TV channels of Ukraine as a factor of moral education of adolescents”, V. Zagorodniuk’s “Formation of social communication technology “edutainment” and prospects of its introduction on Ukrainian TV”, I. Penchuk’s “Regional television and radio broadcasting in the context of the formation of national consciousness of youth”, N. Ostrovska’s “Features of social communication technologies of political talk shows on the air of Ukrainian TV channels” and I. Pobedonostseva’s “Television discourse in the cultural space of postmodernism”, but none of these studies considers the nature of reality show as a journalistic phenomenon.

Foreign researchers study reality shows in terms of management and producing, either as part of their social communication culture. So, we can rely on their classifications, genre characteristics, etc., but considering the fact that reality shows have been developing since 1948 and they have certain characteristics due to their mentality, our reality shows have their own peculiarities.

The theory of journalism was researched by a number of Ukrainian and foreign scholars such as Y. Agnes, F. Bond, M. Weber, V. Gagemann, G. Le Bon, D. McQuail, T. Peterson, F. Siebert, W. Sramm; A. Boyko, V. Goian, O. Goian, S. Gorevalov, D. Grigorash, V. Zdorova, I. Mikhailin, A. Moskalenko, G. Pocheptsov, V. Rizun and V. Shklyar.

The **purpose** of our study is to identify the place of reality shows in the modern system of mass communication.

The tasks are to analyze the profile literature related to journalism and social communications; to determine whether there is a correlation between journalism and reality shows; systematize and generalize all available knowledge about reality shows.

Our **source base** consists of reality shows that were released in the prime time of the Top-6 Ukrainian TV channels (“STB”, “New channel”, “1+1”, “ICTV”, “Inter”, “Ukraine”) in the period 2016-2017.

## 2. Research methods

The descriptive (ideographic) method we used to identify the characteristics of television programs in the reality show format and the main categories of the concept of “journalism”.

The bibliographic method allowed us to work out scientific sources.

Next, we applied the inductive method to reveal the regularities of the functioning of the phenomenon of reality shows.

After obtaining the results, we applied the method of comparative analysis to understand if there is a correlation between journalism and reality shows.

Applying the historical-typological method, we classified reality shows according to the main characteristics.

Methods of generalization and structuring allowed us to develop a modern structure of social communications, where clearly the place of reality shows in the Mass Media is set.

## 3. Results and discussion

In order to investigate the phenomenon of reality shows in the context of social communications, we chose the following key features of the phenomenon of journalism: the definition of the term and the availability of the same functions that journalism performs.

Let's start with the definition.

In his book “Fundamentals of Journalism”, I. Mykhailyn notes that: “Journalism is a form of public and literary activity in collecting, processing and disseminating information through mass communication channels, which primarily refer to the press, broadcasting, television, news agencies, electronic channels of communication” [2].

Creating a reality show is a process whereby a group of people carries out specialized activities in the collection, processing and dissemination of information through the media, namely, television. Given that the definition of I. Mykhailyn doesn't have any other special features, we can conclude that the reality show is a product of journalistic activity.

Let's consider the definition of journalism in the dictionary by Y. Bidzilia:

“Journalism is one of the forms of mass information activity, which involves the collection, processing and dissemination of information through mass communication channels (press, television, broadcasting, news agencies, cinema, photo)”. [3]

The definition of Y. Bidzilia is almost identical to the interpretation of the concept of “journalism” by I. Mykhailyn, which also confirms that the reality show is a product of journalistic activity.

V. Rizun also defined the concept of “journalism”, he noted that “journalism is the works that reflect social reality not in artistic form (fiction), but in the form of a direct reflection mediated only by the author's perceptions of social reality. These are works that are made public through periodicals, television, radio, the Internet or through separate editions” [4, 118].

Taking into account the fact that the participants of the reality show are actually going through all of the events that happen to them during the shooting period (this lies in the nature of the reality show format), reality shows demonstrate social reality. This is especially true for projects where there are more than two participants, because then they form a separate microscope, with its rules, hierarchies and laws.

As for the form of reflection of reality, after analyzing the content of Ukrainian and world reality shows, one can first conclude that the content is presented “artistically glossy”. However, if you explore this product deeper, then “artistic” manifests itself in the following aspects:

- dramaturgy;
- beautiful shooting;
- dynamic music editing.

But is it really a form of art? In our opinion, it is not.

Dramaturgy is just a form of presenting information. The events are not invented and played by the participants, it is just a competent work of the people who worked on this content. The same algorithm works when plotting news stories, the line of material presentation is based on the same laws of drama. And we do not assume that modern news is not a product of journalistic activity. Moreover, scientists have long come to the conclusion that in the modern media space the phenomenon of infotainment is actively dominates [5].

The beauty of filming is also a technically planned algorithm of work, because always whenever there is a conflict, a bright unexpected reaction to something, camera does not have time for the participants, through which participants talk about these events on the interview, or there is a “dirty” shooting when the camera shakes, or the participants attack the crew, or during shooting, force majeure situations occur (“chavs” attack, police visit, etc.) [6; 7]. If the dominant factor in reality shows was beauty, this material would hardly be broadcast on the air.

Dynamic musical editing is something that falls under the “author’s vision of social reality”.

We reviewed the definitions of journalism by Ukrainian scientists, now we want to consider foreign determinations. The world leading dictionaries give such definitions of the phenomenon of journalism: “the collection and editing of news for presentation through the media” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) [8], “the activity or profession of writing for newspapers, magazines, or news websites or preparing news to be broadcast” (Oxford Dictionaries) [9], “the job of collecting news and writing about it for newspapers, magazines, television, or radio” (Collins Dictionary). [10] All definitions are similar to I. Mykhailyn’s and Y. Bidzilia’s determinants, but they are different because of “news” element.

“News” is an “information or reports about recent events [...] a broadcast or published report of news”. [11] This is an argument which sceptics use as a proof that reality show has nothing to do with journalism, that the news shows independently existing events and celebrities, which is not applied for reality shows (for example, events exist only in order to be televised). We agree with this fact, this is the feature that distinguishes reality shows from news, but the principles of journalistic work with content and information are the same both for the news and for the reality show. In addition, if previously the news actually were a selection of facts, now they have transformed into a new form.

Another argument against reality shows is that their main function is to entertain, which is not valid for journalism. Returning to the theme of convergence, there are almost no “old news” now, it is a new phenomenon that scientists call infotainment: “nearly everyone believes that the news today is substantially different than it was even a decade or two ago [...] Market-centred journalism is one description of the tendency, “infotainment” is another”. [12] As an example, we want to remind coverage of presidential election (USA, 2016) by leading American TV channels – what’s not dramatic entertaining content?

Other reason why scholars are sceptical about considering the reality show as a kind of journalism is that reality shows aim is to gain a large number of views. As well as news, commercialization is a general trend in world television that extends to all types of television products, and not just on reality shows: “News has always mixed the serious and the entertaining. The tension between journalism and commercialism goes back long before television, but it is felt with special intensity in television news today”. [13]

We agree that journalism is not just about entertainment or infotainment, but that’s the reason why scientists divide it into different types: informational, analytical, and entertainment. All

of them perform their functions, which we want to consider and examine.

Author of the study “Introduction to Journalism. Investigation of the “fourth state” in all its manifestations” (1961) F. Bond counted the following four functions of journalism:

- to inform;
- to interpret the events;
- to manage the reader;
- to entertain the public.

D. McQuail (“Introduction to the theory of mass communication”, 1987) summarized the views of his predecessors – H. Lasswell and C. W. Mills – and proposed the following scheme of journalistic functions:

- to inform;
- to correlate;
- to ensure heredity;
- to entertain;
- to mobilize. [2]

A. Moskalenko in the textbook “Theory of Journalism” (1998) identified five functions of the press:

- to organize;
- to educate;
- to propagandize;
- to counter-propagandize;
- sociological. [14]

It is also worth referring to the analysis of the broadcasting functions outlined by O. Goyan, V. Lizanchuk, as well as the functional features of television, identified by V. Goian, which distinguish the most important for the modern TV and radio broadcasting function: informational, educational, and entertaining. [15, 80]

Thus, the repeated functions of journalism in different scholars are as follows:

- to inform;
- to entertain;
- to socialize;
- to educate;
- to advertise.

In our previous study, “Functions of the reality show”, we found that reality show programs perform the following functions:

- to entertain;
- to recreate;
- to inform;
- to educate / to bring up;
- social integration;
- public control.

Apparently, the reality show features and functions duplicate journalistic ones such as informing, entertaining and social integration. The educational function of the reality show has all the characteristics of the educational function of journalism (a concrete example – the reality show “From Ladette to Lady”). The advertising function in the reality show is available in two forms: native – the advancement of interesting places and activities that the participants in the reality show attend; product placement – a sponsorship of a specific product in the form of a visual or verbal display in a specially shot scene.

Thus, by definition of the term journalism and its functions, one can conclude that reality shows are a product of journalistic activity. It also complements this thesis the fact that the process of creating a reality show is based not only on the cinematic principles of shooting, but also on the use of journalistic genres and methods for obtaining information, namely, a report, an interview, a commentary and a portrait essay (see work “Journalistic genres in reality shows”).

Let's consider legal documents related to journalism. In Ukraine the Law "On State Support to Mass Media and Social Protection of Journalists" (edited from 02/20/2018) is in force.

There, firstly, is the definition of a journalist (Article 1) as a “creative worker who professionally collects, receives, creates and engages in the preparation of information for the media, perform editorial and official duties in the media (in state or on a freelance basis) according to the professional titles of the posts (work) of the journalist, which are indicated in the state classifier of professions of Ukraine”. [16] Reality shows are either produced by TV channels or production studios commissioned by TV channels. Employees who are responsible for the content of the reality show are journalists, editors or chief editors. They directly deal with all aspects of journalistic activities that are described in this law.

Article 12 also describes the characteristics and conditions of journalistic activity: “the creative nature, intensity of intellectual work [...] socially influential effects of the value of work, high social responsibility for its work and its results [...] a consistently significant moral and psychological load [...] systematic staying on business trips and travelling [...] the need to make a creative search for new information and its sources, the existence of objective and subjective difficulties and obstacles in obtaining information [...] manifestations of moral and psychological pressure, threats and direct threatening actions to the journalist in connection with the performance of their official duties”. [16]

The creation of a reality show is an originating process, for the creation of this product a constant permanent generation of new and fresh ideas is required. Given that this content is shown on the leading TV channels at prime time, there are various services involved in monitoring this content (for example, the National Expert Commission for the Protection of Public Morality, the National Council of Ukraine for Television and Radio Broadcasting, etc.), the requirements for reality shows are extremely high. In all descriptions of the search for specialists in the reality show, a specialist should be stress-resistant and prepared for excessive work schedules. Regarding staying on business trips and travelling, a large number of reality shows depict their episodes abroad (“Love for survival”, “Bachelor”, “From Ladette to Lady”, etc.). Reality show workers are looking for heroes and information about them, information about some unknown occupations, hobbies or traditions by themselves. [17] Regarding the manifestations of pressure in relation to professional activity, it is constantly tracked even in the actual content of reality shows, for example, the program “Inspector” when people were trying to prevent the filming group from conducting their audits. [18]

Thus, from a scientific point of view, and from a legal point of view, the process of creating a reality show is a kind of journalistic activity itself.

Now we need to determine the place of reality shows in the mass communication system, based on the obtained results. Let's start with the analysis of the phenomenon of reality shows.

We categorized a reality show based on its main characteristics: shooting people, not actors; emphasis on behaviour and emotions of people; no script; documentary style of shooting.

Therefore, we have got the following classification: according to the scenario (scripted and not scripted), by technical features (studio, outgoing, mixed, show with using content of the audience), by the development of history (sequential / linear – we want to note that it is more expedient to use the term **horizontal**, this is already a constant statement from specialists working in the field of reality shows, and parallel / cyclic – it is more expedient to use the term **vertical**), by the

format feature (game shows, competitions, makeover, professions, social control, experiment, docusoap), by the thematic direction (romantic, cooking, dancing, etc.).

However, with our further analysis of these products and features of a reality show, according to these characteristics, such television programs, as a demonstration of sports events or musical concerts, can also be considered a reality show. In addition, if you compare the reality show “From Ladette to Lady” or “Ukraine’s Next Top Model” and studio game shows “Super Intuition”, these are too different projects. They differ in structural elements (in the studio shows there is no such a formatting feature as commenting by the participants of all events) and in the nature of the captured scenes. Although, there are such gaming studio shows as “Love at a first glance”, why this is not a reality show? In addition, we isolated a talk show in an independent phenomenon, it is based on its laws and algorithms, but according to the principles of shooting it is the same studio project, just not gaming. How to dissolve all these concepts in order to clearly understand what the reality show is?

The answer we found in the scientific literature. In circulation there are two terms – “reality show” and “reality television”. They are used synonymously, but we propose to divide these concepts.

*Reality show* is a format of a television product, which is to observe the actions and emotions of real people in everyday life or in specially modelled situations, characterized by the performance of unusual for the participants actions and constant commenting on everything that happens to them. This category includes show competitions, makeovers, dating, talent shows and more.

*Studio and gaming projects* are a separate category that includes the following TV product formats: talk shows, late night shows, and game shows.

*Reality TV* is a kind of television program that demonstrates non-played situations in which real people, whether ordinary citizens or politicians and celebrities, find themselves. This means that the situation can be structured, planned and known in advance, but how exactly people will speak or formulate their thoughts – these will be happening “in life”. In order to understand specifically, in an example we will present the broadcast of the final selection of “Eurovision-2018” in Ukraine.

It is clear that this event is a structured script, but artists and experts do not play this process, but they are living it: it is unknown how actors will perform, what the expert says, how artists will react to criticism is unknown as well. A striking illustration of this is the conflict between A. Danylko and the manager of the singer TAYANNA [19], when the criticism of the expert and the request to re-enable minus of the singer, the manager approached the scene and began screaming at the expert, distracting from work, and eventually A. Danylko could not stand up and spooked up. Thus, the conditions are virtually artificial, the zone of interaction is limited (the stage and place for the jury), but they live this situation in real life.

Festivals, awards ceremony, sports events – all this falls into a separate category of broadcasting events.

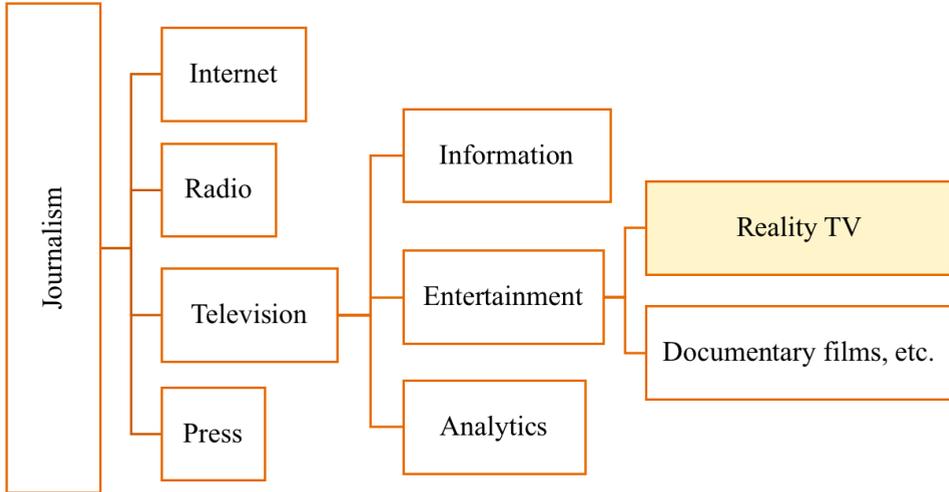
Thereby, structuring and classifying all these concepts can be as follows: reality TV is a meta-category that includes studio and gaming projects, reality shows and event broadcasts.

#### 4. Conclusions

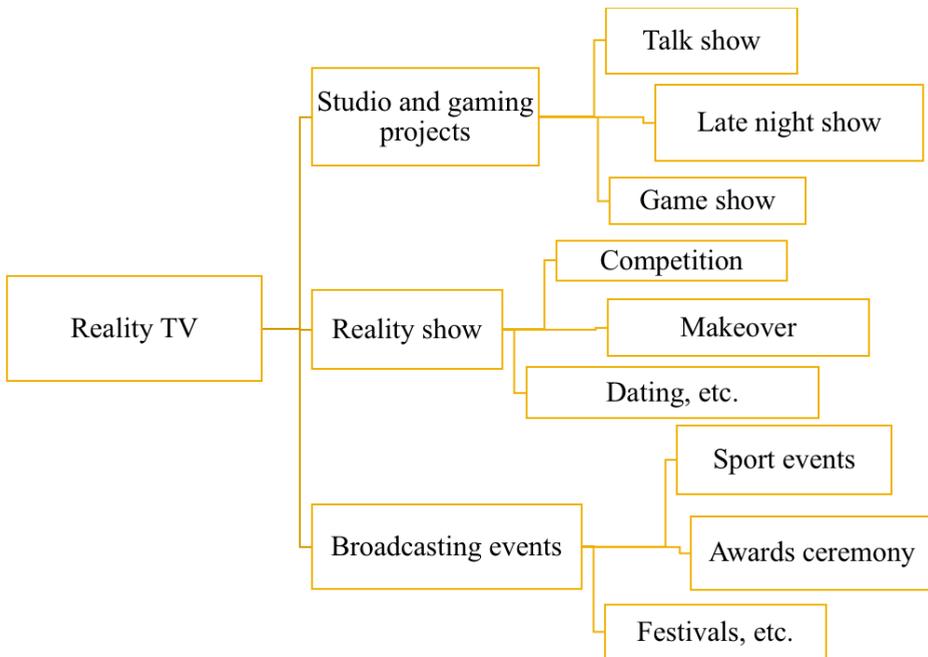
We found the position and number of reality shows’ content in the Ukrainian media. Considering the reality show from terminological, legal, and genre-functional point of view, the concepts of “reality show” and “reality television” are determined. Given that the main function of

reality television is to entertain, we identified the following relationship of reality television (and as a consequence, reality shows) and mass communication systems (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2):

**Fig. 1**



**Fig. 2**



Besides, based on facts that we discovered concerning the phenomenon of reality shows and reality television, we proposed a new classification of reality shows.

Reality shows:

- *By format feature*: makeover, dating, competitions, experiment, social control, docusoap;
- *By the development of history*: horizontal (one story plot from episode to episode) and vertical (each episode has its own autonomous history);
- *By script*: scripted and not scripted.

We suggest categorizing by technical features (studio, outgoing, mixed, show using content of the audience) and by the thematic direction (romantic, culinary, historical, dance, etc.) as secondary (not basic) in the analysis of reality show.

Also, the fact that the reality show is a product of journalistic activity requires a number of new scientific studies that will examine the mechanisms for creating a reality show, their functioning algorithms, rules and principles for the submission of information.

In addition, the results obtained after studying the functional specificities of the reality show allow us to consider this phenomenon at a different angle, since reality shows do not only entertaining, but also have a number of other functions, such as informing, recreational, educational, social integration and public control, which directly affect the formation of society and its public opinion. Accordingly, we have discovered the potential of using reality shows in the media.

And it would be desirable to note separately: it is not necessary to demonize the phenomenon of reality shows, because it is only a tool of mass communication. How to use it – for good or for evil – is a personal choice of every person or every channel.

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