



TELEVISION GENRES AND THEIR ROLE IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION

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Abstract

This article examines the role of television genres in shaping public opinion. It explores the characteristics of informative, analytic, and publicistic genres, highlighting how they influence audience perception through rhetorical strategies and communicative techniques. The study analyzes news broadcasts, talk shows, and other TV formats to demonstrate the mechanisms of persuasion and their socio-cultural impact.

Keywords: Television, genres, public opinion, informative programs, analytic programs, publicistic genres, media influence.

Introduction

Television remains one of the most powerful mediums influencing how the public perceives events and issues in society. Media research has long shown that what audiences see on TV **impacts their beliefs, values, and attitudes** in everyday life¹. In particular, different **television genres** – ranging from straight news broadcasts to opinionated talk shows – each play distinct roles in shaping public opinion. In the scholarly tradition of journalism studies (especially in Uzbekistan and the post-Soviet context), television and journalistic content are often categorized into three basic genre groups: **informative, analytical, and publicistic**.

For example, Uzbek scholar I. *Toshaliyev* classifies media genres into “*information genres, analytical genres and visual (artistic-publicistic) genres*”². Likewise, russian media theorist L.E. *Kroichik* observes that journalistic texts tend to serve

¹ Lindemann D. True story: what reality tv says about us. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022. P. 1–12. URL: <https://us.macmillan.com/books/9780374539570/true-story> (murojaat: 27.08.2025).

² Ismatullayeva N. M. Journalistic style linguistic features of newspaper language // American Journal of Science on Integration and Human Development, 2024, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 108.



one of three purposes: to **report** news or problems, to **explain and analyze** them in depth, or to **emotionally influence** the audience ³. These correspond broadly to the **informative, analytic, and publicistic** modes of television content.

Informative television genres focus on delivering news and factual content in a straightforward manner. This category includes **news bulletins, reports, live coverage, and interviews** that primarily aim to inform the public of events and developments. In Toshaliyev's classification, the informative group encompasses basic journalistic forms like the news *message, report, interview, and reportage* ⁴ – in other words, content delivered with an objective, concise style. The ideal of informative programs is to present information neutrally and promptly, without overt commentary. Classic examples of informative genre programs are nightly news broadcasts (e.g. BBC News at Ten, *Ozbekiston 24* news hour) or live news reports on channels like CNN. Such programs provide viewers with a baseline of facts, updates, and on-the-ground reporting that form the raw material of public knowledge.

Despite their straightforward approach, informative genres have a **profound effect on public opinion** through the processes of agenda-setting and framing. By selecting which stories lead the broadcast and how much time to allocate to each issue, news programs influence what audiences consider the most important topics of the day. As media theorists explain, the press and television news “*are not necessarily effective at telling people what to think, but are highly effective at telling people what to think about*” ⁵. In other words, by constantly reporting certain issues (economic crises, pandemics, elections, etc.) at the top of the news, television sets the public agenda and primes viewers to discuss those issues. For instance, extensive TV news coverage of inflation and unemployment can elevate those matters in public consciousness, so that people come to see the economy as the top national concern.

Informative television can shape opinions in more direct ways as well. Visual news media often leave a strong impression due to the combination of images and

³ Nasimova I. Publicistic genres in the age of modern technology: exposure or necessity? // JournalNX: A Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Journal, 2022, Vol. 8, No. 12, pp. 312–314.

⁴ Ismatullayeva N. M. Journalistic style linguistic features of newspaper language // American Journal of Science on Integration and Human Development, 2024, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 109.

⁵ Sahu B. K. Evaluating the Role of Media in Shaping Political Opinions & Political Preferences: A Statistical Critical Research Analysis // International Journal of Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIRMP), 2025, Vol. 13, Issue 2, pp. 1–16.



narrative. As G. Gerbner noted that **television news can serve as potent political propaganda** because it is visually vivid, reaches a mass audience, and carries an air of authority that can make its messages more persuasive than print media ⁶.

Even when newscasters strive for objectivity, the framing of a story – for example, using particular wording or visuals – can influence audience perceptions. A crime story accompanied by alarming footage and graphics may heighten viewers' sense of threat, whereas the same facts delivered calmly might not. Over time, repeated exposure to certain frames can cultivate enduring viewpoints; Gerbner's *cultivation theory* indeed proposes that **heavy long-term viewing of TV news gradually shapes viewers' perceptions of reality** (for example, heavy exposure to crime news may lead people to believe the world is more dangerous than it actually is)⁷. Thus, informative programs do not merely reflect public opinion – they actively **mold** it by determining which facts people know, which issues they deem salient, and what baseline interpretations are available.

It is worth noting that in many countries the influence of informative TV content is amplified by its broad reach. In regions where internet penetration is lower or print media are less popular, television news remains the primary information source for the majority. For example, recent studies in Central Asia found that in Uzbekistan about half of the population relies on television as their main source of domestic news, especially in rural areas⁸.

In such contexts, the government or dominant broadcasters wield significant power over public opinion through control of informative programming. State-run news can shape citizens' views by emphasizing successes of the authorities and downplaying alternative viewpoints. In **authoritarian and transitional regimes**, in fact, “*television is often used as a tool of legitimizing power and suppressing alternative points of view*”⁹.

⁶ Gerbner G. (as cited in Sahu B.K.) Growing up with television: The cultivation perspective // In: Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research. Eds. J. Bryant & D. Zillmann. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1994 – cited in Sahu B.K. Evaluating the Role of Media in Shaping Political Opinions & Political Preferences: A Statistical Critical Research Analysis. IJIRMP, 2025, Vol.13, Issue 2, pp. 1–16.

⁷ Boboeva M. Vliyanie televideniya na obshchestvennoe mnenie [The Influence of Television on Public Opinion] // Rossijsko-Tadzhikskij (Slavyanskij) Universitet News Portal. 2023. (In Russian). Available at: https://rtsu.tj/news/?ELEMENT_CODE=2904 (accessed 27.08.2025).

⁸ IREX vibrant information barometer 2023: uzbekistan. Washington, 2023. URL: <https://www.irex.org/files/vibrant-information-barometer-2023-uzbekistan.pdf> (murojaat: 27.08.2025).

⁹ Boboeva M. Vliyanie televideniya na obshchestvennoe mnenie [The Influence of Television on Public Opinion] // Rossijsko-Tadzhikskij (Slavyanskij) Universitet News Portal. 2023. (In Russian). Available at: https://rtsu.tj/news/?ELEMENT_CODE=2904 (accessed 27.08.2025).



By carefully curating the news – through what is reported and what is omitted – authorities can manage public perception. Viewers may receive an incomplete picture of events, which nonetheless forms the basis of their opinions and knowledge. For this reason, media experts stress the need for plurality and objectivity in informative genres; otherwise, news broadcasts risk becoming instruments of propaganda rather than public enlightenment.

Analytical television genres go beyond straight facts to provide **explanation, context, and evaluation** of issues. This category includes programs such as in-depth news magazines, investigative journalism exposés, political talk shows with expert panels, debates, and documentary analysis. Unlike brief news reports, analytical programs examine the “why” and “how” behind events, often featuring commentary by journalists or guests.

Prototypical examples include weekly investigative programs like CBS’s *60 Minutes* in the U.S. or the BBC’s *Panorama*, which provide deep dives into current affairs. These shows help viewers make sense of complex issues by offering interpretations, differing opinions, and often a narrative that connects facts into a coherent story.

Even more than straight news, analytical programs engage in **framing**: they highlight certain aspects of an issue and downplay others, thereby guiding audience interpretation. An investigative report that consistently focuses on government failures can foster skepticism and demand for reform in the audience, whereas one that emphasizes successes can build public confidence. Thus, through selection of angles, tone, and the voices given a platform, analytic shows actively shape opinions.

Televised debates and talk shows illustrate how format and presentation can sway viewers. On the positive side, a balanced talk show that includes multiple perspectives can broaden viewers’ understanding and expose them to arguments from different sides of an issue, ideally leading to a more informed public.

On the negative side, if a talk show is one-sided or the debate is stage-managed, it can create a misleading illusion of consensus. For example, on a political talk show where all commentators fervently support a government policy, viewers with reservations might feel their concerns are isolated or illegitimate, and thus remain silent. Over time, this effect molds public opinion by crowding out contrary attitudes and reinforcing the dominant narrative.



It is important to note that analytic genres straddle the line between information and persuasion. They maintain a factual basis but also openly engage in *evaluation*. The credibility of these programs can significantly affect their influence. When audiences trust the expertise of hosts or commentators, they are more likely to adopt the interpretations offered.

For instance, a respected investigative journalist's conclusions on a corruption case may shift public outrage or demands for accountability. Conversely, if an analytical show is perceived as biased, its influence may be confined to viewers who already share that bias (a phenomenon seen in highly partisan talk shows).

Analytical television genres serve as the forum of **public debate and interpretation**. Through interviews, debates, documentaries, and talk shows, television doesn't just tell us what happened – it tells us *what it means*. By framing issues and elevating certain interpretations, these programs heavily influence political attitudes and public discourse. Their impact can be constructive (educating viewers, encouraging critical thinking) or destructive (spreading one-sided narratives, fueling polarization), underscoring the responsibility on producers and hosts to strive for balance and insight.

“Publicistic” genres (a term used in Uzbek and Russian scholarship) refer to media content that is explicitly **opinion-based, persuasive, and often emotionally charged**. This category includes formats where the journalist or presenter takes a **subjective, argumentative stance**, for example, editorial commentaries, political monologues, advocacy documentaries, televised essays, or satirical programs that critique social issues.

Publicistic programs typically blend facts with interpretation and artistic or rhetorical techniques to **influence the audience's attitudes** on an issue. They correspond to what is elsewhere called **opinion journalism** or advocacy media. Classic examples might range from a prime-time editorial segment on a news network (e.g. an anchor's opinion monologue) to entire shows devoted to commentary – such as *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* (which mixes satire and advocacy on public issues) or, in a different vein, partisan talk shows like those hosted by pundits on Fox News or MSNBC in the U.S., which overtly push a particular political viewpoint.

Publicistic content has a long tradition in journalism, often overlapping with literary techniques – for instance, the **essay, pamphlet, or feuilleton** have been



considered artistic-publicistic genres in print media. On television, while less common than straight news or talk shows, the publicistic approach appears in certain **author-driven programs** where the goal is not just to inform or analyze, but to *move* the audience's emotions or convictions. A hallmark of publicistic TV is the use of persuasive rhetoric, dramatic storytelling, or emotional appeals. The underlying intent is usually to **advocate** for a perspective or to shape societal norms and opinions proactively. As one Uzbek scholar explains, all such publicistic texts share a common aim: they are *"intended for the public, aimed at influencing the political and social consciousness of the people"* ¹⁰. In other words, influencing public opinion is an overt goal – be it to inspire a certain civic behavior, to criticize wrongdoing and rally public support for reform, or even to propagandize on behalf of those in power.

One of the clearest manifestations of the publicistic genre on TV is the **editorial commentary** program. For example, many news networks feature segments where a senior journalist or the channel itself delivers a commentary on current events (sometimes called an "op-ed on air"). Unlike a balanced report, here the language will be more charged and evaluative – framing an event as "alarming", "promising", "a disgrace", etc., in order to sway audience sentiment.

Another example is the **political propaganda talk show**. On Russian state television, shows like *"Vecher/Vladimir Solovyov"* (*Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*) function as publicistic platforms wherein the host and panel aggressively promote the Kremlin's narrative on domestic and international issues.

These programs use emotional appeals – patriotic rhetoric, fear of external enemies, etc. – to consolidate public opinion in a desired direction. While labeled as talk shows, their content is largely one-sided advocacy, making them effectively publicistic. Viewers of such shows are presented with a strong interpretive framework and are encouraged to feel a certain way (pride, anger, fear, approval) about the topic. In extreme cases, when only one narrative dominates the airwaves, people may internalize that narrative as the "common sense" view, even if it's artificially orchestrated – a dynamic that reinforces itself by marginalizing dissent. It should be noted that **publicistic television need not always be political**; it can also address social and cultural issues, attempting to mold public opinion on

¹⁰ Khalilova M. Y. About the peculiarities of the methodological features of the Uzbek publicist microtexts. *ACADEMICIA: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*. Vol. 11, Issue 12, December 2021. P. 652.



matters like morality, culture, or lifestyle. For instance, a TV documentary crusading for environmental conservation or a televised town-hall advocating for women's rights are publicistic in that they explicitly promote certain values and try to galvanize viewers.

Even some reality TV programs can carry a publicistic undertone: for example, a reality show highlighting the struggles of disadvantaged communities might aim to elicit empathy and change attitudes about social welfare. More commonly, entertainment TV (sitcoms, dramas, reality competitions) is not categorized as publicistic. Television series and reality shows project ideas of the “successful person”, “ideal family”, or notions of justice and citizenship, which in aggregate can influence viewers' social values.

For example, the widespread portrayal of certain family structures as ideal in TV dramas can influence public opinion about family life; reality competitions emphasizing cut-throat individualism might reinforce values of competitiveness in the culture. These effects are more diffuse and long-term, but they form part of how television as a whole environment shapes public consciousness.

Because publicistic and opinion genres operate openly in the realm of persuasion, they carry great responsibility. When done ethically, they can serve as a **force for social progress** – exposing wrongs, championing the voiceless, and mobilizing public support for positive change. Many a public opinion shift has been catalyzed by brave journalistic commentary or documentary storytelling (for example, TV campaigns that shifted public opinion in favor of civil rights or against smoking).

On the other hand, these genres can be **tools of manipulation** if used unscrupulously. History and contemporary politics provide sobering examples of television propaganda fueling nationalism, spreading disinformation, or demonizing groups – with publicistic programs at the forefront of that effort. The persuasive power of TV – with its combination of visuals, sound, and narrative authority – means that a skillful propagandist on screen can have an outsized impact on public opinion, for good or ill.

Television's diverse genres – informative, analytical, and publicistic – each contribute in a unique way to the shaping of public opinion. **Informative programs** supply the facts and set the agenda of public discussion; they establish *what* people think about, and their credibility can instill baseline trust (or mistrust) in shared information.



Analytical programs interpret those facts, offering frames and context; they help people form opinions by telling them *how* to think about issues, though this power can be used to enlighten or to bias. **Publicistic programs** explicitly push viewpoints and aim at persuasion; they tap into emotions and values, attempting to tell people *what to think* (or feel) about societal matters, whether through earnest advocacy or manipulative propaganda.

In practice, many television shows blend elements of all three genres – for example, a news magazine may present facts (informative) but also include reporter commentary (analytic) and a concluding editorial stance (publicistic). Thus, rather than rigid silos, these genres work together on the spectrum of media influence.

What remains clear is that **television as a whole retains a formidable ability to shape mass consciousness**. This puts an onus on broadcasters to uphold ethics and on viewers to approach television critically. Media scholars across the world emphasize the importance of **media literacy and critical thinking** in audiences.

An informed, skeptical viewer is better equipped to recognize the difference between straightforward news and slanted commentary, or between genuine analysis and emotive manipulation. Encouragingly, initiatives in many countries focus on teaching citizens to consume media responsibly – to check facts, be aware of biases, and seek multiple perspectives. In sum, television’s genres each shape public opinion in different ways, but the ultimate impact of TV on society hinges on both the integrity of its content creators and the mindfulness of its consumers.

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