

# Scientists explain reality show popularity

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University of South Carolina researchers believe they have discovered why television reality shows have become very popular.

Marketing Professors Randall Rose and Stacy Wood believe viewers desire to blend fact with fantasy in order to create a complexly constructed experience they call "hyperauthenticity."

Rose and Wood say the blending of real and fantasy is the difference between simply watching "real" programming, such as CSPAN, and engaging and interacting with a program such as "Survivor."

"We argue consumers blend fantastic elements of programming with indexical elements connected to their lived experiences to create a form of self-referential hyperauthenticity," explain Rose and Wood. "In contrast to news programs, however, the majority of reality fare depicts common people engaging in uncommon (wilderness survival) and common (home-redecorating) tasks, giving viewers the chance to compare and contrast their own lives with those of the show's 'protagonist.'"

The say the shows' popularity persists because the viewing experience is inherently different than that of other television programs.

The research appears in the September issue of the Journal of Consumer Research.

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