

Behind the Scenes: The Magic and Manipulation of La Casa De Los Famosos México

Claudia Torres González

Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, Villas Universidad; Biológicas 109, Zacatecas, México

Arturo Hiram Rosales Torres

Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, Villas Universidad; Biológicas 109, Zacatecas, México

Laura Sánchez Solorio

Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, Pirita 24, Mina azul, Guadalupe, Zacatecas, México

Flor Nazareth Rodríguez Ávila

Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, Calle sendero arroyo molino no. 302, Paseos del Valle, Zacatecas, México

Minerva Esparza Jaquez

Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, San santiago 42, Lomas del convento Guadalupe Zacatecas, México

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Abstract

Reality television has become a privileged site for observing how entertainment, celebrity culture, digital participation, and public judgment converge in contemporary Mexican media. Objective: This study analyzes *La Casa de los Famosos México* as a mediated cultural text, focusing on the problem of how production design, participant interaction, audience participation, and ethical tensions construct social meaning. Method: A qualitative hermeneutic content analysis was conducted through purposive documentary sampling of publicly available program materials, official production descriptions, nomination and voting mechanisms, selected broadcast and digital scenes, and public social media discourse surrounding the Mexican version of the program. The analysis followed the hermeneutic circle, moving between scenes, recurring narrative patterns, and the wider social context. Results: Five interpretive findings were identified: confinement and surveillance operate as the central narrative device; conflict and alliances organize audience attention; celebrity vulnerability reshapes public identity; gendered stereotypes and power relations influence interpretation; and voting and social media transform viewers into active co-producers of the spectacle. Conclusion: *La Casa de los Famosos México* functions not only as entertainment but also as a space where mediated reality is negotiated through production framing, public participation, and cultural interpretation. The study contributes a structured hermeneutic reading of Mexican reality television and highlights the need for critical media literacy regarding authenticity, manipulation, and audience responsibility.

Keywords: La Casa de los Famosos México, hermeneutics, reality television, audience participation, media manipulation, gender representation, celebrity culture, social media.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Reality television occupies an important place in contemporary media because it combines entertainment, surveillance, emotional exposure, competition, and public participation. Hill (2005) explains that reality television depends on audience judgment and on the promise that viewers are watching behavior that is less scripted than conventional fiction. This promise of authenticity is one of the genre's strongest attractions. Yet the attraction is also a problem: reality television is never a transparent record of life. It is produced through casting, camera placement, selective editing, confession-room sequences, promotional framing, and audience voting. For this reason, it must be analyzed not only as entertainment but also as a cultural text through which meanings are constructed, circulated, disputed, and consumed.

The relevance of this genre has increased with the rise of digital media. Earlier television formats primarily organized attention around scheduled broadcasts, while contemporary formats circulate through streaming platforms, social networks, memes, short clips, hashtags, fan pages, and voting campaigns. Livingstone (2004) argues that interactive media conditions force scholars to reconsider the role of audiences. Reality television illustrates this transformation clearly. Viewers do not merely observe contestants; they compare, interpret, defend, accuse, vote, produce memes, organize support, and create their own explanations of what the program means. *La Casa de los Famosos México* is especially useful for analyzing this transformation because it combines the surveillance structure associated with Big Brother with the Mexican media economy of celebrity culture. In the Mexican version, public personalities live together in a controlled house under constant observation, facing weekly nomination and elimination processes. Televisa Univision described the 2023 Mexican version as a format in which fourteen personalities from entertainment, digital media, and sports would coexist under the rules of the reality show, with television broadcasts, digital extensions, voting, and streaming access (Televisa Univision, 2023a). This structure connects traditional television with platform-based participation and produces continuous public conversation around contestants and their behavior. The importance of the program is also visible in its reported audience reach. Televisa Univision (2023b) reported that the first-season finale reached twenty-one million viewers on national open television, accumulated 133 million votes throughout the season, and generated five billion social video views. These data come from the program's corporate source and should be read as institutional audience information rather than independent measurement. Even so, they demonstrate the public scale of the phenomenon and justify scholarly attention to the program. The show did not remain confined to the television screen; it became a voting event, a celebrity event, a social-media event, and a public interpretive arena.

1.2 Research Problem

The central problem addressed in this article is that *La Casa de los Famosos México* is frequently discussed as spectacle but less often examined as a structured cultural text. Public debate usually concentrates on which contestant is popular, which conflict is controversial, or which elimination was perceived as fair or unfair. These discussions are important because they reveal audience engagement, but they do not fully explain how the program organizes meaning through production techniques, celebrity vulnerability, stereotypes, social media participation, and public voting.

Reality television creates a specific difficulty for analysis because it presents itself as direct observation of real behavior. The viewer is encouraged to believe that the camera gives access to authentic reactions, intimate conversations, alliances, emotions, and conflicts. Nevertheless, the viewer sees a mediated version of events. The program's reality is organized by rules, cameras, editing, host commentary, online clips, and social-media circulation. Consequently, the problem is not whether the program is "real" or "false" in a simple sense. The problem is how mediated reality is constructed, circulated, and interpreted as socially meaningful.

This problem is important in the Mexican context because celebrity-based reality television participates in debates about morality, gender, loyalty, class, sexuality, public recognition, and the boundaries between private and public life. When contestants are interpreted as authentic, manipulative, loyal, arrogant, vulnerable, heroic, or villainous, those labels do not arise only from isolated behavior. They are produced through a combination of format, program design, audience expectations, social norms, and online debate. Understanding this process is necessary for a more critical reading of contemporary media culture.

1.3 Central and Secondary Research Questions

The central research question guiding this study is the following:

- How does *La Casa de los Famosos México* construct social and cultural meaning through production framing, participant interaction, audience participation, and ethical tensions?

Secondary questions:

- How are conflict, celebrity vulnerability, stereotypes, gender representations, and power relations framed within the program's narrative structure?
- How do voting, social media discussion, and fan communities contribute to the interpretation of the program and to the public construction of contestant identities?

1.4 General and Specific Objectives

The general objective: analyze *La Casa de los Famosos México* as a mediated cultural text to explain how its reality is constructed, interpreted, and ethically contested within contemporary Mexican media culture.

The specific objectives are:

- To identify the narrative and symbolic mechanisms through which the program frames conflict, celebrity vulnerability, stereotypes, gender roles, and power relations.
- To interpret the role of audience participation through voting, social media commentary, and fan communities in the construction of public meaning around the program.

1.5 Justification of the Study

This study is justified for three reasons. First, *La Casa de los Famosos México* has become a visible cultural phenomenon in Mexico. Its relevance cannot be explained only by audience ratings. The program generates discussions about authenticity, emotional behavior, gender, loyalty, visibility, and celebrity identity. These discussions continue social media before, during, and after broadcast moments. The program therefore offers a valuable case for understanding how contemporary audiences participate in the construction of mediated reality.

Second, the study is justified because reality television blurs the limits between entertainment and social judgment. Contestants voluntarily enter the program, but the conditions of isolation, surveillance, editing, and public voting expose them to intense scrutiny. The show invites viewers to judge conduct, personality, strategy, vulnerability, and morality. That process deserves academic attention because it reveals how media institutions and audiences share responsibility in shaping public reputations.

Third, the study contributes to media literacy. The program's popularity shows that audiences can be deeply engaged by a format that presents itself as spontaneous while depending on production decisions. Critical hermeneutic reading helps viewers recognize that mediated reality is not simply given; it is framed, interpreted, and circulated. The value of the article lies in moving beyond gossip or summary and toward an organized interpretation of how the spectacle works culturally.

1.6 Research Gap, Scope, and Contribution

The original version of this manuscript presented broad background on the history, cultural relevance, audience participation, and ethical concerns of *La Casa de los Famosos México*. However, a clearer research gap and a more focused academic contribution were necessary. The present version addresses that need by organizing the article around a specific gap: the lack of a structured hermeneutic content analysis that connects format, narrative mechanisms, audience participation, and ethical implications in the Mexican celebrity-reality context.

Existing studies on reality television have examined surveillance, authenticity, audience participation, and the construction of celebrity. Andrejevic (2004), for example, links reality television to the labor of being watched, while Corner (2002) analyzes Big Brother in relation to the transformation of factual television and the performance of the real. Ouellette and Hay (2008) interpret reality television as a cultural form connected to self-management, citizenship,

and social discipline. These studies provide valuable frameworks, but the Mexican adaptation of *La Casa de los Famosos* requires attention to its own cultural and media conditions, including its use of established celebrities, digital fan communities, and national public debate.

The scope of the article is interpretive rather than experimental. It does not attempt to measure statistically the effects of the program on audiences, nor does it diagnose the psychological state of contestants. Instead, it analyzes publicly available program materials, official production descriptions, visible voting mechanisms, and public audience discourse as cultural evidence. The contribution is to organize those materials into a focused interpretation that connects media theory with the Mexican reality-television case.

2. State of the Art

2.1 Reality Television, Surveillance, and the Performance of the Real

The first line of scholarship relevant to this study concerns the relationship between reality television and surveillance. Big Brother and its related formats are built on the promise that everyday behavior becomes meaningful when it is placed under continuous observation. Andrejevic (2004) argues that reality television normalizes being watched and turns surveillance into a form of participation and entertainment. This observation is central to *La Casa de los Famosos México* because the house operates as a controlled environment where privacy is suspended and where ordinary gestures can become public evidence of character.

Corner (2002) describes Big Brother as part of a transformation in factual television, where the “real” is not merely documented but performed. His argument is useful because *La Casa de los Famosos México* does not simply record celebrity coexistence. It organizes coexistence into a narrative form: there are weekly rituals, confessions, nominations, eliminations, tests, conflicts, and public votes. Reality appears through a structure that already anticipates drama. The program’s realism therefore depends on an organized performance of everyday life rather than on unmediated transparency.

Hill (2005) adds that audiences of reality television often evaluate the genre through the tension between authenticity and performance. Viewers may know that the program is edited and produced, yet they still search for moments that feel sincere. This tension helps explain why confession-room sequences, tears, jokes, silences, gestures, and unexpected alliances become important. Audiences do not require pure objectivity; they require enough signs of sincerity to keep interpreting contestants as real people.

2.2 Audience Reception and Participatory Culture

A second body of literature concerns audience interpretation. Hall’s (1980) encoding/decoding model remains useful because it demonstrates that audiences do not passively receive media messages. A program may encode a participant as sympathetic or problematic, but audiences may accept, negotiate, or reject that framing. In *La Casa de los Famosos México*, the same scene

may produce opposed readings: one group may interpret a contestant's emotional reaction as vulnerability, while another may interpret it as strategy. The program's meaning is therefore unstable and is shaped through reception.

Livingstone (2004) argues that changes in media technology require a reconsideration of what audiences do. Digital environments intensify this issue because viewers are not limited to watching at home. They comment, post, vote, remix, and circulate media fragments. Jenkins (2006) describes this environment as convergence culture, in which audiences participate in the movement of media across platforms. *La Casa de los Famosos México* fits this description because television, streaming, social media, fan activity, and voting operate together as part of the same phenomenon.

Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007) show that viewers of reality television are motivated not only by entertainment but also by habit, relaxation, social interaction, and the appeal of apparently real behavior. Their findings help explain why audience members continue to follow the program beyond individual episodes. Viewers use the program as a topic for social connection. The show becomes a shared language through which people discuss trust, conflict, humor, manipulation, and personal authenticity.

2.3 Celebrity Culture and the Public-Private Boundary

The third relevant line of scholarship concerns celebrity culture. Reality television changes the relationship between public image and private conduct because it places known figures in settings designed to reduce control over self-presentation. Celebrities are accustomed to publicity, but a reality house changes the terms of publicity. The participant cannot rely only on interviews, promotional events, scripted roles, or curated social media posts. Everyday conduct becomes material for public evaluation.

This condition modifies the boundary between public and private life. The program invites audiences to see the famous person as more ordinary, more vulnerable, or more contradictory than their established public image suggests. That invitation can humanize celebrities, but it can also intensify judgment. The participant's emotional life becomes a product. A joke, an argument, a gesture, or a moment of fatigue may be interpreted as proof of identity. The more visible the contestant becomes, the harder it is to separate personality from narrative role.

Van Dijck (2013) argues that platform culture organizes sociality through visibility, connectivity, and data-driven circulation. In the case of *La Casa de los Famosos México*, celebrity identity is not constructed only by the program. It is also constructed by clips, comments, algorithmic trends, fan pages, memes, and voting campaigns. The public-private boundary is therefore not simply crossed by television cameras; it is continuously reworked by digital circulation.

2.4 Hermeneutics as a Framework for Media Interpretation

Hermeneutics provides the theoretical foundation of the present study. Gadamer (2004) argues that understanding is not the mechanical extraction of a fixed meaning, but a dialogical process shaped by history, context, and the interpreter's horizon of expectations. This position is important for media analysis because audiences approach television with prior assumptions about gender, fame, morality, class, authenticity, and emotional behavior. When viewers interpret a contestant's action, they do not interpret only the visible gesture. They interpret that gesture through broader social and cultural frameworks.

Ricoeur (1976) adds a narrative dimension to interpretation. For Ricoeur, meaning unfolds through discourse, symbol, and narrative configuration. A reality program such as *La Casa de los Famosos México* can therefore be read as a narrative text in which participants become characters, conflicts become turning points, nominations become plot devices, and the finale becomes narrative closure. The program's meaning is not found in a single scene but in the way, scenes are connected by viewers, producers, and digital communities.

The state-of-the-art shows that reality television cannot be studied adequately from only one angle. It requires attention to surveillance, performance, celebrity, audience reception, platform circulation, and interpretation. The present study brings these perspectives together through a hermeneutic content analysis of the Mexican case.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

This study uses qualitative hermeneutic content analysis. The method is appropriate because the object of inquiry is not a set of numerical variables, but a mediated cultural text composed of dialogues, images, gestures, production rules, audience reactions, and social meanings. Content analysis identifies patterns within the material, while hermeneutics interprets those patterns in relation to the cultural horizon in which they become meaningful.

The research design followed the hermeneutic circle. Interpretation moved repeatedly between individual units of analysis, broader thematic categories, and the wider context of Mexican television and digital culture. The scene was not interpreted in isolation. Each scene was read in relation to recurring narrative patterns such as confinement, confession, conflict, public judgment, gendered expectation, voting, and celebrity self-presentation.

The design is exploratory and interpretive. It does not seek causal proof or statistical generalization. Its validity depends on conceptual coherence, transparent data sources, explicit analytical categories, and the connection between evidence and interpretation.

3.2 Data Sources and Sampling

The study used a purposive documentary corpus. The corpus was built from publicly available materials related to the Mexican version of the program. These materials included official

production descriptions, broadcast and digital program segments, visible nomination and voting procedures, public online commentary, and secondary literature on reality television, hermeneutics, audience reception, social media, and celebrity culture.

The data was not collected through private interviews, surveys, or confidential production documents. This decision reflects the ethical and methodological scope of the study. The analysis focuses on what is available to the public as part of the mediated text and its circulation. This includes official materials and publicly visible audience practices that form part of the program’s interpretive environment.

The sampling procedure was purposive rather than random. The purpose was not to represent every minute of the program but to select relevant materials that illuminated the research questions. Materials were selected when they showed one or more of the following elements: surveillance and confinement, emotional vulnerability, strategic alliance, interpersonal conflict, gendered representation, power negotiation, audience voting, fan interpretation, or ethical tension.

Table 1. Data sources, sampling focus, and analytical purpose

Data source	Sampling focus	Analytical purpose
Official descriptions	production Format, number of participants, voting system, broadcast structure, streaming availability, and institutional audience information	To establish the program’s design and the conditions under which contestants and audiences interact
Broadcast and program material	digital Selected scenes of coexistence, conflict, confession-room reflection, nomination, elimination, emotional exposure, and forms of vulnerability, and alliance formation	To identify narrative devices, character construction, and forms of mediated interaction
Public participation	audience Voting mechanisms, social-media discussion, memes, hashtags, fan support, criticism, and public interpretation visible on digital platforms	To interpret how viewers act as evaluators, interpreters, and co-producers of public meaning
Secondary literature	theoretical Hermeneutics, audience reception, reality television, surveillance, social media, celebrity culture, and media ethics	To contextualize findings within established media and cultural theory

3.3 Unit of Analysis and Analytical Categories

The unit of analysis was the thematic event. A thematic event was defined as a segment, interaction, rule, production device, or audience practice that made a key interpretive category visible. Examples include a nomination scene, a conflict between contestants, a confession-room

statement, a public voting campaign, a meme-based reinterpretation of a contestant, or an official communication about the program’s format. This unit of analysis is appropriate because the article seeks to understand meaning-making rather than count isolated expressions.

The analytical categories were developed deductively from theory and inductively from recurring patterns in the corpus. Deductively, hermeneutics, audience reception, and reality-television studies guided attention toward interpretation, narrative framing, performance, surveillance, and audience participation. Inductively, repeated attention was given to the forms of conflict, alliance, vulnerability, stereotype, gendered reading, public judgment, and ethical tension that appeared in the program’s circulation.

The categories are summarized below to make the analytical procedure transparent.

Table 2. Analytical categories used in the hermeneutic content analysis

Category	Operational focus	Interpretive question
Confinement and surveillance	Rules of isolation, constant recording, cameras, microphones, and the house as a controlled environment	How does the program make being watched appear natural, dramatic, and meaningful?
Conflict and alliances	Interpersonal tensions, rivalries, nominations, strategies, and emotional confrontations	loyalties, narrative and produce audience judgment?
Celebrity vulnerability	Moments in which contestants reveal fear, fatigue, insecurity, contradiction, intimacy, humor, or exposure	How does the show reshape the public image of celebrities?
Stereotypes and power relations	Gendered expectations, social hierarchy, emotional labels, and unequal forms of judgment	Which cultural assumptions are reproduced or challenged?
Audience production	co-Votes, hashtags, memes, fan communities, criticism, digital clips, and public debate	How do viewers participate in constructing the meaning of the program?

3.4 Analytical Procedure and Validity Criteria

The analysis was conducted in four stages. First, the format was reconstructed through official program descriptions, public information about voting and elimination, and the institutional presentation of the show. This step established the structural conditions of the text. Second, selected scenes and public interactions were read to identify recurring narrative and symbolic patterns. Third, the patterns were grouped into interpretive categories. Fourth, the categories were discussed in relation to hermeneutic theory, audience reception, reality-television scholarship, and ethical concerns.

To strengthen credibility, the analysis used triangulation of public materials: official descriptions, program scenes, social-media circulation, and academic literature. The study also used negative interpretation, meaning that it avoided treating the program as either purely authentic or purely manipulative. Instead, it interpreted reality television as a hybrid form in which real emotions and real interactions are organized by an artificial production environment. The study did not include personal data from private accounts, private messages, or confidential participant information. Public social media was considered only as a visible cultural space and not as a source for identifying individual users. This approach reduces ethical risk while still allowing analysis of audience participation as a social phenomenon.

4. Results

4.1 Finding 1: Confinement and Surveillance as the Narrative Center

The first finding is that confinement and surveillance function as the central narrative device of *La Casa de los Famosos México*. The house is not a neutral setting. It is a controlled environment that produces dependency, routine, fatigue, conflict, and emotional exposure. The absence of ordinary privacy changes the meaning of everyday behavior. Eating, sleeping, joking, disagreeing, crying, remaining silent, or forming alliances becomes part of a public narrative.

The program's surveillance structure creates a paradox. Contestants are known celebrities, yet they are presented as if audiences were seeing them outside their polished media image. The viewer is invited to observe the "real" person behind the celebrity. However, this real person appears within a space carefully designed to produce tension. The authenticity of the program therefore emerges from an artificial environment. The contradiction is not a weakness of the format; it is the format's operating logic.

This finding supports Corner's (2002) claim that reality television performs the real. The house produces a version of reality that feels spontaneous because contestants react to pressure in unpredictable ways. At the same time, the conditions producing those reactions are highly organized. Confinement converts coexistence into a narrative machine.

4.2 Finding 2: Conflict and Alliances Organize Audience Attention

The second finding is that conflict and alliances organize audience attention. The program depends on weekly nomination and elimination rituals, but the emotional weight of those rituals comes from relationships inside the house. Alliances create loyalty, but they also generate suspicion. Rivalries provide dramatic clarity, but they can also oversimplify contestants into heroes, villains, victims, or strategists.

Conflict is not only an accidental effect of coexistence; it is a narrative resource. The audience follows the program by interpreting why a participant said something, whether a gesture was sincere, whether a vote was betrayal, whether an apology was authentic, or whether silence had strategic meaning. The program offers enough ambiguity to sustain interpretation. In this sense, conflict is not merely noise. It is the material through which viewers create moral narratives.

The analysis also found that alliances are interpreted as signs of character. A contestant who protects another may be read as loyal, while a contestant who changes position may be read as strategic or untrustworthy. These readings depend on audience expectations and on the narrative, framing made available by production. The same behavior can be defended or condemned depending on the interpretive community that discusses it.

4.3 Finding 3: Celebrity Vulnerability Reshapes Public Identity

The third finding is that celebrity vulnerability is one of the principal sources of meaning in the program. Contestants enter the house with public images already shaped by television, music, sports, digital media, or entertainment journalism. The program places those images under pressure. Viewers observe how contestants respond to fatigue, rejection, boredom, criticism, conflict, and emotional uncertainty. This exposure can confirm a public image, damage it, or unexpectedly transform it.

Vulnerability works because it produces a feeling of proximity. A celebrity who cries, laughs without calculation, admits fear, or shows insecurity may become more accessible to viewers. The famous person becomes ordinary without ceasing to be famous. This double movement is central to celebrity reality television. The program sells access to the human side of the public figure.

However, vulnerability also creates ethical tension. Emotional exposure may generate empathy, but it may also become a consumable spectacle. A contestant's sadness, anger, or confusion can be edited into content and circulated as entertainment. The program therefore humanizes and exploits at the same time. This ambivalence is one of the most important interpretive findings of the study.

4.4 Finding 4: Gendered Stereotypes and Power Relations Shape Interpretation

The fourth finding is that gendered stereotypes and power relations shape audience interpretation. The house functions as a small social space where broader cultural assumptions are reproduced and contested. Participants are evaluated not only by what they do but also by what audiences expect from men, women, and public figures. Emotional expression, leadership, anger, seduction, vulnerability, and strategy may receive different interpretations depending on gender.

Women televisions are often judged through contradictory expectations. If they are emotionally expressive, they may be labeled unstable or manipulative; if they are reserved, they may be labeled cold or strategic. Men may also be judged through gendered expectations that reward dominance, humor, emotional control, or competitive behavior. These patterns do not appear only in the program. They are intensified by the interpretive activity of audiences and by the circulation of comments and memes.

Power relations also emerge through alliances, nomination practices, control of group narratives, and the ability to influence how others are perceived. Some contestants become informal leaders; others are placed in weaker symbolic positions. The program makes these hierarchies visible and transforms them into entertainment. At the same time, audience interpretation can challenge those hierarchies by supporting contestants whose production or other participants appear to marginalize.

4.5 Finding 5: The Audience Becomes a Co-Producer of the Spectacle

The fifth finding is that the audience becomes a co-producer of the spectacle through voting, social media, fandom, criticism, and digital circulation. Viewers are not external to the program. Their votes determine eliminations, while their online interpretations shape public reputation. A contestant’s image can be transformed by fan edits, viral clips, memes, hashtags, or coordinated support campaigns.

Audience participation changes the temporality of the program. The show does not happen only during broadcast hours. It continues through online debate, repetition of clips, reinterpretation of scenes, and speculation about future events. This second life of the program can become more influential than the original scene because many viewers encounter the program through fragments rather than through full episodes.

The audience’s role is therefore interpretive and performative. Viewers interpret the program, but their interpretations also act upon the program. They influence votes, strengthen fandoms, stigmatize contestants, and create public narratives. This result supports Jenkins’s (2006) idea that audiences participate in the circulation and meaning of media content.

Table 3. Summary of findings in relation to the research questions

Research question	Main finding	Interpretive implication
Central question	Meaning is constructed through the interaction of participant conduct, framing, voting, and interpretation.	The program should be read as a mediated cultural text rather than as a simple record of spontaneous behavior.
Secondary question 1	Conflict, vulnerability, stereotypes, and power relations are organized as narrative resources.	Contestant identity is produced through both behavior and framing.
Secondary question 2	Voting and social media transform viewers into producers of the spectacle.	Audience interpretation has material and reputational consequences.

5. Discussion

5.1 Reading the Program as a Hermeneutic Text

The findings indicate that *La Casa de los Famosos México* can be understood as a hermeneutic text. Its meaning is not fixed by producers, contestants, or viewers alone. Meaning emerges through the encounter among the program's structure, the behavior of participants, the cultural assumptions of audiences, and the interpretive circulation produced by social media. This supports Gadamer's (2004) view that interpretation takes place through a fusion of horizons rather than through the discovery of a single final meaning.

The program also illustrates Ricoeur's (1976) emphasis on narrative. Contestants are interpreted as characters in an unfolding story. Conflicts operate as plot points. Nominations provide rhythm. Eliminations produce closure and suspense. The finale offers resolution, but digital memory continues to reinterpret the season after it ends. The reality of the program is therefore narrative: real people are arranged within a story-like structure.

This does not mean that emotions are fake. A more careful interpretation is needed. The emotions may be real, while the conditions that intensify and display them are produced. The program's power lies precisely in this mixture. Viewers respond to real gestures and real conflicts, but they receive them through a mediated frame that guides attention and judgment.

5.2 Authenticity, Manipulation, and the Viewer's Trust

One of the central tensions in the program is the relationship between authenticity and manipulation. Viewers know that reality television is edited, yet they continue to search for genuine moments. This is consistent with Hill's (2005) observation that reality television audiences often evaluate the genre by negotiating the boundary between performance and sincerity. The viewer does not need to believe that everything is natural. The viewer needs to believe that some moments reveal something true about contestants.

Manipulation should not be understood only as direct fabrication. In reality television, manipulation often occurs through emphasis, omission, repetition, sequencing, and emotional framing. A contestant may not be scripted, but the meaning of a contestant's behavior can be shaped by which scene is shown, when it is shown, what came before it, and how audiences are invited to discuss it. The program constructs interpretive paths without fully controlling reception.

This issue is especially important because audience trust is part of the product. The show must appear spontaneous enough to feel real and organized enough to remain entertaining. If it appears too scripted, viewers may reject it. If it appears too chaotic, it may lose narrative force. The program succeeds by maintaining tension between unpredictability and structure.

5.3 Mexican Popular Culture and the Public Judgment of Fame

The Mexican case adds cultural specificity to the broader reality-television format. Celebrity culture in Mexico is historically connected to television, telenovelas, comedy, music, sports, and entertainment journalism. *La Casa de los Famosos México* places these traditions inside a format of surveillance and public voting. This combination produces a strong emotional connection because viewers often approach contestants with previous memories, opinions, sympathies, and prejudices.

The program also shows how fame becomes unstable under continuous observation. A participant may enter with prestige and leave with criticism; another may enter with limited public respect and leave with stronger affection. Fame is no longer only a product of career achievement or media promotion. It becomes a negotiated outcome of public interpretation. Viewers decide whether a person is authentic, worthy of support, morally acceptable, or socially admirable.

This public judgment can create moments of cultural recognition, but it can also become punitive. Social media intensifies both processes. It allows audiences to support contestants and to create communities of identification, but it also facilitates ridicule, harassment, and simplified labels. For this reason, the program must be analyzed as part of a broader culture of visibility.

5.4 Ethical Implications

The ethical implications of the findings involve producers, platforms, contestants, and audiences. Producers and media institutions hold responsibility because they design the environment, select what is made visible, and benefit from emotional intensity. The program may generate empathy and representation, but it also transforms vulnerability into content. This creates a need for clear participant protection, psychological support, and responsible editing practices.

Platforms also matter because social-media circulation extends the program beyond its original broadcast. Clips may be removed from context, repeated indefinitely, and used to sustain public criticism. A moment of emotional weakness may become a meme. A conflict may become a simplified moral label. Because digital circulation is persistent and rapid, the consequences of exposure can outlast the program itself.

Audience responsibility is equally important. Viewers are not passive recipients. When they vote, post, comment, mock, defend, or accuse, they participate in the social life of the program. This participation can support contestants and create communities of identification. It can also intensify harassment and reputational damage. Critical media literacy is therefore necessary not only to understand production manipulation but also to understand the ethical consequences of public interpretation.

5.5 Contribution to Media and Cultural Studies

The contribution of this article is threefold. First, it provides a focused hermeneutic analysis of a specific Mexican celebrity-reality program rather than a broad descriptive overview. Second, it identifies explicit data sources, sampling logic, analytical procedures, findings, and discussion. Third, it connects the program's entertainment structure to larger questions of culture, ethics, audience participation, and mediated reality.

This contribution is relevant because Mexican reality television is often evaluated in terms of ratings, controversy, or celebrity gossip. Such evaluation is insufficient for understanding the program's cultural significance. *La Casa de los Famosos México* operates as a site where audiences negotiate social meanings regarding gender, loyalty, fame, authenticity, vulnerability, and moral judgment. The program's success cannot be explained only by its conflicts. It must also be understood through the interpretive work performed by audiences.

The article also contributes to critical media literacy. By showing how reality is constructed through format, editing, framing, and circulation, the study encourages viewers and researchers to question the apparent transparency of reality television. The point is not to dismiss the program as false but to understand the processes through which it becomes meaningful.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of the study is that it does not include interviews with contestants, producers, editors, or audience members. Such interviews could provide additional insight into intention, experience, and reception. The present analysis is limited to publicly available materials and cannot determine private motives with certainty.

A second limitation is that the analysis does not quantify social-media comments or measure audience sentiment statistically. Therefore, the findings should be understood as interpretive themes rather than numerical claims. The study identifies how meaning is constructed and circulated, but it does not calculate how many viewers hold each interpretation.

A third limitation is the focus on the Mexican case. This focus is appropriate for the research objective, but comparative studies with other Latin American or international versions could show how local cultural contexts change the interpretation of similar reality-television formats.

6. Conclusion

This study analyzed *La Casa de los Famosos México* through qualitative hermeneutic content analysis. The central problem was the need to understand the program not only as spectacle but as a mediated cultural text. The results indicate that the program constructs meaning through five interrelated mechanisms: confinement and surveillance, conflict and alliances, celebrity vulnerability, gendered stereotypes and power relations, and audience co-production through

voting and social media. These mechanisms demonstrate that the program is a space in which public identity, morality, fame, and social belonging are negotiated.

The general objective was fulfilled by explaining how the program's reality is constructed and interpreted within contemporary Mexican media culture. The first specific objective was addressed through the identification of narrative and symbolic mechanisms that frame conflict, vulnerability, stereotypes, gender roles, and power relations. The second specific objective was addressed through the interpretation of audience participation as a form of co-production that influences public meaning and contestant identity.

The analysis also highlights important ethical concerns. Reality television can humanize public figures and create spaces of identification, but it can also convert emotional vulnerability into spectacle and expose contestants to prolonged public judgment. For this reason, media producers, platforms, and audiences should approach these formats with greater awareness of how visibility, editing, voting, and social-media circulation shape reputations and social meanings.

One recommendation for future research is to conduct a systematic empirical audience study, using interviews or a defined sample of social-media comments, to examine how different demographic groups interpret the same program events and how those interpretations influence voting, fandom, and public judgment.

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