

Case #3

Near the end of its fall season, a top executive from the popular reality television competition, *Idol Starz*, appeared on the *Today Show* and revealed that the program's contestants either advanced or were cut based on producers' decisions rather than being selected through the program's public text-messaging voting system. The executive went on to state that the show's winners and losers were selected by producers on a round-by-round basis in the hopes that certain "controversial" or "questionable" choices would positively influence ratings, increase fervor for underdog candidates, and create a more developed fan-base which would return to view the show during both current and future seasons.

Given the show's popularity and viewers' commitment to their favorite contestants, the revelation led to a large public outcry condemning the show for dishonesty and false advertising. Many claimed to have been cheated and explained that the show had a responsibility to adhere to the public's decisions about which candidates they preferred. Given special attention during this debate was the show's slogan: "You vote. You decide. Who should be the next Idol Star?"

During ensuing interviews, the show's producers explained that their decisions were based on the fact that they were in the entertainment business and that certain unpredictable events helped to keep the audience invested in the show and provided increased entertainment value. They also argued that, more often than not, their decisions about who should advance or win were in line with the public's desires. When questioned about the program's slogan, one producer was quoted as saying, "Look at it carefully. There is a difference between telling someone to vote and decide who *should* be the next Idol Star and telling them that their votes *will* decide the next Idol Star."