





Television Coverage of WYD23 in Portugal: Reading a Media Event in the 21st Century

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explain the impact of World Youth Day (WYD) coverage on Portuguese television programming and audiences from August 1 (the day Pope Francis arrived in Portugal) to August 6, 2023 (when the Pope departed). The analysis of television coverage, as well as the corresponding audiences of WYD, is contextualised within a renowned theoretical rationale in Communication Sciences, notably in mass communication studies: the theory of media events (Dayan & Katz, 2009[1992]). The research consists of mapping and performing an exploratory quantitative content and audience analysis of the programming aired on the three Portuguese free-to-air generalist channels (RTP1, SIC, and TVI) and the four cable news channels (RTP3, SIC Notícias, CNN Portugal, and CMTV), in a total of more than 285 hours of broadcast. To conduct this research, we requested data from companies that measure and analyze audiences in Portugal on all news programs dedicated to this event. Our analysis focused on the following variables: channel, time slot, duration, brief description, average audience, and audience share. This study aims to deepen our understanding of how large-scale media events influence television programming and coverage practices. By including both generalist and cable news channels, we ensure a comprehensive overview of all TV operators in Portugal. The conclusion drawn is that the coverage of WYD on Portuguese television resulted in notable alterations in the programming and audiences of both generalist and news channels, clearly illustrating the significance of media events as originally conceptualised. WYD prompted a radical change in the regular programming of the analysed channels, with the values of consensus and unity conveyed extensively. The pragmatic aspect of the media event scrutinised is thoroughly confirmed by the audience data, highlighting the widespread dissemination of its message.

Keywords: Television, audiences, programming, media event, world youth day (WYD)

Introduction

In the first week of August 2023, Portugal hosted World Youth Day (WYD), prompting significant adjustments to the programming schedules of national media outlets, especially television channels, which provided exceptional coverage of the event. This phenomenon contrasts with the prevailing trend of fragmentation, dispersion, and bipolarisation in contemporary communication processes. Instead, WYD emerges within the national television landscape as a counter-cyclical event, explainable within the theoretical framework of media events theory introduced in the 1990s by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992)].

This paper seeks to explain the impact of World Youth Day coverage on television programming and audiences from August 1 (the day Pope Francis arrived in Portugal for WYD) to August 6, 2023 (when the Pope departed Lisbon for Rome).

WYD is the biggest event in the Catholic calendar and has been organised since 1986, established by Pope John Paul II. It was this very Pontiff who, in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, characterised "the world of communications" as "the first Areopagus of the modern age"¹. This statement viewed the expansion of communications as an opportunity for the Catholic Church, as it could potentially foster "a more united world"², according to the Pope's perspective. Indeed, this encyclical letter serves as a cornerstone for understanding the rationale behind the Catholic Church's dedication to events like WYD, rooted in the principles outlined in the Second Vatican Council. The *Ad Gentes* Decree, issued during Vatican II, underscores the centrality of evangelisation to the Catholic Church's mission and encourages missionaries to engage in acculturation with the peoples they aim to convert and evangelise. Twenty-five years after the decree's promulgation, John Paul II acknowledged changes in the mission *ad gentes* ("to the nations"): he emphasised that the privileged places for evangelisation and mission should be the major urban centres, "where new customs and styles of living arise together with new forms of culture and communication, which then influence the wider population." Additionally, John Paul II highlighted the transformative power of communication as the foundation of the concept of the "global village," signifying the unification and transformation of humanity.

"The means of social communication have become so important as to be, for many, the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families and within society at large. In particular, the younger generation is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media. (...) Involvement in the mass media, however, is not meant merely to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel. There is a deeper reality involved here: since the very evangelisation of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the "new culture" created by modern communications".

¹ Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* dated December 7, 1990, available at https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pt/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html, accessed January 25, 2024.

² *Idem*

John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio

On another note, without disregarding this Encyclical, it is essential to acknowledge the significant emphasis placed on young people, as underscored by the Pope. He reminds us that young people constitute half of the world's population, and therefore, pastoral efforts must encompass and elevate cultural and social initiatives targeted at this audience. Here, the term "audience" is employed in its broadest sense.

WYD embodies a concerted effort that combines an acute awareness of the influence and significance of image and the strategic use of communication channels with the overarching goal of engaging young people. Its inaugural edition, under the auspices of John Paul II, was launched in Rome. Subsequent editions saw remarkable participation numbers: in 1987, Buenos Aires (Argentina) hosted WYD with 900,000 attendees. Santiago de Compostela (Spain) welcomed 600,000 young people in 1989. In 1991, Częstochowa (Poland) hosted WYD with a staggering 1.5 million pilgrims, marking a significant celebration following the fall of the Berlin Wall. The fifth edition of the WYD (1993), held in Denver (USA), introduced the inaugural Way of the Cross, subsequently becoming a hallmark of later editions. Manila (Philippines) hosted the largest gathering ever in 1995, with over 4 million pilgrims. Paris (France) welcomed 500,000 young people for WYD in 1997, and in 2000, the event returned to Rome with a participation of two million amidst the Jubilee of the Year 2000. In 2002, WYD was presided over by John Paul II for the last time, and the event was hosted in Toronto (Canada). Benedict XVI succeeded him and led his first WYD in his homeland, Germany, held in Cologne in 2005, with approximately one million pilgrims attending the send-off Mass. In 2008, Sydney (Australia) became the first city on a new continent to host WYD, drawing 500,000 participants. Madrid (Spain) saw two million pilgrims in 2011, marking Benedict XVI's final WYD. Pope Francis inaugurated his WYD journey in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 2013, where over three million pilgrims gathered for Mass on Copacabana beach. Poland hosted WYD once more in 2016, with Krakow welcoming around one and a half million attendees. In 2019, Panama City welcomed Pope Francis, who acclaimed the Virgin Mary as "the greatest influencer in history"³. Finally, in 2023, Lisbon hosted WYD, bringing together a million people with Parque Tejo as the primary venue, situated at the transition zone between East Lisbon and Loures, where the vigil and the send-off Mass occurred. The stage set up in the centre of the capital (named "Colina do Encontro") hosted various events, including the Pope's welcoming and the Way of the Cross.

The nature of World Youth Day classifies it as a pseudo-event, as defined by Daniel Boorstin (1962). Among the characteristics outlined by the author, it is crucial to emphasise: 1) their lack of spontaneity, solely existing because they were planned; 2) their intended mediatisation (even if that is not its exclusive purpose), meaning every facet of the event is meticulously designed for promotion and media coverage. However, rather than solely examining the characteristics of a pseudo-event, which the scale and essence of the event largely surpass, we propose analysing WYD through the lens of the concept of "media event."

A Unifying Media Event Amidst Fragmentation and Polarisation

³ All the information provided in this brief overview of WYD editions is sourced from official Vatican data.

The analysis of the coverage and corresponding audiences of WYD 2023 in Portugal, as elaborated and presented below, is situated within a well-established theoretical rationale in the field of Communication Sciences, particularly in mass communication studies: the theory of media events (or ceremonial events⁴ systematised in the early 1990s by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (2009 [1992])).

At the time of its inception, their proposition marked a groundbreaking moment with significant epistemological and methodological implications (Couldry et al., 2009) for research on scheduling, representation, and narrative mediation. In the first chapter of this seminal work, following a preface in which they anticipate and humorously refute expected criticisms⁵, they define a media event by stating:

"This book is about the festive viewing of television. It is about those historical occasions - mostly occasions of state - that are televised as they take place and transfix a nation or the world. They include epic contest of politics and sports, charismatic missions, and the rites of passage of the great, what we call - Contests, Conquests, and Coronations" (Katz & Dayan, 2009, p. 1).

Although the mediascape has changed considerably since the original theory was published, we agree with Nim (2019) when the author states that discussion about "the end of media events" is still far from over (p. 28).

Metaphorically defined as "festive events" and practically recognised as a television genre, media events, according to these authors, have a threefold dimension: i) a syntactic dimension - evident in their programmed nature and their capacity to disrupt the regular flow of everyday news; ii) a semantic dimension - rooted in collectively shared set of values and a strong ritualistic aspect; iii) and a pragmatic dimension - distinguished by their ability to captivate mass audiences (Couldry et al., 2009; Fox, 2016). Dayan and Katz also introduced a typology comprising three scripts corresponding to typical narrative plots: competition, exemplified by the Olympic Games, characterised by its cyclical and apolitical nature; conquest, illustrated by events like the moon landing broadcast in 1969, distinguished by the singularity and centrality of the hero(s); and coronation, exemplified by ceremonies such as weddings or royal funerals, which thrive on the (re)construction of the past and the preservation of certain values.

In Portugal, it was Mário Mesquita who, following the footsteps of these authors, developed the theoretical and methodological framework for "teleceremonies." In his book *O Quarto Equívoco* (The Fourth Misconception), he compiled six studies on the subject, some empirical in nature and others essayistic, in which he systematises the narrative, rhetorical, and performative dimensions of these televised events. Although these reflections hark back to a pre-digital era when traditional media (particularly television) dominated the public space, the timeliness of the theoretical and conceptual framework allows for an examination of the mediatisation of WYD 2023.

A media event, or a "teleceremony", if we adopt Mário Mesquita's concept, possesses a distinct set of narrative attributes concerning space-time, communication, and performance. Essentially, these television narratives, from a spatial perspective, are structured within a dialogical framework, juxtaposing "the space of performance and the space of reception" (Mesquita, 2003, p. 284) in a skilful enunciative construction where the times, spaces, and characters of the mediatic event subsume the times, spaces, and characters

⁴ Mário Mesquita, following Katz and Dayan's work, has also delved into the subject and employs the term "teleceremonies" (Mesquita, 2003).

⁵ In the introduction to their 2009 book, wherein they introduce a fresh perspective on the theory of media events within the framework of globalisation and the digital ecosystem, Couldry et al. outline a series of studies that had been conducted concurrently since the late 1970s. These studies aimed to scrutinise certain tenets of Dayan and Katz's theory (Couldry et al., 2009).

of the original event. Drawing upon Paul Ricoeur's notion of narrative as a "laboratory of human action" (Dubied, 2000, p. 65), particularly the triple narrative mimesis, it can be posited that the construction of a media event arises from a negotiation among i) the proto-narrative matrix of the event (the responsibility of what Mesquita terms the 'organising entity' (2003, p. 285), since, unlike other types of events (but in line with the concept of pseudo-events mentioned earlier) these are programmed and planned [Dayan & Katz, 2009]); ii) the work of media coverage and production (with its performative, ritualistic, and aggregating dimensions); iii) and mass reception (as a media event inherently serves as a shared aggregating occurrence).

On the other hand, from a temporal perspective, "teleceremonies" diverge from television news programmes, which prioritise the present and are 'indicative', instead transitioning into the 'conjunctive', manifesting as "a time of consensus and celebration," a utopian and somewhat fictional time (because it is constructed). While disruption, the driving force behind any narrative (Phelan, 2008), is typically associated with negativity and dystopia in the media, in the case of "teleceremonies", it is redemption, unity, and conciliation that define them. Consequently, as rightly pointed out by Mesquita, "'teleceremonies' are (...) at the intersection of three television temporalities: the time of information, the time of fiction, and the time of archives" (Mesquita, 2003, p. 333).

By altering television channels' schedules and engaging a substantial audience, media events adhere to a specific narrative logic and mode of storytelling. Employing a technique known as simultaneous narration⁶, where actions are recounted as they occur, "teleceremonies" aim to conceal the signs of enunciation and construction, creating the impression that they unfold naturally. The emphasis on immediacy and the broadcast of various stages of the ceremony have significantly contributed to this effect (Mesquita, 2003, pp. 320-321).

The profound and rapid changes in the media ecosystem and post-modern societies have meanwhile forced a reevaluation of this theoretical rationale and its core concept: the emergence of 24-hour television channels, audience segmentation, the emphasis on breaking news, the sensationalisation of news, the blurring of genres facilitated by digital transformation, and the central role of social media are among the factors prompting a reassessment of the underpinnings of the theory of media events. "While we find highly important arguments in the original discussion, we need to update our understanding of contemporary media events within an analysis of globalised media cultures" (Couldry *et al.*, 2010, p. 1).

The authors themselves revised the concept and theoretical framework in 2007, resulting in the incorporation of disruptive media events - such as terrorist attacks, wars, or disasters (Sonnevend, 2016; Dayan, 2016). According to Couldry *et al.* (2010), the initial theory of media events is challenged primarily in three aspects: i) the ritualistic interpretation of events, which assumes a utopian social homogenisation and shared common values, both of which are questioned by globalisation and postmodernism; ii) the conceptualisation of the media event as a genre, concealing its discursive and ideological dimension; iii) the reductive typology of scripts proposed by the initial theoretical framework, which failed to account for disruptive events or the commercial or popular dimension of some events.

Thus, in the second decade of the 21st century, there was an effort to reconstruct the theory of media events, examining them in terms of power relations, the hegemonic centres from which they emanate, who

⁶ Simultaneous narration, although less prevalent than subsequent narration, serves as a narrative device enabling the discursive representation of ongoing events, facts and thoughts (REis, 2018, pp. 284-285).

produces them, and for what purpose (Couldry et al., 2010; Fox, 2016). The proposal to redefine the concept reflects this endeavour to adapt the theoretical framework, which remains operational today:

"Media events are certain situated, thickened, centred performances of mediated communication that are focused on a specific thematic core, cross different media products and reach a wide and diverse multiplicity of audiences and participants" (Couldry et al., 2010, p. 12).

According to Couldry et al. (2009), three types of media events can now be discerned: i) those that can be described and explained in the light of the original theoretical framework - the 'ritual media events'; ii) the 'conflictual media events' - which encompass the outbreak of conflicts or terrorist attacks (such as the September 11 attacks); and iii) the 'popular media events' which are embedded in celebrity culture.

The divisive nature of some events is also an argument for some critiques of Dayan and Katz's theory. For instance, contested events (e.g., political debates, protests, or religious themes) may polarize audiences rather than unify them. These would be considered as "disruptive media events", a new category to add to the previously existent (Mitu, 2016). The notion of disruptiveness also considers that media audiences are more active and diverse than the media events' model suggests. Reception varies based on several individual or group beliefs. Thus, media events might not evoke universal reactions but rather provoke differing responses.

What about digital media?

Understanding media as large-scale televised performances aimed at integrating society, as Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz suggested in their initial theoretical approach, excludes digital media from the equation. Although the purpose of this article is not to analyze how Portuguese digital platforms covered WYD, a brief note on this issue is included as a basis for future research. As Nim (2019) and Mitu & Poulakidakos (2016) argue, media events can be regarded as a "never-ending story and theory. However, to further expand on this framework, the concept of "transformative media events" — understood as mediatized social dramas that frame the renewal of social order or its fundamental institutions — should be developed⁷. An examination of the news websites of Portugal's three main television stations (RTP, SIC, and TVI, all free-to-air channels) reveals notably different approaches to coverage, although all indicate that a special operation was implemented before, during and after WYD.

The importance of television outputs in optimizing content production and dissemination is evident across all three platforms. In this sense, from a certain perspective, WYD can also be considered a media event in the classical sense, as television serves as the primary source for much of the digital coverage. This is unsurprising, given that the digital platforms are deeply rooted in their respective television networks. Many published news items include full television segments or video clips accompanied by text.

It is worth noting that both RTP and SIC created dedicated microsites for WYD, where all related news pieces are published. Some of these are exclusive to the online platforms and are clearly marked as such. The degree of multimediality, hypertextuality, and interactivity varies significantly—not only between channels but also between individual articles.

⁷ According to the "Digital News Report Portugal 2023", in 2023, Portugal is characterised as a country where television continues to play a prominent role in the population's information diets. In fact, this media continues to be used to access news by 67.6 per cent of the Portuguese and by 51.0 per cent as their main source of news (Cardoso *et al.*, 2023).

While further analysis is required to fully explore the following claim, it is reasonable to suggest that WYD, as a media event in 2023, goes beyond being a “teleceremony”. Nevertheless, television continues to play a dominant role, both in attracting audiences and in serving as a vital audiovisual content provider for other media. This conclusion underscores television's enduring relevance within a multiplatform, networked media ecosystem. Social media and multimedia may have transformed the media landscape, but they will not kill the video star.

Methodology

In order to analyse the extent to which WYD 2023 is conclusively established as a media event, we designed and carried out a case study of television coverage by Portuguese news and generalist channels.

To analyse the television coverage of WYD, we propose a two-tiered study:

- i) identifying the programming aired on the three free-to-air generalist channels (RTP1, SIC, and TVI) and the four cable news channels (RTP3, SIC Notícias, CNN Portugal, and CMTV) dedicated to this media event (thus covering all Portuguese television operators and channel types;
- ii) analysing the respective audience. Both levels will start with data provided by GFK, the company measuring audiences in Portugal, and Mediamonitor, the company analysing these audiences.

We have requested a list of broadcasts dedicated to WYD, accompanied by the following units of analysis: channel, time, duration, brief description, average audience, and share.

To understand the significance of the audiences assembled during WYD week, we have also requested audiometric data obtained in the week preceding the event and during the same period of the previous year. This quantitative and descriptive approach, based on the analysis of secondary data obtained from reliable sources, makes it possible to assess the impact of WYD on the programming of television channels as well as to analyse television consumption of the event.

Reading and discussion of results

Throughout the six days of WYD, spanning from August 1 to 6, 2023 (week 31 of the year), the three free-to-air generalist channels (RTP1, SIC, TVI) and the four news channels (RTP3, SICN, CNN Portugal, and CMTV) dedicated a total of 285 hours, 5 minutes, and 21 seconds of broadcast time to the event, reaching approximately eight million viewers.

In terms of free-to-air broadcasting, RTP1 aired the highest number of programmes dedicated to WYD, although TVI stood out in terms of broadcasting time with 46 hours and 23 minutes (RTP1 added 46 hours, 2 minutes, and 39 seconds, and SIC 43 hours, 41 minutes, and 12 seconds).

Comparatively, the three free-to-air channels adopted similar programming strategies: they created special broadcasts throughout each day of the week, aired key moments live (such as Masses and the Way of the Cross), and prominently featured the event during their lunchtime (1 pm) and evening (8 pm) news programmes.

On the news channels, broadcasting time was longer, with SIC Notícias leading with 55 hours, 43 minutes, and 21 seconds, followed by RTP3 with 43 hours, 44 minutes, and 28 seconds.

The programme offer mirrored those of the generalist channels but included significantly more studio interviews, split between the main television channel studios and those set up at the event venues (in Lisbon, at Parque Eduardo VII and Parque Tejo, and in Fátima, at the grounds of the Marian shrine).

In the ranking of the most-watched WYD broadcasts, the top five belonged to RTP1, which also recorded the most-watched WYD programme each day. However, in terms of general programming, the public generalist channel was behind TVI and SIC during this period. This means that viewers continued to follow the regular programming of the free-to-air TV channels, but for this major event, many preferred to tune in to public TV.

Table 1: Ranking of WYD broadcasts on generalist channels

Date	Channel	Description	Start	End	Duration	Share %	Rat %
1/8	RTP1	WYD - Opening Mass	6:59 pm	8:34 pm	1:34 am	18.1	7.2
5/8	RTP1	WYD - Vigil in Parque Tejo	8:01 pm	10:20 pm	2:18 am	16	6.7
4/8	RTP1	WYD - Pope in Portugal	7:37 pm	7:58 pm	12:21 am	15.4	6
3/8	RTP1	WYD - Welcoming ceremony	5:00 pm	7:58 pm	2:58 am	15.3	5.1
6/8	RTP1	WYD - Pope in Portugal	10:41 am	11:32 am	12:51 am	18.2	4.9
3/8	TVI.	WYD - Welcoming ceremony	5:30 pm	7:56 pm	2:26 am	14	4.8
4/8	TVI.	WYD - Way of the Cross	5:55 pm	7:58 pm	2:02 am	14	4.8
6/8	TVI.	WYD - Farewell to the Pope	4:12 pm	6:23 pm	2:10 am	13.1	4.7
2/8	RTP1	WYD - Arrival of the Pope	8:59 am	12:58 pm	3:53 am	19.2	4.1

Source: Authors

In terms of market share on the generalist channels, only RTP saw an increase in its share compared to the previous week, totalling a 10.6% share (+0.6 pp). RTP2 remained unchanged (no significant changes were made in this area). SIC reached a 13.5% share (-0.7 pp), and TVI registered a 13.9% share (-0.2 pp), taking a lead it had not held since week 23. RTP1 particularly stood out in the morning, with a share of 18.3% (+2.6%), marking its best result since week 19 of 2016, when the Fatima Ceremonies garnered a 24.1% share. The prime-time results, at 9.9% share (+0.6 pp), were significantly influenced by the special WYD broadcasts, notably the broadcast on August 4, the Vigil in Parque Tejo, which achieved a 16% share.

On the cable channels, there was a 1.2 pp increase attributed to the information channels, which that week reached a record share for the year: 15%. The channel with the highest market share was CMTV, which obtained a 5.9% share that week, a figure previously recorded in week 22 and surpassed in week 21 when it reached 6%. CNN Portugal achieved a 3.9% share, its best result since week 15 of the same year, when the broadcast *"Breaking News: Moscow high alert"* achieved a 6.8% share. SIC Notícias, meanwhile, achieved a 2.8% share, its best result since week 9 of 2022, coinciding with the outbreak of the war in

Ukraine. Despite totalling a 2.1% share, RTP3 achieved its best result since week 14 of 2020, during a critical period of the COVID-19 pandemic in Portugal.

With reference to the generalist channels and considering the top 10 most-watched programmes that week, it is evident that WYD took up more airtime on the public channel and had a more significant impact on TVI, the channel that led audience ratings during the period under review, with 10 programmes, WYD ranked fifth on RTP1. In third place is *Telejornal*, and in sixth place is *Jornal da Tarde*, a news format that predominantly covered the event during that week.

Table 2: Ranking of the most watched programmes on generalist channels

RTP1 programmes	Insertions	Rat %	Share %
Preço Certo (game show)	1	7.1	16.9
Preço Certo (R) (game show)	1	6.7	17.9
Telejornal (information)	7	6	13.7
Futebol Feminino (sports)	1	5.6	39
WYD	10	4.9	15.5
Jornal da Tarde (information)	7	4.6	13.9
Estrelas ao sábado	1	4	12
Ao Largo	5	3.9	8.1
I Love Portugal	1	3.8	9.3
Porquinho Mealheiro (game show)	5	3.3	7.6
SIC programmes	Insertions	Rat %	Share %
Jornal da Noite (information)	7	8.1	18.2
Sangue Oculto (soap opera)	5	7.9	17.3
Salve-se quem puder -	1	7.6	18.2
Salve-se quem puder -	1	6.8	15.8
Primeiro Jornal (information)	7	6.2	19
Vida Selvagem	1	6.1	19
Cheias de charme (soap opera)	3	6	14.9
Flor do Caribe	3	6	17.1
Terra Nossa	1	5.8	15.3
Flor sem Tempo (soap opera)	5	5.7	16.4
TVI programmes	Insertions	Rat %	Share %
Festa é Festa (soap opera)	7	8.3	18
Jornal Nacional (information)	7	7	15.8
Queridos Papás (soap opera)	6	6.5	16.3
Vai ou racha (game show)	4	6.4	16.3
TVI Jornal (information)	7	5.4	16.6
Para sempre	5	5.3	16
Somos Portugal	2	4.9	13.5
WYD - Welcoming ceremony	1	4.8	14

WYD - Way of the Cross	1	4.8	14
WYD – World Youth Day	2	4.4	12.5

Source: Authors

When the audiometric data for the week of WYD are compared with that of the same period last year, there is a significant increase in the number of people watching television, as observed by aggregating the audience across all TV channels and analysing each one individually. The only exception to this trend is SIC, the channel that lost its audience leadership during the WYD week.

Table 3: Global audience metrics

	Share	Reach	Average aud.	Average aud. %
2023	100	8/063.9	2/216.1	23.2
2022	100	7/881.6	1/980.3	20.9

Source: Authors

Table 4: Audience metrics for generalist/information channels

		Share	Reach	Average aud.	Average aud. %
RTP	2023	10.86	3,353.0	240.2	2.5
	2022	10.49	3,058.7	207.2	2.2
SIC	2023	13.31	3,946.1	294.9	3.1
	2022	15.8	3,630.7	308.3	3.3
TVI	2023	13.84	3,353.7	306.4	3.2
	2022	13.44	3,141.3	266.2	2.8
RTP3	2023	2.21	1,852.9	49.4	0.2
	2022	1.17	1,406.1	23.2	0.5
SICN	2023	2.88	2,114.4	64	0.7
	2022	2.26	1,797.1	44.6	0.5
CNN Portugal	2023	4	2,241.0	88.8	0.9
	2022	3.28	2,011.3	64.9	0.7
CMTV	2023	5.91	2,755.0	131.5	1.4
	2022	5.72	2,515.6	113.2	1.2

Source: Authors

Results discussion

In summary, the television coverage of WYD resulted in notable changes in the programming and audiences of both generalist and news channels:

- There was a significant alteration in the programme schedules of all channels, particularly noticeable on RTP1 (among generalist channels) and SIC Notícias and RTP3 (among information channels), primarily due to the increased number of broadcasting hours.

- RTP1 experienced a substantial increase in market share;
- SIC saw a drop in audience share to 13.31%, and TVI also experienced a decrease to 13.84%;
- TVI emerged as the leading channel in terms of audience share during this period;
- RTP3 and SIC Notícias had to rely on significant past events (such as the pandemic and the war in Ukraine) to find instances of higher audience shares.

While this study does not analyze the content of the broadcasts, it evaluates quantitative data related to the timing, duration, and audience metrics per channel. It is possible to conclude that there was a notable effort across all broadcasters to provide comprehensive coverage of this major event. A comparison between public and private channels reveals that public television made a greater investment and had a more significant impact. This can largely be attributed to RTP's role as the host broadcaster, responsible for capturing, producing, and transmitting all events of this World Youth Day (WYD) to a global audience via the European Broadcasting Union's satellite network and digital platform. On 28 July 2023, RTP's website described the event as "the biggest ever held in Portugal," involving 172 operational structures and over 500 professionals.

The substantial number of broadcast hours allocated to WYD underscores the significance that television attributes to such events, persistently finding a platform that not only validates their legitimacy but also garners large audiences. WYD reaffirms the aggregating power of crowds around the small screen, even during a month when most people are on vacation and presumably less inclined toward television consumption.

Another notable finding of this study highlights the audience's preference for public channels during both disruptive periods (such as conflicts or pandemics) and celebratory moments (as is the case here). Despite similar programming across the three generalist channels, there was a notable increase in the number of viewers tuning on RTP1 during the week of WYD, indicating a distinct preference that was not influenced by other types of programming. These audiometric findings align with the conclusions of Obercom - Digital News Report Portugal 2023 (DNR) - which indicates that in Portugal, the public television service continues to lead the ranking of brand trust in news. According to DNR, 78.4% of Portuguese individuals trust the information broadcast by RTP. Similarly, the Flash Eurobarometer survey conducted in the European Union underscores the trust placed in public service television and radio, with 48% of respondents across the EU choosing them as their most trusted news sources.

Additionally, DNR highlights Portugal's significant reliance on public news services, such as those provided by RTP, ranking it as the fifth country among the 46 countries studied where citizens attach the most importance to public news services. Portugal's trust in public broadcasting is surpassed only by Northern European countries, including Finland (71%), Denmark (68%), Norway (65%), and Sweden (64%).

This study on WYD television audiences further supports the conclusions of both the DNR and Eurobarometer 2023 regarding media and news consumption habits. According to these sources, television remains the most used medium for accessing news. Eurobarometer reports that TV accounts for 82% of preferences in

Portugal, compared to 71% in the European Union at large. Similarly, the DNR indicates that television remains the primary source of news for 67.6% of Portuguese individuals, with 51% considering it their main news source.

Conclusion

The television coverage of WYD on Portuguese television unequivocally demonstrates the relevance of media events, as initially conceptualised by Dayan and Katz.

In its syntactic dimension, WYD is shown to have induced a radical change in the regular programming of the channels analysed. This shift is prominently observed in the significant increase in broadcasting hours dedicated to WYD. Over the five days and across all channels, the average number of hours allocated to WYD amounts to 57 hours per day. This translates to approximately eight hours of broadcasting on average for each channel, constituting roughly a third of the daily programming. Moreover, the syntactic dimension of this media event is evident in the creation of special programmes dedicated specifically to WYD. In addition to live broadcasts capturing the key moments of the Day, the hallmarks of such "teleceremonies" which effectively eliminate traces of enunciation and construction, there were also programmes featuring guests and commentators, many of which were broadcast live as well.

As far as the semantic dimension is concerned, the values of consensus and unity were widely disseminated. Despite some controversy in the weeks leading up to WYD concerning the event's costs for the country, particularly for the municipality of Lisbon, and its connection to the ongoing national issue of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church, these concerns largely dissipated during WYD. The imprint of consensus is also evident in the adherence of the television channels analysed to the coverage of WYD. A noteworthy and somewhat unexpected finding from the analysis is that a private company-owned news channel granted greater prominence to WYD in its programming. SIC Notícias allocated 12 more hours of broadcasting time to WYD than the second-ranked channel with the highest WYD coverage (RTP3, part of the RTP universe, the concessionaire of the Public Media Service in Portugal and the host broadcaster of WYD), amounting to 22% more time than its public counterpart.

The audience metrics unequivocally affirm the pragmatic aspect of the media event under analysis. Particularly noteworthy is the performance of the news channels SIC Notícias and RTP3, which during WYD week garnered audiences comparable only to those seen during the COVID-19 pandemic and the onset of war in Ukraine. Additionally, there was a noticeable "migration" of audiences to RTP, the official WYD broadcaster, whenever WYD-related content was being aired.

This media event holds such significance that it transcends certain questions raised about the concept, particularly by Couldry et al. (2010). The ritualistic dimension, these authors dispute, is clearly evident in the case of World Youth Day, with an apparent sharing of common values, at least in terms of the widespread interest materialised by the audiences. Thus, WYD can be regarded as a 'ritual media event' that is readable in the light of the original theoretical framework. However, considering the proposed renewal by the authors above, it also qualifies as a 'popular media event' integrated into celebrity culture

In fact, the media coverage of WYD sparked processes of celebrity construction around Pope Francis as the protagonist of this media event, eliciting a response from the crowds akin to that of a star system.

Given the scale and characteristics of this media event, it can be considered, as previously mentioned, a pseudo-event with very distinct characteristics. Its projection is such that a pseudo-event ends up generating real events that warrant coverage due to their inherent newsworthiness. This phenomenon can also account for the breadth of the coverage, which extends beyond World Youth Day itself to encompass the events it spawned. Examples include the situation of foreigners who entered Portugal as pilgrims only to remain in the country illegally or reports on the expenditures of WYD participants during their stay in Lisbon. Analysing these events further will be an interesting continuation of the research focusing on the coverage of WYD, distinguishing between what constitutes "teleceremony" and what warrants news treatment as part of this media event.

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