

Article

World Youth Day 2016 in the Archdiocese of Lodz: An Example of the Eventization of Faith

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Abstract: The organization of numerous religious mass events of international, or even global, reach is a phenomenon of the early 21st century. It is sometimes termed “eventization of faith”. This article presents a multifaceted analysis of the initial stage of the World Youth Day in 2016, which took place in the Archdiocese of Łódź (Poland). While multiple scholarly publications have been written about World Youth Day (WYD) itself, its first part of preparatory nature, the so-called “Days in Dioceses”, has not been studied yet. The authors of this paper used a wide array of research methods, such as participant observation, questionnaire (official statistics concerning 10,000 pilgrims), pilot survey (258 respondents), and analysis of media reports (over 100 films and 30 articles). The analysis of the organizational method of such a major religious event leads to a conclusion that it is a complex logistic undertaking, which requires professional preparation and implementation by a team of specialists in different fields as well as an army of deeply involved volunteers and public services employees. Over 10.2 thousand young pilgrims (mostly at the age of 15–29) participated in the youth meeting in the Archdiocese of Łódź; apart from spiritual motives (strengthening faith, meeting Pope Francis, following in the footsteps of St. John Paul II) they exhibited strong social (willingness to be in the community of believers, making new friends), recreational and tourist (visiting Poland) needs as well. In view of the hermetic and low-budget character of World Youth Day, its impact on the economy of the region was deemed negligible. Above all, the event played a promotional and image-building part, which perhaps in the years to come will result in an increase in visits of foreign tourists to Łódź.

Keywords: World Youth Day; eventization of faith; religious tourism; Archdiocese of Lodz; Poland

1. Introduction

World Youth Day is a mass religious event open to the followers of other religions, non-believers or those searching for faith. The only condition for participation is to show respect for the Catholic character of the event and for the dignity of all people, regardless of their sex, origin, color or creed. The main aim of the event is to meet God, the Pope, other human beings, and oneself, and in this way build a community of Catholics—a community of young people guided by the same values (Bik 2016). From the organizers’ point of view, World Youth Day (WYD) has one additional aim—to create a positive image of the host country. Therefore, the program of the pilgrims’ stay includes tourist, cultural, recreational and other elements.

World Youth Day (WYD) is a meeting of young Catholics, an event initiated by Pope John Paul II in 1985 and held every 2–3 years. In other years, it is celebrated locally in all the dioceses of the

Catholic Church. So far, the international meetings have been organized 14 times¹, and including local events, over 30 times.

An exceptional feature of World Youth Day is the number of people taking part in it: from 300,000 to over 4 million. The biggest meeting ever took place in Manila in 1995 and was officially included in the Guinness Book of Records as the greatest gathering at a single location in the world. The 31st event was held on 26–31 August 2016 in Krakow (for the second time in Poland) and attracted ca. 2.5 million pilgrims.

WYD celebrations usually include 14 kinds of religious event which are held on a specific day or even one part of a day (e.g., welcoming the Pope, the Way of the Cross, all-night vigil, the final mass, volunteers' meeting with the Pope). In 1997, in Paris, the tradition of the "prologue" was started, called Days in the Dioceses. It is the week directly preceding World Youth Day which young pilgrims spend in the different dioceses of the host country. At this time, they get ready spiritually for the main religious celebrations, but also have time for sightseeing, learning about culture and traditions, as well as meeting the inhabitants of the host country (e.g., by staying in local families' homes). In 2016, the Days in the Dioceses were held on 19–25 July (in some years, in exceptional situations they started on 15 July), and one of the most visited places was the Archdiocese of Lodz (over 10,000 visitors).

2. Literature Review

"Eventization" is a relatively new term. The first mentions of a broader concept of event tourism appeared in the 1970s (Ritchie and Donald 1974). However, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that this form of tourism had become a popular object of study conducted in particular by researchers from Australia, Canada and the USA (Gartner and Holecek 1983; Ritchie 1984; Hall 1989). Initially, event tourism was analyzed from an economic perspective. With time, researchers also became interested in the participants and the impact on spatial development while the 1990s brought a number of publications focusing primarily on management and its increasing professionalization (Getz 1991; Uysal et al. 1993). In the 21st century, there were studies on the aware and purposeful policy (strategy) of events (e.g., Foley et al. 2012), serving, among others, the regeneration and revitalization of cities (e.g., Richards and Robert 2010; Cudny 2016). Popular examples were various types of cultural and sports events such as the Olympic Games. Although Getz (2008) mentions religious events in his typology, he does not elaborate further on this topic.

"Faith eventization", as the contemporary organization of religious events is referred to, is an expression which appeared in the literature in the 21st century (Pfadenhauer 2010; Zduniak 2010, 2015; Bilska-Wodecka and Izabela 2014). The organization of spectacular events is a tool for implementing a well-thought-out marketing strategy, assuming improvement of the general image of the Church, promotion of religion and pilgrimage, and, consequently, gaining new followers (evangelization). However, since contemporary religiosity and pilgrimage are subject to significant changes (Norman and Mark 2011; Reader 2015; Gonzalez et al. 2019; Carbone et al. 2016; Kate and Hemel 2019), they require a special approach (spiritual, organizational, promotional, etc.) of church institutions in neoliberal times—the age of global religious pluralism. Most articles about mass events organized by churches or religious organizations consider individual mega-events, e.g., World Youth Day. There are publications presenting all aspects of this particular event (1985–2018), but they mostly fall into the category of popular writing (Muolo 2015; Sarniewicz and Anna 2016). There are, however, academic publications describing individual events, and one of the first studies on World Youth Day was conducted in Cologne in 2005 (Pfadenhauer 2010). Many papers were published after the next event, which was held in Sydney in 2008 (e.g., Webber 2008; Rymarz 2008; Singleton 2011; Mason

¹ Pilgrims from all over the world stayed in Rome (1986), Buenos Aires (1987), Santiago de Compostela (1989), Częstochowa (1991), Denver (1993), Manila (1995), Paris (1997), Rome (2000), Toronto (2002), Cologne (2005), Sydney (2008), Madrid (2011), Rio de Janeiro (2013), Krakow (2016) and Panama (2019).

2012; Halter 2013). WYD in Rio de Janeiro was described among others by [de França et al. \(2014\)](#) and [Gonzalez et al. \(2019\)](#), while the latest WYD, held in Krakow, was widely discussed by Polish researchers in individual articles and detailed reports ([Jackowski et al. 2016](#); [Kozak and Peziński 2016](#); [Nowotny 2016](#); [Bogacz-Wojtanowska et al. 2016](#); [Borkowski 2017](#); [Seweryn 2018](#)). It is uncommon, however, to find publications on the initial stage of World Youth Day—the Days in the Dioceses—which has an influence on the promotion of individual regions of the host country. Two works on this topic were published by [Bik \(2016\)](#) and [Bik and Stasiak \(2017\)](#).

3. Research Aims, Methods and Source Materials

The most important aims set by the authors were to analyze the promotional and organizational activities connected with a global religious event, describe the participants of World Youth Day in the Archdiocese of Lodz, as well as establish the impacts of the event on the region, especially economic and promotional.

The authors posed three research questions:

Q1—How are contemporary religious mega-events organized?

Q2—Who were the participants of the World Youth Day in the Archdiocese of Łódź and what did they do in Łódź in addition to participating in religious events?

Q3—How did the pilgrims' stay impact on the Łódź region?

Depending on the aim, the authors used different research methods and source materials, including the following:

- Participant observation—one of the co-authors was a volunteer at the WYD Diocesan Centre of the Archdiocese of Lodz for 30 months (she was responsible for contacts with foreign groups and for pilgrims' accommodation);
- A questionnaire—the offices of the four festivals in Lodz provided documents, organizational information and above all databases, including detailed statistics on nearly all pilgrims (9952 out of the 10,173 officially registered). The authors also used data obtained from the Central Statistical Office and the WYD Organizing Committee in Krakow;
- A pilot survey conducted at the end of 2016 (after the pilgrims returned home)—an invitation was mailed to over 1500 people; the questionnaire posted on the internet was filled in by 258 respondents (121 Poles and 137 foreigners from 11 countries); the questionnaire (in five languages: Polish, English, French, Italian and Spanish) contained 35 questions, e.g., reasons for participating in WYD, sources of information about Lodz, the character of their stay, ways of spending free time, opinions and assessment, as well as personal data;
- An analysis of media reports concerning the Days in the Dioceses which appeared on 15–25 July 2016 on social media (YouTube), on official WYD websites ([Kraków 2016 2019](#); [Łódź Piotrowa 2019](#); [Archidiecezja Łódzka 2019](#); [Magis Poland 2016 2019](#); [Paradise in the City 2019](#)), on regional TV and in the press. The analysis included over 100 video broadcasts and films, as well as 30 articles containing 84 statements by foreigners and 63 by Poles.

The material presented in the article is only a fraction of the results of research conducted by the authors as a part of a broader study of tourism in the Lodz region.

4. World Youth Day 2016 in the Archdiocese of Lodz

The Archdiocese of Lodz is one of 41 Roman Catholic Church dioceses in Poland. It covers 5200 km² and is situated in the very center of the country, but its borders are not congruent with the borders of Lodz Province (it covers ca. 30% of the territory and includes 60% of the region's population). The history of the Archdiocese of Lodz is relatively short. The rapid development of the textile industry in Lodz in the 19th century, the huge inflow of people to the city, as well as the new political situation after World War I were the reasons why, in 1920, Pope Benedict XV created a new diocese with a seat in Lodz. After 72 years (25 March 1992), Pope John Paul II raised it to the rank of archdiocese. Since 2004,

together with Łowicz diocese, it has constituted the metropolitan archdiocese of Lodz (one of 14 church provinces on the territory of Poland). Currently, it has about 1,430,000 believers. Its area is divided into 219 parishes (27 deaneries), employing 570 priests (www.archidiecezja.lodz.pl). The best-known figures connected with Lodz include St Maximilian Kolbe² and St. Faustina Kowalska³.

World Youth Day in 2016 was one of the most important events in the short history of the Archdiocese of Lodz. The Days in the Dioceses featured four festivals, prepared by four separate organizers, cooperating with one another:

1. Peter's Boat—the main festival prepared by the WYD Diocesan Centre of the Archdiocese of Lodz attracted 2161 participants from 16 countries;
2. The Claretian Family Youth World Meeting—a meeting of the communities and milieus which are active in Claretian parishes all over the world (formally independent, but often organizationally linked with “Peter's Boat”); 231 participants from 12 countries;
3. MAGIS 2016⁴—coordinated by Jesuits, a meeting of young people from all over the world, united by Ignatian spirituality⁵. In Lodz, only the first stage of the MAGIS program took place; after three days, about 2500 participants (representing nearly 50 countries) went back to nearly 100 locations in Poland, the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Slovakia, to take part in other classes and workshops;
4. Paradise in the City—the largest (5345 participants from 48 countries) festival, prepared by the French Chemin Neuf Community⁶.

Each festival had its own, individual program consisting of various religious events (services, meditations, vigils), as well as social (meetings in international groups), tourist (sightseeing, active hiking, e.g., kayaking, biking), cultural (concerts) and sports events (football, volleyball). The Days in the Dioceses closed with a farewell holy mass, celebrated in the Atlas Arena sports hall for the participants of all festivals, attended by about 13,000 inhabitants and pilgrims.

It is worth mentioning that the pilgrims staying in the Archdiocese of Lodz travelled over the whole Lodz region, and Days in the Dioceses events were also held in other dioceses of Lodz Province (Figure 1). Visits to Świnice Warckie, where St. Faustina was born, were particularly significant.

² Maksymilian Maria Kolbe (born Rajmund Kolbe, 1894–1941)—Polish Conventual Franciscan, missionary, martyr, saint of the Roman Catholic Church. Founder of the most numerous Catholic monastery in the world in Niepokalanów (762 people in 1939). He voluntarily went to death by starvation in exchange for another prisoner of the Nazi concentration camp—KL Auschwitz. The first Polish martyr of the Second World War (beatification in 1971, canonization by Pope John Paul II in 1982).

³ Maria Faustyna Kowalska (born Helena Kowalska, popularly spelled Faustina, 1905–1938)—a saint of the Roman Catholic Church, a nun from the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, a mystic, stigmatist and visionary. A proclaimer of the cult of Divine Mercy. The author of the Diary, in which she described her spiritual and mystical experiences (a Polish book most often translated into other languages). Beatification in 1993, canonization in 2000 (both by Pope John Paul II). In 2005, she was announced the patron of Łódź.

⁴ The Latin word *magis* means: *more, better, fuller*.

⁵ Ignatian spirituality (Jesuit spirituality)—a method of shaping and leading the inner and outer life of a Christian, based on three spiritual exercises proposed by Ignacy Loyola (founder of the Jesuit order): “Principle and foundation”, “Call of the King” and “Contemplation to obtain love”.

⁶ The Chemin Neuf Community was formed in Lyon, in 1973. Its mission is evangelization and Christian spiritual formation in mature faith. It operates in about 30 countries all over the world and includes nearly 2000 members, including about 100 in Poland ([Chemin Neuf Community 2019](#)).



Figure 1. Major World Youth Day (WYD) events in 2016, in Łódź Province (Source: authors).

5. Results

5.1. The Organization of the Days in the Dioceses in the Archdiocese of Łódź

The WYD Organizing Committee of the Archdiocese of Łódź was officially established on 2 February 2015. It consisted of 16 sections (Figure 2), forming the following four sectors:

1. Administrative—dealing with all kinds of office work (WYD Office sections: Invitations, Information and Accommodation, Contracts and Finance, Translations);
2. Event preparation—caring for the pilgrims' basic needs and safety, as well as the necessary infrastructure (sections: Transport and Logistics, Catering, Maintenance, Medical Care and Security);
3. The form of the event—taking responsibility for the program, the course of the event and visuals (including the media) (sections: Liturgy, Music, Exhibition, Media);
4. Cooperation—coordinating volunteers' work and contacts with Catholic organizations and movements, representatives of other denominations, as well as representatives of the state, local authorities and security institutions.

Almost all of these sectors were headed by a Chairman, Vice-chairman, a Director of Operations and a secretarial office.

The World Youth Day Organizing Committee in the Archdiocese of Lodz			
Sections:			
Invitations	Transport and Logistics	Liturgy	Cooperation with Volunteers
WYD Office, Information and Accommodation	Catering	Music	Cooperation with Catholic Organizations and Movements
Contracts and Finance	Technical Service (altars, sound, etc.)	Exhibitions	Cooperation with Other Creeds
Translations	Medical Care and Security	Media	Cooperation with State, Local Authorities and Security Agencies

Figure 2. Structure of the WYD Organizing Committee of the Archdiocese of Lodz, 2016 (Source: authors).

For the duration of WYD, the area of the Archdiocese of Lodz was divided into special spatial units consisting of several adjacent deaneries. There were 12 of them, including four in the city of Lodz. This organization was to facilitate the preparation and management of the event outdoors. Each area was headed by a regional coordinator, directly subject to the WYD Diocesan Centre of the Archdiocese of Lodz.

As individual dioceses had to attract pilgrims (Krakow Committee did not suggest, let alone allocate, places of stay in Poland before WYD), it was necessary to introduce a number of promotional activities that were supposed to encourage young people from all over the world to come to Lodz. It was not easy to do because the Archdiocese of Lodz is relatively new, and the city and the region are not world famous or considered to be particularly attractive in Poland. It was necessary to make the area stand out from other places. The Lodz region was presented, first of all, as the place of St. Faustina Kowalska's first revelations and the place where St Maximilian Maria Kolbe had lived as a child. The promotional messages often stressed the past multi-culturality of Lodz and its industrial character, as well as its closeness to Krakow and Warsaw (Lodz is located in the very center of Poland).

As regards members of religious orders (Claretians and Jesuits), or the international Chemin Neuf Community, attracting them largely focused on encouraging people involved in pastoral activity around the world to come to Lodz. It was different in the case of the Peter's Boat festival, where initially there were no organizers or potential participants. It was necessary to plan and run a professional promotional campaign on an international scale, which included:

- Developing a corporate identity (a symbolic name—Peter's Boat⁷, logo, colors: red, blue, yellow; hymn—"Blessed be the Merciful");
- Starting an event website (www.lodzpiotrowa.com) and a Facebook profile (WYD/SDM Lodz Piotrowa);
- Developing the Archdiocese of Lodz Press Office which was responsible for contacts with foreign journalists, official reports (over 20 video reports), promotional videos (8), interviews, etc., as well as for organizing regular press conferences (4);

⁷ For the duration of WYD, dioceses in Poland took on biblical names. "Peter's Boat" refers directly to the meaning of the Polish name of the city (*łódź* = boat), as well as to the pilgrimage of John Paul II to Lodz in 1987, when the expression "Peter's Boat" was used for the first time.

- Making and popularizing special video reports from the preparations for the event (over 25);
- Designing and printing promotional materials (leaflets, brochures, etc.) in different languages (Polish, English, French, Italian, Spanish);
- Producing several thousand promotional items advertising Peter's Boat (ballpoint pens, mugs, bags, buttons, T-shirts, bracelets, CDs, key rings, etc.);
- Running training courses for volunteers in the media section (Youth Academy of Journalism and Journalism Workshops, organized by the Polish WYD Committee⁸);
- Direct promotion of the event, e.g., during the Taizé European Meeting of Young Adults, the European Meeting of the Carmelite Youth in Avila and the International Convention of WYD Delegates in Wieliczka where each of the dioceses could put up its stand;
- Sending out the offer (program and promotional materials) to dioceses in other countries;
- Promoting WYD among the inhabitants of the region (e.g., advertisements on public city transport vehicles (MPK) and Lodz Agglomeration trains).

The activities proved effective. The Archdiocese of Lodz was visited by about 10,173 pilgrims, which can be considered a success, with the fourth best result in the country after the Archdioceses of Warsaw, Wrocław and Katowice (ca. 12,000 in each).

In order to make the process of registering for the event smoother, special on-line registration forms were prepared (separate for Poles and foreigners and in different language versions). After registering a group, it was contacted only by the registration coordinator. Due to the risk of terrorist attacks, all potential participants of the event were verified by the Home Security Agency (pol. Agencja Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego—ABW). The pilgrims were distributed over the area of the whole diocese, according to earlier offers from host families. The groups were picked up on arrival from a place agreed earlier (airport, train station) and transported to the pilgrims' registration point, often escorted by the police.

Such a huge logistic operation required the involvement of over 1000 volunteers. Earlier, they had been thoroughly checked by the police and the Home Security Agency. They also went through extensive training (e.g., on first aid, mass event protection, and directing traffic at railway stations) conducted by appropriate services (the police, emergency services, ABW, Railway Police, Fire Brigade). The volunteers were allocated specific regions and tasks. Before the last mass celebrated in the sports hall (Atlas Arena) the volunteers checked bags, vehicles and tickets at the entrance gates (in cooperation with the police), issued name badges, directed the traffic, provided first aid, worked on stalls, and distributed water and food.

To sum up, the professionalism of organizing the World Youth Day can be seen in the following:

- The formalized and developed organizational and spatial structure of the event;
- Various modern activities promoting the events, both on a national and international scale;
- An online system for registering groups of pilgrims in different language versions;
- Services provided by a group of over 1000 trained volunteers;
- Effective realization of several dozen small events (religious, cultural, tourist, recreational and sport-oriented).

5.2. The Participants of World Youth Day in the Archdiocese of Lodz

The Days in Dioceses in the Archdiocese of Lodz were attended by 10,173 people from nearly 80 countries around the world. The majority (over 77%) were Europeans (Figure 3). The remaining

⁸ The WYD Committee, appointed by the Archbishop of Krakow, was responsible for the organization of the main celebrations of the 2016 World Youth Day. A total of 120 employees and 50 long-term volunteers worked there. Events within the Days in Dioceses were prepared by diocesan organizing committees. On 2 February 2015, Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski issued a special decree establishing the WYD Organizing Committee in the Archdiocese of Łódź.

continents were represented by more or less equal numbers of pilgrims: Asia—5.65%, Africa—5.20%, South and Central America—4.67%, North America—4.54%. They included representatives of some exotic (not popularly known to Poles) countries, such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guyana, Guadalupe, Haiti, Congo, Madagascar, Martinique, Mauritius, New Caledonia, the Philippines, Rwanda, Reunion, the Seychelles or Zimbabwe. Australia and Oceania (the farthest from Poland countries) were represented by the smallest number of participants (under 0.5%). However, some pilgrims arrived in Lodz from as far as New Caledonia in the Pacific Ocean, which is located more than 15,500 km away from Poland.

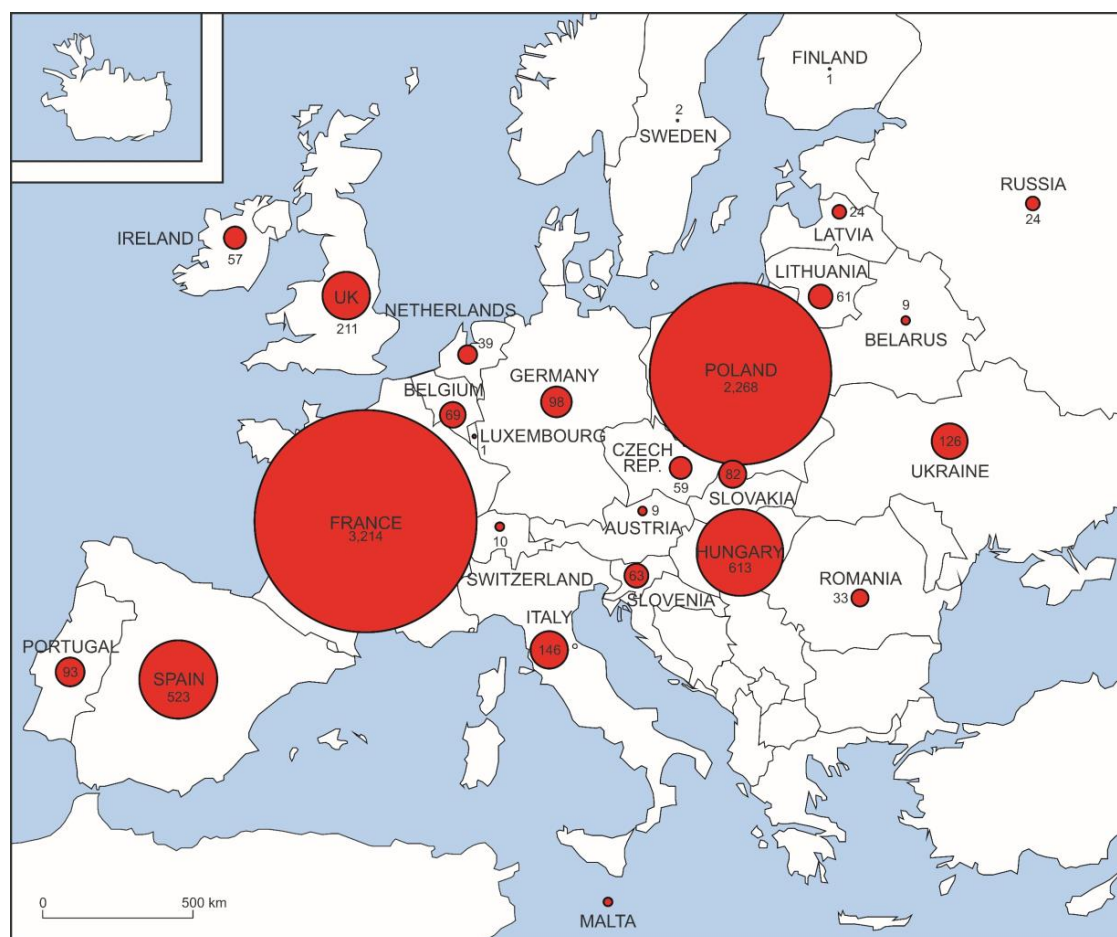


Figure 3. Origins of the European participants of the Days in the Dioceses in the Archdiocese of Lodz (Source: authors, based on the data provided by the organizers).

Paradoxically, the nation which was most numerously represented at the World Youth Day (WYD) in the Archdiocese of Lodz were not Poles (2268), but the French (3214), which is easy to explain. The organizer of one of four festivals was the French community Chemin Neuf, which very efficiently recruited pilgrims, not only in France, but in many other countries as well. As a result, the “Paradise in the City” festival attracted the greatest number of pilgrims (5300) from 48 countries (52.5% of the participants of all events, 60% of all the participating countries).

Besides the French and Poles, other nationalities were represented by far smaller numbers: Hungarians—by 613 people, Spaniards—523, Canadians—280, the British—211, and Americans—by 182. Most countries were represented by only a few or several pilgrims. We can observe here a clear relationship: the higher the percentage of Catholics in a given country (>50%) and the shorter the distance from Poland (<1500 km), the greater the number of pilgrims arriving for WYD festivities.

An additional factor encouraging people to travel to Lodz was the dynamic activity of Chemin Neuf or religious orders (Claretians, Jesuits) in a given country.

It is noteworthy that only the French, Poles, Spaniards, Canadians and Brazilians participated in all four festivals held in Lodz. Representatives of most nations took part in one festival (maximum two).

Based on the data obtained from the organizers of three festivals, it was possible to define the exact age and sex structure of the participants. A considerable majority of the pilgrims were people aged 15–30 (mostly in the 20–24 and 15–19 ranges), as the event is, by definition, directed towards young people. However, because the age limit is not observed too rigorously at the WYD, it was attended by both younger (under 10) and older (over 70) pilgrims. In the first case, they were usually children accompanying their parents. The other group consisted of priests, bishops, nuns and youth carers. They also included many participants—older by birth certificate but young at heart. The majority of people attending the Days in the Archdiocese of Lodz were women, who outnumbered men by 14%. What is interesting is that men did not form the majority in any of the age groups.

Following the WYD organization arrangement, most foreign pilgrims were accommodated with families in Lodz and other destinations in the region (59% of the people participating in Peter's Boat, Paradise in the City and Claretians' festivals). The remaining 41% stayed in schools and student hostels. There were many people willing to take the pilgrims into their own homes, but the festival organizers offered student's hostels (Technical University and University of Lodz) to the participants for their convenience, with the main attractions and events nearby.

More detailed information was provided by the survey that was conducted among the pilgrims. The relatively small sample ($n = 246$) cannot be regarded as fully representative of the whole group. The conclusions must be then approached carefully. The results that were obtained, however, give a general idea of the motivations, behaviour and opinions of the WYD participants. It was assumed—and later fully confirmed—that the Days in the Diocese were attended by two separate groups: Poles (49.2%) and foreigners (50.8%). Therefore, the description of WYD participants will be a comparative analysis of these two populations.

A vast majority of the respondents had participated in World Youth Day for the first time (nearly 91% of Poles and over 2/3 of the foreigners). Only 9.1% of Poles and nearly 1/3 of the foreigners stated that they had already taken part in a young people's meeting with the Pope before. What is important is that it was not confirmed that earlier experience of the event made the respondents more critical in their assessment and opinions.

Foreign pilgrims usually stayed at the Archdiocese of Lodz for 4–5 days (52.6%) or 6–7 days (36.3%). Shorter or longer stays were infrequent. Next, everybody travelled to Krakow to take part in the main WYD festivities. Thus, the foreigners spent a total of 10–14 days in Poland. The participation of Poles was slightly different. Due to their involvement in organizing the event, their stays were visibly longer. Nearly 1/3 of the respondents spent over a week in Lodz, 27.3%—4–5 days and 23.1%—6–7 days. There were also Polish pilgrims who appeared only at individual events for one (9%) or 2–3 days (8%). Including one week in Krakow, the average stay of Poles at World Youth Day can be estimated at 2–3 weeks.

The most popular means of transport for foreigners were the plane and the coach. Approximately half of the travelers (mostly from other continents) came to Poland by plane, and the other half (inhabitants of European countries) came by hired buses and coaches. Other means of public transport (e.g., trains, regular buses), as well as private cars, were statistically insignificant. The trips were usually prepared by various church institutions (parishes, religious communities, special diocesan bodies, orders, etc.—jointly over 70%), or travel agencies from the pilgrims' countries, specializing in religious tourism (11%).

The institutional organizer of the trip decided not only about the means of transport to be used, but also about a person's companions during the stay in Poland. Therefore, the foreigners usually arrived in Lodz in organized groups, together with other members of their parish (over 42%) or another religious community (23.7%), possibly in a group of friends (28.1%). Being accompanied by family

members, partners or traveling alone was reported by very few people. Poles' responses were quite different. Over half of them (52.9%) declared that they were taking part in the WYD events together with their friends and people they knew. Every third respondent was a member of a larger group (a parish community or another religious organization). Every tenth respondent arrived at WYD alone, with no company.

It was particularly interesting to analyze the answers to the question about the motivations and purposes of participating in World Youth Day. They were divided into two groups: the main reasons—religious (Figure 4) and the remaining ones—non-religious (Figure 5), presenting a range of several possible variants of responses. The respondents also had an opportunity to make a free comment to this open question.

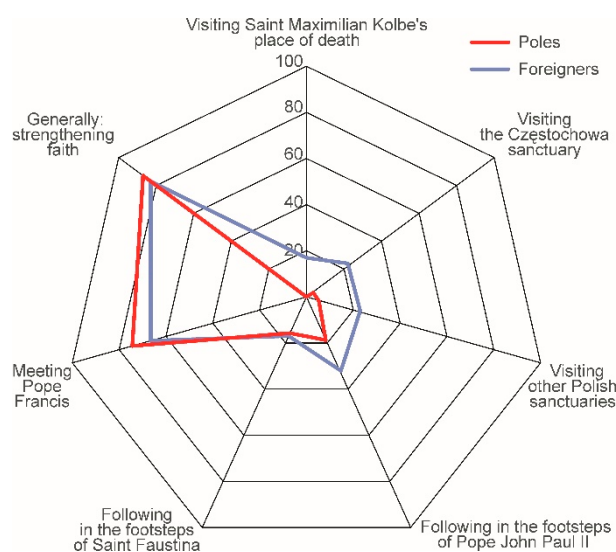


Figure 4. Religious purposes of respondents' participation in World Youth Day. (Source: authors, based on a survey).

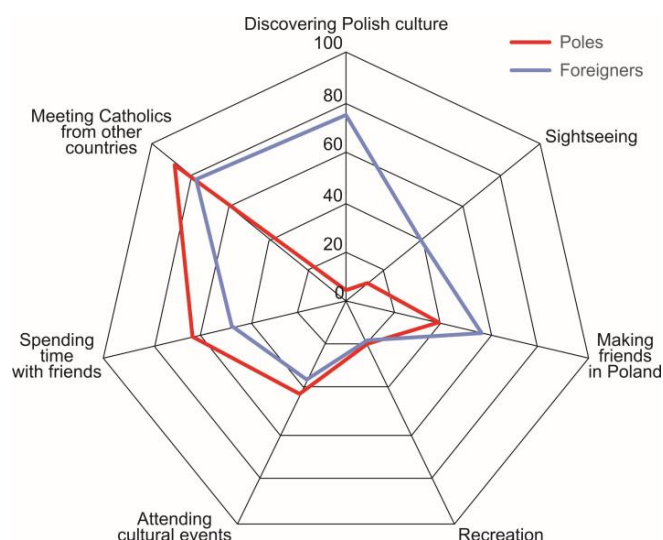


Figure 5. Non-religious purposes of respondents' participation in World Youth Day. (Source: authors, based on a survey).

As regards the religious-spiritual purposes of attending WYD, two were clearly predominant: "the overall strengthening of faith" (over 80% of the respondents) and "the meeting with Pope Francis" (ca. 70%). Those responses were most common among Poles and foreigners alike (Figure 4), with a few

percent of Poles more (as regards their desire to see the head of the Catholic Church, the difference was 8%—74% compared to 66%). As for the foreigners, the “religious-tourist” purposes turned out to be more important. They, much more often than Poles, wanted to visit places related to Pope John Paul II (33% and 19%, respectively), Częstochowa and other Polish sanctuaries (22% and 3%, 23% and 5%, respectively), as well as KL Auschwitz, where St. Maximilian Kolbe had died (16% and under 1%, respectively). A similar proportion of Polish and foreign respondents (16–17%) planned a trip following in the footsteps of St. Faustina.

Even bigger differences could be noticed as regards the non-religious purposes (Figure 5). Poles tended to prioritize “social” motivations: meeting Catholics from other countries (over 88%), spending time among friends (63%), as well as attending cultural events (42%). They were also important to the foreigners but indicated by them much more rarely (from a few to several percent). The only exception was the desire to make new friends in Poland. The hope to meet new, interesting people was expressed by 56% of foreign and 39% of Polish World Youth Day participants. Many more foreign than Polish pilgrims indicated “tourist” purposes: discovering Polish culture (76%), sightseeing (39%), as well as visiting museums, discovering Poland’s natural assets and practising active tourism (several percent each). Only a small proportion of Poles were interested in these forms of activity. The two groups were in complete agreement as regarded the recreational purpose. Every fifth respondent, regardless of their origin, hoped to relax and rest.

The respondents described their motivations in more detail in the open question. Naturally, the answers were extremely varied. After being put in order and aggregated, they can be divided into the following groups of motivations:

- Religious-spiritual, e.g., deepening the faith, sharing faith, meeting with God, meeting the head of the Church, pilgrimages to sacred places, recollections, spiritual development, service to the Church, experiencing the community (unity) of the Church;
- Cognitive-cultural, e.g., being curious of another country, other people, a different culture, the desire to travel, visit new places, practice English (mostly Poles), visiting friends and relatives (occasionally the foreigners);
- Socializing, e.g., striking new, international friendships, spending time among peers, meeting people of similar views and professing the same values;
- Charity and “patriotic” motivations—those regarded only Poles, who often explained their volunteering with a strong, inner need to give something to others, to serve a fellow man, as well as with the feeling of pride with Poland and the wish to show their country, city and Church to foreigners (see too: [Seweryn 2018](#)).

Pilgrims from abroad, with a few exceptions, had never been to Lodz or the Lodz region before. They did not have any family bonds with Poland either. Nearly half of the respondents had not known anything about Lodz and its region before arrival (the stay was organized by church institutions, which did not require the participants’ involvement). Those who searched for information about the place of their stay looked it up on the Internet (37%), asked their families and friends (17%), looked for books and tourist guidebooks (13%), and every tenth visited a tourist information point on the spot, in Poland. In Lodz, the most frequently used information centres were located in the historical centre of Lodz (Manufaktura, Piotrkowska Street) and at the main transport nodes (Łódź Kaliska and Łódź Fabryczna train stations, W. Reymont Airport). Local guides, both professional and amateur (Polish volunteers and carers/supervisors), were an important source of information about the region. Nearly half of the foreigners admitted having used their services.

The pilgrims’ schedule for their stay in the Archdiocese of Lodz was filled primarily with all kinds of religious-spiritual events, not leaving much time for tourism or recreation. Therefore, visiting the region was usually limited to walking around the town and making short trips to nearby destinations.

The most frequently indicated place in Lodz, visited by the respondents during the Days in the Dioceses, was Atlas Arena—a sports hall, where the final mass, closing the whole event was held

(84% of Poles and 75% of foreigners—cf. Figure 6). Other places that were frequently mentioned by the respondents included St. Stanislaw Kostka Cathedral, Poniatowskiego Park, “Bombonierka”, Expo Hall and the City Centre of Sport and Recreation, Słowackiego Park (Venice) and St. Faustina’s house, i.e., sites located in the southern part of the city centre, where the pilgrims’ life was bustling.

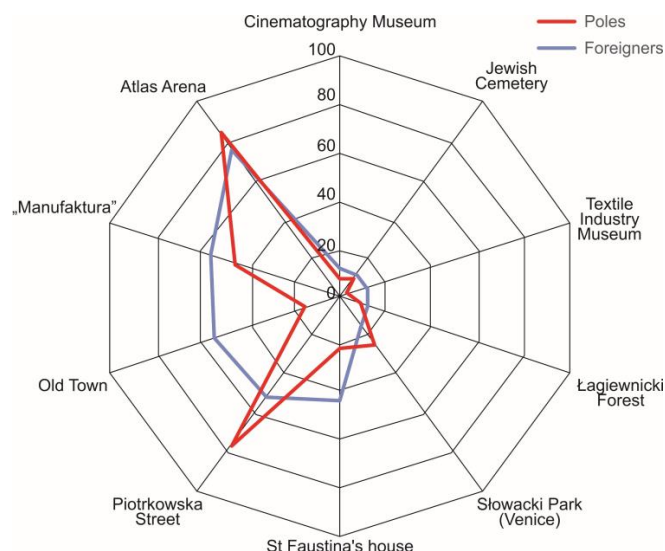


Figure 6. Lodz attractions visited by respondents (Source: authors, based on a survey).

Apart from taking part in religious events, the WYD participants could freely walk around the city. They were mostly interested in the historical centre of Lodz. Over half of the foreigners visited Manufaktura⁹, Piotrkowska Street¹⁰ and the Old Town¹¹. Poles’ preferences were slightly different. 3/4 went to Piotrkowska Street, half of them—to Manufaktura, and only 16%—to the Old Town. The differences in responses, however, may result from the misunderstanding of the term “Old Town”. The foreigners quite often considered the representational Piotrkowska Street to be a fragment of the oldest district of the city, which is not true. It is a fact, however, that all these three spaces have a historical-commercial-recreational character. Other tourist-recreational attractions of Lodz were far less interesting for the respondents. Every 8–9th foreigner visited Łagiewnicki Forest, the Museum of Textile Industry, the Museum of Cinematography and the Jewish Cemetery. Poles appeared there less often, but they additionally visited Księży Młyn and the Old Cemetery in Ogrodowa Street (10% each). Those two places were rather omitted by the foreign visitors. Only few people went to the Museum of Art, Palm House, “Fala” Aquapark or the Open-Air Museum of Wooden Architecture.

The respondents were also asked which event of the Days in Dioceses had impressed them most. Free and very emotional responses, given by Poles and foreigners alike, clearly pointed to the following: (1) the Dismissal Mass and the closing concert in Atlas Arena, (2) the Way of the Cross, led along the streets of the city, and (3) other, minor events (concerts, meetings, prayers), which took place during the festivals or in the parishes receiving the pilgrims.

The respondents also had the opportunity to evaluate different aspects of the Days in Dioceses (1 point = very bad to 5 points = very good). Both the events and the stay in the Archdiocese of Lodz itself were evaluated very highly by Poles and foreigners alike (Figure 7). The elements appreciated the

⁹ A shopping and recreation center, located on the premises of a former, revitalized 19th century textile factory, owned by Israel Poznański, one of the largest in the city.

¹⁰ The main street of Lodz, over 4 km long—a historical route and the central axis of the developing city in the 19th century. Today, the northern section of the street (2 km) is a representational promenade and the center of city life.

¹¹ The area of the medieval city surrounding the Old Market (north of Piotrkowska Street and west of Manufaktura). In 1945–1944, the Old Town was situated within the premises of the Litzmannstadt Ghetto, created by Germans.

highest (over 80% were rated as good and very good) included the following: the atmosphere during the festivities (92%!), the kindness of the inhabitants, security and hospitality (Figure 8). The last of the above-mentioned categories reached the highest arithmetical mean (4.83 among Poles and 4.89 among foreigners). There were, however, visible differences between the evaluation by Polish and foreign respondents. The Poles rated cultural and sports events accompanying the WYD higher, while the foreigners—the accommodation, tourist information and the cleanliness of Lodz streets.

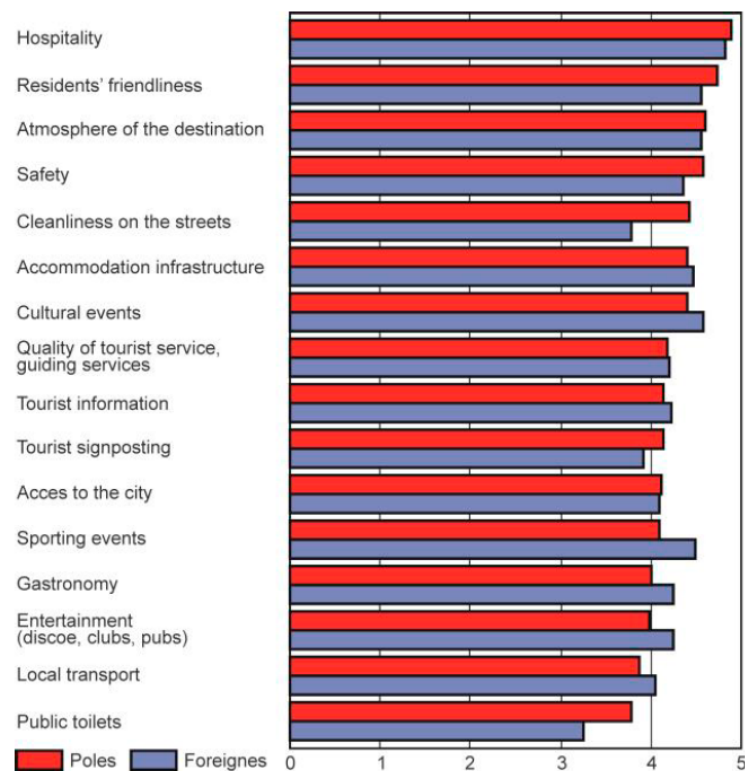


Figure 7. Mean ratings of different aspects of WYD in the Archdiocese of Lodz (1—very bad, 5—very good) (Source: authors, based on a survey).

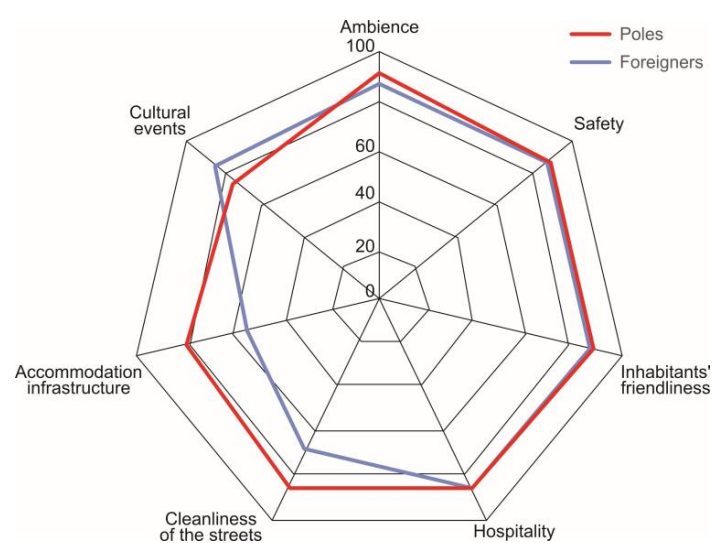


Figure 8. Top-rated aspects of WYD in the Archdiocese of Lodz (the total of “good” and “very good”) (Source: authors, based on a survey).

The last of the above-mentioned aspects is particularly interesting. The foreigners praised the cleanliness of the city streets (84% of positive ratings, the mean: 4.42), while the Poles were more careful when giving good and very good marks in this category (68%, mean: 3.78). As much as 11.5% thought that the level of cleanliness in the public spaces of Lodz should be a cause for embarrassment (it was rated as “very bad” and “bad”). This opinion was shared by 10 times fewer foreigners (only 1.5%).

What differed the respondents most were probably the negative opinions (Figure 9). The Poles first of all criticized public toilets (16.5% were rated as very bad and bad, the mean: 3.26), the cleanliness of streets and tourist graphic identification (6.6%; 3.91). The foreigners were definitely more critical of the local transport (9.6% of negative opinions, mean: 3.87) and access to the city (6.7%; 4.11), as well as—which may seem a little surprising—the standard of gastronomic services (low for 8.1% of respondents, despite the mean of 4.00). In general, however, the visitors were much less judgemental than Poles.

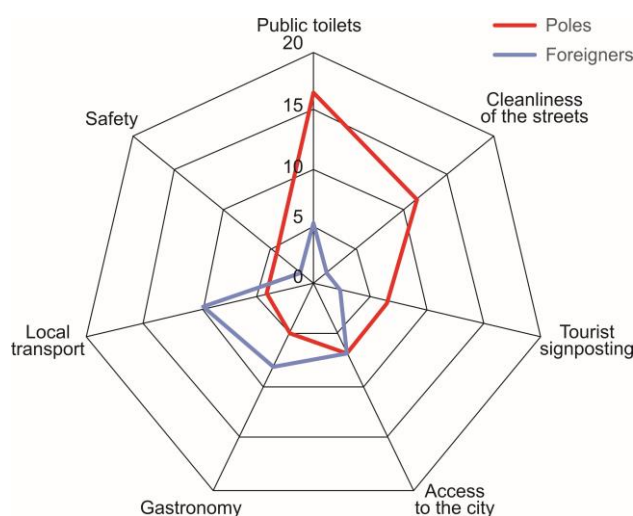


Figure 9. Lowest rated aspects of WYD in the Archdiocese of Lodz (the total of “bad” and “very bad”) (Source: authors, based on a survey).

Naturally, all the evaluations should be approached with extreme caution, as they are heavily subjective (lack of clear assessment criteria, various points of reference when evaluating, for instance, the standard of living in one’s own country), as well as sensitive to external factors (the context of evaluation, personal experience during WYD, courteousness, the feeling of gratitude towards the hosts, etc.). Nevertheless, the general impression of the Days in Dioceses must have been very positive, as over 90% of the respondents (90.9% of Poles and 91.9% of foreigners) declared that they would recommend Lodz and the Lodz region to their families and friends. A great majority of the respondents also claimed that they would be happy to take part in the next World Youth Day (80% of foreigners and 68% of Poles). These responses confirm the assumption that the event attracts young, active Catholics involved in the life of their religious community.

To sum up, based on the survey results, it can be concluded that, at the diocese level, WYD was attended by two main groups: Poles (nearly 1/4) and foreigners (3/4). The former usually came from Lodz and the Lodz region, played the role of hosts, often worked as volunteers helping to organize the event, spontaneously took care of the visitors, and took on the role of the local guides and animators of the guests’ free time. The latter, regardless of the country they had arrived from, behaved as guests, showed great interest in Poland, and were willing to take part in cultural, sports or tourist events. They can certainly be defined as pilgrim tourists or religious tourists. Despite the fact that the main, spiritual aim of the meeting was the same, the groups differed considerably, for example, as regards the motivations to participate in World Youth Day, religious or tourist-recreational behaviours, as well as evaluations and opinions. All of them, however, created a unique atmosphere of an exceptional holiday—a joyous meeting of the Catholic youth from all over the world.

5.3. Economic Outcomes

Expenditure levels during the Days in the Dioceses are extremely difficult to define, or even calculate, due to different forms of payment and varied charge rates, where factors such as the home country or the status of the participant have to be taken into consideration as well. Participating in the diocese stage on the premises of the Archdiocese of Lodz cost from EUR 12 (Polish volunteers used a subsidy from Lodz Curia) to EUR 220 (foreign participants of MAGIS 2016 and Paradise in the City festivals)¹². It was the price of the pilgrim's package, which included accommodation, board, water to drink, transport at the place of stay and transport to Krakow to the main WYD celebrations, insurance and a set of promotional items. The packages enabled the pilgrims to satisfy all their basic needs. Foreigners additionally paid for transport to and from Poland. This cost depended on the distance and the means of transport they chose.

According to the information provided by the Church, the payment for participation in individual festivals was used for their organization, covering the cost of renting facilities, transport, provisions for the pilgrims, sound systems, lighting, decoration, creating promotional materials and name badges, supplying water, organizing additional attractions, etc. However, they were not sufficient to cover all the costs of organizing the event. Some costs were covered by the families receiving the pilgrims; they not only put them up, but also gave them breakfast, drinking water and other support (transport, organizing free time, etc.). Some funds were provided from the state budget or local government budgets (security, medical aid, etc.).

Considering the rates suggested by the Episcopacy of Poland¹³, it can be estimated that the income generated by over 10,000 visitors in the Archdiocese of Lodz reached at least ca. EUR 300,000. On the other hand, assuming average charges (medium price range), the sum of EUR 950,000 is obtained. That money above all went to small, local firms (catering, sound management, lighting, transport, printing, etc.). Such enterprises certainly significantly benefited from providing services for the event, but region-wise, those were still rather small sums.

The respondents taking part in the survey were asked about their expenses during their stay in the Archdiocese of Lodz (apart from the pilgrim's package and transport to and from Poland). Nearly every tenth foreigner and every third Pole declared a lack of any additional expenses. The remaining mentioned small, spontaneous shopping (bottled drinking water, extra food, devotional items, souvenirs). The average foreign pilgrim's expenses were about EUR 53 and Poles spent about EUR 32. These sums are significantly smaller (2–3 times) than the expenses of the tourists visiting the city and region of Lodz¹⁴ in 2016 (despite the fact that the pilgrims stayed longer).

Assuming that the respondents' declarations concerning their expenses reflect the shopping behaviors of the remaining WYD participants, we may try to calculate the overall amount of money spent in the region by the pilgrims (Bik and Stasiak 2017). This sum is not very large, amounting to ca. EUR 400,000. However, the participants of the Days in the Dioceses did not arrive in order to shop, but for quite different, non-commercial purposes. The majority of pilgrims were not interested in spending money at all. Only one third of the respondents admitted that they would be willing to spend more, above all on food, souvenirs and sightseeing.

5.4. Promotional Outcomes

One of the WYD ideas that was particularly alive during the Days in the Dioceses was developing new friendships and sharing faith by young people coming from various parts of the world (Jackowski et al. 2016). Pilgrims' learning about the culture and traditions of a place they visit is

¹² These are costs for the entire duration of stay.

¹³ The Episcopacy of Poland imposed the minimum charge for all foreigners in all the dioceses (30 Euro), so that they could not compete for foreign pilgrims through a lowered price of the packages.

¹⁴ Respectively: EUR 102 and EUR 103 (Napierała 2016).

most strongly affected by their personal experience and relationships with the inhabitants. It is later reflected in the perception they have of the whole visited country. Thus, it was decided to examine the perception of Poland by pilgrims from abroad, as well as the perception of the pilgrims by Poles. For this purpose, the authors thoroughly analyzed the contents of the media messages posted on the internet (YouTube, the local TV and the Archdiocese of Lodz news), as well as in the regional press (five newspapers). Among numerous reports from WYD, only those were selected which included direct comments made by the participants. In general, it was possible to record the opinions of 84 foreigners (73 on YouTube, 11 in the press) from 27 countries, including France (19), Spain (8), Zimbabwe (7) and Ukraine (6). It is possible to observe a certain tendency: the reporters interviewed representatives of the most numerous groups of pilgrims, but also representatives of countries which are exotic to Poles (e.g., Haiti, Martinique, Sri Lanka, New Caledonia). They participated in the two largest festivals in Lodz (Peter's Boat, Paradise in the City). The interviewees usually spoke about their motivations and purposes for participating in WYD and coming to Lodz, as well as evaluating their stay in Poland.

The main motivation to come to WYD was the desire to meet Catholics from all over the world (21 statements), to deepen faith (13) and to feel unity with other members of the Catholic Church (11). This last motivation was particularly important for people coming from countries where Catholics make up only a small part of society. In the context of the survey results, it may be surprising that for only five people it was important to meet the Pope, and nobody mentioned St. Faustina or St. Maximilian Kolbe.

It is much more difficult to sort out and generalize the opinions of the foreign visitors in Poland. Five said, generally, that they simply liked it there. However, the majority of responses were very emotional, full of pathos and exaggerated statements (Poland is extraordinary, wonderful, beautiful, breath-taking, etc.). Some pilgrims stressed that they felt very well there ("I feel here at home, though I've just arrived and I'm very far from my country"). They appreciated the way they were welcomed, the program that had been prepared for them to have fun and pray at the same time ("I'm very happy to be here with you—Poles. I like the way we are received here and I'm really proud to be here").

There were also comments regarding Polish food, which was described as "delicious", "good" or "different", as well as the weather in Poland, which some people loved (e.g., an Irish woman) and others thought it was too cold or too variable. Some visitors were surprised with the amount of greenery in Lodz, as well as the number and size of churches. Generally speaking, foreigners staying in the Archdiocese of Lodz greatly approved of Poland.

The pilgrims also commented on Poles, who often received them under their own roofs. The hosts were described in a very positive way, as amiable, friendly and kind people. This is interesting as it contradicts a popular self-stereotype that Poles are reserved, depressed, dissatisfied and complaining about everything.

During World Youth Day, the old Polish saying "a guest in the home, God in the home" became alive again. In the Archdiocese of Lodz, nearly 3500 pilgrims could experience Polish hospitality, staying with families and seeing what their everyday life was like. The foreigners often stressed in the interviews how well they were received by Poles and how nice their hosts were. They were surprised by Polish hospitality, including the meals they were offered ("We liked the people in Lodz best. They cared for us for all these days. This care we have experienced is really wonderful. The food is also delicious. Most of us lived with Lodz families. They prepared everything. The tables were always full. We really felt like home").

Both the hosts and the guests realized that there was a language barrier between them. In order to make the communication easier, they used Google translator ("Even elderly people manage Google very well, so they explain, they found great solutions and this exchange really is very, very fruitful and so very happy"), and they talked using gestures ("Most of us communicate with the families using gestures. But it's wonderful").

To sum up, foreigners highly evaluated both Poland and Poles. Table 1 presents 25 words which were most frequently used by the foreigners. The word "very" comes first—it was used 63 times,

usually in combination with “much”, “important”, “nice”, “good”, “nicely”. Other frequent words included “Poland”, “here” and “Lodz”, i.e., words describing the locations where the events took place. Based on the words which were used by the foreigners more often than ten times, we might risk defining the Days in the Dioceses in Lodz as a “wonderful experience, a very good meeting to share God here”.

Table 1. Twenty-five words occurring most frequently in foreigners’ and Poles’ statements.

No.	Foreigners		Poles	
	Word	Occurrence Rate	Word	Occurrence Rate
1.	very	63	very	55
2.	Poland	40	youth	30
3.	here	31	joy	22
4.	Lodz	27	preparations	20
5.	meet	25	pilgrim	19
6.	God, Christ	24	meet	17
7.	well	17	together, all	13
8.	together, all	15	song	12
9.	share	13	extraordinary	12
10.	an experience	12	important	12
11.	wonderful	10	God, Christ	9
12.	experience	10	language	8
13.	faith	9	wonderful	8
14.	nice	9	to experience	8
15.	world	8	dance	6
16.	happiness	8	prayer	6
17.	meeting	6	surprise	6
18.	joy	6	cheers	4
19.	nicely	6	fatigue	4
20.	to experience	6	talk	4
21.	interesting	6	wait	4
22.	satisfaction	4	involvement	4
23.	great	4	chance	3
24.	extraordinary	3	testimony	3
25.	Church	3	smile	2

Source: authors.

Poles’ comments in the media underwent a similar analysis (the total of 63, including 55 video broadcasts on YouTube and eight press reports). The interviews concerned above all three principal issues: the program and organization of the Days in the Dioceses, the opinions of host families, and general expressions describing the pilgrims and WYD. Different forms of the word “prepare” were used 20 times, which points to the fact that the role of host on World Youth Day and the smooth running of the event were treated very seriously (“We were preparing with the group for the whole year, in a very organized way, so that our guests from Italy and Ukraine could sleep in our house, had something to eat and something to do. So that they did whatever they liked and when they liked. But they also had some free time. It was important that they learnt something about the city, our culture and us as Poles, as young people”). The amount of preparation was accompanied with traditional Polish complaining. Poles mostly complained of being very tired, but they also stressed their satisfaction.

The comments of the families receiving the pilgrims focused on the following:

- Motivations (a form of returning the hospitality of other people, e.g., during pilgrimages);
- Ways of overcoming the language barrier (usually with a smile and gestures, learning basic Polish words);
- Traditional Polish dishes (nearly 20 specialities were mentioned, including zurek, pierogi and home-made bread);
- Opinions about the guests (“smiling”, “cheerful”, “grateful”, “helping”).

Poles, similar to foreigners, most frequently used the word “very” (55 times, e.g., “we are very happy”, “very much”, “very important”). Other frequent words included: “youth” (30), “joy” (22), “preparations” (20), “pilgrim” (19) and “meet” (17). Two words were not used by foreign visitors: “fatigue” and “difficult”. It could be said that the hosts focused on the organization and meeting pilgrims from all over the world, while the guests paid more attention to meeting God and other human beings.

Perhaps it was the meeting of these two different worlds (host’s and visitor’s) that was the essence of World Youth Day. The event is a tool for breaking cultural barriers, and the opening of one person to another. Patience, the will to communicate and a positive attitude on both sides, as well as the same values (faith in Christ) make them happy members of one, huge community (Kalinowska-Żeleźnik and Lusińska 2011).

6. Discussion

World Youth Day can be treated as a long-term marketing strategy of the Roman Catholic Church, aimed at refreshing its image and convincing young people that it is a resilient and modern religious institution (Pfadenhauer 2010). The attractive, diversified and colorful event is also a tool of new evangelization, serving to propagate the canons of faith, to keep the current believers and to win over new ones. In this context, WYD is treated as an example of Peter L. Berger’s theory of counter-secularization (Lynch 2008), an innovation aimed at maintaining the continuity of Catholicism (Mandes and Sadłoń 2018) or a modern pilgrimage event of evangelistic nature (Rymarz 2008; Norman and Mark 2011).

It proves a challenge for the organizers to find new means of communication with young people. Thus, they widely use the media that are popular among the youth: television, Internet, social media (Hepp and Veronika 2009). WYD is held during the holidays, which, on the one hand, facilitate the organization of outdoor events and, on the other hand, make it possible to combine religious practices with leisure and traveling (Mandes and Sadłoń 2018). Tourism allows the young to achieve values that are important to them: to see new places and to meet new people. Gonzalez et al. (2019) emphasize the important role of home hospitality as representation of religion in action. Thanks to everyday direct contacts, pilgrims and the families that accommodate them become closer to one another, break down intercultural barriers (Kalinowska-Żeleźnik and Lusińska 2011), enter into cordial relations, but also mutually strengthen their faith. Visitors have the chance to learn what the real life of the inhabitants of the visited country looks like. The practice to host the participants of WYD free of charge is several decades older than the contemporary vogue for couch surfing.

Carefully prepared and elaborate program, which has been evolving for years, is of great importance for the popularity of WYD. It is a “hybrid event” (Pfadenhauer 2010) that combines traditional, conventional religious elements with modern festivals, often of wholly lay nature. Hence, huge religious events constitute a sui generis bridge between traditional religious culture and modern popular culture, enable transmission of religious content in a manner understandable for the contemporary man (Zduniak 2015). That is why, for instance, the culminant meeting with the Pope is surrounded with multiple cultural, sports, tourist and recreational attractions that cater for all tastes and meet different expectations of the participants (Bogacz-Wojtanowska et al. 2016; Jackowski et al. 2016; Kate and Hemel 2019).

Organized since 1997, the “Days in Dioceses” component is destined for new pilgrimage tourism: spiritual preparation for the main celebrations, but also relaxation, getting to know the host country (its attractions, culture, cuisine, etc.) and meetings with its inhabitants. For the young, it is a perfect opportunity to experience religion in a completely new, emotional way, to experience unity of opinions with peers from other countries and participate in diverse events of hybrid (religious and lay) nature (Rymarz 2008; Mandes and Sadłoń 2018). And, when the opportunity arises, to travel, sightsee, discover, rest, entertain themselves. All the more so because this manner of getting to know the world does not require high spending and gives one a sense of security. In this regard, the obtained results

correspond with the results of numerous other researchers (Kalinowska-Żeleźnik and Lusińska 2011; Bogacz-Wojtanowska et al. 2016; Jackowski et al. 2016; Kozak and Pęziński 2016; Borkowski 2017).

It is also worth pointing out that the eventization of faith satisfies not only fundamental spiritual needs, but also other human needs: biological and social ones, the need for security, for respect and acceptance, for self-fulfilment (Zduniak 2015) as well as for the sense of uniqueness, festiveness, celebration of special moments in life.

7. Conclusions

On the basis of wide-ranging and varied studies, we may draw the following conclusions:

1. Contemporary religious mega-events are not much different from other mass events. The main difference is the theme. All of them are complicated logistic undertakings, which require professional preparation and realization, effective organization by a team consisting of specialists in a variety of areas, as well as an army of strongly involved volunteers and public service workers. The attractiveness of an event to pilgrims is determined by its religious theme, but also the promotion campaigns, visuals, accompanying events, media coverage, etc. These activities demonstrate the constantly growing professionalism of the organizers of religious events, including World Youth Day.
2. During World Youth Day, held on 15–24 July 2016, the Archdiocese of Lodz was visited by over 10,200 pilgrims from 80 different countries. They were mostly young people (15–29), secondary school and university students, who had never been to Poland before. The main purposes of their trip were religious and spiritual (strengthening faith, meeting Pope Francis, following in the footsteps of St. John Paul II, visiting Polish sanctuaries). However, non-religious reasons also played an important role (e.g., meeting Catholics from other countries, discovering Polish culture and making friends in Poland). Despite a varied religious program, the pilgrims found time for fun, rest and sightseeing together. These additional attractions significantly enriched the program of their stay, highlighted the joyous character of the event, and built and strengthened the feeling of community and the exceptionality of the time spent together. In this sense, we can talk about clear symptoms of the eventization of faith.
3. Due to the relatively hermetic character of the event (focusing on the spiritual dimension, the organization mostly by church bodies, pilgrims rarely using external gastronomic and accommodation services), its influence on the economy of Lodz and the Lodz region should be considered insignificant. Organizing the Days in the Dioceses brought in a total income of about EUR 1.2–1.3 million. The total cost of preparing the event and actual staging remains unknown. World Youth Day above all had a promotional and image-creating function. Thousands of people from all over the world, who had not even heard about Lodz before, left the city satisfied and became its “walking proponents”. The positive message (recommendations) spread among family and friends and on the social media should result in a more positive image of Lodz and the Lodz region (or even the whole of Poland) and, consequently, increased tourism in the near future. In this context, the co-financing of the event by state and local authorities (free use of the police, fire brigades, ambulances etc.) should be considered a kind of promotional investment.

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