

BRAZIL: “DEEP BRAZIL” IN TV FICTION¹

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7764/obitel.24.e.bra>

Authors

Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3477-1068>)

Cláudia Peixoto de Moura (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1047-255X>)

Team

Marcel Antonio Verrumo (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2488-3616>)

Renata Pinheiro Loyola (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1902-9738>)

Bruno Iury Fracchia (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2053-1787>)

João Alfredo Alineri Ramos (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7997-4929>)

Talitta Oliveira Cancio dos Santos (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2136-7816>)

Catarina Lopes (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9781-004X>)

Felipe Gabriel da Silva (<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2396-979X>)

Renan dos Santos Dias (<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-8259-0794>)

Hellen Cristina de Almeida Barreto (<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5348-3142>)

Introduction

In what ways is the imaginary idea of who we are constructed in fictional stories? What are the origins of fictional stories that reach and impact considerable audiences? In an attempt to respond to the “2023 Theme of the Year”, “What is happening to the narratives in Ibero-American television fiction?”, we will use the metaphor “Deep Brazil”, a powerful key interpretation of Brazil presented throughout the year in different formats (telenovelas and TV series), in new productions, remakes, and reruns. Even in the era of streaming, Brazilian television fiction, especially the telenovela, has been confirmed as “narrative of the nation” (Lopes, 2003) and “communicative resource” (Lopes, 2009) in the current era of streaming, as a space for debate on topics linked on identity and conflicting interpretations of Brazil as social formation. Television images are not merely in the present, rather they represent a set of complex temporal relations, suggesting that we should think of Brazil as an intersection of different times, spaces, images, and voices.

In the narratives of travelers and settlers, in chronicles, journals, and stories of different kinds, the categories of *hinterland* and *coast* were forged and coexisted as opposites as much as complementary: opposites because one expressed the reverse of the other and complementary because, as in a mirror game, one was built in function of the other. These are dominant categories in the Brazilian social thought, in analyses that shift between the conventional and the unfamiliar within the same

¹ Obitel Brasil team thanks Kantar Ibope Media for kindly providing the information that made it possible to present this study.

country, echoing the uncomfortable and persistent belief that “Brazil does not recognize Brazil”. Molded as the basic categories to represent the nation, they are mentioned in books, cinema, or television, highlighting the contrasts between the rural and urban landscapes. However, we wish to appropriate the metaphor of “Deep Brazil” as a more actual concept that corroborates the hybridization of the *hinterland* and the *coast* instead of their opposition or complementarity.

Working in the cocoa plantation or dealing with cattle, laboring in industries, and performing elementary jobs of the “common man”, the characters’ journeys synthesize the reality of a large number of Brazilians living in unstable work relations in the countryside or the city, migrating from one place to another looking for work. Their lives portray a country that does not respect rigid limits between scenarios and ways of life, which feed back into each other and produces this unique social formation. Therefore, “Deep Brazil” is an analogy of a parallel Brazil where a large part of the population lives, whether in the *hinterland* or the *coast*. Throughout our history, peoples and cultures have been silenced by the dominating capitalism, colonialism, indigenous holocaust, slavery, and corruption. It is not difficult to see that within the “Hybridized Deep Brazil” there is room for stories of telenovelas like *Saramandaia* (1976), *O Rei do Gado* (1996) and *Pantanal* (2002), as well as those of *Vale Tudo* (1988), *Avenida Brasil* (2012), and *Vai na Fé* (2023)². All narratives of the imagined nation where strong similarities and differences, inequalities and oppressions are present.

Finally, we explain the choice of the concept “Deep Brazil” as the title of this chapter. Its origin comes from classic Brazilian literature, precisely from *Os Sertões* (1902) by major writer Euclides da Cunha. We believe this term, as a metaphor, expresses the diverse “brazils” existing in this vast national territory. It will be found along this chapter, especially in “Theme of the Year”.

1. The audiovisual context of Brazil in 2023

1.1. Broadcast television in Brazil

The Brazilian television system has seven television networks with national coverage, five private and two public.

² Note: In this work, Brazilian telenovela titles without indication of the production company are all from TV Globo.

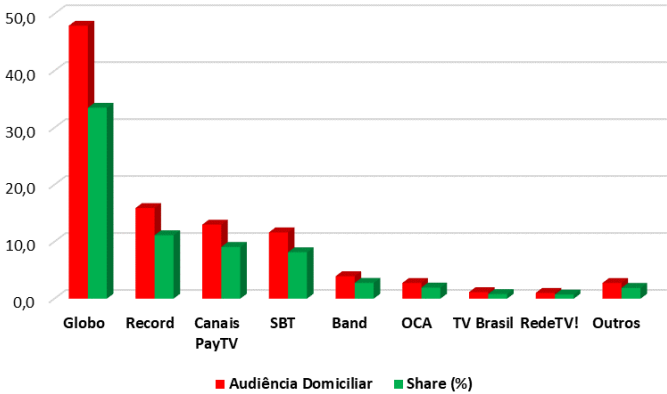
Table 1. National broadcast TV stations in Brazil in 2023

Private Broadcasters (5)	Public Broadcasters (2)
TV Globo	TV Brasil
TV Record	
SBT	TV Cultura
TV Band	
Rede TV!	
Total Broadcasters = 7	

Source: Obitel Brasil

Graph 1. TV audience and share by broadcaster in 2023

Broadcaster	Home Rating	Rating (%)	Share (%)
Globo	11.3	47,5	33,5
Record	3.8	16,0	11,1
PayTV Channels	3.1	13,0	9,1
SBT	2.8	11,8	8,1
Band	0.9	3,8	2,8
OCA ³	0.7	2,9	1,9
TV Brasil	0.3	1,3	0,8
RedeTV!	0.2	0,8	0,7
Others	0.7	2,9	1,9
TOTAL	23.8	100,0	69,9



Source: Kantar IBOPE Media and Obitel Brasil

Broadcast TV faced a drop in audience throughout 2023, going from 21.6% in 2022 to 20.7% (discounted 3.1% of Pay TV Channels). Only Record, TV Brasil and OCA were not affected by this loss of viewers.

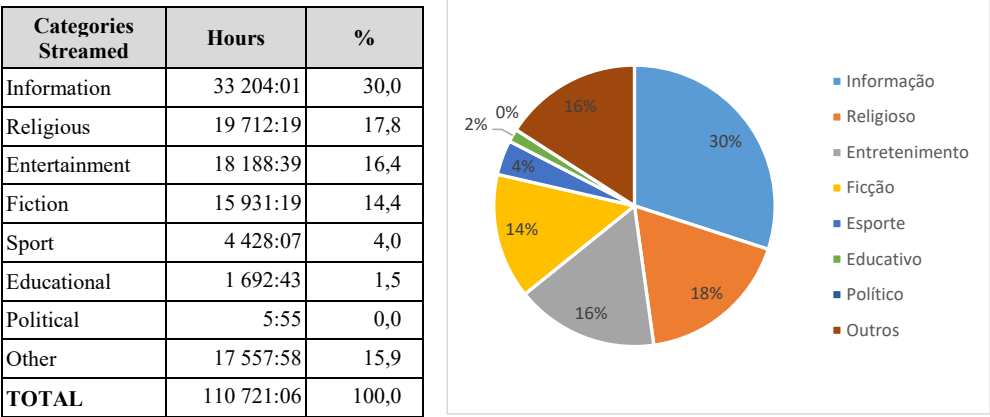
TV Globo remained the leader viewers despite a decrease in the share of 0.5% and ratings going from 11.7% to 11.3%. Even so, the broadcaster remained far ahead of the second-placed Record, which kept its 3.8% rating and share stable. There were also no changes in the third-placed SBT which remained in this position, even though its rating went from 3.1% to 2.8%.

Pay TV also lost viewers. In 2022, paid channels had a rating of 3.5% and a share of 10.2%. In 2023, they fell to 3.1% and 9.1%, respectively. As for the media penetration ratings³, the Internet remains in the lead despite its slight drop from 90.8%

³ OCA: Other Open Channels (Outros Canais Abertos in portuguese): open broadcasters that do not have reported viewership.

to 90.1%. The growth trend present in the film industry stands out, whose penetration increased from 13.9% to 14.8%, achieving a solid post-pandemic recovery. To reach these numbers, the film industry released new blockbusters and sequels of selected franchises, such as “Avatar: The Way of Water”, or new versions of transmedia works, such as “Barbie”, the highest grossing film in Brazil in 2023, and “Super Mario Bros: the Movie”. Radio and print media (newspapers and magazines) increased significantly, from 43.9% to 46.7, proving that traditional media is regaining audiences.⁴

Graph 2. Genres and hours broadcast on TV programming in 2023⁵



Source: Kantar Ibope Media and Obitel Brasil

The Graph 2 remains the same as in 2022. In the first place, the genre ‘information’ increased from 32,000 to 33,000 hours but dropped from 30.9% to 30% in share. The numbers of the ‘religious’ genre have increased by 2,000 hours, demonstrating the appeal of evangelical content on open TV. ‘Entertainment’ and ‘fiction’ increased substantially by 28.6% and 78%, respectively, compared to 2022. Fiction, which accumulated 8,000 hours, reached more than 15,000, thanks to the resurgence of the sector in broadcasting TV post-pandemic. Finally, ‘Political’ genre suffered the greatest retraction, from 389 to 5 hours, due to the end of the election year (2022).

⁴ Media penetration index comparing 2023 with 2022: Internet, 90.1%, from 90.8% in the previous year (decrease); Outdoor Media, 79.9%, from 80.3% (down); Open TV, 70.1%, from 72.1% (fall); Radio, 46.7%, from 43.9% (increase); Pay TV, 24%, 26.1% (down); Magazines, 6.9%, 6.5% (increase); Newspapers, 7.19%, from 6.29% (increase); Cinema, 13.9%, from 11.3% (increase). Source: Kantar Ibope Media: Target Group Index.

⁵ Genres: Fiction: film, miniseries, telenovela, series; Entertainment: auditorium, cars and engines, culinary, game show, humorous, children’s, musical, awards, reality show, show; Information: debate, documentary, interview, journalism, report; Sport: sport, football; Religious; Educational; Political; and Others: others that are not listed, rural, health, raffle, telesales, travel and tourism. This final categorization was made by Obitel Brasil, based on categories from Kantar Ibope Media.

1.2. PayTV and VoD platforms in Brazil

Table 2a. PayTV channels in Brazil

10 most watched PayTV channels in Brazil			
Channel	Genre	Origin	Rating (home audience)
Viva	Fiction	Brazil	0.08
SporTV	Sport	Brazil	0.07
AXN	Fiction	Singapore	0.05
GloboNews	Information	Brazil	0.05
Premiere Clubes	Sport	Brazil	0.05
Universal TV	Fiction	United States	0.05
ESPN	Sport	United States	0.05
Discovery Channel	Entertainment	United States	0.04
Cartoon Network	Kids	United States	0.03
Megapix	Fiction	Brazil	0.03

Source: Kantar Ibope Media and Obitel Brasil

Among the leading channels on PayTV, Viva, owned by Globo Group, is at the top. Despite its position, the channel numbers have dropped compared to the previous year, where it had a rating of 0.19, close to first placed SporTV, with 0.21. In second place, SporTV is at 0.07, a retraction justified by the end of the coverage of major sporting events, such as the “2022 World Cup” and “Copa Libertadores da América”. Among the top ten, Megapix, owned by Globo Group, intended for the exhibition of films, holds the last position.

Table 2b. VoD platforms in Brazil

10 most important VoD platforms in Brazil
1. Netflix
2. Prime Video (Amazon)
3. Looke ⁶
4. DirecTV Go
5. HBO Max (Warner Bros. Discovery)
6. Globoplay (Globo)
7. DaFilms
8. FlixOlé
9. Simply South
10. Discovery+ (Warner Bros. Discovery)

Source: Ancine (National Film Agency 2023)

Ancine (National Film Agency) has made its 2023, report available⁷ and it identifies the largest streaming platforms operating in Brazil via subscription. Looke and Globoplay are the only Brazilian ones. The first holds 5.2 thousand audiovisual works, with 12.6% being national content, and the second offers 2.5 thousand works, 34.9% of those are Brazilian productions - the largest national catalog⁸. Considering the ten platforms researched, only 8% of the content is Brazilian, 69% of which are independent productions.

1.3. Funding sources for the audiovisual sector

The year 2023 marks the return of public investments in the Brazilian audiovisual sector focused on recovering creative and productive capacity. The investment reached around 470 million dollars due to public calls from the Audiovisual Sector Fund (FSA, Fundo Setorial do Audiovisual in portuguese) and other Incentive Laws.

Ancine held the second edition of the TV/VoD Public Call with an investment of approximately 18 million dollars. To encourage the production of audiovisual content on both open and paid networks, the call allocated resources to productions in the North, Northeast, and Midwest regions through a public policy aiming to favor the “Deep Brazil”.

⁶ Although considered platforms, according to Ancine’s criteria, Looke, DirecTVGo, DaFilms, and FlixOlé are digital media repositories.

⁷ <https://bitly.cx/IA0>

⁸ List of the five largest SVOD categories in national content (except Claro TV+), according to Ancine’s list: Globoplay (34.9%), Looke (12.6%), DirecTV Go (11.0%), Prime Video (4.4%), Netflix (3.8%) and HBO Max (2.7%).

The Paulo Gustavo Law (LPG, Lei Paulo Gustavo in portuguese) became one of the most relevant public resources for funding audiovisual projects. Although it was created on an emergency basis in 2022 by the Brazilian Congress after the COVID-19 pandemic, the law was regulated under the Lula government, and its first proposals were published in 2023.

In 2023, the advertising industry invested 10.4% more compared to 2022, going from 424 million dollars to around 468 million. On the other hand, there was a drop in advertising investments⁹ for open and closed television. The budget for Broadcast TV dropped from 41.7% in 2022 to 39.6% in 2023. The percentage allocated to PayTV was 6.3% in 2022 compared to 5% in 2023.

1.4. Communication policies

After a cycle of setbacks in the communication industry during the Bolsonaro Government (2019-2022), 2023 saw a rebuilding in several sectors. In culture, the return of the Ministry of Culture was crucial to resuming audiovisual productions in the country considering the following achievements: normalization of federal public funding by Ancine; the Paulo Gustavo Law; the Aldir Blanc Law; mandatory quota for Brazilian productions (films and series) on PayTV, ensuring the stability of the audiovisual sector; and finally the new format of the Superior Council of Cinema, with unprecedented attention to gender equality, regional and ethnic-racial diversity.

There are still challenges, such as the regulation of VoD, the definition of copyright for creators and producers, improvements in infrastructure, and the distribution of national productions that impact the internationalization of the Brazilian audiovisual industry.

In the public sector, the year was marked by actions such as the expansion of the National Communications Network with the inclusion of universities and federal institutes; the pilot project of the Brazil Digital Program; the resumption of TV Brasil Internacional; and the creation of the Working Group to discuss social participation and propose measures to improve public communications (EBC, 2024)¹⁰.

1.5. Digital and mobile infrastructure

Internet access in Brazilian homes grew again in 2023 thanks to more serviceable connectivity in houses in classes C, D, E. In Brazil, 84% of houses are connected to the internet, an increase of 4% compared to 2022, remaining stable since 2020¹¹.

The number of people without internet connection fell from 36 million (2022) to 29 million (2023). As multiple activities and services are available online, not having access to the internet can cut off citizens from opportunities.

⁹<https://janela.com.br/2024/03/20/publicidade-no-brasil-cresce-10-4-em-2023-acima-ate-da-retomada-de-2022/>

¹⁰ EBC (Empresa Brasil de Comunicação), manager of TV Brasil, is a federal public company and has a public media conglomerate in the country: Rádio Nacional, Rádio MEC, TV Brasil, Agência Brasil, Radioagência Nacional. <https://www.ebc.com.br/>

¹¹ Cetic.br|NIC.br, <https://cetic.br/pt/>

In Brazil, the mobile phone is the most used tool to access the internet (99%), followed by the television (58%), with its access via cable or fiber optics on the rise for a decade, and computers (42%). Although connectivity has increased, the quality of access is still unequal.

There was a growth in listeners of *podcasts*, the favorite media of almost 30% of the population, and videos, which increased to 45%. As for video sharing, we have music (50%), news (48%), and religious events or other programs (34%).

Online services and purchases were very popular in 2023: 73% of the population used free government services, and 50% made online purchases. Optical fiber continues to be the most used connection technology, but data security is still a concern.

In 2022, the 5G technology was implemented in Brazil, being considered the fastest in Latin America. However, it serves only 10% of the population. The promise is that by 2029 there will be full coverage countrywide. In this way, 4G continues to dominate the mobile phone market.

2. Analysis of the year: the national and Iberoamerican fiction premiere in 2023

The data presents us with the possibility of quantifying and understanding the predominant elements broadcasted on screen and identifying the topics with the highest audience. The ten most-watched productions in 2023 show what people have been watching and the representations in television fiction, including those of the “Deep Brazil”.

Table 1. Premiere fictions aired in 2023
(national and foreign within the Obitel scope)

PREMIERE NATIONAL TITLES – 39	PREMIERE FOREIGN TITLES – 8
TV Globo (32 titles)	SBT (4 titles)
1. <i>Amor Perfeito</i> (telenovela)	1. <i>Minha Fortuna é te Amar</i> (telenovela, Mexico)
2. <i>Aruanas</i> (series) - season 2	2. <i>Três Vezes Ana</i> (telenovela, Mexico)
3. <i>Cara e Coragem</i> (telenovela)	3. <i>Um Refúgio para o Amor</i> (telenovela, Mexico)
4. <i>Cine Holliudy</i> (series) – season 3	4. <i>Vencer o Desamor</i> (telenovela, Mexico)
5. <i>Cinema do Líder: As Five</i> (series) – season 2	Band (1 title)
	5. <i>Valor da Vida</i> (telenovela, Portugal)
6. <i>Elas Por Elas</i> (telenovela)	TV Brasil (1 title)
7. <i>Encantado’s</i> (series)	6. <i>Maria Madalena</i> (telenovela, Mexico)
8. <i>Família Paraíso</i> (series) – season 2	TV Cultura (2 titles)
9. <i>Fuzuê</i> (telenovela)	7. <i>Da Mood</i> (series, Portugal)
10. <i>Histórias Impossíveis - Falas da Terra: Pintadas</i> (unit)	8. <i>Merli</i> (series, España)
11. <i>Histórias Impossíveis - Falas da Vida: Acesso</i> (unit)	
12. <i>Histórias Impossíveis - Falas de Orgulho: Sísmicas</i> (unit)	
13. <i>Histórias Impossíveis - Falas Femininas: Mancha</i> (unit)	
14. <i>Histórias Impossíveis - Falas Negras: Levante</i> (unit)	
15. <i>Histórias Quase Verdadeiras</i> (miniseries)	
16. <i>Mar do Sertão</i> (telenovela)	
17. <i>Marighella</i> (miniseries)	
18. <i>No Ritmo de Natal</i> (telemovie)	
19. <i>Onde Está Meu Coração</i> (series)	
20. <i>Pluft, o Fantasminha</i> (series)	
21. <i>Rensga Hits!</i> (series)	
22. <i>Segunda Chamada</i> (series) – season 2	
23. <i>As Aventuras de José e Durval</i> (series)	
24. <i>Baião de Dois</i> (telemovie)	
25. <i>Beleza da Noite</i> (telemovie)	
26. <i>Fim</i> (series)	
27. <i>Fuga de Natal</i> (telemovie)	
28. <i>Guerra da Tapioca</i> (telemovie)	
29. <i>Terra e Paixão</i> (telenovela)	
30. <i>Todas as Flores</i> (telenovela)	
31. <i>Travessia</i> (telenovela)	
32. <i>Vai na Fé</i> (telenovela)	
Record (1 title)	
33. <i>Reis</i> (telenovela)	
SBT (2 titles)	
34. <i>A Infância de Romeu e Julieta</i> (telenovela)	
35. <i>Poliana Moça</i> (telenovela)	
TV Brasil (2 titles)	
36. <i>DPA: Detetives do Prédio Azul</i> (series)	
37. <i>Seis da Ilha</i> (series)	
TV Cultura (2 titles)	
38. <i>3 Teresas</i> (series)	
39. <i>Morgana & Celeste</i> (series)	
	TOTAL OF PREMIERE TITLES: 47

Source: Obitel

Table 1a. Reruns aired in 2023 (national and foreign within the Obitel scope)

NATIONAL RERUN TITLES - 20	FOREIGN RERUN TITLES – 6
TV Globo (7 titles)	SBT (6 titles)
1. <i>Chocolate com Pimenta</i> (telenovela)	1. <i>A Dona</i> (telenovela, Mexico)
2. <i>Mulheres Apaixonadas</i> (telenovela)	2. <i>A Gata</i> (telenovela, Mexico)
3. <i>Mulheres de Areia</i> (telenovela)	3. <i>Abismo de Paixão</i> (telenovela, Mexico)
4. <i>O Rei do Gado</i> (telenovela)	4. <i>Meu Pecado</i> (telenovela, Mexico)
5. <i>Paraíso Tropical</i> (telenovela)	5. <i>Rebelde</i> (telenovela, Mexico)
6. <i>A Presepada</i> (telemovie)	6. <i>Sortilégio</i> (telenovela, Mexico)
7. <i>Amor ao Quadrado</i> (telemovie)	
Record (5 titles)	
8. <i>A Lei e o Crime</i> (series)	
9. <i>A Terra Prometida</i> (telenovela)	
10. <i>Jesus</i> (telenovela)	
11. <i>Jezabel</i> (telenovela)	
12. <i>Vidas em Jogo</i> (telenovela)	
SBT (6 titles)	
13. <i>Chiquititas</i> (telenovela)	
14. <i>Cristal</i> (telenovela)	
15. <i>Cúmplices de um Resgate</i> (telenovela)	
16. <i>Marisol</i> (telenovela)	
17. <i>Pequena Travessa</i> (telenovela)	
18. <i>Pícara Sonhadora</i> (telenovela)	
TV Brasil (2 titles)	
19. <i>Bugados</i> (series)	
20. <i>O Pantanal e Outros Bichos</i> (series)	
	TOTAL OF RERUN TITLES: 26

Source: Obitel Brasil

In 2023, the number of premieres in Brazil increased significantly. Forty-seven new titles were released, marking an increase of 74% compared to the previous year, with only 19 new productions. In total numbers, 73 productions were broadcasted in 2023, an increase of 40.3% compared to the 52 productions broadcasted in 2022.

On the one hand, the number of national telenovelas increased by only one production, while Brazilian series more than doubled, going from 7 to 15 new productions, one of the great highlights of the year, as we will see below.

TV Globo continues to be responsible for most national premieres, behind 32 of the 39 new productions, an increase of 146% compared to the 13 works aired by the company in 2022. One telenovela, “*Todas as Flores*”, was added to the grid at 10 pm, an example of Globo’s distribution strategy by which a production created directly for Globoplay streaming is aired on broadcast TV as premiere.

As for the other broadcasters, only public television recorded an increase in series: TV Cultura premiered just one production in 2022 (the miniseries *Independências*) but four in 2023, all new productions, two national: *DPA:Detetives do Prédio Azul* e *Seis da Ilha* and two foreign: *Mood* and *Merlí*, while TV Brasil went from four to five productions (four Brazilian and one foreign). On the other hand, SBT, Record, and Band suffered a reduction in the total number of fiction broadcasted. On the other side TV Globo decreased the number of reruns, from seven to six fiction.

The next three tables show how **production capacity** of the Brazilian television fiction had a remarkable growth in 2023.

Below, table 2 shows the evolution of the national premiere production over the last five years by number of productions and hours watched.

**Table 2. Formats of national fiction premiere in 2023
and their evolution in a five-year period**

Format	Titles						Hours					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Telenovela	15	6	7	11	12	51	1075:00	339:35	366:40	1187:25	1231:10	4199:50
Series	18	9	9	7	15	58	85:00	34:10	50:45	97:30	231:35	499:00
Miniseries	5	1	1	1	2	10	20:25	7:45	1:05	12:00	5:00	46:15
Sitcom	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:45	1:40	0:00	0:00	0:00	2:25
Unitary	0	0	0	0	5	5	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	3:40	3:40
Docudrama	6	5	0	0	0	11	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
Other	6	5	0	0	5	16	118:15	32:55	0:00	0:00	4:35	155:45
Total	50	26	17	19	39	151	1.299:25	416:05	418:30	1.296:55	1.476:00	4.906:55

Source: Kantar Ibope Media and Obitel Brasil

The data show the increased number of new productions by more than 100% compared to 2022, coming close to the average Brazilian production flow of 45.3 productions/year, recorded five years before the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of average hours watched, it exceeded the pre-pandemic average (1,346 hours/year) with 1,476 hours in 2023.

Although telenovela is the main fictional narrative, impacting millions of viewers daily, in 2023 there was a rise in series, surpassing the number of new telenovelas aired. In addition, other formats, such as miniseries, units, and documentary dramas also registered a rise. In “others” we have five television movies. These productions highlight current topics about Brazil and the world, fictionalized in a creative and educational way. Telenovelas are a picture of society and address relevant themes that create identification and dialogue with the public, staying in tune with present times. In other words, Brazilians need to see themselves in telenovelas for the genre to survive (Svartman, 2023).

Table 3. Premiere fiction aired in 2023: countries of origin

Country	Titles	%	Hours	%
NATIONAL (total)	39	83	1476:00	75
OBITEL COUNTRIES (total)	8	17	486:40	25
Argentina	0	0	0:00	0
Brazil	39	83	1476:00	75
Chile	0	0	0:00	0
Colombia	0	0	0:00	0
Ecuador	0	0	0:00	0
Spain	1	2	11:25	1
USA (Hispanic production)	0	0	0:00	0
Mexico	5	11	324:55	17
Peru	0	0	0:00	0
Portugal	2	4	150:20	8
Uruguay	0	0	0:00	0
Venezuela	0	0	0:00	0
CO-PRODUCTIONS (total)	0	0	0:00	0
National co-productions	0	0	0:00	0
Co-productions Obitel Countries	0	0	0:00	0
TOTAL	47	100,0	1962:40	100,0

Source: Kantar Ibope Media and Obitel Brasil

Table 4. National and Ibero-American fiction formats aired in 2023

Format	Titles				Hours			
	National	%	Ibero-American	%	National	%	Ibero-American	%
Telenovela	12	30,8	6	75,0	1231:10	83,4	468:30	96,3
Series	15	38,5	2	25,0	231:35	15,7	18:10	3,7
Miniseries	2	5,1	0	0,0	5:00	0,3	0:00	0,0
Sitcom	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00	0,0	0:00	0,0
Unitary	5	12,8	0	0,0	3:40	0,2	0:00	0,0
Docudrama	0	0,0	0	0,0	0:00	0,0	0:00	0,0
Other (TV movies)	5	12,8	0	0,0				
Total	39	100,0	8	100,0	4:35	0,3	0:00	0,0
					1476:00	100,0	486:40	100,0

Source: Kantar Ibope Media and Obitel Brasil

The number of premiere released Ibero-American products remained at eight productions, with the same number of Mexican and Portuguese ones. Despite this, we had a 55.2% increase in the number of hours of fiction from other countries, from 313 hours in 2022 to 486 in 2023.

The Ibero-American productions were mostly presented in telenovela format, corresponding to 75% of the total exhibited in Brazil. However, the number of telenovelas decreased from 7 to 6, while the number of series increased from 1 to 2.

The national productions had diverse formats. However, the variety of foreign ones remained small with only two formats registered.

The dominance of TV Globo, especially its prime time, was again in the list of the ten most-watched productions. The telenovela *O Rei do Gado* is the only production that was not aired in prime time and the only rerun out of the ten most watched fictions. Unlike 2022, one rerun featured in the top 10 list, one that we may consider an example of an “Deep Brazil” narrative.

Table 5. Top 10 most watched titles in 2023

Titles		Channel	Country of production	Format/Genre	Chapter in 2023	Time Slot	Rating	Share
1	<i>Terra e Paixão</i>	TV Globo	Brazil	Telenovela/Drama	204	Prime time	26,1	43,6
2	<i>Travessia</i>	TV Globo	Brazil	Telenovela/Drama	107	Prime time	24,9	41,6
3	<i>Vai na Fé</i>	TV Globo	Brazil	Telenovela/Drama	179	Prime time	23,8	39,6
4	<i>Cara e Coragem</i>	TV Globo	Brazil	Telenovela/Comedy/Adventure	11	Prime time	21,1	36,3
5	<i>Amor Perfeito</i>	TV Globo	Brazil	Telenovela/Drama	161	Prime time	20,9	37,6
6	<i>Mar do Sertão</i>	TV Globo	Brazil	Telenovela/Romantic Comedy	65	Prime time	20,7	38,5
7	<i>Fuzuê</i>	TV Globo	Brazil	Telenovela/Romantic Comedy	120	Prime time	20,1	35,1
8	<i>O Rei do Gado</i>	TV Globo	Brazil	Telenovela/Drama	109	Afternoon	19,1	38,8
9	<i>Rensga Hits!</i>	TV Globo	Brazil	Series/Musical/Drama	8	Prime time	18,4	35,2
10	<i>Histórias Quase Verdadeiras</i>	TV Globo	Brazil	Miniseries/Comedy	4	Prime time	17,5	33,3
Total national productions: 10				Foreign Original Screenplays: 0				
100%				0%				

Source: Kantar Ibope Media and Obitel Brasil

Like in 2022, the top ten does not consist only of telenovelas. The last two places on the list are Brazilian series, *Rensga Hits!* and *Histórias Quase Verdadeiras*. However, the eight telenovelas in the top positions prove the country’s preference for the format. Despite that, there was a drop in audience ratings. *Pantanal* (2022), first place on last year’s list, registered 28.9 points against 26.1 points of *Terra e Paixão* (2023). The other positions follow similar numbers to those of 2022. As for genres, the data distribution of the previous year is maintained, with 60% drama productions and 40% comedy.

Out of 10 productions, six present the “Deep Brazil” showing, namely: *Terra e Paixão*; *Travessia*; *Vai na Fé*; *Mar do Sertão*; *O Rei do Gado*; e *Rensga Hits!*. All set in the hinterlands or in the peripheries of large cities.

The appreciation for Brazilian identity or “Brazilianness” has proven to be a recent trend, driven by the success of the remake of *Pantanal* in 2022. This diversity of scapes is essential to understanding the changes in everyday life and the experiences portrayed on television. As Néia (2023) highlights, “television fiction forged notions of Brazilian identity that incorporated melodramatic ethics and aesthetics and are embodied with a whole repertoire rooted in the culture of the country and its popular imagination” (p. 77).

**Table 6. Audience profile of the ten most watched titles:
gender, socioeconomic level and age group**

Titles		Channel	Gender %		Socioeconomic level %		
			Women	Men	AB	C	FROM
1	<i>Terra e Paixão</i>	TV Globo	62,4	37,6	30,3	49,3	20,5
2	<i>Travessia</i>	TV Globo	63,7	36,4	31,4	48,4	20,1
3	<i>Vai na Fé</i>	TV Globo	64,6	35,4	28,6	49,0	22,3
4	<i>Cara e Coragem</i>	TV Globo	63,7	36,3	28,1	48,2	23,7
5	<i>Amor Perfeito</i>	TV Globo	65,8	34,2	28,7	49,6	21,7
6	<i>Mar do Sertão</i>	TV Globo	63,9	36,1	28,3	48,3	23,3
7	<i>Fuzuê</i>	TV Globo	64,3	35,7	27,6	50,1	22,2
8	<i>O Rei do Gado</i>	TV Globo	63,8	36,2	26,6	49,2	24,3
9	<i>Rensga Hits!</i>	TV Globo	63,1	36,9	30,6	48,9	20,6
10	<i>Histórias Quase Verdadeiras</i>	TV Globo	63,2	36,8	31,9	47,8	20,2

Titles		Age group %					
		4 to 11	12 to 17	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 49	50+
1	<i>Terra e Paixão</i>	4,4	3,2	5,2	11,2	23,0	53,0
2	<i>Travessia</i>	4,5	3,4	5,3	11,4	24,0	51,4
3	<i>Vai na Fé</i>	4,9	3,8	5,2	12,0	23,8	50,3
4	<i>Cara e Coragem</i>	4,7	3,5	4,9	11,2	24,1	51,7
5	<i>Amor Perfeito</i>	4,3	3,2	4,7	11,1	22,3	54,6
6	<i>Mar do Sertão</i>	4,4	3,1	4,9	10,5	23,4	53,9
7	<i>Fuzuê</i>	4,7	3,4	5,1	11,4	22,6	52,9
8	<i>O Rei do Gado</i>	4,4	3,1	5,0	10,7	23,4	53,3
9	<i>Rensga Hits!</i>	4,6	3,4	5,6	12,8	23,9	49,6
10	<i>Histórias Quase Verdadeiras</i>	4,5	3,6	5,9	12,2	25,8	48,0

Source: Kantar Ibope Media and Obitel Brasil

The two tables above repeat what we may call the standard television audience in Brazil: 60% are women and 40% are men. Women are still the highest audience of 6 and 7 pm telenovelas and among men, the 9 pm telenovela remains the most watched.

The C class remains the main audience of the ten most watched fictions, with consistent numbers in all time slots, with *Fuzuê* and *Mar do Sertão* standing out as the most popular. The audiences of A and B classes dropped compared to previous years, reinforcing the possible migration to streaming platforms or other leisure activities out of home. On the other hand, classes D and E are responsible for a general increase in viewership, with *Cara e Coragem* and *Mar do Sertão*, both at 7 pm, the most watched, indicating the people preference for romance and comedy.

Considering age groups, people over 50 were the main audience of fictional productions, with special emphasis on telenovelas aired at 6 pm. We noticed a change in the age group from 35 to 49 years old which, in 2022, preferred the miniseries *Histórias Quase Verdadeiras*, and in 2023, two telenovelas, *Cara e Coragem* and *Travessia*.

Open television is still the main force of entertainment thanks to the significant increase in the production of national fiction that obtained expressive audience results, even with the growth of streaming services in the country.

3. VoD Monitoring 2023

Brazilian streaming platforms have been established as spaces of availability and consumption of national content, presenting different ‘Brazils’, mirroring its depth with diverse stories and characters typical of the country.

3.1. VoD Platform Market in 2023

VoD platforms continue in the main formats of audiovisual content in the country. According to “Inside Video 2024”¹², the time dedicated to online video platforms was about 2h23 per day. About 44% of the public uses the free trial of each provider before switching players to use a new free trial. The ban on account sharing initiated by Netflix in May 2023 was noticed by the market

3.2. Offer of local VoD platforms in 2023 (national, regional into the country)

Brazil counted 62 VoD platforms in 2023, according to the “Panorama of the Video on Demand Market in Brazil 2023”¹³. On the 24 main ones, only 15.3% of the productions are national, just 9% have the Brazilian Product Certificate (CPB), and another 6.3% are independent production companies constituents of qualified space.

Among Brazilian platforms with greatest national content we have Box Brasil Play that leads this ranking with 41.3%, followed by Globoplay (35.2%) and Libreflix (31.9%). The platforms with the lowest offer of Brazilian content are Disney+ (1.3%), HBO Max (2.7%) and Star+ (3%).

The national VoD platforms are: Arte1 Play, Belas Artes À La Carte, Box Brasil Play, Canais Globo, Cinemateca Pernambucana, Claro TV+, Claro Video, Globoplay,

¹² *Inside Video 2024* is a study by Kantar Ibope Media with data from 2023. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3R2ibWk>

¹³ Research by Ancine and the Brazilian Observatory of Cinema and Audiovisual (OCA): <https://bit.ly/3UOdakX>

Libreflix, Looke, NetMovies, Oi Play, Oldflix, SBT Videos, Telecine, UOL Play and Vivo Play. Most operate through a fixed monthly fee for access to the production library (Subscription VOD - SVOD); another relevant model only charges registration (Free VOD - FVOD).

3.3. VoD analysis in 2023: national premiere fiction and co-production

The national VoD premieres in 2023 in Brazil were:

Table 7. Premiere national and production fiction
screened in 2023 in Brazil on VoD

Premiere National Titles	Co-productions
Globoplay - 28 titles 1. <i>A Vida Pela Frente</i> (series) 2. <i>Acampamento de Magia Para Jovens Bruxos</i> (series) 3. <i>As Aventuras de José & Durval</i> (series) 4. <i>As Five</i> (series) 5. <i>Betinho – No Fio da Navalha</i> (series) 6. <i>Fim</i> (series) 7. <i>Os Outros</i> (series) 8. <i>Rio Connection</i> (miniseries) 9. <i>Todas as Flores</i> (telenovela) 10. <i>Vicky e a Musa</i> (series) 11. <i>Amor Perfeito</i> (telenovela) 12. <i>Cara e Coragem</i> (telenovela) 13. <i>Cine Holliúdy</i> (series) – season 3 14. <i>Elas Por Elas</i> (telenovela) 15. <i>Família Paraíso</i> (series) – season 2 16. <i>Fuzuê</i> (telenovela) 17. <i>Histórias Impossíveis - Falas da Terra: Pintadas</i> (unitary) 18. <i>Histórias Impossíveis - Falas da Vida: Acesso</i> (unitary) 19. <i>Histórias Impossíveis - Falas de Orgulho: Sísmicas</i> (unitary) 20. <i>Histórias Impossíveis - Falas Femininas: Mancha</i> (unitary) 21. <i>Histórias Impossíveis - Falas Negras: Levante</i> (unitary) 22. <i>Histórias Quase Verdadeiras</i> (miniseries) 23. <i>Mar do Sertão</i> (telenovela) 24. <i>No Ritmo de Natal</i> (TVmovie) 25. <i>Pluft, o Fantasminha</i> (series) 26. <i>Terra e Paixão</i> (telenovela) 27. <i>Travessia</i> (telenovela) 28. <i>Vai na Fé</i> (telenovela) Netflix - 9 titles 1. <i>A Sogra que Te Pariu</i> (Sitcom) 2. <i>B.O.</i> (Sitcom) 3. <i>Cidade Invisível</i> (series) 4. <i>De Volta aos 15</i> (series) 5. <i>DNA do Crime</i> (series) 6. <i>Olhar Indiscreto</i> (miniseries) 7. <i>Sem Filtro</i> (series) 8. <i>Sintonia</i> (series) 9. <i>Todo Dia a Mesma Noite</i> (miniseries) STAR+ - 7 productions 1. <i>A História é Delas</i> (series) 2. <i>Compro Likes</i> (series)	Globoplay - 1 title 1. <i>Codex 632</i> (miniseries - Brazil and Portugal) SBT - 1 title 2. <i>A Infância de Romeu e Julieta</i> (telenovela) – Prime Video

3. <i>Dois Tempos</i> (series) 4. <i>Impuros</i> (series) 5. <i>O Rei da TV</i> (series) 6. <i>Santo Maldito</i> (series) 7. <i>Últimas Férias</i> (series) Prime - 4 titles 1. <i>Amar é Para os Fortes</i> (series) 2. <i>Cangaço Novo</i> (series) 3. <i>Novela</i> (series) 4. <i>O Negociador</i> (series) Disney+ - 4 titles 1. <i>A Magia de Aruna</i> (series) 2. <i>Mila no Multiverso</i> (series) 3. <i>Tá Tudo Certo</i> (miniseries) 4. <i>Tudo Igual... SQN</i> (series) HBO Max - 3 titles 1. <i>Além do Guarda-Roupa</i> (series) 2. <i>B.A: O Futuro Está Morto</i> (series) 3. <i>Use Sua Voz</i> (series)	
Total: 55	Total: 2

Source: Obitel Brasil

The year 2023 was characterized by the launch of 57 Brazilian fictional titles on VoD. Globoplay remained in the lead with 29 productions, 10 of which were produced strictly for this national streaming (in table 7, from number 1 to 10); 18 were premiered on TV Globo (open channel) and simultaneously on VoD (in table 7, from number 11 to 28). There are also fictions co-produced with Portugal. Among the productions made exclusively for Globoplay, two biopics series stood out: *As Aventuras de José & Durval*, about the life of the popular country duo Chitãozinho and Xororó, and *Betinho – No Fio da Navalha*, about Herbert José de Souza (called Betinho), leader of the national campaign against hunger and resistance to the military dictatorship (1964-1985).

The platforms with the highest number of premieres are Netflix (9), STAR+ (7), Prime (5), Disney+ (4), and HBO Max (3). These platforms also released comedy and teen series (22). Also noteworthy is the children’s telenovela *A Infância de Romeu e Julieta*, a co-production Prime and SBT, which is one of the country’s major television networks, known for broadcasting Mexican telenovelas, and for the production and adaptation of shows for younger audiences.

The miniseries *Codex 632* was the only released co-production, a Brazil/Portugal partnership directly produced for Globoplay. But the co-production index shows a retraction compared to 2022 (6), returning to 2021 data. Unlike the previous year, in 2023, foreign streaming platforms did not launch co-productions in the country.

In addition to the new fictions that premiered on VoD platforms, Globoplay, in 2023, also launched 52 “classic” TV Globo productions, continuing the project of building a “digital library” (Newcomb, 1999), with the premiere of productions that

were only in its collection, and started being exhibited via Globoplay. Stories that made people remember plots, characters, and spaces stored in their affective memory and that build meanings of time for the Brazilian nation.

3.4 Narrative characteristics of VoD in 2023

Narratives often point out the quality of national television. This could be seen on three Globoplay series *Fim*, *Os Outros*, and *Betinho – No Fio da Navalha*. The first is an adaptation of the homonymous book by actress and writer Fernanda Torres that portrays a group of friends' journeys and shows the changes in Rio de Janeiro through the sixties. On the other hand, *Os Outros* presents conflicts between neighbors in a condo, signaling the tensions of a polarized society. The last one tells, as cited earlier, the story of Herbert José de Souza. These productions showed a diversity of representations of the “Deep Brazil”, with complex characters built in distinct layers, scenarios with social and psychological settings; TV editing promoting suspense and emotion.

On Prime Video, the “Deep Brazil” can be seen in *Cangaço Novo*, a series intended to update the historical phenomenon of “cangaço”, a kind of “social *banditry*” (Hobsbawm, 1975) practiced by violent gangs in the Northeast countryside in the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th. This topic will be resumed below, in topic 5.1.

4. Interactivity and participation of audiences

The year 2023 is one of active participation of social media users and other audiences in television content. Telenovelas remained the format that stirred the most emotions and continued to drive conversation, especially on social networks. Characters were shipped, songs went viral, and content was created and spread across different platforms. In addition, serial productions presented us with a variety of “Brazils” and its characters, promoting marathons on streaming platforms, and creating content in digital environments.

Social Interactivity

In 2023, TV series promoted engagement in digital spaces, advertising, and marketing actions. An example is the release strategy of the series *Cangaço Novo* (Prime Video), in which a famous television presenter recorded vignettes reporting crimes in the fictional city of Cratará, where the story takes place - an action aimed at digital influencers. The campaign bolstered the series, awarded for technical quality, among local and international audiences. In African countries, such as Angola and Mozambique, the production was one of the most watched releases. In addition, it

bolstered discussions about TV 3.0, the television of the future that promises a new experience of watching TV and offers new and advanced interactive tools .

Social participation

In line with the narratives that portrayed the “Deep Brazil”, the telenovela *Terra e Paixão* narrated the story of a family after a life-changing murder in the fictional city of Nova Primavera. By showing a rural environment in the countryside, the telenovela introduced themes such as agrarian conflicts, social experiences in the contemporary countryside, violence, and affection. The homosexual relationship between foreman Ramiro and Kelvin, an attendant at a show house, won over the audience that shipped the characters – “Kelmiro” – and became a trending topic on social networks, showing great interactivity between viewers and fictional characters. Fans raised money online to ask for a spin-off of the couple’s story using a billboard built near Globo Studios. Kelmiro’s success changed the course of the production, which increased their screen time, promoted Ramiro’s redemption, and ended happily with a kiss between the two men.

As a telenovela that stood out for the participation of fans, *Vai na Fé*, our case study in the “Theme of the Year”, won over viewers who became commentators and producers of content on the plot. The audience got involved and cheered for different couples, such as Lumiar and Theo, Sol and Theo, and Sol and Lui. During the last episode, internet users confessed how much they would miss the characters and the opening song.

5. Highlights of the Year 2023

The year of 2023 was marked by productions of different Brazilian realities that, due to their narrative and technical quality, captivated critics and audiences. We highlight the series *Cangaço Novo* (Prime Video), *Os Outros*; *Betinho – No Fio da Navalha* (Globoplay), the telenovela *Terra e Paixão* (Globoplay) and discussions on the regulation of streaming and its impacts on the national audiovisual market.

5.1. The quality of national series in streaming

Some Brazilian series produced in 2023 for streaming stood out for the quality of their dramaturgy and production, reinforcing the “indigenization of fiction” (Buonanno, 2004) and presenting national traditions and ways of life through the “narrative of the nation” (Lopes, 2009).

Cangaço Novo, a series written by Mariana Bardan and Eduardo Melo, a co-production by Prime Video with the independent production company O2 Filmes, premiered in August 2023 and has eight episodes. The narrative and visual style is

inspired by the “northwestern”¹⁴ and, since its launch, has joined the top 10 most-watched series on the platform in 49 countries. The script tells the story of Ubaldo, a banker in São Paulo, who, after the death of his father, find out that he has an inheritance to receive in a town in the hinterlands of Ceará. With no memory of his childhood, he joins one of his sisters, who leads a gang of bank robbers. The drama is driven by strong violence, mysticism, and criticism of local bosses, who are corrupt and exploit the population. The main points of the production are the script that focuses on the moral and psychological dilemmas of the characters; the choice of a mostly northeast origin cast, and the investment in production, which grew infrastructure and logistics in the state of Paraíba, enabling complex action scenes¹⁵.

Os Outros is a Globoplay series written by Lucas Paraizo that premiered in May 2023. Its 12 episodes discuss the intolerance and difficulty of communicating in contemporary society. Set in a middle-class condo in Rio de Janeiro, two families get involved in a conflict started by a confrontation between their children. In an escalation of tension and violence, the families start showing a lack of emotional control and intolerance, adding to the parallel and shady local events as a background to criticize the complex integration of militias (para-police) in Rio de Janeiro.

The eight episodes of the series *Betinho – No Fio da navalha* were created by José Júnior and premiered in December 2023, in a co-production Globoplay and AfroReggae Audiovisual and Formata Produções. Based on the biography of sociologist Herbert José de Sousa (Betinho) – symbol of the fight against hunger in Brazil. The production was celebrated by the public and critics, being the only Brazilian work selected in six categories of the Cannes International Series Festival.

These highlighted series exemplified “Deep Brazil” in different genres and revealed stories of a diverse and complex country, paradoxically intolerant and supporting in the face of life challenges.

5.2. “Deep Brazil” in *Terra e Paixão*

The telenovela *Terra e Paixão*, written by Walcy Carrasco and Thelma Guedes, was produced and aired by TV Globo in 221 chapters. Set in the fictional city of Nova Primavera, in Mato Grosso do Sul, a Midwest state of Brazil, the telenovela narrates the story of Aline, a teacher whose husband has been murdered at the behest of a powerful landowner. Interested in the widow’s land, the ruralist oppresses her and uses his influence to subvert laws with the support of the local police. After investigations, family problems, and media scandals, the farmer loses his power.

¹⁴ “Nordersten” (a word that unites Northeast Brazil with the American western) has gained strength since 1953 with the film *O Cangaceiro*, director Lima Barreto and is currently represented by the award-winning film *Bacurau* (Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles, 2019) and the series *Cangaço Novo*.

¹⁵ The region of Campina Grande, the countryside of the state of Paraíba, is known as the “Brazilian Roliúde”.

As we know, the telenovela is an audiovisual product that dialogues with culture, updates and inserts new behaviors in people’s lives, dictates trends, and has educational potential, as it reflects and refracts society¹⁶ (Baccega, 2011) by building an imagined nation in which viewers recognize themselves (Lopes, 2009). The regional theme points to a slavery past, based on the construction of large estates and the appropriation of public goods for private interests, the dispute over land, and the search for justice in the face of the indifference of institutions (Hollanda, 1995).

The cast was composed by a black actress protagonist and characters representing various minorities, like the homosexual couple, Kelvin and Ramiro, who questioned the hegemonic masculinity (Connell, Messerschmidt, 2013); the transgender woman, Luana Shine, who discussed citizenship through access to night classes for youth and adult education; and yet the novelty of introducing an indigenous plot with indigenous actors who presented their culture with songs and dances, far from the common stereotypes.

The telenovela brought melodramatic elements such as the moral duality of the characters, the opposition between good and evil, the redemption of the villains, the emphasis on family issues, and a whole set of elements typical in the melodrama genre (Martins; Santos, 2009). A “Deep Brazil” made of contradictions and a tele-dramaturgy experience that highlights topics of real-life news.

5.3. The regulation of streaming

Streaming regulation was discussed in the Congress, and by the agents of the audiovisual market. Among the bills (PL) discussed on regulation, the controversial PL 2331/2022 gained power by trying to include streaming services in the Condecine (Contribution to the Development of the National Cinematographic Industry)¹⁷, with a 50% discount for productions and licensing of national content to boost financing sources and balance competitiveness between players and signed TV services (OTT). In addition, it suggests a 3% tax rate on revenues for investments in the sector, which is still low compared to the rates of other countries, reaching 20%.

After several changes, the text was approved by the Economic Affairs Committee of the Federal Senate, including a minimum on-screen quota for Brazilian productions. It is estimated that the project will be approved in 2024 to become law in 2025¹⁸.

The audiovisual sector considers the project a move forward that will provide significant cultural changes with plenty of space on platforms for national content and a consequent increase in demand for Brazilian productions. Through this regulation it is expected to combat piracy in the digital environment and to reinforce the intellectual property of audiovisual productions.

16 Veja Magazine. Interview: Maria Aparecida Baccega, 24 jan. 1996.

¹⁷ Taxation is levied on the broadcasting, production, licensing, and distribution of audiovisual works for commercial purposes, and the amount collected makes up the FSA (Audiovisual Sectorial Fund).

¹⁸ bit.ly/3WYjA3J

6. Theme of the year: What is happening to narratives in Ibero-American television fiction?

To answer the key question, we selected a production that offers an overview of the present, the past, and the future perspectives of the fictional narratives of Brazilian television. Created and written by Rosane Svartman, directed by Paulo Silvestrini and produced by TV Globo, this telenovela was exhibited from January 16 to August 11, 2023, from Monday to Saturday, in the 7 pm slot, *Vai na Fé*¹⁹ can be seen as a symbolic work in form, content, and modes of distribution and reception of what is happening with narratives in Brazilian television fiction, as we will try to demonstrate in the present analysis.

An urban telenovela, it starred Sheron Menezes, an actress with 20 years of experience on television who played the protagonist Sol, a black, evangelical woman, focused on her family, who ensures her survival by selling “quentinhas”.²⁰ Widowed, Sol decides to work as a backing vocal for singer Lui Lorenzo (José Loreto), beginning a set of conflicts and reunions of the protagonist with characters from her past, including Benjamin (Samuel de Assis), her first love, now married to Lumiar (Carolina Dieckmann), and Theo (Emílio Dantas), responsible for the breakup of the protagonist couple in the past.

This quintet of protagonists joins other characters to create a complex narrative involving relevant social topics, such as gender and sexual violence, racism, social and racial discrimination, smuggling, religiosity, bullying, homophobia, terminal illnesses, alopecia in homosexual relationships, and even ageism, a theme that rendered a scene of great repercussion played by Renata Sorrah (Wilma Campos).

Stories in *Vai na Fé*

Sol has always hidden from her daughter Jeniffer (Bella Campos) the true identity of the girl’s father. It is only after the death of her foster father that the young woman discovers that she is not his daughter and starts her search for the truth, hidden from her by her mother – she is the result of a rape committed by Theo. Throughout her life, the protagonist feels guilty about what happened until other women begin to denounce the antagonist, taken to court only at the end of the story. The attorney responsible for his defense was Lumiar, with whom he had become romantically involved after she separated from Benjamin. Known as Ben, he is the great hero of the telenovela .

Lovers in their youth, when Sol danced in funk balls, they met again after 20 years due to Ben’s involvement in the accident that killed Carlão, Sol’s husband. When Jennifer seeks out the lawyer on her journey to discover her father’s identity, the love triangle formed by Sol, Ben, and Lumiar reemerges.

¹⁹ The telenovela title *Vai na Fé* is a popular slang that can be translated by something like *Go with Faith*.

²⁰ Also known as lunchboxes, the “quentinhas” are popular meals stored in aluminum foil packages.

Representation and representativeness in *Vai na Fé*

There is a strong representativeness of Brazilian types in each chapter of *Vai na Fé*. They are ‘people like us’, which relates to how the narrative builds the characters. To this end, author Svartman and her team linked social problems to characteristics of the melodrama, such as manichaeism, different musical elements, and valuing the spirit of the family, the institution that establishes pedagogical and identity values with the popular audience, as Jesús Martín-Barbero (1997) points out, “(...) the enormous and thick entanglement of family relationships, which, as infrastructure, build up the dramatic plot, would be the way in which, starting from the popular, the opacity and complexity that cover the new social relations are understood and expressed” (p. 166).

Based on the characters Vitinho (Luis Lobianco), Yuri (Jean Paulo Campos) and the couple Clara (Priscila Sztejnman) and Helena (Regiane Alves), *Vai na Fé* includes, throughout the stories, LGBTQIA+²¹ representativeness. This is one aspect cause the great representativeness it is the mostly black cast, in prominent roles, and of different social backgrounds. Brazil is a country that has historically exploited enslaved, indigenous, and black people, and despite 55.5% of the population declaring itself black²², this is the first time a cast is composed mostly of black people. In the dialectic of fiction and reality that characterizes the Brazilian telenovela, *Vai na Fé* reflects and incorporates the struggles and achievements of the contemporary black population against structural and historical racism.

Narrative structure of *Vai na Fé*

The structure of *Vai na Fé* follows the standard plot of TV Globo’s 7 pm telenovelas. The story takes place in the present day, featuring comic cores, clear lighting, and agile editing. Set in Rio de Janeiro, the macro space presents its fixed environments, including a Law School, where meaningful topics are debated, and Lumiar (Carolina Dieckmann) is a professor. The first meeting of her character with Wilma Campos was one of the highlights of metalinguistic uses in a telenovela.

Lui Lorenzo’s mother, a shunned actress, is played by Renata Sorrah, who has among her most iconic roles the villain of *Senhora do Destino* (2004), “Nazaré Tedesco”, a character who kidnapped and raised Isabel, played by Carolina Dieckmann. After working on this hugely successful telenovela, the two actresses only met again in the scene of chapter 47 of *Vai na Fé*, marked by the first meeting between Lumiar and Wilma. In the metalinguistic scene, Lumiar asks Wilma the same question that her character Isabel asked her biological mother, Maria do Carmo, in the first meeting between them in *Senhora do Destino*: “Is everything okay?”. This sequence had great repercussions for the audience, something that occurred in many of Wilma’s

²¹ Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual.

²² Census, 2022. In Brazil, the Census, a demographic study to collect information on the population, is organized by the IBGE - Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. In this study, the identification of an individual as a black person occurs by self-declaration, with the total number of this population being stipulated from the sum of those who declare themselves black or brown.

scenes, thanks to shares on social networks, in acts of “spreading transmedia content” (Jenkins, 2014), a strategy of distribution and repercussion of content by which the telenovela was benefited and employed in its narrative.

In chapters 75 and 76, Wilma helps Érika (Letícia Salles) audition for *Vale Tudo – o Filme*, that should be a *cinematic remake* of one of the greatest telenovelas in the history of Brazilian television. The scene features a conflict between the characters, culminating in Wilma’s right to reply to Érika on social networks. In the response, ageism is addressed and linked to women, in a plot of great dramatic power. A production with social network aesthetics spread across the networks. But the highlight of the metalinguistics present in the telenovela was a scene in the penultimate chapter in which Wilma Campos meets the renowned authors, Glória Perez, Walcyr Carrasco, and João Emmanuel Carneiro, in person. In a scene written by collaborator Mário Viana, Wilma addresses the authors, quotes texts of iconic characters written by them, and proposes a toast to the telenovelas .

With this adopted metalinguistic exercise, *Vai na Fé* takes its Brazilian telefiction heritage, while points towards the future, gathering in the same scene three of the greatest writers in Brazil and in 2023. While Walcyr Carrasco and Glória Perez are the authors of two productions with the highest audience on open television this year, João Emmanuel Carneiro is the author of the first original Brazilian telenovela on streaming, “Todas as Flores”, a success of critics and audiences alike.²³

The “telenovela as a narrative of the nation” (Lopes, 2009) dialogues with the metaphor of the “Deep Brazil”, which is not restricted to a geographical concept. In an interview, *Vai na Fé* author, Rosane Svartman, says that some research done for her previous telenovela, *Bom Sucesso* (2019), found that a large part of the audience is evangelical.²⁴ The information shared by Svartman reflects the enormous growth of evangelical religions in Brazil to the point that there are projections that the 2022 census will reveal an increase in the evangelical population, going from approximately 22% in 2010 (around 42 million) to 30% of Brazilians in the current census (about 70 million).²⁵

We can also find the “Deep Brazil” in the religiosity expressed in the conversion of *Vai na Fé* protagonist Benjamin to Candomblé and in the evangelical characters of this telenovela, and also in the series *Cangaço Novo* (Prime, 2023). The religious elements present in these two works are an unequivocal sign of the hybridization of the coast and the hinterland implied in the contemporary conception of the “Deep Brazil”, as we anticipated in the Introduction above. In 2023, the regional theme was present in both the urban space of *Vai na Fé* and in stories set in the hinterland, like

²³ Since *Verdades Secretas 2* (2021), the first telenovela produced by Globoplay, is a continuation of Walcyr Carrasco’s homonymous telenovela on TV Globo in 2015.

²⁴ <https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/tela-plana/rosane-svartman-explica-o-segredo-de-sucessos-como-vai-na-fe>.

²⁵ A demonstration of power in this scenario can be represented in the figure of the owner of TV Record. The second largest television broadcast in the country, which currently produces only biblical telenovelas, belongs to a pastor and founder of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God.

the telenovelas *O Rei do Gado* (1996), once again successfully rerun in 2023; *Terra e Paixão* (2023), and *Travessia* (2023), this set partly in small towns in Maranhão, state in the Northeast.

Yet, in 2023, for the first time in the history of Brazilian tele-dramaturgy, all TV Globo productions had black characters as protagonists. By opting for black protagonism and for the link to traditional formal and thematic procedures of melodrama and Brazilian telenovela, addressing contemporary themes, and benefiting from the spreading content in other exhibition windows and for all exposed here, we defend that *Vai na Fé* is the production that best answers the question of the theme of this 2024 yearbook. With an average audience of 23.8 points (when the time slot goal is 25), it recovered part of the audience of the TV Globo 7 pm slot and rised to the third most watched program of the year on open television.

The Brazilian telenovela is a cultural product with hybrid characteristics. And hybridism is the hallmark of *Vai na Fé*, a story with numerous comic shades but with remarkable dramatic power and sensitivity to social issues and criticism. It’s “Deep Brazil” imagined by the writers in synergy with the imaginary and expectations of the audience and skillfully interpreted by the cast of the production.

Wilma Campos, embodied by actress Renata Sorrah, shows that the telenovela can still synthesize the past, present, and future of the main product of Brazilian audiovisual fiction. Although the telenovela extends to “other seas” and starts to tell narratives that assume the Brazilian people, its origin continues to be that of the melodramatic genre embraced by the naturalistic style in this main cultural product of Brazilian television.

Finally, the metalinguistic aspect of *Vai na Fé* – to honor the history of the Brazilian format and to document its time in form and content – ended up helping us to answer to the question of the theme of the Obitel Yearbook and also pointed to possible future paths of narratives in Brazilian television fictions.

References

- Baccega, M. A. (2011). Reflexões sobre telenovela: o âmbito do ficcional como desenho do cenário das práticas de consumo. *Anais: XXXIV Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação. Recife* - PE.
- Buonanno, M. (2004). La qualità della fiction. Dal prodotto all'ambiente produttivo. In: Buonanno, M. (Org.) *Realtà multiple. Concetti, generi e audience della fiction tv*. Napoli: Liguori.
- Connell, R. W. & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2013). Masculinidade hegemônica: repensando o conceito. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, 21(1), 241–282.
- Hobsbawn, E. (1975). *Bandidos*. Rio de Janeiro: Forense-Universitária.
- Hollanda, S. B. de. (1995). O homem cordial. In: *Raízes do Brasil*. 26. ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- Jenkins, H., Ford, S., Green, J. (2014). *Cultura da Conexão: criando valor e significado por meio da mídia propagável*. São Paulo: Aleph.
- Lopes, M. I. V. de (2009). Telenovela como recurso comunicativo. *MATRIZES*, São Paulo, v. 3, n. 1. *MATRIZES*, 3(1), 21-47. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1982-8160.v3i1p21-47>
- Lopes, M. I. V. de. (2003). Telenovela brasileira: uma narrativa sobre a nação. *Comunicação & Educação*, São Paulo (26), 17-34. <https://revistas.usp.br/comueduc/article/view/37469>
- Martín-Barbero, J. (2001). *Dos meios às mediações: comunicação, cultura e hegemonia*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ.
- Martins, V. S.; Santos, G.F.C. dos. (2009). Do melodrama à telenovela: das lágrimas ao retrato do cotidiano *Anais XI Congresso de Ciências da Comunicação na Região Centro-Oeste*. Brasília.
- <http://www.intercom.org.br/papers/regionais/centrooeste2009/resumos/R17-0074-1.pdf>
- Néia, L. M. (2023). *Como a ficção televisiva moldou um país: uma história cultura da telenovela brasileira (1963 a 2020)*. São Paulo: Estação das Letras e Cores.
- Newcomb, H. (1999). *La televisione, da forum a biblioteca*. Sansoni.
- Svartman, R. (2023). *A telenovela e o futuro da televisão brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó.