



# A Region of Contenders: Overwatch in Brazil

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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In February 2021, Blizzard Entertainment decided to close the South American branch of its professional *Overwatch*. For the majority of the game’s global audiences, this came as a surprise—why were the owners removing one of the largest and most active populations from professional competition? This chapter provides possible explanations for the above by analyzing perceptions of *Overwatch* in Brazil via its public media materials before the close-down. It explains how PC-based play in particular has had difficulty thriving in this cultural context, suggesting that some arguments propagated within esports practices might not translate to reality or having a misinterpretation about how and why structures matter if the aim is broadening and diversifying esports scenario.

Since infrastructural, socioeconomic, and cultural aspects influence the agency of individuals, a critical examination is needed to evaluate public reports on the country as well as data from the official regulating committees, which measure technology, accessibility, and digital inclusion in the nationwide context. It should be noted that, following Blizzard Entertainment’s decision, when referring to the “region” or South

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America (SA), this most commonly means Brazil and does not reflect other countries or their players' experiences.

Marketing and media reports tend to promote Brazil as a promising land for esports, with masses of highly engaged people. According to Statista reports published in January 2021, the Brazilian gaming and esports markets generated 31 million Brazilian reals (US \$5.4 million) in revenue in 2018 (Statista 2021) and this is expected to reach US \$1.17 billion by 2023 (Statista 2021). Esport Charts, (Esport Charts 2021) in turn, presented the country as an attractive opportunity for teams operating on both the local and global scales because it has an engaged audience, professional players, and online performers across gaming platforms<sup>1</sup> and segments.

Beyond the above data, Brazilians exhibit communitarian patterns of behavior such as extensive support toward intense backlashes. Despite Brazilian Portuguese being the dominant language, people also consume English content and manage to find ways to understand what is being said. When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in 2020, the Brazilian gaming community started breaking records. In 2020, Gaules, (Esport Charts 2020a) a variety streamer in Twitch, was the second most-watched channel in the world with 133.6M hours watched (Esport Charts 2020c). LOUD, a gaming organization, reached the billion mark on their YouTube channel and when it transitioned to Twitch, maintained an outstanding performance (Esport Charts 2020b).

The picture drawn by financial success tells little about the structural context for the country, however. The local player archetype that has been the basis of decision-making and investments is usually developed using data from only one city, Sao Paulo.<sup>2</sup> This can overlook the full picture of what is being played, who is engaging, and how.

As Penix-Tadsen (2019) pointed out, games are being appropriated around the world in the most peculiar and unexpected ways. At the same time, however, play is also restricted due to various practical realities such as lacking infrastructure (e.g., Messias et al. 2019). According to ICT Households (2018), during the past decade, Brazil has gone through an accelerated process of Internet access and is gradually drawing closer to the numbers found in more developed countries.<sup>3</sup> Within this period, Internet access has climbed from 18% to 67%. On the other hand, inequalities have remained critical (ibid., p. 250). For example, socioeconomic indicators such as formal education, age, area of residence, and class strongly predict the quality of service and its use (ibid., pp. 222–228).

The analysis aims to better understand how some of the Brazilian infra-structural inequalities combined with decisions made by *Overwatch* stakeholders resulted in the perishing of the game's Brazilian competitive scene.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology applied here is content analysis combined with an experimental sentiment coding of materials related to Brazilian *Overwatch*. Five keywords—*Overwatch*, Brazil, Contenders SA, Team Brazil, and *Overwatch Cup*—were combined and used to collect the data which form the corpus of analysis. The words were inserted into the search engines of YouTube and multiple local media outlets: ESPN Brazil (esports), e-SportTV (Globo, esports), +MaisEsports, Vice Brazil (technology), DotEsports, The Enemy Brazil, and MGG Brazil (former Versus Esports). Spanish results were not included, as Spanish is not an official language of the country, and therefore these results would likely not represent the Brazilian sentiment.

From YouTube, a sample of 57 videos from 16 channels in Brazilian Portuguese, plus seven videos in English, was selected based on the quality of their content as sources for the discussion. A podcast in Brazilian Portuguese was included because it captured perceptions of the game during its release and the expectations for the *Overwatch League*.

The background materials (not included in the content analysis or sentiment coding) include official statements by Blizzard Entertainment on their site, blog, YouTube, and Twitter. Media coverage includes sites and blogs from both established and independent media venues and the Wiki registering the composition of the teams and tournaments. Governmental reports and *Overwatch* Regulation were also consulted. They provided a general view of the competitive *Overwatch* scene on the international and local levels, which often lack proper documentation for future knowledge.

All the sample data were initially read, listened to, and watched in order to familiarize with the content (see, e.g., Braun and Clarke 2006). Videos and podcasts were not transcribed but notes were taken from their arguments and discussion. From them it was possible to distinguish the main categories by frequency (Table 7.1).

All the videos (57) and the podcast episode (1) were then coded with the six thematic categories. Each time one of the six instances surfaced, a note was made manually (see, e.g., Basit 2003). The complete table of sources and codes are openly accessible via [[https://osf.io/kh9ue/?view\\_only=51cf0573cc0c42ecb93da4afd4ac3941](https://osf.io/kh9ue/?view_only=51cf0573cc0c42ecb93da4afd4ac3941)].

**Table 7.1** Thematic categories and its description

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Description</i>
Infrastructure	Infrastructure described or discussed (computers, servers, etc.)
Working conditions and professionals	Professional players and their conditions (e.g., contracts, payments, benefits, training)
Competitive non-professional play	Players' experiences related to online play
Community	The fan base, regular players, and other individuals who are part of the local <i>Overwatch</i> community
Business	The economics of <i>Overwatch</i> internationally and in the Brazilian context

### ***Overwatch Categorization Overview***

After the categorization of the videos and podcast, the data provided insights about perceptions of *Overwatch* as a game in general and in four competitive domains: *Overwatch Contenders*, Contenders SA, *Overwatch World Cup*, and *Overwatch League* (Table 7.2). The former was produced only by Brazilian channels, typically based on the players' personal experiences from ranked play.

Looking at competitive tournaments, the *Overwatch League* was mentioned only three times in the Brazilian materials, one of them being sponsored coverage. However, the tournament received extensive coverage by the English media. Although the *Overwatch World Cup* is an international event, it was a subject covered exclusively by Brazilians, generally about the Brazilian national team. This can be related to a desire for validation and to attract investment to the local scene. Nevertheless, the *Overwatch Contenders* and Contenders SA were poorly covered despite being announced as important local venues for competitive talents. The English-speaking sources briefly mentioned them, and the Brazilian sources had mainly general explanations of the tournament format and player interviews.

Two videos were related to *Overwatch* but did not fit into any category. They addressed vulnerable working conditions in the esports ecosystem and the fact that being in “emerging regions” increases those circumstances.

Table 7.2 Summary analysis for the coverage of *Overwatch*

<i>Overwatch</i>	<i>Infrastructure</i>	<i>Working conditions and professionals</i>	<i>Competitive non-professional play</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Business</i>
<i>Overwatch</i> as a game (23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persistent infrastructural problems in SA give a sense of abandonment to the region</li> <li>No plan to mitigate the problem</li> <li>Players migrate to NA server</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No endorsement to pursue a professional career in SA</li> <li>SA players can assume other functions to maximize their gains and influence</li> <li>The few people working have been in their positions since the game announcement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competitive drive and investment to improve is uneven</li> <li>Few high-ranking players in SA</li> <li>Negative player behavior</li> <li>Doubts about the efficacy of reporting system</li> <li>Individualistic approach</li> <li>Systems included in the game were not adopted by the players or have no significant impact on their experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to establish a cooperative community</li> <li>Fan labor without recognition</li> <li>Missing in-game novelties</li> <li>The game might not be accessible to be played</li> <li>Streamers were the target of online provocation</li> <li>Reduced creation of content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No plans or lack of proactivity to solve ongoing problems in infrastructure, game (balancing), and negative behavior of players</li> <li>Sensation of abandonment and miscommunication</li> <li>Some decisions (price and lack of tournaments) affected the expansion of the game in less privileged regions</li> </ul>

(continued)

Table 7.2 (continued)

<i>Overmatch</i>	<i>Infrastructure</i>	<i>Working conditions and professionals</i>	<i>Competitive non-professional play</i>	<i>Community</i>	<i>Business</i>
<i>Overmatch league</i> (19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English broadcast left</li> <li>COVID-19 and needs to modify the structure</li> <li>Online matches</li> <li>Modification of streaming platform (from Twitch to YouTube)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Players pursuing other esports opportunities</li> <li>Mental health issues associated with work and competition</li> <li>Retirements, longer breaks, demotivation</li> <li>Need for new players and investment in lower tiers and amateur division</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of balance in the game, and the temporary measures are not pleasing</li> <li>Patch modifications in the middle of the season making it hard to adapt</li> <li>Erosion of competitive basis related to boosting accounts and player behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online matches did not reflect an increase in viewership</li> <li>Bad spectator experience</li> <li>Dedicated fans</li> <li>Different interest groups</li> <li>Universe related to the game is a way to consume without playing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The company struggles to transform <i>Overmatch</i> into an export that justifies the initial investment</li> <li>Organizations and stakeholders are dissatisfied with the results</li> <li>Riot launched a direct competitor in the market in 2020 and managed to be more appealing to organizations and professional players</li> </ul>
<i>Overmatch World Cup</i> (12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional structure can impair practices, but the tournament is in NA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over the years the representatives were from the same and most successful team of the country.</li> <li>Therefore, only a small group of people had international visibility and experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disparity of abilities between countries</li> <li>The aim was to learn and improve, but there were limited winning expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal conflicts between communities of players</li> <li>Brazilian fans were not always supportive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The region attended the event until 2019 when financial support was offered</li> <li>Regional representatives had to support an adverse event among the Committee of 2018</li> </ul>

<i>Overwatch</i> <i>Contenders</i> (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tournament explanation</li> <li>• Lack of investment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for aspiring players to be seen on the international stage</li> <li>• Doubts about the efficacy of the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitive driven people</li> <li>• South Korea perceived as an example of quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doubts about the interest of the audience in the matches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of low tier, regional expansion</li> <li>• Little to no effort to make Contenders happen</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge beyond KR and NA</li> </ul>
Contenders SA (8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No English broadcast</li> <li>• SA matches online and pre-recorded</li> <li>• Ongoing server problem in the region</li> <li>• Structural problems on the individual level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of teams and investment</li> <li>• Players cannot “play for a living”</li> <li>• Between amateur and semi-professional</li> <li>• No tournament besides Contenders</li> <li>• No relation to the League</li> <li>• Fragility, insecurity, and vulnerability of working relations</li> <li>• Legal action is not feasible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good mechanic skill but limited strategic thinking</li> <li>• Individualistic mind-set is predominant</li> <li>• People do not communicate while playing</li> <li>• Consuming content from other players and teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casual players do not have interest</li> <li>• Constant changes in teams and players make it difficult to support</li> <li>• Small network of supporters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of plans and actions to promote the competition in the media</li> <li>• Limited coverage in the esports and independent media</li> <li>• Prize offered is one of the smallest among the regions</li> </ul>
Others (2)	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distrust in organization’ attitude toward social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication, financial, and management problems</li> <li>• Organizations with this conduct should not be allowed to be part of the esports system, and should be held accountable</li> </ul>	

Abbreviations: KR (South Korea), NA (North America as US), SA (South America), and N/A (nothing to add)

### *Sentiment Coding*

After the content categorization, a sentiment analysis was carried out. This approach allows an evaluation of the emotional valences presented in the language, words chosen, and people's expressivity by their tone of voice—for example, modifying the intonation to stress some argument or opinion—and body, such as facial expressions.

Expressive emotional communication<sup>4</sup> cues have been investigated and measured, for example, in the fields of psychology and computer science (Barrett et al. 2019; Saberi and Saad 2017). They can be helpful for accessing nuances while using scales and quantitative parameters. In this chapter, however, sentiment coding was applied in an experimental qualitative setting.

Automated sentiment coding was applied to the dataset using NVIVO 12.<sup>5</sup> However, while evaluating the results it was noticeable that passages were incorrectly classified, even when unambiguous.<sup>6</sup> Because of these limitations, the automated results were discarded, and the sentiment codification was reperformed manually paragraph by paragraph.

The emotional range adopted was based on the standard of the software NVIVO, which has the degrees (very and mostly) positive and negative, along with neutral and mixed. The latter was used in passages that could have multiple interpretations. For example, the company showed interest in the SA region during their press talks (positive); however, the lack of planning in 2018 received criticism (negative). Player-viewers identified with the heroes of the game (positive) but lacked identification with the professional players (negative).

The result was 475 nodes which helped to create a nuanced perception about *Overwatch* in Brazil using media coverage produced by professional established media, independent creators, and official coverage (Images 7.1 and 7.2).

The highest combined positive values were attributed to Community (38), which supports the previously cited beliefs of the active Brazilian esports community. The lowest values were attributed to Business (66), which mainly relates to Blizzard Entertainment's organization, strategies, management, and accountability.



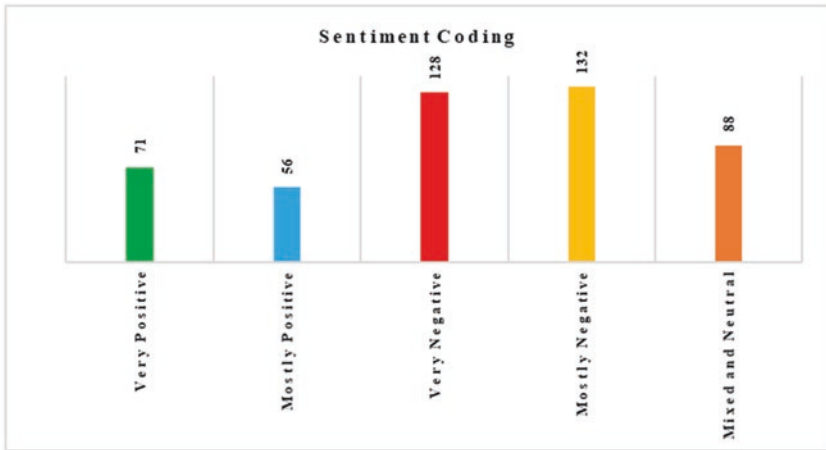


Image 7.1 Distribution of sentiment coding. Mixed codes were combined with the neutral ones, neither of which had report value in this study

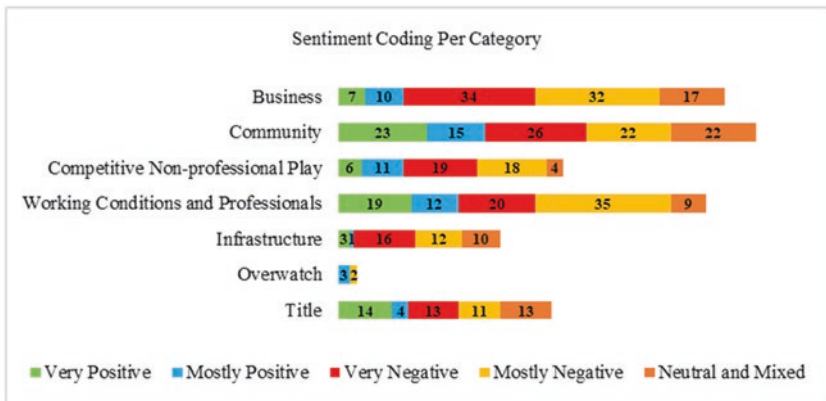


Image 7.2 Distribution of sentiment coding per category

## RESULTS

In this section, the outcomes of the thematic and sentiment coding are presented via a narrative analytical report with a focus on two selected areas: players (including the “Competitive Non-professional Play” and

“Working Conditions and Professionals” themes) and the community (including the “Community” and “Infrastructure” themes). The idea is not to comprehensively examine all themes and their sentiments, but rather to illustrate with examples why the Brazilian *Overwatch* scene did not take off as expected. At specific points, direct references are provided in footnotes.

### *The “Path to Pro” in an “Emerging Region”*

The technical structure of the SA server was generally considered weak, with constant disconnection and instability issues (Blizzard Forum 2018). Competitive players felt that it was hard to find people on the same level to have balanced matches. Match outcomes thus felt random, causing frustration and a sense of stagnation. A new grouping system, in turn, was considered promising, but in the SA, this also meant long queues to play.

Playing with friends or groups of acquaintances was considered the best option for playing *Overwatch*. Many streamers, in turn, gave up performing live because there was an increase of *smurfing*<sup>7</sup> accounts created to *gank*<sup>8</sup> streams by annoying and provoking adverse reactions, which would be clipped and spread to *strike*<sup>9</sup> a streaming channel. The streaming platforms and game owners did not respond to such events, which made many streamers frustrated.

Despite the above difficulties, enough players were ready to play in Brazil to form a competitive community. They are mainly driven to win and master the game mechanically, ranking top in their countries and influencing the decisions of the representatives in the *Overwatch World Cup*. This commitment sometimes transformed high-level players into analysts and coaches.

Teams in Contenders SA mostly consist of Brazilians, but also include Argentinians, Uruguayans, Chileans, Colombians, and Mexicans. Other nationalities are under or not represented. Although SA is generally perceived as *Latin*, internally, there was fragmentation and few joint efforts. Brazilians tend to care a lot about how NA perceives them.<sup>10</sup> They were considered the “inspirational region,” with players frequently endorsing them in terms of skill. Brazilian players in Contenders SA trained mainly on the NA server because to them there was not much to be learned in the SA.

Going over-server, however, brought issues of connectivity and language. Negative experiences on the NA servers were toned down even if

explicit xenophobic (Viana 2019) behavior was reported as anger toward players on the SA servers. Offensive behavior was nevertheless also interpreted as a learning process, which would make them better players. This perception might have been fueled by unsatisfactory playing experiences, and the assumption that excelling involves pain, sacrifice, and will be eventually rewarded by fulfillment.

Neus et al. (2019) have suggested that esports audiences online pursue complete knowledge gain. However, the Brazilian professional play data, such as those of the *Overwatch World Cup*, did not yield evidence for any such motivations. In general, the professional scenes were discussed as entertaining, and the enjoyment was derived from social and aesthetic aspects.

A former Director of the local *Overwatch League*, Nate Nanzer, said in an interview in 2017 (Falcão 2017) that the product was inspired by the Football World Cup (FIFA) where qualified delegations attend an event at the international level for a broad and enthusiastic audience. Perhaps the event that better corresponds to this is the *Overwatch World Cup*, as reported by Turtiainen et al. (2020). Team Brazil attended the event from 2016 to 2018 but never passed the first stage. Many expressed this underperformance to be related to the low-level working practices<sup>11</sup> and the competitive potential of the SA.

According to the Brazilian *Overwatch Contenders* Regulation document,<sup>12</sup> teams “may enter into services agreements with Players in connection with Player participation on the team. Any such contracts must comply with applicable laws.” Viana (2018b) found that the average Brazilian Contender player did not have a formal work contract, salary, or other benefits. The local regulation also favors *Overwatch League* teams in conflicts, as they can buy out any player from a Contenders team with 25% of the upcoming *Overwatch League* player’s salary (Chui 2018a, b). The uncertainty and fragility of labor conditions produced by the above naturally impact the team’s competitive focus as they are at risk of their players being bought out. Notably, there were also no compulsory or planned practice schedules in the “professional” teams. Organizations with written contracts keep a percentage of the prize earnings, however.<sup>13</sup>

An open letter<sup>14</sup> signed by all the teams officially included in the first SA tournament made it clear that they were all amateurs and students, and none of the players in the SA plays for a living, which made it difficult for them to play in the tournament. The matches were scheduled to take place during the day, which for many players collided with their work or study

schedule. The local tournament organizers did not consider this a problem: “We appreciate your suggestions regarding the schedule for the upcoming *Overwatch Contenders* South America, and we will definitely take it into consideration for future seasons.” The response attracted the attention of the esports media, however, and the organizers agreed that matches would be pre-recorded in the SA to make it possible for all of them to participate from their own homes.<sup>15</sup> No public comments were allowed (to prevent the results from leaking) (Viana 2018a).

Such events relate to the labor difficulties discussed in Peuter and Young (2019). According to them, digital gaming labor can be “a formidable source of financial value generation in contemporary capitalism” (p. 748), particularly in a country where the level of youth unemployment (18–24) reached a worrying 27.1% in the first term of 2020 (Fraga 2020), becoming one of the worst years in historical records.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, according to Woodcock and Johnson (2019), gaming opportunities (despite their problems) have been “an important element of contemporary youth employment dynamics, especially for those disaffected by, or unsuccessful in, traditional education or career paths” (p. 814). Playing is an unregulated labor activity in Brazil, but people are willing to pursue their professional aspirations presented by *Contenders* as a “path to pro”—or, as jokily referred to as in the data, “path to poverty.”

### *The Brazilian Overwatch Community Around the Competitive Scene*

According to the findings of Freeman and Wohn (2018), players start teams with friends because they have already proven to be trustworthy. This pattern was followed when *Overwatch* was launched in Brazil. Here, *soft skills*, which are related to personality and nationality, are more important than competitive abilities (pp. 107–108, 110). Players thus benefit from their existing social connections, creating an endogenous environment that may dissuade people outside the founding groups.

According to the data analyzed in this chapter, and in line with the above, already-popular players acted as gatekeepers, joined the most stable teams, had better working and playing conditions compared to their peers, performed on the international stage, and did not suffer the consequences of misconduct (Rigon 2017) while playing professionally. In the sentiment coding, the “very positive” attributions were related to this ambience of

camaraderie and support, which can balance the eventual burden, stress, and uncertainties of their working position. Social capital was closely related to their longevity and influence.

The sources referenced this group as one that was established and had become popular in other games, from which they moved to *Overwatch*. This allowed them to make use of their existing personalities and national fame, thus granting them media attention before competitive success. Accordingly, a common explanation that was given for the group's survival was their popularity on wide-ranging online platforms. Social media presence is an asset, and Blizzard Entertainment, with other related stakeholders, understood the group's market potential.

The community around the Brazilian competitive scene is also an institution with influence and power (see Chee and Karhulahti 2020). Systematic engagement in online communities can also be a laborious activity with high emotional demands, however (Guarriello 2019). In 2018, the elected Community Leader of the Brazilian *Overwatch* claimed to have been harassed by members of the Team Brazil delegation in the *Overwatch World Cup*.<sup>17</sup> Allegations also arose from the community, as the people allied with the competitive scene (Team Brazil) and did not think the leader was credible enough to fulfill the position. These events reflect the overall instability and conflicting opinions within the community, which was reported as an element that made “liking” *Overwatch* difficult.

Blom (2018) proposed that *Overwatch* consists of a universe that is shared in the community: everyone can consume and interact with *Overwatch* media, and this may connect them to the community. This shared, connected, but not codependent universe finds support in the Brazilian context, with the caveat that accessibility plays an important role. In the podcast (*Poligonal*, Vice-Brazil, 2017), the hosts and guests discussed the price of the game in the country; one of the guests mentioned that people often engage with the *Overwatch* universe not by playing, but through comics and animations. While this may have sometimes led them to start playing and participating in other game events, it was often too expensive for the regular Brazilian player. The price of the game was reduced eventually,<sup>18</sup> but the free weekends remained as the only moment when financially disadvantaged players could participate. In Brazil, the price of global media versus local income is part of a complex historical problem.

## CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this chapter was to better understand the Brazilian *Overwatch* and its competitive scene. I applied systematic content analysis and experimental sentiment analysis on Brazilian Portuguese and English qualitative materials specifically to map out the reasons for the game's local competitive shutdown.

The findings indicate Brazilian *Overwatch* to have suffered from poor working conditions, infrastructural issues, and conflicts in the community. The first can be illustrated by the “path to pro” project, launched by the company to strengthen emerging regions like Brazil. The initiative did not achieve its aims, and the reasons behind its failure are mostly related to Blizzard Entertainment's decisions and lack thereof. An example of the second point is that there were no improvements on the local infrastructures: people had significant and permanent negative playing experiences due to various technical issues and the simple lack of equipment. Third, the community—that was also addressed in many positive terms—had numerous problems of internal validation (who belongs and has the opportunities to belong) with symptoms of polarization due to the local power dynamics, which produced conflicts of interest. This made commitment to *Overwatch* difficult for larger audiences. Finally, I should add that the country also has its own structural adversities, which can impact the player base.

Although this work presented a perspective on Brazil, its reality and struggles are connected to other esports markets too (see Woodcock and Johnson 2018). Nevertheless, I argue that the vulnerabilities of participation in Brazil are (or were) more severe. The currently dominant esports business models like those listed by Scholz (2020) and Scholz and Stein (2019) do not seem to work equally in peripheral regions such as Brazil, as *Overwatch* demonstrates. Thus, regardless of those discourses, and even persuasive marketing reports, elements such as place and structure cannot overcome in fragile structures.

While writing this text in 2020, the final paragraph included uncertainties about the future of the Contenders SA project and *Overwatch* in Brazil more generally. Before this final version, an announcement was made in Reddit in February 2021<sup>19</sup> about the closure of the regional division. The reaction in the comments and social media accounts of former professional players, casters, and audience was a mixture of disappointment and resignation. The sensations of these Brazilian *Overwatch* players can be characterized by the game's opening cinematics: “*Everyone knows Overwatch got shut down.*”

## NOTES

1. Gaming platforms here means the diversity of devices used to play, for example PCs, emulators in web navigators, consoles, mobile and gaming devices, virtual reality, and so forth.
2. The city of Sao Paulo is usually the base for global companies, being even considered the financial capital of Latin America. This centralization implies that other cities will most likely not be appropriately portrayed and included.
3. The methodology of this study follows “the measuring guidelines created by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to ensure comparison with international data and with the survey’s own historical series” (ICT Households 2018, p. 222).
4. The American Psychological Association defines as “emotional expression” (a) an outward manifestation of an intrapsychic state. For example, a high-pitched voice is a sign of arousal, blushing is a sign of embarrassment, and so on; (b) an emotional response in which the individual attempts to influence their relation to the world through the intermediacy of others, rather than directly, for example, a sad face and slumped posture elicit nurturing from others. Expressions differ from action tendencies, which influence the world directly, and from feelings, which are intrapsychic experiences of the significance of a transaction (APA Dictionary of Psychology).
5. NVIVO is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software developed by QSR International. The version used for this work was 12th.
6. See limitation to auto-coding sentiment in NVIVO.
7. Smurfing is Internet and gaming slang used to refer to alternative accounts of people used to mislead others. The intentionality and consequences of this action depend on the context. However, it is a term with negative association (Blizzard Forum 2019a, b; Paez 2020).
8. Ganking is informal gaming slang used to refer to an attack. In the passage the meaning is a sudden invasion or increase of viewers which is unusual. For more information related to the activity in games (Malaby 2019).
9. Strike is used in Internet and gaming slang to refer to an attack, an action to cancel, interrupt, and deny. Thus, it is close to the original meaning of the word.
10. As the work is delimited to the Brazilian context, the perceptions of others in SA are not reflected. Nevertheless, it would be valuable to see them circulating in the field.
11. Viana (2018b) collected information from the players and according to them, they could not dedicate or commit themselves to a competitive routine because they were studying or working. Playing, then, was a secondary but desired activity of their lives. Without the possibility to work as a player, or at least include playing in a regular daily demand, forming a

- team, planning strategies, training, coaching, and other competitive competences could not be developed.
12. Version 3.0.1 of the Official Regulation was the most recent found, although there is no date on the document. Furthermore, according to Clause 1.2 (Changes to and Enforcement of these Rules) of this document: “*The field of professional esports competitions is still relatively new and changing rapidly, and these Official Rules will evolve in real time to keep pace with those changes. Accordingly, in its sole discretion, Blizzard (a) may update, amend or supplement these Official Rules from time to time.*” The reasons alleged are not reasonable. However, it is a common practice of lack of transparency from companies.
  13. The Official Regulation v.3.0.1 point 10.1 “Distribution of Prize Awards” says: “Team Owners and Players may agree to an alternative distribution of prizing in any applicable services agreement that is entered between a Player and Team Owner. Substitutes must play in a match in order to be eligible for payment.”
  14. The open letter is available in English (Duduzeraow 2018).
  15. Over GG published the news in English and pointed out that Oceania (Australia) was facing similar problems. Nevertheless, the resolution in this region is unknown (Tamagao 2018; Razgriz 2018).
  16. The English version of the site is incomplete, but the graphic with the historical marks of unemployment per age is the third one. Statistical measurement started in the first term of 2012 and the latest report is the last term of 2020 (IBGE 2021).
  17. The author has decided not to reference the videos related to the incident so as not to give visibility to the content producer and its channel because the discourse perpetuated there is inclined to foment hate speech, harassment, false allegations and doxing, for example. Nevertheless, the coding of the content is available in the supplementary material.
  18. The basic edition of the game for the PC in 2019 was R\$69 compared to the original price of R\$159 (approx. US \$13 and US \$29 respectively) (Romer 2019).
  19. Dan McHugh representing the Overwatch Path to Pro Team shared on Reddit (r/Competitiveoverwatch) on February 5, 2021, the plans for the upcoming year (McHugh 2021).

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