



Otome Games: globalization and glocalization processes, conceptualization and data analysis of Brazilian players

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Abstract

This paper endeavors to examine the concept and features of Otome Games in a comprehensive way by conducting an exploratory narrative review and applying a e-survey to understand the Brazilian Otome Game market and player's culture. This article also discusses the globalization and glocalization process of Otome Games, covering the actors, market share, exportation process, social issues, indigenization, culture, and definition. Furthermore, this paper offers a historical definition of Otome Games and their relation to Japanese feminine culture. Additionally, a fitting definition for Otome Games and other types of games - known as Josei Muke - is introduced. The indigenization process of Otome Games in South Korea and Brazil is also explored, demonstrating how this process is improving tourism and animation markets via transmedia. Finally, this paper presents data analysis from an E-survey of the Brazil fan community of Otome Games, revealing specific cultural and market aspects unique to Brazil setting it apart from other countries where Otome Games have been studied.

Keywords: *Otome Games, Brazil Game Market, Globalization, Josei Muke, E-survey*

1 Introduction

The exportation of Japanese pop culture starting in the 1990s led to the formation of several groups of Western fans who consume these types of Japanese products, such as J-Pop (Japanese pop music), J-Games (Japanese games), J-Dramas (Japanese dramas and soap operas), anime (Japanese animation), J-Movies (Japanese movies), and manga (Iwabuchi 2002). Within the Japanese electronic games industry, one genre that has gained prominence is the visual novel genre, becoming one of the most widely played types of game in Japan (Taborda & Alves 2015) (Koide & Obana 2018) (Koyama *et al.* 2019). Visual novels (and Otome Games too) are usually classified and typified by the industry into categories such as: Simulation Games, Music Games and Role-Playing Games (Statista 2023) (SensorTower 2023).

Visual novels, or electronic novels, are a type of game that is accessible in terms of technology and the creation of immersive worlds, mostly featuring simple mechanics with a strong emphasis on plot and player-driven narrative, as the player is invited to take a first-person perspective to explore the story through writing, dialogue, thoughts, music and sound effects, paving their route among dozens of possible endings, with some games being so narratively complex that guides are released to reach all the possible endings (Taborda & Alves 2015). It can be stated that visual novels provide a multifaceted playful experience that ensures the player's creativity (Cavallaro 2009). This genre of games

started to be consumed in the West when groups of fans began making fansubs (fan translations) from the original Japanese to other languages such as: English, Spanish, Chinese and Filipino (Díaz Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez 2006) (Taborda & Alves 2015) (Ganzon 2019).

From the genre of visual novels, the so-called Otome Games emerges as relationship simulation games with the romantic experience at their center, inspired by the concepts of Japanese *ren'ai* romance (恋愛) and a focus on the female audience as their main target (Morris 2017) generating an estimated revenue of ¥15 billion yen in the mid-2010s (Koide & Obana 2018) and ¥80 billion yen in 2021 (Mochizuki 2021). From the 2010s, Otome Games began to experience greater penetration and success around the world, with their games being released on several platforms (Morris 2017), with Japanese companies creating subsidiaries to translate and produce original content in English for the public, especially the US (Morris 2017). This observation is in line with the conclusions of the systematic review carried out by Martucci *et al.* (2023), in which he points that games aimed at the female audience have as a baseline characteristic the establishment of social (or parasocial) relationships.

In the 2010s, the emergence of fan groups for Otome Games in Brazil was also observed, with fan translations being shared and communities being formed, increasing the consumption of this type of game in Brazil. This time frame is corroborated by the release of the game *Amor Doce* (2011) which was the first game in this genre available with Portuguese subtitles (Mello *et al.* 2021). This market continued to grow significantly, to the point of establishing a solid base of consumers, enabling the production of national

games of this kind by Brazilian studios, such as the game *Laços e Amassos* (2023) as an example.

However, deeper research revealed a vacuum of structured data on the profile and size of the public for this type of game and content in Brazil. Therefore, this work in question aims to be a first structured contribution to the geographic reality in question, which is based on a preliminary publication, duly revised, and expanded, presented at the XXI Brazilian Symposium of Games and Digital Entertainment (Diniz *et al.* 2022b).

2 Methodology

The present work is part of an exploratory study of Otome Games in Brazil, given the lack of bibliography in Portuguese, seeking to conceptualize this type of game and scrutinize trends for operations to mark out the profile of the Brazilian Otome Games player, through from a quantitative and qualitative perspective supported by conducting a narrative review and electronic survey (e-survey).

Initially, a bibliographic survey of the term Otome Game was carried out through the perspective of narrative review (Onwuegbuzie & Frels 2016), in addition to the establishment of the adopted databases. In the case in question, Google Scholar was used, added to the empirical experience of the authors in the subject in question, resulting in an expressive degree of coverage of the state of the art, perfectly suitable for a narrative review. In this way, a conceptualization of the Otome Game was heuristically possible, since it has not yet been academically crystallized, which also resulted in the conceptualization of *Josei Muke* games, considering that there is no rigid border, but still erased between these games. The narrative review also focused efforts on the synthetic meeting of the state of the art suitable for the fabric of the previously listed themes with the topics of globalization and export of contemporary Japanese culture, understanding it as a soft power resource (Iwabuchi 2015).

For the study in question, the survey is intended to measure the variables categorized as "social", which enable us to make inferences about the social structures and phenomenological aspects of social groups with a limited degree of distinctiveness. Thus, measures of demographic and socioeconomic order serve as beacons to establish possibilities for interpretations of social facts (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik & Warner 2018). Therefore, it is important that the respondents fully comprehend the questions. For them, it is necessary to understand the question submitted so that they can determine the information to be provided. If the question is related to a choice, it requires the triggering of individual memory or the emanation of a momentary judgment. With this, it becomes important, when preparing a survey, that it has passed through a pre-test, in order to assess the reception of the target audience (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik & Warner 2018). It also highlights as relevant the robust knowledge of the researchers of the different concepts and organizational and cultural structures that guide the variables to be adopted in the re-

search. For this, considering the scope of this work, the empirical experience of the authors as users of Otome Games becomes an important element in the harmonization of the research instrument, in face of a field where the concepts themselves have not yet crystallized in the community of players (Kim 2009) (Ganzon 2019) (Ganzon 2022).

In surveys, the social structure and phenomenological aspects are read from the data extracted from the survey instrument. This can be done through input harmonization, conducted before data collection, or through output harmonization, after data collection (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik & Warner 2018). Finally, a final observation relevant to survey design is the conceptual-empirical framework for determining which harmonization is most appropriate.

By harmonizing the questions of a survey, Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik and Warner (2018) establish five stages. Stage 1 seeks to clarify the purpose of the measurement by developing the research question and the object to be measured. Stage 2 aims to outline a social landscape with regard to the political and legal bases where the respondents are based, which allows establishing appropriate categories and typologies to be inserted in the questions. In step 3, the researchers set up the research instrument, considering that, in some cases, there may already be tested and proven examples. The non-verification of the full or partial reproducibility of tools produced by third parties obliges researchers to elaborate in their own way but having the previous steps as a guide. Stage 4 consists in the harmonization strategy, that is, in the selection of the method to be adopted in the survey application, considering the delimitations of the previous stages. Step 5 refers to the establishment of categories that are comparable across countries and cultures, allowing a comparative perspective of reading the results.

For this research, which consists of an exploratory study about the Otome Games players located in Brazil we used qualitative and quantitative research instruments, we adopted the first four stages. This choice was based on the finding that, along the narrative review, no qualitative and quantitative research about Otome Games players were found. The work that came closest to the approach with users implemented here was that published by Ganzon (2022), where the use of semi-structured interviews with players was verified, but not aiming to establish any quantitative series. With this, a robust comparison with scenarios originating from other countries was not possible, which also leads to a choice of input harmonization considering the diverse economic, social, political and cultural realities in Brazil.

As a data collection instrument, an electronic survey (e-survey) was adopted (Reynolds *et al.* 2006), with the objective of mapping personal and geographic information, in addition to the relationships of respondents with the Otome Game and *Josei Muke* and your financial investments to play.

With regard to e-survey, regarding the use of electronic surveys, it's enhanced by the dissemination of easy-to-use and free tools, such as Google Forms. With this, surveys are built in a structured way and easy to disseminate for the considered sample. In this article, it's in line with Couper (2000)

note that, although a survey represents any type of data collection or survey, currently its meaning is limited to those surveys carried out using questionnaires (commonly closed).

As far as the exploratory study presented in this article is concerned, the boundary conditions of the sample design for an e-survey must be limited in some way. With that, the clipping was directed to members of communities in social networks devoted to the theme of Otome Games and other subjects that touch it, such as *Josei Muke* and *Shoujo*.

Couper (2000) identifies this type of research as “unrestricted self-selection surveys”. However, when using Google Forms, this unrestricted has the barrier of the fact that it can be answered only once per registered account. Another aspect cited by the author is self-selection, which is based on publicizing the questionnaire on social networks where members have specific interests. For the research in question, as it’s an exploratory study about Brazilian players, such property is desired, as the bias is clear and needs to be assumed.

3 Globalization and Otome Games Export

Since the 1990s, the export of Japanese pop culture has become a global phenomenon when Japanese companies began to see their cultural products as feasible to be appreciated abroad, going through a process of removing cultural characteristics of the country implicated in the product, which make their vernacular origin identifiable, such as artistic styles, lifestyles, languages, music, among others (*Mukokuseki*) (Iwabuchi 2002). Observing this phenomenon, the Japanese government instituted the Cool Japan policy to positivate the external view of the country, using mainly Japanese pop culture, to capitalize abroad, especially in the West (Iwabuchi 2015) (Berto & Almeida 2020). This popularization phenomenon can be observed with anime (Japanese animation) in the 1990s, and recently with the expansion of streaming services promoting anime in Brazil, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Crunchyroll, with the later having licensed more than six hundred animation titles (mostly from Japan and China) available to the Brazilian public on their platform. (Urbano & Araujo 2021) (Ferreira *et al.* 2023). In agreement with the scenario observed in the animation and print publication industry, the Japanese game industry was also heavily exported.

Through a cross-pollination phenomenon of the anime industry in the late 1990s, the Japanese game industry received many professionals from anime production, who adopted narrative tactics and complex story development common to these cultural products, as well as their aesthetics. Based on player choices, in this scenario, visual novels were born (Cavallaro 2009). However, visual novel games only became export products later, from the end of the 2000s, due to not only the translation costs, but also the costs involved with the production and exportation of the own game (Taborda & Alves 2015).

Within the established visual novel genre, Otome Games emerge as a new and expanding niche outside of Japan. Initially, starting from translations made by fan communities, who shared these games during the 2000s, mainly for English-speaking users, on blogs and sites, commonly for anime and manga consumers outside of Japan and South Korea (Ganzon 2019) (Ganzon 2022), it was found that another cultural consumption niche had been established, resulting from the organic birth of a vibrant community born of the mutual horizontal identification of women who are able to share, through their fan activities, moments of humor, emotional adversity, and commonly limited tastes to be expressed freely, a result of the patriarchal regime dominant in the societies where they live. This creates bonds of mutual identification, including non-binary people, making Otome Games a genre already separated from the visual novels from which they originated (Ganzon 2022).

Starting in the 2010s, various Japanese, Chinese, and South Korean companies began translating their content into English and distributing them on game and app marketplaces such as Google’s Play Store and Apple’s App Store. For example, one of these companies, Japanese-based Voltage Inc., has registered over 50 million players and has more than 80 Otome Games available internationally (Morris 2017).

The expansion of Otome Games leads to the emergence of the term Original English Language Visual Novel (OELVN), which encompasses visual novels made entirely in English, rather than being translated from Japanese (Morris 2017). Otome Games are usually developed with a focus on the tastes of English-speaking consumers, addressing themes that are less frequently seen in the original Japanese games, such as issues related to work in the West and LGBTQIA+ representation (Ganzon 2022), demonstrating the robust process of internationalization of this cultural product.

It’s worth noting that many of these game companies have Japanese involvement, and many also translate and localize various contents from Japan. This is a global marketing strategy for these companies, which includes “indigenization” and local consumption, as in the case of Sony’s articulated strategy of “global localization” or “glocalism” (Iwabuchi 2002), with Voltage Entertainment USA as a model. This is a subsidiary of the aforementioned Japanese company Voltage Inc., created to develop original English language visual novels tailored to the consumption characteristics of American female audiences (Morris 2017), such as introducing romance options with non-white and non-binary characters (Ganzon 2022). Finally, in terms of revenue, Voltage Inc. reported a revenue of ¥7.3 billion yen in the Japanese market and ¥828 million yen internationally (Voltage Inc. 2022).

3.1 Otome Games Glocalization: The Voltage Entertainment USA case

Iwabuchi (2002) demonstrated that, when studying the case of Japanese media companies in their process of internationalization through glocalization in the 1990s, this strategy does not always result in success, due to various factors such as concentration of power in the original headquarters (usually Tokyo), lack of freedom of action of workers in local subsidiaries, and a mistaken understanding of the functioning of the local consumer market and their respective local working conditions.

In July 2020, Voltage Entertainment USA experienced a strike and unionization movement by its workers, predominantly women and non-binary individuals, demanding better wages and improved working conditions. They received support from the English-speaking community of Otome Game players and after a month of advocacy, the workers successfully secured an 85.71% wage increase. However, in December 2021, Voltage's Tokyo headquarters decided to shut down Voltage Entertainment USA, citing reasons such as a stagnant Otome Game market, decreased productivity, and rising labor costs in San Francisco (Ganzon 2022). It is worth questioning Voltage's claim about the market stagnation, considering the increased consumption of Asian pop culture products, like anime, outside of Japan during the COVID-19 pandemic by popularization of streaming services, converting some of these products like anime largest dependent of global market (Pineda 2021) (Hirasawa & Mihara 2022) (Ferreira *et al.* 2023), including very specific niche markets like Virtual YouTubers (*VTubers*) (Regis 2021) (Diniz *et al.* 2022a).

3.2 Expansion of Otome Games in the Mobile Market

In the realm of Otome Game expansion, there has been a broadening of the mobile game market (games programmed for use on smartphones) in recent years, reaching \$61.7 billion in revenue in 2019 (Chapple 2020) and surpassing \$92.2 billion in 2022, representing 50% of the entire global game market (Wijman 2022), with Otome Games also penetrating this platform, replacing physical media sales in the end of 2000s (Morris 2017) (Ganzon 2022), even though, until the early 2010s, physical media associated with other trans-media products, such as girls' magazines, were the most common way of consuming Otome games in Japan, and they still have a significant presence today (Koide & Obana 2018). Regarding the Otome Game market, there are few studies on its global participation. However, considering the latest data from Japan, Otome Games generated around ¥80 billion yen (equivalent to \$595.2 million in February 2023), accounting for approximately 6% of the total Japanese game market (Mochizuki 2021).

To visually measure the participation of Otome games in the mobile market, an empirical search was made for the Otome games present in the top 200 most rented games in the simulation category in the Apple Store and the Play Store

on 14 May 2023 (SensorTower 2023), as shown in Figure 1. It's important to note that in both mobile stores there is no category for "romance games" or "women's games", so most of the games considered to be "otome games" are found in the "simulation games" category, with a small presence in the "music games" and "role-playing games" categories. Given the lack of clear industry standards that define and categorize these types of videogames, collecting a definitive and accurate catalogue of these titles across online stores can prove to be a challenging task. In light of this reality, and for the purposes of this specific topic, we filtered as an Otome Game or Josei Muke Game any game that had the following three characteristics at the same time: (i) It's a game intended for women, (ii) it wasn't a children's game, and (iii) it had some sort of visual novel mechanic in its gameplay (Cavallaro 2009).

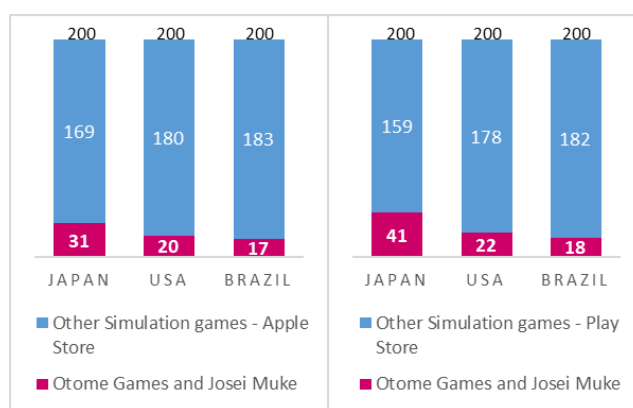


Figure 1. Number of Otome Games from the top 200 most rentable Simulation Games category in Apple Store and Google Play, retrieved on May 14, 2023

It's worth noting that the introduction of mobile devices into the Otome Games market has meant a paradigm shift in production and commercialization (with companies in this sector adopting a platform economy) (Ganzon 2019) (Wagner & Liang 2021) (Ganzon 2022). For example, Voltage Inc. launched its own app, *Lovestruck*, with all its games in 2018 (Ganzon 2022). In many cases, these games are marketed under a free-to-play model, based on microtransactions to acquire characters in *gacha* systems, a predatory system where users can unlock characters, romance routes, and extra events through random rolls with a certain percentage of success, or for recharging energy/stamina to keep playing indefinitely (Sellier 2021) (Wagner & Liang 2021) (Ganzon 2022). This model utilizes the player's desire to acquire a character and/or more parts of their story through induced narrative tension and/or segmentation of the story for each possible route, which is only available for purchase in a system called "narrative gates". Another important element for the success of the free-to-play model is the unique aesthetic appeal of each character (Sellier 2021), as illustrated in **Figure 2**.



Figure 2. Characters from the game Court of Darkness (2020) by Voltage Inc

However, it should be noted that these games have an explanatory complexity that considers the player as an active and rational element in the story, rather than a passive one, in which the narrative design takes into account the ability of each route to create long-term relationships with each type of possible player adopted in the game, and with decisions that affect the entire story. This competence also follows the aim of fostering the player narratively, commonly opposing the generic sexist stereotypes of Western representation of women in other media (Sellier 2021), in agreement with Azuma's theory (2009), which argues that the *otaku* audience is an avid consumer of diverse narratives, with Otome Games being another growing niche in this larger audience.

This recent production and management model has re-configured and channeled women's fantasies, emotions, and choices towards modes more frequently related to East Asian societies, turning the act of playing into emotional labor (Ganzon 2019) (Ganzon 2022). Lastly, it's important to highlight that this logic of microtransactions and free-to-play strategy applied in mobile devices allowed Otome Games to be constantly updated and democratized in access, facilitating, and strengthening the formation of communities and creating games without a defined end.

3.3 Otome Games Indigenization and Hybridization: South Korea and Brazil

Iwabuchi (2002) highlights that a process of indigenization and hybridization of Japanese pop cultural products being exported had already begun in the 1990s, such as pop music. Indigenization refers to the collection of exogenous elements of local culture and the formation of non-Western local modernities (Iwabuchi 2002). Hybridization refers to the amalgamation of global and regional cultural flows in the same locus (Papastergiadis 1995). With the receiving nations of cultural flows from Japan as a geopolitical reference, these

concepts are added to the formation of local industries from these influences, transforming the foreign into national through transcultural flows (Appadurai 1996).

However, in December 2021, Voltage's headquarters in Tokyo ordered the closure of Voltage Entertainment USA, citing a stagnant Otome Game market, decreased productivity in the division, and rising labor costs in San Francisco-USA (Ganzon 2022). It can be said that Voltage Inc. replicated many of the strategic mistakes made by its compatriots in the past, as outlined by Iwabuchi (2002), in the Japanese glocalization strategy.

With this in mind, it should be noted that the indigenization phenomenon also occurred in the Otome Games market, through the creation of companies and the expansion of the game portfolio, thus adapting the business model that existed until then, making it extremely competitive and forcing the large Japanese developers to map these new competitors, with companies from South Korea, China, and the United States standing out in this segment (Wagner & Liang 2021) (Ganzon 2022). This geographical expansion has already reached Brazil with the creation of Doguinho Estúdios, which launched the Otome Game "Entre Laços e Amassos" (2023), set in the state of Goiás, incorporating cultural elements of the Brazilian Midwest region, with more than 50,000 downloads in the Play Store, indicated in **Figure 3**.



Figure 3. Brazilian Otome Game Entre Laços e Amassos (2023) (Between Ties and Make-Outs) by Doguinho Estúdios

Historically, within the process of indigenization of Otome Games, South Korea has received particular attention. Otome Games entered South Korea in 1997 (Ganzon 2022) with the end of the ban on cultural imports from Japan that had been banned since the end of World War II (Iwabuchi 2002) (Ganzon 2022). Already in the early 2000s, local industries began to produce for the local market in a rapid process of indigenization and hybridization (Ganzon 2022). In 2011, South Korea translated its first Otome Game into English and followed this trend, contributing to the sector's development simultaneously with Japan. However, unlike Japan, South Korean Otome Game producers were concerned with inserting cultural elements of the country, presenting typical foods, social groups, and musical elements, among others (Ganzon 2022), not adopting the strategy of *Mukokuseki*. **Figure 4** shows the South Korean Otome Game

Mystic Messenger (2016), in which the character "707" displays a bag of "honey butter chips", a very popular snack in South Korea.



Figure 4. The Mystic Messenger (2016) character "707" displaying a popular South Korean snack.

The concern to exhibit and publicize South Korean culture was part of the government policy to promote and export the country's digital culture from the perspective of the "Hallyu Wave" through artifacts such as Otome Games (Ganzon 2022). Thus, the "Hallyu Wave" became a state policy to promote the country through soft power (Shim 2006) (Kim *et al.* 2009). This policy affected digital artifacts and the national tourism industry (Kim & Nam 2016), with Otome Games playing an important role in this promotion, a phenomenon like what happened in Japan.

3.4 Otome Games from Transmedia Cultural Product to Tourism Promoter: Hakuouki Case

The Japanese Otome Game Hakuouki (also written as Hakuoki or Hakuōki), released in 2008 (Figure 5), features a narrative containing various traditional Japanese cultural characteristics, such as legends of youkais (a type of Japanese mythological creature) and taking place during the Edo period (1603-1867) in the regions of Kyoto, Tokyo, and Hokkaido, being part of and one of the main promoters of the *rekijo* (歴女) wave, which can be translated as "history-loving girls". This category of people represents girls passionate about media that portray Japan's history, especially Otome Games. As a result, groups travel all over the country to learn about the history and culture of the places where their favorite stories occur (Sugawa-Shimada 2015) (Lopez 2019). With its success in the market, Hakuouki was adapted into an anime (Figure 6) and exported to various countries, receiving translations, and showcasing Japan's culture and history to the world (Sugawa-Shimada 2015) (Lopez 2019) (Ganzon 2022), demonstrating Otome Games as products with great

transmedia potential (Lopez 2019) (Wagner & Liang 2021) (Tosca 2021).



Figure 5. Otome Game Hakuouki: Kyoto Winds (2008)



(a)



(b)

Figure 6. (a) Hakuouki: Kyoto Ranbu (2013), and (b) Hakuouki: Shinsengumi Kitan (2010).

In summary, Hakuouki is part of a later generation of Japanese pop cultural products that no longer use the *Mukokuseki* strategy, especially for Western consumers, attracting

legions of fans outside Japan to these transcultural flows, promoting consumption and appropriations of these Japanese historical and cultural narratives (Tosca 2021). Therefore, it can be concluded that Hakuouki and other more recent and English-language marketed Japanese Otome Games have a Japanese cultural odor (Iwabuchi 2002), with Japaneseness being a strong element of interest for foreign fans (Ganzon 2022).

4 Otome Games and Shōjo Bunka: History, Concept and Definition

Currently, Otome Games can be considered as a niche pop of modern Japanese female culture, which has used the writing style from the electronic games to produce its own narratives.

In this item of the article, we consider important to promote a historical overview of how the Japanese perspective on what is called female culture (or female sociability) was consolidated and how its intrinsic characteristics still shape several cultural products aimed at girls within the country, later exported to eastern and western nations. Further on, we intend to deepen the conceptualization, searching for reference marks for a definition, even if provisional, over the Otome Games and their particularities within the so-called *Josei Muke*.

4.1 The Resignification of Japanese Women's Culture

The Meiji Era (1868-1912) was characterized by a state enforced westernization and strategic hybridization policy to protect their own sovereignty over the threat that the western countries displayed in Asia at that time. Thus, the cultures and technologies to be hybridized from the West were selected by the state in favor of a modernization plan, that legitimated these hybridizations as being Japanese, using the concept of "*Wakon Yosai*": "Japanese spirit, Western technology" (Iwabuchi 2002). This phenomenon extended through the 20th century as well and lead Japan to consider itself as the best Western hybridizer (Iwabuchi 2002). Because of this state policy, at the end of the 19th century, Japan built a new social and economic order, in which, the role of women in society was re-signified (Segal 2015).

This resignification influenced the teaching in the new schools aimed at young girls of the emerging urban middle class (Shamoon 2012), whose curriculum featured subjects such as mathematics, history, and literature, but also domestic arts and foreign languages. The focus was to train women who would live by the Japanese motto of "Wise wives and good mothers" (*ryosai kenbo*) (Shamoon 2012).

The teenage schoolgirl came to be called by the term "Otome" (乙女), becoming one of the symbols of Japanese modernity. Gradually, the rate of enrollment in girls' schools by middleclass girls gradually increased, enabling the flourishing of what came to be known as *Shōjo Bunka* (can also be written as *Shoujo Bunka*) (少女文化) (Shamoon 2012)

The Japanese female culture of this time also accompanied the growth of the country's phonographic and entertainment industry. The emphasis is on the perspective of being centered as a tool for expression and creativity from the closed world of the girl students, who began to articulate themselves through poems, short novels, illustrations, and other possibilities, which were characterized especially by the sentimentalism, the focus on the lyricism of the words, and narratives that often depicted bonds of friendships between the girls and relationships characterized by sisterly love (*Ren'Ai*), which these were called Class-S Relationships (*S Kankei*) (Shamoon 2012).

Ren'Ai is a concept of spiritual/intellectual love that emerged in Japan during the Meiji era as a result of the hybridization of new European Christian concepts of love with old Buddhist concepts of it. In the Taisho era (1912-1926), the idea of *Ren'Ai* is appropriated by students at girls' schools, in a secularized way, who, faced with the homosocial environment (characterized by social relationships restricted to people of the same gender) (Shamoon 2012) establish bonds of romantic friendships with each other, but without a focus on sexual intimacy (Shamoon 2012).

Simultaneously, while female culture was growing in the private world of the schools, externally *shoujo* culture began to stand out mainly through the emergence of the "Takarazuka Revue" theater company, created in 1914, and, at the same time, the creation and expansion of magazines focused on the young female audience, with the most notable titles being "Shoujo no Tomo" and "Shoujo Club". The main characteristic of these magazines was to encourage the female readers to contribute to the creation of the cultural artifact itself, as the editors made sessions available for them to publish their poems, drawings, articles, calligraphy, and even love letters. They could also participate in contests and challenges promoted by the magazines and have their work published and receive prizes (Shamoon 2012).

As World War II progressed, these magazines began to suffer governmental pressure, justified in the fight against a culture of exacerbated sentimentality. With this, the editorial line was remodeled for a nationalistic bias, inserted in the striving initiatives before the war conflict, where the idea of fleeting girls talking about their feelings was considered unproductive, while other virtues like patriotism and self-sacrifice for the country became the new ideal for teenage girls. Yet the foundations for what we now consider as *shoujo* culture were laid at this time, from the authentic expression of the hearts of the girls who lived at that age. (Shamoon 2012).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the popularity of women's magazines declined. However, new spaces of expression emerged with manga, books, art, and music, fostered by a greater freedom of creation, especially in themes such as sexuality, politics, and romance. Currently, the word Otome has been appropriated to represent the possibility of women and girls enunciating their identities, situated in a hermetic environment, expressing narratives represented in the dreams and fantasies of freedom, romance, and sexuality warped by adventure (Shamoon 2012).

The digital games inspired by the issues described and analyzed in the previous paragraphs were positioned as a possibility of making cultural artifacts produced with a focus on the consumer public that identifies with the otome perspective.

4.2 Otome Game x Josei Muke

As the market for female-target games has grown, various terminologies have emerged and been adopted by the gaming community itself. In particular, the terms Otome Games (乙女ゲーム) and Josei Muke (女性向け).

Otome Games (乙女ゲーム) is a more specific definition for games produced for women, with the differential that its narrative and gameplay are developed in the user who puts him/herself in the role of a protagonist, and must choose between one of the romantic interests provided by the game. Thus, throughout the story, the player is led to perform a series of compositions in certain situations, in order to increase or decrease the intimacy with the chosen romantic pair, besides, through these choices, the user can unlock other key points of the story, alternative endings as well as routes and stories of other characters (Kim 2009). **Figure 7** illustrates decisions in the Otome Game Mystic Messenger. In this case, the decision to be made can favor or not the relationship with the character Jumin, influencing in the positive ending (center position in the figure) or negative ending (right position in the figure) of his route.

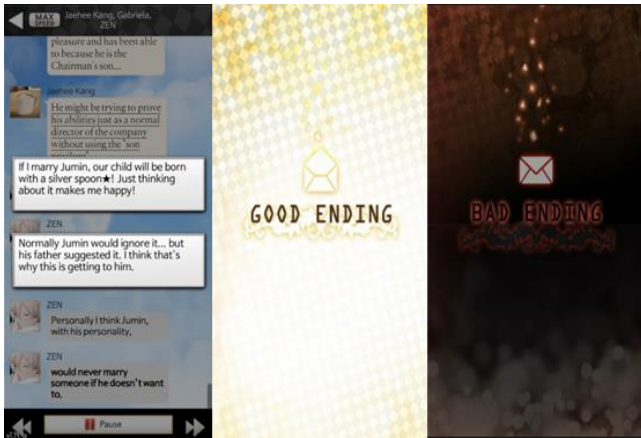


Figure 7. Decisions in the Otome Game Mystic Messenger (2016)

Regarding Josei Muke games, it's necessary to point out the generalist nature of the term (lit. women's game) and the little and diffuse bibliography dedicated to establishing conceptual bases to it. However, from the authors' empirical experience, one observes a noticeable effort by gamers to settle the principles guiding the differences between Otome Games and Josei Muke, making it possible to minimally separate the titles into their respective types.

Josei Muke (女性向け) is a broader term to define any type of game that is produced, planned, and distributed with a focus on the female audience, but that does not necessarily feature the romantic development of a protagonist with other characters (Kim 2009). Generally, this type of game has

more diverse gameplay mechanics and allows the user not only a romantic experience, but also the experience of the entire universe and gameplay presented in the game. With this, the ultimate goal of consumption is a playful experience, but not necessarily a romantic one.

Several Josei Muke games adopt the "rhythm game" mechanics, which are known for challenging the player's sense of rhythm as the player needs to operate the game controls in a sequence that is presented to them. In the case of the game Idolish7 (Figure 8), the player needs to collect cards through the gacha system, to assemble good teams and thus be able to perform all the songs that the game catalog offers.



Figure 8. Gameplay of Idolish 7 (2015)

The game Tears of Themis from the Chinese company Mihoyo (Figure 9) is an interesting example of the diversity of mechanics and experiences that can be found in Josei Muke games. In Tears of Themis, the player assumes the role of a newly graduated lawyer who starts working for a firm and, together with four male characters, begins to unravel a series of crimes occurring in the fictional city of Stellis City. But, to advance in the story, it's necessary to complete several mini games that the narrative proposes to the player, such as: defeat opponents in debates using the cards collected by the gacha system, look for suspicious items at the crime scene, correlate evidence and evidence obtained in a logical way to the story, among others. In this way, the romance mechanics to be developed with the four male protagonists occurs in a secondary way, and it can even be optional for the player to explore this mechanics or not.

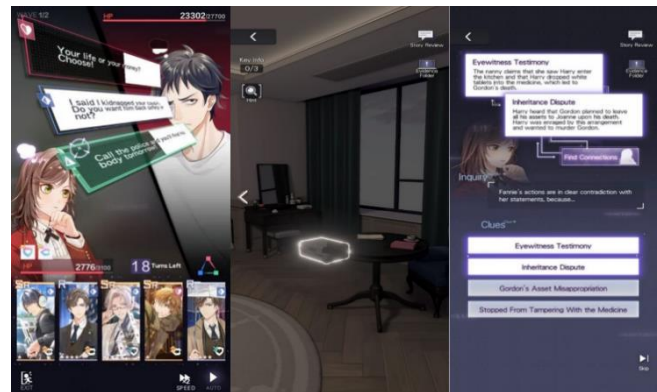


Figure 9. Gameplay of the game Tears of Themis (2020)

5 E- Survey: Design and Deployment

Considering that this article is an exploratory study with the social group of Brazilian players of Otome Games, it is important that the sociodemographic variables carry characteristics that allow them to be used in the future, in a comparative perspective, with research with similar themes, enabling the interchangeability of interpretations of the social facts analyzed (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik & Warner 2018). The narrative review undertaken in this study did not reveal qualitative and quantitative research on Otome Games players. In order to set up a standardized basis for its use in the research, reference was made to works focused on online and/or offline console games.

5.1 Surveys: Research application in the field of online games

Research with primary data on the online gamer community began to be undertaken in the early 21st century. Previously, Griffiths et al. (2004) identified that studies in this field did not consider as relevant the sociodemographic issues pertinent to the users. From previous works, focused on offline console games (Douse & McManus 1993) (Griffiths & Hunt 1995) (Phillips et al. 1995), the authors translated and transmuted the sociodemographic variables to the object in question, the online games. Corroborating the statement made by the authors, Ribbens and Vanden Abeele (2008) noted that in this time interval were published the first works that expand the analytical framework of online games beyond the scope of technological artifacts and tools, to include users' characteristics, as well as psychological constructs.

However, unlike the surveys adopted in the fields of medical and biological sciences, in addition to psychology, there are no robustly established standards on questionnaires of sociodemographic variables (Q-SV). As shown by Toledano-Toledano et al (2019), for the previously mentioned areas, the marker of differentiation between survey instruments lies only in the emphasis being directed internally or externally to the patient. When observing Q-SV focused on digital games area, besides a sociodemographic basis, there is the conjunction with specific subjects of interest of each research. The survey models adopted in research on the gamer community are not structured solely on sociodemographic variables.

In researching on demographic factors and performance variability in an online game, Griffiths et al. (2004) set up a survey involving sociodemographic variables of age, gender, marital status, country of residence, level of education and work occupation, mixed with variables of the research universe in question such as history of access to the game, frequency of hours of gameplay and preferred forms of access to the online game.

In the work of Ribbens and Vanden Abeele (2008), on sociodemographic and psychological determinants for the enjoyment of the online gaming experience, the survey is structured only on the sociodemographic variables of gender, age and level of education, in addition to questions on

average gaming time per week in minutes and general interest in online games.

In Ankara and Baykal's (2022) work on socioeconomic and sociodemographic factors affecting digital gaming addiction among Generation Z, the survey is structured in four sections. The first two sections collect information on the socioeconomic and sociodemographic characteristics of the household. The third and fourth sections collect information on each child's characteristics and the family's gaming behaviors of interest.

Specifically dealing with an economic variable, which is the financial amount used to access special resources of free to play games, Costes and Bonaire (2022) use in their research instrument the sociodemographic variables of gender, age, level of education and family income combined with the harmonic use of surveys formulated by other researchers and that are validated by peers. In this research the models Game Experience Questionnaire (GEQ) and Motive for Online Gaming Questionnaire (MOGQ) were adopted.

In a systematic review of papers addressing people's motivations to gamble online and their associated psychological and sociodemographic variables, Martucci et al. (2023) lists a number of types of surveys validated in the area: Motivation to Play in Online Games Questionnaire (MPOGQ), The Player Experience of Need Satisfaction (PENS), Motive for Online Gaming Questionnaire (MOGQ), Gaming Motivation Scale (GAMS), Massively Multiplayer Online Games Motivations Scale (MMO-MS), Gaming attitudes, motivations, and experiences scales (GAMES), Digital Games Motivation Scale (DGMS), Videogaming Motives Questionnaire (VMQ), Video Game Uses and Gratifications Scale (VGS). Reasons for playing video games (RPVG), Electronic Gaming Motive Questionnaire (EGMQ) and Massively Multiplayer Online Motivations Inventory (MMI).

Considering the dispersion of validated Q-SVs presented in works focused on the gaming area and comparing the sociodemographic variables in the surveys operated in the works cited in the previous paragraphs with those presented by Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik and Warner (2018), the baseline structure is maintained, orbiting in the fields of: (i) sex/gender; (ii) age; (iii) marital status; (iv) ethnicity; (v) education level; (vi) residence; (vii) family income. Thus, from the perspective of input harmonization (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik & Warner 2018), these variables formed the basis of the questions of the e-survey prepared for this research, along with specific fields of interest of the exploratory study reported in this paper, also duly harmonized.

5.2 E-survey for exploratory research on Brazilian Otome Games players

When preparing the questions of the e-survey, it was considered that the study in question seeks a first approach with the Brazilian players of Otome Games. Thus, using the strategy of harmonization of the questions, posed by Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik and Warner (2018), it was determined as follows the boundary conditions which refer to the research question and

the object of study. This first stage indicates that the socio-demographic variables to be adopted in the e-survey are: (I) sex/gender; (II) age and (III) residence and (IV) family income. In the second stage of harmonization, the delineation presented in the previous items of the text, regarding the social panorama of the Brazilian players, indicates us the need to establish mixed categories about the game language, since the classificatory boundaries of the games are still blurred along with the player's gender. In the third stage of harmonization, we opted for the elaboration of our own questionnaire, but attending the necessary variables identified in the first stage, besides the use of survey elements as MOGQ and MMI to approach the choices and motivations of the players about the choice of platforms, the most accessed games and the financial amount used to change the degree of performance in the games or to acquire the game itself. The **Table 1** shows specifically the questions used and their respective explanation. Finally, in step 4, it was made the choice of the e-survey method, as described below.

Table 1. Questions and Answer options of E-Survey

Questions	Answer options	Utility explanation
Gender	Male Female No Binary Others	Sociodemographic variable of gender adopted with such options on account of the pre-test, where respondents demanded the use of neutral language when dealing with the non-binary option.
Age	-15 15 - 20 20 - 25 25 - 30 +30	Socio-demographic variable of age with narrower bands between the ages up to 30, as a large majority of the games are launched with a targeting on this age group.
What Brazilian Federative Unit (UF) do you live?	Each Brazilian federative unit and "Abroad Brazil"	Sociodemographic variable of domicile, having as options the states of the country and an option for Brazilians who live outside the country, considering that most Otome Game communities are in the virtual space.
What platforms do you use to play	Android Computer/Laptop Steam	Variable adapted from MMI intended for respondents to report

	Console PSP (Playstation Portable) Nintendo Switch IOS Others	which technological artefacts are engaged when playing an Otome Game.
What languages do you play in?	English Portuguese Japanese Spanish I use screen translator. Korean Traditional Chinese Simplified Chinese French Filipino	Variable adapted from MOGQ about the language options in which the game is played, also considering the usage of artifacts for translation. Observing that to choose one of the options it was not necessary to have advanced knowledge of the chosen language, being required only enough to understand the narrative and the game mechanics.
Which of these titles do you know or have heard of?	Amor Doce Mystic Messenger Uta no Prince Sama Obey Me Diabolik Lovers Ikemen Series (Vampire, Sengoku, Prince etc...) Idolish 7 Twisted Wonderland Tears Of Themis Jogos da Genius Inc (Soul of Yokai, Twilight Lovers etc...) Mr Love: Queens Choice Love 365 Wannabe Challenge Court Of Darkness Ensemble Stars Others	Variable adapted from the MMI designed for respondents to inform which games respondents are familiar with, without necessarily establishing a rigid boundary between Otome Games and <i>Jo-sei Muke</i> .
Which of these titles have you played recently or are still playing?	Same options as above.	Variable adapted from the MMI destined to the respondents to inform which games they have had or have experience, without necessarily establishing a rigid border between Otome

		Games and <i>Jo-sei Muke.</i>	deepen the issues addressed in this work.
What genres do you most often play?	Visual Novel Dating Sim <i>Gacha</i> Rythm Games Detective, Puzzles Boys Love LGBTQIA+ Girls Love Others	Variable adapted from MOGQ about the choice of game mechanics in conjunction with the genre performance variables. In the current stage of Otome Games consumption in Brazil, it is verified that there is not a rigid boundary on the classification of these games by their gameplay mechanics, sometimes being the game genre confused with the performance genre. Therefore, shaped this way, the options allow respondents to guide their answers through the genre that motivates them to play (as game mechanics or as performance identity), understanding it as a structured system of communication marked by a "grammar" and a "vocabulary" in action by the community of players.	<hr/> <p>While analyzing the state of the art via narrative review, the issue of the formation and information flows between players of Otome Games being supported by virtual communities, via apps and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Discord, was noted as fundamental to our research.</p>
Have you ever spent money on these games?	Yes No I prefer don't respond	Sociodemographic variable of household income, which, in this research, was adapted to seek information about the income consumed to enhance the experience of playing an Otome Game or of obtaining the game title itself. The relationship between this expenditure and its limitations regarding the family income is a correlation placed in the MOGQ, recommendable for further research, which shall	<p>Accordingly, it was decided to formulate a survey applied remotely (e-survey) and disseminated in virtual communities focused on issues that in its scope include the Otome Games, whose main communicational support is the use of the Portuguese language, considering that this is research targeted in these players. As criteria for selection of these communities, we adopted the number of followers and the verification of the occurrence of posts on previous dates, proving then that it's a collective in activity. Considering these criteria, and based on the data collected on July 4, 2022, the following communities were chosen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Love Live Brasil" (300 members) - largest discussion group maintained on Discord of the Love Live franchise IP in Brazil. By IP, it's understood in this paper as a transmedia conglomerate of intellectual properties of digital artifacts (Koyama <i>et al.</i> 2019). The Japanese Love Live franchise was initially designed for the seinen (young adult male) audience, however, as the franchise has grown, female involvement is currently robust and expressive. • "Shoujo Portal" (5,210 followers) - largest Twitter community aimed at anime/mangá and IPs of the <i>shoujo /josei</i> demographic, which is geared toward female teenagers and young adults, an audience ideally configured as the primary one in the consumption of Otome Games. • "Otomices" (320 followers) - largest community on Twitter that is specially focused in Otome Games. • "Garotas que curtem animes" (201,435 followers) – One of the biggest communities on facebook that targets girls who not only likes <i>shoujo/josei</i> products, but also japanese cultural in general.
			<p>It's important to emphasize other aspects that directed the sample outlined above. On Facebook, there is a community dedicated to Otome Games ("Otomes games br e +"), with over 1,000 followers. However, when we contacted the administrators of the page, they considered it only valid to advertise in the group formed by followers, supported by WhatsApp, with less than 100 participants. On Instagram, we did not find active profiles focused on Otome Games and those contemplating cultural products from the female demographic did not provide feedback to our contacts.</p>
			<p>When assembling the e-survey, considering the exploratory nature of the research aimed at the Brazilian public, a questioning arose in the preparation of the questions. What</p>

would be the titles of the games to be included in the data collection system?

To make possible to prove or not the hypothesis that the concept of Otome Games is not hermetic even for most of its players, we chose to insert a mix of games that go through the genres of Otome Game and *Josei Muke*, considering the concepts established in the previous item of this article. The list of games was elaborated from the empirical experience of the authors, as players and/or members of virtual communities that have these thematic in their scopes. Finally, it's important to point out that this e-survey is the first Brazilian academic initiative to work with this topic and this niche community within the gaming subculture.

Based on these framework conditions, we opted for the creation of an electronic questionnaire with only one page and with questions related to the players' data on: (i) gender, (ii) age, (iii) state of the federation that the player resides, (iv) software platform adopted for playing those games, (v) titles known by the researched players, (vi) titles already played, (vii) most common genres of narrative played, (viii) languages chosen when playing, and (ix) financial investment in the chosen games.

The survey instrument was applied over the course of four days, by means of the disclosure chronology described below:

- 2022/07/06 - 8pm - Launch of the questionnaire on Google Forms and dissemination on the social networks of the article's authors.
- 2022/07/06 - 2pm - Disclosure at "Love Live Brasil" server on Discord.
- 2022/07/06 - 7pm and 10pm - "Portal Shoujo" publication about the survey on twitter.
- 2022/07/06 - 8pm - "Otomices" publication about the survey on Twitter.
- 2022/07/06 - 8pm - "Garotas que Gostam de Anime" community publication on Facebook.
- 2022/07/06 - 10pm - Announcement at "Otome Games br e +" community's WhatsApp group
- 2022/07/07 - 10am - New publishing of the research in "Portal Shoujo" and "Otomices"
- 2022/07/08 - 6pm - Publication at "Otome Games br e +" community
- 2022/07/08 - 11:59pm - Removal of the questionnaire from the public and beggining of the collection of data from completed forms.

Regarding the evolution of the number of responses over time (**Figure 10**), it's interesting to note that the number of responses grows incrementally by stimulus provoked by some kind of publication (that works like a sort of advertising for our survey). This appears right after the release of the questionnaire on the authors' social media (evening of July 05), the disclosure in the collectives (evening of July 06), the new posting on the Twitter collectives (late morning and early afternoon of July 07) and disclosure in the Facebook community (early evening of July 08).

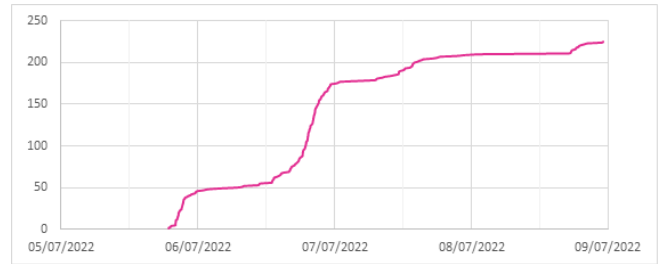


Figure 10. Number of forms answered in relation to survey duration in DD/MM/YYYY format

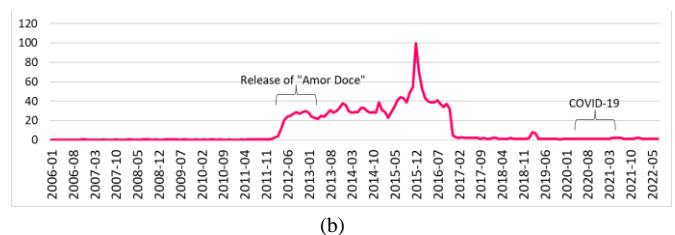
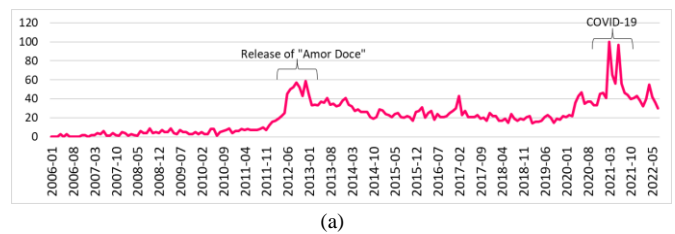
At each of these times there is an increase in the response rate over time. However, in all cases, this increase comes back to a standstill within a few hours. We infer that this stems from the volatility of the publications on social media. As no extra action was taken to boost these publications, they were diluted in so many others that make up the feed of each user profile. Thus, if the user is not accessing it at the moment that the publication is posted, there is a high probability that he or she will not see it. At the end of the designated period, we collected 225 answers from the e-survey.

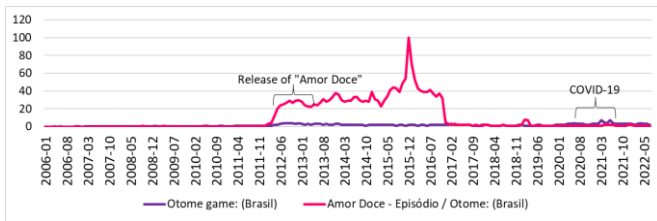
6 Data Analysis

In order to better understand and prove the issue of consumption and search for Otome Games content in Brazil, the Google Trends tools were used to trace the history of searches for "Otome Games" and for the game "Amor Doce", which was the first to receive Portuguese subtitles. Then, we analyzed the data collected in the e-survey. The survey was sent to several groups of Otome Games fans on Facebook, Twitter, and Discord.

6.1 Google Trends

We analyzed the hypothesis, based on searches in Google Trends, a free tool that tracks the most searched terms on the web in each period of time (Melo, Marques, and Cunha 2013), on the correlation of the release of the game "Amor Doce" on digital platforms with searches for "Otome Game" (**Figure 11**).





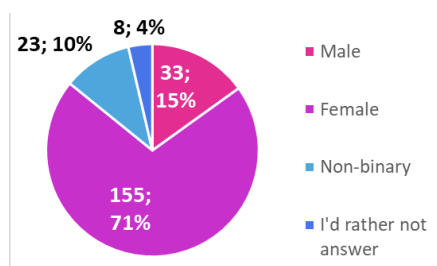
(c)

Figure 11. Graphs of searches on Google Trends for the (a) subject "Otome Games", (b) for the subject "Amor Doce - Episode / Otome" and (c) both terms overlapped

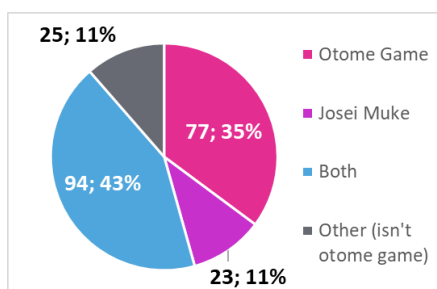
The concentration of searches for the terms "Otome Game" and the game "Amor Doce" starts from the release of the Portuguese version of the first "Amor Doce" game for Android and IOS smartphones, in 2012, consequently taking advantage of the searches for the term "Otome Games". The searches for the game were much higher than the Otome Games genre itself in that period, indicating a strong wave and matching the period in which fan groups and translations of this type of game appear, nascent between 2012 and 2016, which is the period of greatest searches for this game, representing the vanguard of the Otome Games genre in Brazil, apparently for its availability in Portuguese. On the other hand, the strongest period of search for Otome Games occurred recently with the COVID-19 pandemic, in which people sought new forms of virtual entertainment during the period of isolation (García-Macías & Espinoza 2021). It should also be noted that the search for Otome Games began in Brazil in 2006, in the second half of the decade of the 2000s, as observed by Morris (2017) in the case of the United States.

6.2 E-survey Data Analysis

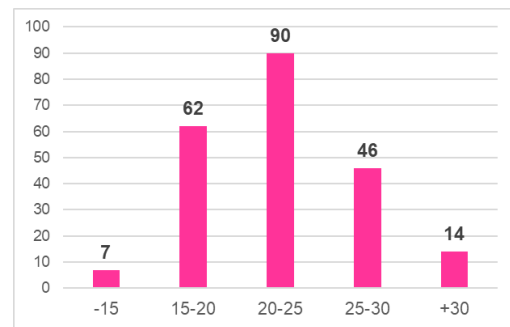
As demonstrated in **Figure 12**, which was produced with data from players who currently claim to be playing this type of game, among the chosen game responses, 48% of players play both Otome Games and *Josei Muke* Games.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure 12. Graphs of the (a) audience by gender, (b) number of players of Otome Game and Josei Muke and (c) number of players by age group

Given that the category of games discussed in this article is created and designed with a female audience in mind, it's not surprising that this is also the largest consumer audience, accounting for 71% of the responses reported in the questionnaire. At the same time, it's also notable that the percentage of the audience that identifies as non-binary is like the percentage of the male audience, which can be explained by the growing proliferation of LGBTQIA+ themed games. However, more in-depth studies on these specific profiles would be necessary for this area of debate.

According to the survey, most players are between 20 and 25 years old, with a total of 40% of the responses, with significant numbers also in the 15 to 20 age group, which represents the second largest share of responses, and in third place is the 25- to 30-year-old category. The low number of responses from the under 15 age group can be explained by the lack of consolidated presence of this age group in the communities for which the survey was designed, and the possibility that this age group does not have a profitable level of knowledge of foreign languages such as English, Japanese and Chinese, the languages in which most titles are still found in Brazil, with the exception of Amor Doce and the games of the company Genius Inc, which have already been translated into Portuguese.

Regarding the distribution of the consuming public, the Pareto graph (**Figure 13**) was used to show the concentration in the two states with the largest economic participation in the country: São Paulo (with 32% of the public) and Rio de Janeiro (with 24% of the public), concentrating 56% of the total consuming public. The next states are Paraná, Minas Gerais, Amazonas, and Rio Grande do Sul, which together represent 80% of the total public. The relatively significant presence of states outside the Rio de Janeiro-São Paulo axis is explained by the fact that, since the 2000s, the consumption of the *otaku* subculture is no longer limited to the more populated regions. In the current century, major Japanese pop culture events, including international attractions such as Kodama (in Distrito Federal), Anime Jungle Fest (in Amazonas), and Sana Fest (in Ceará), have been held in other states (Gushiken & Hirata 2014).

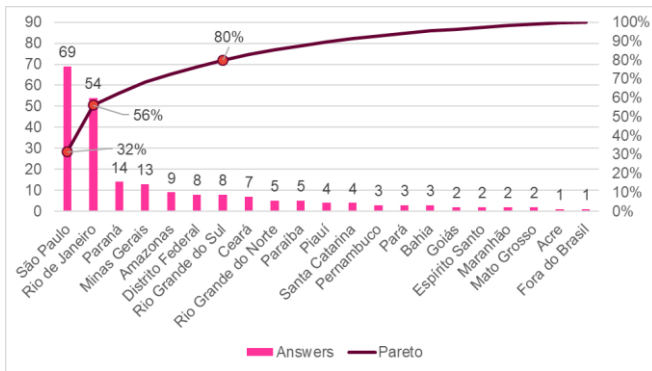


Figure 13. Pareto Graph of the proportion of players per federative unit

The concentration in the Rio de Janeiro-São Paulo axis, as observed in Figure 14, is because these regions have the greatest Internet access and have the largest metropolitan urban centers in the country: São Paulo (21.8 million inhabitants) and Rio de Janeiro (13.1 million inhabitants) (IBGE 2020).

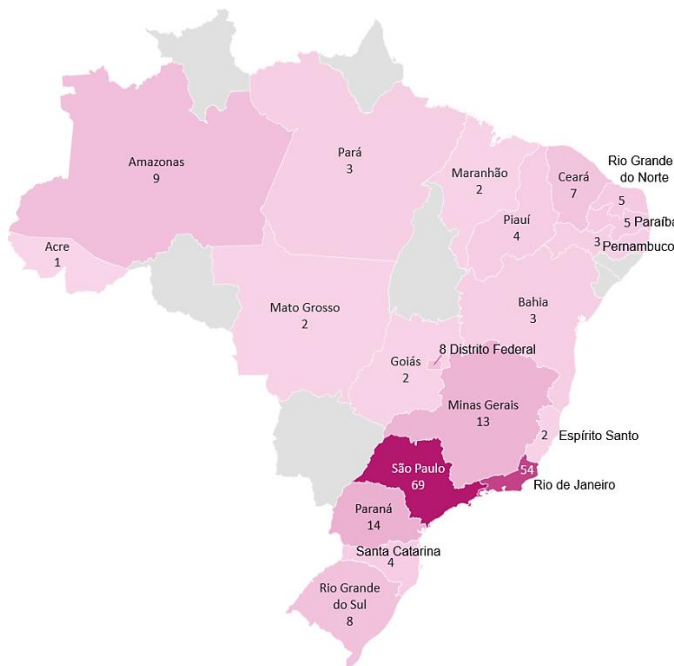


Figure 14. Heatmap of the proportion of players per federative unit

The others state in the country that complement the 80% concentration of the Pareto’s graph of Otome Game players: Paraná, Minas Gerais, Distrito Federal, and Rio Grande do Sul, have a higher average household income compared to the rest of the country (Silveira & Alvarenga 2021), indicating a greater capacity to spend on electronic leisure. Complementarily, we must highlight that São Paulo and Paraná have the largest Japanese-Brazilian communities in the country, influencing it in several cultural and social aspects (Sakurai & Coelho 2008), as illustrated in Figures 15 and 16.



Figure 15. Neighborhood of Liberdade, São Paulo-SP, a Japanese-Brazilian community



Figure 16. Building in the state of Paraná: Japanese Castle, in the city of Assaí

The most peculiar case among the states with more players is the state of Amazonas, which is very far from the economic axis of the country, as shown in Figure 14, and has a more precarious technological infrastructure than the others, but still has a high Asian pop culture influence, which leads to large Asian pop culture events in the state and the consumption of its products (Gushiken & Hirata 2014) (Menezes 2022), as shown in Figure 17 with the event “Anime Jungle Party” realized annually in Manaus, state of Amazonas, as well as the constitution of related social events. It’s noteworthy that the *otaku* community of the state of Amazonas develops a constant cultural and social flow with the state of São Paulo, which generates a great influence on it in its tastes and activities (Menezes 2022). In addition, more than half of its population is concentrated in the metropolitan region of the capital, Manaus (2.7 million inhabitants) (IBGE 2020), known as the “Metropolis of the Amazon”, where there is the best technological infrastructure and access to services in the northern region of Brazil, being a large industrial center with the presence of several multinational companies (Santos 2017). The Northeast region of Brazil has the lowest penetration of Otome Games and is also the region with the greatest socioeconomic challenges in the country, with the lowest proportional income when compared with other regions of the federation (Silveira & Alvarenga 2021).



Figure 17. Otaku’s event “Coca-Cola Anime Jungle Party” in 2016

The social and economic penetration of *Otaku* events in several parts of the country became notorious in the 2000s from several Brazilian victories in world cosplay championships, especially the World Cosplay Summit, in which cities from all over the country are entitled to definite spots in these festivals (Gushiken & Hirata 2014). In addition to the popularization of anime in the country through streaming services in 2010, such as Netflix, Crunchyroll and Amazon Prime, which also bring much of their content already dubbed into the Portuguese language, fostering its universalization (Urbano & Araujo, 2021), being the access to content in the Portuguese language a fundamental characteristic in the analysis concerning **Figure 19**.

The communities of Otome Games are constituted as safe spaces, especially within the cyberspace, contributing to a collective construction that allows leisure and consumption from a shared female identity, without the influence of factors outside the community itself. (Lopez 2019) This phenomenon is identified by Lopez (2019) as another facet of "the entrepreneurial feminism".

These types of community, unfold with the creation of bonds of belonging figured especially by the affective connection between the game and the shared experiences of the female players, these being understood in a relevant way among regional communities of Otome Games (Ganzon 2022). Verifying that in countries that are still in development, the regional community of female Otome game players also plays a role as a haven from hierarchical social pressures coming from members of Anglophone countries or Japan, as well as from the marketing control imposed by the very companies that develop and distribute these games. As a result, it creates a scenario where members of different cultures and countries can share among themselves their productions, translations, copies, etc. more freely in an intra-regional way (Ganzon 2022).

This phenomenon of regionalism is observed in Brazil in each state highlighted in the **Figure 13**, noting that even in regions far from the traditionally remembered urban centers (Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo), for instance the city Manaus in the state of Amazonas, has developed its own circle of Asian pop culture, hosting one of the largest events of its kind in the country (Menezes 2022). In this sense, the events cited become spaces where the Otome games communities share their own tangible cultural productions such as: cosplays, fan books, fanarts etc.; which enables the materialization of the fan sentiment and its communities in the real world (Lopez 2019), similarly to what happens in the original Otome Road in Tokyo (Alban 2020), transforming into spaces of material and social convergence of this culture.

The data in **Figure 18** shows that the most used platforms to play Otome Games were Android phones, the computer/notebook, and Steam, which is also a computer game platform, concentrating 80% of the players. The phenomenon of low adhesion to other platforms (which together represent only 20%) is explained by the high prices in Brazil of

devices such as the Nintendo Switch and PlayStation Portable.

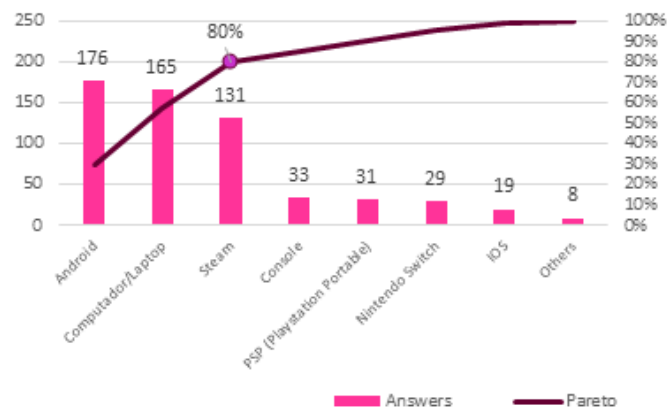


Figure 18. Graph of the proportion of players per platform

Regarding the languages adopted by the players (**Figure 19**), it's important to note that when we asked about those used by the player, the intention was to score the adopt languages, not only used to read the text of the game and understand it's rules but also the idiom used to the audio package of the game (when it's available), It's also important to stress that in order to select the idioms in the questionnaire, the players did not necessarily have to be fully fluent in the selected idioms, they only needed to be able to understand game narrative in the chosen languages. The result is that a significant portion of the interviewees play in English and Portuguese. This data can be explained by the fact that most Otome Games available for the western public have English translations, with the exception being the games Amor Doce and titles from the Genius Inc. It also draws attention to a good percentage of respondents who can play in Japanese and, because of this ability, also have access to more titles and productions than most of the average audience. Finally, it should be noted that at the time the e-survey was applied, the game "Entre Laços e Amassos" had not been released. Thus, in future surveys and with the release of more Otome Games by Brazilian studios, this graph is likely to have its configuration changed.

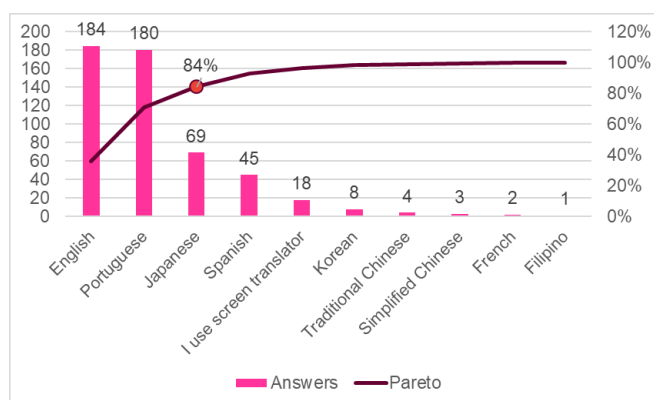


Figure 19. Graph of the proportion of players per language

It's important to note that, in 2012, the French Otome Game Amor Doce was made available in Brazil with Portuguese translation, besides being accessible to users by being playable in the browser, as well as in Android phones, becoming a successful product in the country, as shown in Google Trends searches in Figure 9. A linguistic particularity was then identified. Differently from the popularization in the rest of the West, in which the translation of Otome Games into English was enough for its popularization and formation of communities (Ganzon 2019) (Ganzon 2022), in Brazil the translation into Portuguese was fundamental for the adhesion of more users.

In order to corroborate the implications formulated with the help of the data obtained in the research, the work of Ganzon (2022) offers an insightful perspective. According to the author, Otome Game players from countries in the global south, such as Brazil, the Philippines, South Africa, and Thailand, are often uncomfortable interacting with Otome Game practitioners and communities from the global north, due to the fact that, even with knowledge of the English language, access to many Otome Game titles is largely hindered by economic issues and little official distribution in countries in the global south (Ganzon 2022), making legal access to these games costly and stressful. This fact causes many players to end up making their own translations or accessing these games through piracy, something much criticized and stigmatized by the English and/or Japanese-speaking Western community, even interdicting the right to debate on the matter (Ganzon 2022). Adding another layer to this problem, the author points out that discussion in languages other than English or Japanese is not tolerated, thus configuring a linguistic neo-colonialism (Ganzon 2019) (Ganzon 2022). However, we emphasize that because English is the most internationalized language, its use becomes necessary for a dialogue of transnational communities.

These facts strengthen the hypothesis of the autochthonous popularization of Otome Games in Brazil due to both the availability of Android, which is the most popular cell phone operating system in Brazil, representing 90% of the cell phones in the country (Cardoso 2020), and the translation into Portuguese of Amor Doce and a few other Otome Games, mainly from Genius Inc, besides the fact that the Brazilian community apparently interacts rarely with the international community by sharing and dialoguing only in Portuguese, as for example the pages that helped share this e-survey, which publish and interact almost exclusively in Portuguese.

Regarding the knowledge and practice of games (Figure 20), it was decided to list, based on the empirical experience of the authors, the franchises and titles most often mentioned in the Brazilian and international communities. However, a field was made available in the survey instrument so that the respondents could add other games they knew as well.

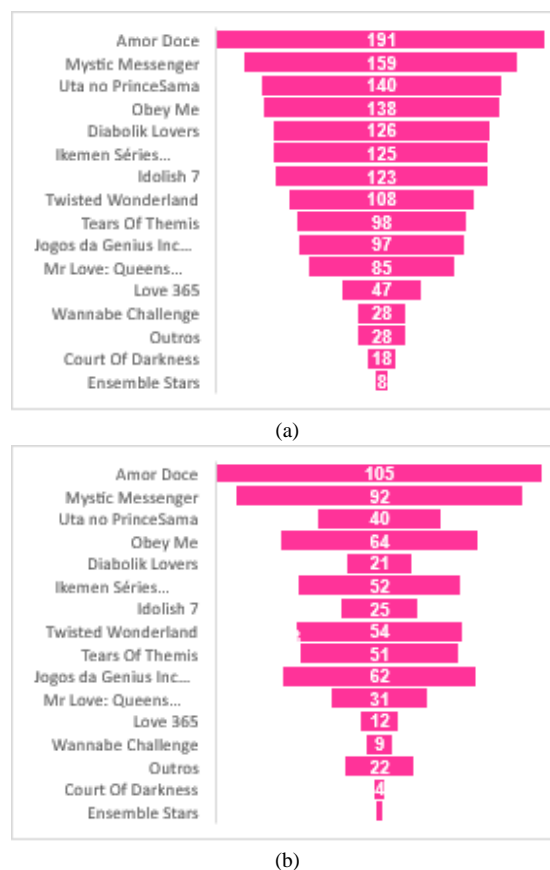


Figure 20. Graph of the (a) number of respondents who know the games and (b) who practice

Most respondents said they knew or experienced most of the base titles that were mentioned, but when relating these same titles to the number of people who currently play Otome Games, we find several discrepancies between the number of people who know the game versus the number of people who actually plays them. This is due to the fact that several franchises, such as Uta no Prince Sama and Diabolik Lovers, have become so popular in their home countries where they have anime, movies, and other games that are more easily distributed among western fans through anime fansub communities. On average, 42% of the players who knew the games played them themselves.

In the chart in Figure 21 we have listed several types of mechanics and themes frequently found in Otome Games and *Josei Muke*. In this section players could choose several options at the same time, which highlighted the choices for Visual Novel and Dating Sim mechanics, whose are the basic mechanics of Otome Games, however most of these answers were combined with other options, such as *Gacha*, Rythm Games among others. This analysis allows us to infer which types of games are popular with the Brazilian public, and which future imported cultural products of this type may become successful in Brazil. In addition, most of the respondents identify the games by the mechanics of the game, and not necessarily by the gender performance of the characters. It is noteworthy that there are games launched whose main driving force of advertisement are gender issues, such as the *Yaoi* themed games (Ganzon 2022).

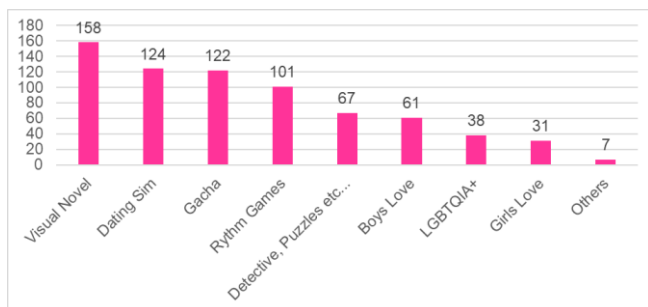


Figure 21. Graph of the number of respondents by favorite thematic and mechanics

Finally, data on users' investments in performative development in Otome Games is illustrated in **Figure 22**. First, we informed the respondents that any form of financial transaction would be valid to answer positively to this question. In other words, buying a title, be it physical or digital, performing in-game microtransactions, or giving a gift to someone with a game were considered valid investments to demonstrate how much the Brazilian community is willing to invest in games of this genre. The survey showed that 53% of players have already declared to have carried out monetary transactions in games of this genre, 42% declared not to have done so, and 5% preferred not to answer.

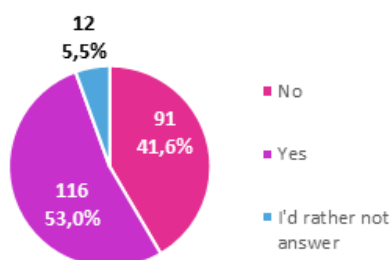


Figure 22. Graph of the number of respondents who invested money in Otome Games and/or Josei Muke

Noteworthy that, as most of the audience of these games are in the age groups up to 25 years (**Figure 12c**), it's inferred that respondents plan to invest an amount in Otome Games, but face limitations such as not having a credit card and/or being financially dependent from parents. Importantly, these financial spending data are mostly related to spending on in-game microtransactions, given that as observed in Figure 15, respondents revealed their preference for free-to-play Otome mobile games, which use this transactional mechanic (Ganzon 2019) (Sellier 2021) (Ganzon 2022).

7 Final Considerations

The Otome's Games have become an important consumer product within the scope of female culture, including in Brazil, through them the female audience can have satisfactory experiences by placing the player in the role of protagonist and heroine in their own history, breaking barriers and impositions of gender and performing its own history. They also increasingly reveal the interest of women in the

electronic gaming sphere, and their study and community can produce good fruits in terms of digital inclusion and gender narratives. It's currently important that both nationwide and international more research and mapping are carried out so that women's consumption narratives are increasingly gaining such an important visibility.

By studying the cases of the games "Amor Doce" and "Entre Laços e Amassos", we were able to realize how quickly the community of Brazilian female gamers embrace these games, when they are accessible to them in monetary and linguistic terms, therefore, we consider that the Brazilian market for Otome Games, has a promising future, but it's important that the released titles are available to the wide public and not confined as a niche cultural product.

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