

The “not so” Beautiful Game: a study on Brazilian players of the fantasy soccer game *Cartola FC*

Gabriela Birnfeld Kurtz

Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul
Post Graduate Program of Information and Communication
gabriela.kurtz@puers.br

João Pedro Corrêa de Araujo

Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul
School of Communication, Arts and Design - Famecos
joapedro91@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Fantasy sports games exist for over 50 years and are popular in North America and in European countries. In Brazil, the sports fans only recently took interest in those games with *Cartola FC*, an online fantasy soccer game. This study aims to investigate the Brazilian players' behavior and consumption in *Cartola FC* through a qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and the discussion was supported by Game Studies and consumer behavior theoretical approaches. The results pointed to the game boundaries' permeability, where the actions performed by the players occur mainly outside of it. Although *Cartola FC* is an online game, the social ties with local friends and work colleagues are reinforced and, as in previous researches carried on in other countries, the act of playing deepened the players' relationship with the sport. It was also found an expressive informal market of League betting, created to transgress the Brazilian legislation.

Keywords

Fantasy sports, Game Studies, consumer behavior, soccer, *Cartola FC*.

INTRODUCTION

Sports fans are known for being deeply engaged. It is natural that they seek to sustain their passion beyond the game moments. According to Richard Lomax (2006), over the years, these individuals tried to expand their sports universe creating or recreating teams, players and results in different formats other than reality. This set of practices became known as fantasy sports. Fantasy sports are, by academic definition, “an interactive team-management activity based on statistics accrued by athletes of real-life professional sport organizations and college athletics” (Ruihley and Hardin, 2010, p. 233).

The fantasy sports exist for over 50 years and were originated in the United States. Long before the computer or the internet arrival, people played with basic resources such as boards, cards and/or dice following explicit rules. Computers automated handmade processes, but the internet made the practice explode, extrapolating geographic frontiers, acquiring unprecedented proportions (Lomax, 2006). In 2017 almost 60 million people played at least one fantasy sport in the US and in Canada. It is a market that worth 7,22 billion American dollars, and American football is the absolute

Proceedings of DiGRA 2019

© 2019 Authors & Digital Games Research Association DiGRA. Personal and educational classroom use of this paper is allowed, commercial use requires specific permission from the author.

preference: 82% of North American players prefer the sport (Fantasy Sports Trade Association, 2018).

In Brazil, different from North American countries, the passion for fantasy sports is much more recent, and is based on the national preference sport: soccer. With a population that surpasses 208 million inhabitants (IBGE, 2018), at least 49% of all individuals take great or medium interest in the sport (Datafolha, 2018). It is in this context that the fantasy game *Cartola FC* (Globo Group, 2005)¹ emerges. Launched in 2005, it became a success for soccer fans, because its game mechanics are linked to the Brazilian Soccer Championship, the country's most popular championship. Currently, it has 8,5 million users², and it is possible to become an associate to have benefits and advantages, create and engage in Leagues with the participants. The game is available on mobile (Android and iOS) and on computers. *Cartola FC* belongs to Globo Group, holder of the largest Brazilian commercial broadcast television, as well as the country's largest network of cable television and pay-per-view channels.

Although there is extensive academic literature about fantasy sports, mainly in North America and Europe, most part of it is limited to quantitative behavior approaches. 40 out of 71 researches on the subject found by Tacon and Vainker (2017) are based on quantitative primary sources. Besides, there are only a few Brazilian researches that address fantasy sports and they focus on the areas of media/advertising (e.g. Almeida et. al, 2015; Batista, 2018) and computer science/development (Mota et. al, 2018). We noticed lack of academic researches that explore the game *Cartola FC* in the socio-behavioral perspective anchored in Game Studies theories.

In order to fill in these gaps, we sought an exploratory and qualitative approach to investigate the behavior and consumption of *Cartola FC* Brazilian players, conducting in-depth interviews with 6 regular players. That said, the main question of this research is: "how is the consumption and behavior of *Cartola FC* Brazilian players?". Among the objectives, we aim to understand the functioning of the community and the everyday life practices, the forms of consumption and transgressions. The article is structured in four parts: in the first one, we make a brief historical and academic studies contextualization over fantasy sports and explain the *Cartola FC* game in specific. In the second part we detail the methodological procedures, followed by the analysis and discussion of the interviews (third section). The last item refers to the conclusions and future studies possibilities.

FANTASY SPORTS AND CARTOLA FC

In this section, we focus on the historical contextualization of fantasy sports, as well as present a state of art of academic research in the field. Next, we bring the object of study, the *Cartola FC* game, and explain its origins and operation.

Fantasy sports

The starting point of fantasy sports is not a consensus among academics. Historians cite 1960 as the fantasy sports true beginning. This year, Harvard University sociologist William Gamson presents at the National Baseball Seminar a competition among his peers that the goal was to win the most points according to the established criteria in the grand final of the championship (Kordick, 2008). But, for Lomax (2006) the roots of these games can be traced back to the fall of 1962 with the creation of a fantasy football by Bill Wikenback.

According to Kordick (2008), several authors also identify as an important fantasy sports starting point the creation of *La Rotisserie Francaise* (Rotisserie League Baseball) in late 1979 by Daniel Okrent. The fantasy sports thrived, and, in the decade

of 1990, there was an exponential growth due to internet advances. A fantasy game can be developed based on the most diverse sports, but the most common are baseball, football, rugby, golf and soccer.

About related works, we noticed that there are previous researches about fantasy sports. We found material referent to the conceptualization and history of fantasy sports (e.g. Billings and Ruihley, 2014; Consalvo et. al., 2013; Lomax, 2006), consumer behavior and motivation (e.g. Billings and Ruihley, 2013; Dwyer and Drayer, 2010; Farquhar and Meeeds, 2007; Smith et. al, 2006; Sun et. al., 2010), fantasy sports and television audience (e.g. Nesbit and King, 2010; Shipman, 2001); fans and fandoms (e.g. Halverson and Halverson, 2008); masculinities and fantasy sports (e.g. Davis and Duncan, 2006). However, as Tacon and Vainker (2017) state, there is room for studies with more interpretive insights. Next, we bring the contextualization of the game that is the object of study.

Cartola FC

In Brazil, fantasy sports are fairly recent, but promising. It took decades after the first fantasy sport game for Brazil to have its own successful product in the market. *Cartola FC* was launched in 2005 and belongs to Globo Group. The game is described based on the version 1.12.0. The main objective is to achieve the highest score and win over opponents in disputed Leagues. It is a fantasy soccer game, and allows the formation of one team per round, and the athletes' performance and situation mirrors the actual matches almost in real-time.

The game has all players from the 20 available teams in the A Series of the Brazilian Soccer Championship. It has 38 rounds, from April to December, just like the real championship does. *Cartola FC* fits the free-to-play (F2P)³ game category because it is free, but offers an association option in-game named PRO mode. The PRO was implemented in 2016 to offer advantages and benefits for players that pay an annual fee of \$13.50⁴, which allows a variety of resources, including customization and a higher number of Leagues to compete.

As for the Leagues, there are two types: the Classic (round-robin system through all the championship) and the Knock-Out Rounds (the matches are randomly defined and limited to 32 participants). The players in PRO mode can take part in up to 6 Classic Leagues - in free mode, the players can only participate in one League at a time.

To start playing, the user has to register in Globo.com. Then, it is necessary to create a team, giving it a name and also informing the player's name and the team the player actually cheers on. Lastly, the team can be personalized with different colors for the crest and uniform. According to the Figure 1, when these steps are finished, a virtual field appears (1) and the player can choose one of the seven available tactical schemes and choose 11 athletes and a coach for the line up among the available ones in the round.

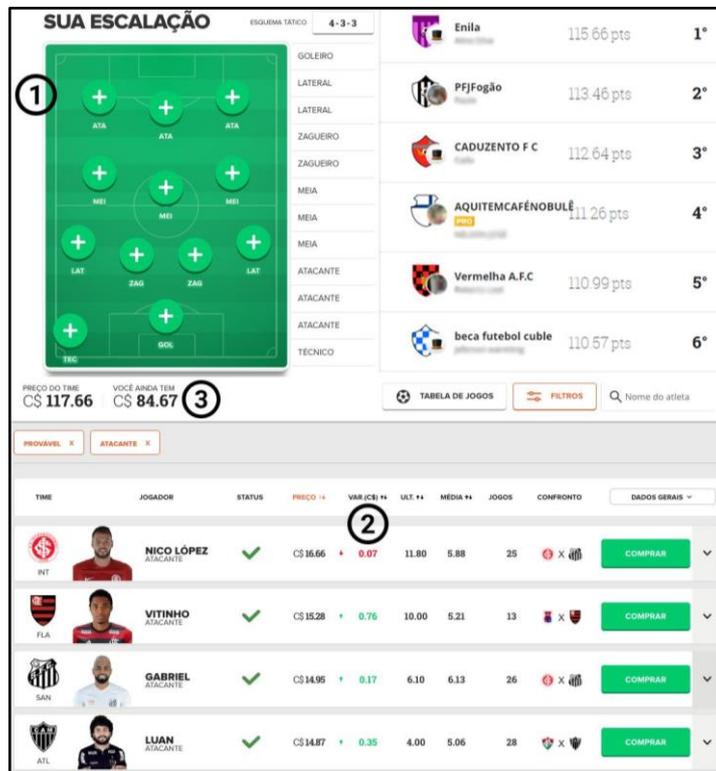


Figure 1: Game screens - virtual line up field, athletes shown in filtered options and Leagues' partial scores.

In the beginning, all users start the game with 100 *Cartoletas*, the virtual game coin. As the athletes play in the real matches, they get scores and become more or less valuable in each round (2). The sum of the player's *Cartoletas* and the lined up athletes' value determines how many *Cartoletas* the player has in game's course. Having more *Cartoletas* means being able to choose better athletes for the team during the rounds. With the line up set, the player has to choose the captain, and this action doubles the chosen athlete's points (except for the coach, that cannot be the team's captain). After the end of each round, the market opens, and only closes 2 hours before the first game of the next round. The line ups must be made during the market hours, and they cannot be altered after it closes. Each action of the athletes in the real matches influence their overall scores. So, the player that chooses the line up with the highest score, wins the match.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

To investigate the behavior and consumption of *Cartola FC* players in depth, it was necessary to choose a research technique that would allow us to gather information from the players in detail. Thus, we opted for an exploratory approach through semi-structured interviews. It would also allow us to investigate emerging issues as they appear during the interviews, something that does not occur in quantitative research often. Among the objectives, we sought to understand the functioning of the community and the everyday life practices, the forms of consumption and transgression.

The interviews were conducted with 6 male players over 18 years old (legal age in Brazil), residents of Porto Alegre city in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The data gathering happened between October 11th and 23rd of 2018, and all interviews were in presence set in private rooms at the [University name omitted for blind review]. On average, the interviews took 50-60 minutes each. The conversations were audio

recorded, transcribed and the data was anonymized when handing in the results. The citations were translated into English and adapted for better understanding when necessary.

We selected people through the snowball sampling technique. Among the criteria, the interviewees should consume digital games and invest money in exchange for virtual goods or advantage in games. These users also had to preferably be associated in *Cartola FC* PRO mode and/or to have taken part in the game's League bettings. We opted for players that reside in Porto Alegre city by proximity criterion, since that is the location of the University where the interviews were conducted.

An important point to highlight was the difficulty of finding women who fit the criteria of the research. There is no official female participation data in the game *Cartola FC*, but other researches show the same difficulty (Dwyer and Drayer, 2010; Lee et al. 2013). In Brazil, the interest over soccer is mostly masculine. According to Datafolha (2018) data, only 12% of Brazilian women stated that they had a great interest in soccer, while 42% of men pointed out this same intensity.

As Davis and Duncan (2006) observe, there are many investigations that show that sport is an institution that favors dominant heterosexual masculinity. Although this is not the focus of the present study, we acknowledge that there is room for future incursions on fantasy sports female players in Brazil. Next, we will describe the results and start with the interviews' discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are discussed based on three main themes: everyday practices and community, consumption behavior and transgression practices. We split them in the subsections that follow.

How and who they play with: everyday game practices and community

The interviewees routine in the game is usually pre-established and defined by the market openings. The process involves lining up an initial team that may or may not undergo changes throughout the week according to the news that the players follow about players and teams on portals, Twitter accounts and *Cartola FC*'s official notifications in-game.

After the market's closure and beginning of the round matches, the interviewees said they usually follow their lined up athletes' partial scores, as well as the League opponents' choices. In order to do that, they use the *Cartola FC* app, that shows real-time scores. They check the scores out constantly.

Also, the *Cartola FC* players routine is heavily linked to information searching in portals, websites and social network sites. The interviewees only interact with the game itself to make necessary modifications. That said, the *Cartola FC* daily activities happen more "outside" of the game than "inside" it. In this case, the boundary between the game itself and what happens outside of it becomes more permeable.

Salen and Zimmerman (2003) analyzed games specially developed to blur these lines between the "real world" and the game. For the authors, all games share the magic circle premise, but some are designed to play with the demarcation line. The artificial space overlaps between the physical spaces and the players' lifestyles. To play *Cartola FC*, it is necessary not only to know the game's rules, but to know soccer rules and to follow week after week the Brazilian Championship results. In addition, the

information exchange between players is crucial. The players form groups on several online platforms to discuss, speculate and talk about the game.

So, beyond modifying their team's line up, the interviewees aim to gather information about them. As they follow the news about the championship, they are also playing *Cartola FC* at the same time, because they will use the information to build their teams. Pierce and Artemesia (2009) understand that a player community is defined as a group of individuals that enter in a collective learning process and maintain a common identity determined by a domain of shared activities and/or interests. This is what happens in *Cartola FC*. For the authors, the emergent behavior in games and virtual worlds comes from the complex interaction between players and the possession of the game's spaces they inhabit.

As for result following, the players are more active after the market closes. There is a direct involvement because they follow the lined up athletes' scores in real-time. Salen and Zimmerman (2004) point out that immediate feedback is one of the resources to build meaningful experiences in play. The events in the game and the athletes' performances serve as motivation for the interviewees to continue trying to improve their performance for the next rounds.

For the interviewees, the players must have a taste for soccer, competing, betting, having fun, share and create bonds with friends. The link between friends is shown by them as one of the greatest game's features. They said that even players that play in bigger and more professional Leagues still take part in closer friends' Leagues. In their perspective, the game, associated to soccer, brings people close and stimulate the affective bond building. Even though it is mostly an individual game, the interviewees cited an interesting behavior in *Cartola FC* players: the line up sharing. They show their choices to peers and discuss them to decide if they are fit for the round, as we can see in the next statement:

I talk about it a lot with a work friend. Normally, we exchange information about line ups. I also talk with other people that are in the Leagues. Sometimes we send each other our line ups, some agree with them, others suggest modifications. I have at least three friends to do that with.

The virtual communities in games have specific features and formations. According to Taylor (2006), there is, in press tradition, a serious misunderstanding (and sometimes intentional prejudice) about the nature of games, in the sense of them contributing to alienation and isolation. However, the game space sociability is not only about players talking to each other, but a network of connections and relationships. Also, as the author states, community and relationship between players, they being friends or opponents, are also key persistent forms for multiplayer games.

The interviewees have shown to care about the way they are seen by the opponents in the game. Being a PRO can be a way to be seen as someone who is devoting him/herself to the game, leading them to be more respected in this dispute environment. One of the interviewees also said that there are two *Cartola FC* player profiles, related to the level of seriousness and commitment the players have in the game: the one that really is committed and is more competitive, and the one who just wants to have fun.

The game *Cartola FC*, then, is seen as a flexible game in dedication terms. However, at its core, it can be considered a casual game. Jesper Juul (2010) differentiates a casual game from a hardcore one as the first one being simpler and focused on a wider

audience. Moreover, it counts with fictions that evoke positive emotions, as soccer in *Cartola FC*. Its usability is simple, and allows the player to invest little time on it. In addition, its difficulty depends on the player's knowledge level, as Juul describes. Juul defends the casual player stereotype break, who is seen as someone with little knowledge in games, and states that dedication (time and search for knowledge) depends on who plays and on the person's moment in life. For the interviewees, however, being a stereotypically casual player (Juul, 2010) is something negative among the community. So, having the PRO mode is not only a competitive lead, but also status between players.

The strong appeal that soccer has in Brazil is other element cited often by the interviewees. From their point of view, someone who does not like the sport hardly would play *Cartola FC*. For them, the game's merit resides in bringing together the Brazilian's passion for soccer with a pastime that makes the sport itself more attractive and exciting:

The contact with soccer is so huge in Brazil that I do not know how they haven't thought about it (*Cartola FC*) before. It was something to be explored and Globo knew how to make the most of it and it paid off, because the Brazilian people live for soccer and now live for Cartola, because it became a part of the sport. When there is a week without Cartola you get upset. The Brazilian Championship sometimes is boring, and I believe Cartola gives an extra excitement over it.

In this section, we could understand the features and relationships between the community that play *Cartola FC*. It is a group of people that already naturally like soccer, but the game's existence reinforces and tightens even more the ties with the sport and with friends.

How they consume it: PRO mode, virtual goods investment and Pay-to-win perception

The main form of consumption exposed by the interviewees in game involves the PRO mode expense. In the game, this is the only possible purchase option. The Leagues belong to the game, but do not bring a lucrative outcome to the game's developers. According to the players, the money they invest in those Leagues end up circulating only among friends, organized in a more informal way. That said, the relationship is not between Globo Group, but between players. One of the interviewees explains the process:

It is not an absurd amount among friends. This money does not go to Cartola, it is ours, and stays with us. It eventually is handed to one of the friends for being the champion, or we spend to have fun together. It is a money that we end up using for ourselves.

The biggest advantage in belonging to PRO mode, according to the interviewees, was the possibility to dispute more than one League. One of the players even said that this was the only advantage he perceived in being PRO. When Globo Group limited the League participation for non-associates, the players ended up becoming PRO to take part in more Leagues. That attitude can also be attributed to their perception of cost benefit in the association. It became a motivation to become PRO:

I consider it a fair amount of money. Even because there is the option to pay in up to nine installments with credit card. I think that the profit that come from the bets can be much higher.

Other advantage that was perceived by participating in more Leagues was the possibility to maintain relationships with different friend groups, such as colleagues from the university, from work and neighbors. Approximating it from the consumer behavior theories, it is in accordance with what Solomon (2017) states. For the author, people classify themselves in groups based on the things they like to do, how they spend their free time and how they decide to spend their available income.

The last observation about the advantages of being PRO in the game was the eventual financial profit. *Cartola FC* offers the possibility for the highest scorer each round and each month to win prizes. The prize is given by Globo Group and can be up to \$1340.00 in gift cards from partner stores. This was also exposed as a motivation for the players, even considering the remote possibility of winning, because of the high amount of points necessary. That said, we could perceive that the PRO mode has shown to be a successful strategy in game, and it was a consensus between the interviewees that the fee was fair. In this case, the consumption became attractive because there was a balance between scarcity and cost.

Lehdonvirta (2009) explains that nowadays players, usually young ones, are familiar with the consumption and property logic in video games, and are already engaged in consumption-simulated games. Recently, however, it became commonplace that virtual goods could be traded for real money. By using a credit card or a cellphone, the players are now able to acquire virtual goods, clothing and characters just like they do in regular online stores. So, because the *Cartola FC* players are already used to these virtual transaction environments (all the interviewees play other games as well), the PRO mode strategy was well accepted.

In many free-to-play games there is also an association with the expression pay-to-win. Some games such as *Hearthstone* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2014), for example, demand that players buy virtual goods (cards) periodically, so they can reach better positions in multiplayer mode. The use of real money to obtain advantages over other players is defined pejoratively as pay-to-win, suggesting that the player did not need ability to win, just wealth (Falcão and Marques, 2017; Howard, 2018). We tried to verify if there is such perception between the *Cartola FC* players.

The interviewees usually keep up with tips on specialized websites and social media pages about *Cartola FC*, because they believe the in-depth information and analysis in those spaces will benefit them when planning their line ups. When questioned about what websites, channels and social media pages they know and follow, some were cited: *CamilloJoga10* (Youtube), *Olheiro FC* (Website), *Cartola FC Dicas* (Twitter), *Cartola Mix* (Website), *Cartoleiros* (Website), *Cartola FC Brasil* (Website) and *Cartola VIP* (Website)⁵. All these information channels offer free tips, but some have an associate plan, which is the case of *Olheiro FC*, as one of the interviewees explains:

This year I decided to put money on *Olheiro FC* website, that gives me all the information I need. With that I have more chances to win. This is an advantage in a League, because I am getting information to perform better than my opponents.

Still, the other interviewed players prefer free tips, because they say there is a great amount of information available that already help with their teams line up choices. We asked if paying for personalized tips could be considered disloyalty among the players. Almost all the interviewees agreed that *Cartola FC* is a game that makes this pay-to-win practice more difficult, because it also counts with the unpredictability of soccer. The player that pays for tips agrees that the investment does not guarantee satisfying results, but has a slightly different point of view:

I think that it makes the game unfair, in a way. If the person can put money on it, so be it. However, it is not guaranteed that this investment will pay off. It depends on the channel and the kind of content he/she is paying for.

This perception is close to what Falcão and Marques (2017) and Howard (2018) call pay-to-win, because the investment in paid tips raises the chances of winning in the game. The same interviewees reinforced the importance of following the news about teams and athletes in order to assemble their line ups. So, who receives probabilities, statistics and informations in real time from other game specialists is getting an exclusive content that others do not have.

How they transpass it: private League bets and game sustainability

In the US, Canada and other European countries, there are laws that permit and regulate the practice of League betting. However, as it is a recent phenomena, there is no specific regulation in Brazil. Brazilian law approaches gambling in the law decree 3.688/1941 (Brazil's Federal Government, 1941), that defines and classifies it. It is interesting to notice that this law was made in 1941, and have outdated information about the fine, citing a currency that does not even exist anymore, called "*contos de réis*". The law can be read below:

Art. 50. Establish or exploit a game of chance in a public place or accessible to the public, on entry payment or without it:

Sentence: simple imprisonment, from three months to a year, and a fine, from two to fifteen "*contos de réis*", extending the effects of the conviction to the loss of furniture and decorative objects of the place.

§ 3º They are considered, games of chance:

- a) the game in which the gain and the loss depend exclusively or mainly on luck;
- b) bets on horse racing outside a racetrack or where they are authorized;
- c) bets on any other sports competition.

Fantasy sports are considered skill games, similar to poker, for example. They are not games that the results only or mainly depend on luck, but also depend on the player's ability and strategy. That said, *Cartola FC* could fit into a legal gambling game category, once it demands the player to search for information, follow the championship, gather knowledge about soccer, athletes and matches. However, it still remains in a fine line between luck-based games, as the interviewees affirmed that it is possible for a beginner to win the Leagues only because he/she was lucky at one time.

The interviewed players bet money on Classic *Cartola FC* Leagues along with friends and unknown players during the Brazilian Championship. According to them, the Classic League bets are usually organized by one person that receive money from each player. One of the interviewees cited a more professional League bet that covers the whole country, which the organization differs from those made with friends or

acquaintances, named *Catimba Scores*. The person responsible for organizing this League charges an application fee that is deposited into his bank account, as the player explains:

I have heard of *Catimba Scores*, where you pay \$2.70 for the application fee and in the end you can gain over \$16000.00 winning just one round. I know about this League but do not take part on it, because there are thousands of participants, so the chances of me winning are slim. I prefer to invest in my friends' Leagues to have more chances of being the champion.

The same interviewee also sent us the *Catimba Scores* virtual promotion folder, as it can be seen in Figure 2:



Figure 2: Promotion folder of *Catimba Scores*' prizes.

This kind of League bet organization draws attention to a bigger issue. Globo Group is not the direct agent of those bets, but the game is a means in which the players take advantage to obtain profit and compete with other users. This format is close to the ones present in fantasy sports bet websites, and it is surprising (maybe even for the game designers) that it could lead to prizes up to \$50000.00 as it is shown in the promotion folder in Figure 1. For Pinho (2000), the internet influenced greatly the economy structure, because it allowed the consumption to happen through leaner structures, with less intermediates and more efficiently. *Catimba Scores* is fully organized through the internet structures, being harder to take down and easier to manage.

In Brazil, the sport bet practice is prohibited. However, the players reported that there are thousands of League bets that are organized every round, and it is easy to find them online, from those that are big as *Catimba Scores* to smaller ones between friends and

acquaintances. Because it is an illegal practice, they are organized online and are meant to be confidential. The participants gather through WhatsApp, a message service app, to agree on money deposits and prize handling. WhatsApp is the favorite messaging application among Brazilians, and is where the company has the largest number of users: 120 million (Digital News Report, 2018). This app's choice is due both to its acceptance nationwide and to the fact that the messages are encrypted - thus making it more difficult to investigate these activities.

Because Globo Group does not participate as a direct agent in those League bets, in theory, it could not be held responsible for them. However, it is possible to compare this situation to cases like those from the platforms The Pirate Bay and Mega, that were file hosting websites that *a priori* would not have responsibility for the content shared by users, but ended up being legally indicted for piracy. In a serious investigation, it is possible that Globo Group would also be held responsible for those illegal bets. What happens in the case of *Cartola FC* is a sort of a "gentlemen's agreement", where Globo Group neither delates nor support the illegal Leagues' delations, because it would mean a significant drop in the game's popularity and appeal. The interviewees affirmed that they play betting money on Leagues, and said that this is one of the factors that bring excitement to the dispute. As the players use shady means for their own profit, the community and Globo Group create a protection network around those League bets.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the research, we understood that the everyday practices of *Cartola FC* players take place more outside the game than in it, with a routine linked to the search for information about players and teams on portals, websites and social networks sites. We could also perceive how the community of *Cartola FC* is seen from the perspective of the interviewed players. The relationship between friends is an important element for them, and soccer can bring people together and strengthen the ties between them through the competition in-game.

For Pierce and Artemesia (2009), the emergent behavior in games and virtual worlds arises from the complex interaction between the players and the possessions of the game space they inhabit. This helped us to understand the routine of *Cartola FC* players, as they described how they look for information and also with who they share and discuss the game moments. Taylor (2006), approaches the sociability in games as a network of connections and relationships, and it is exactly what we could perceive from the interviewees.

As for the consumption formats, we could see that the *Cartola FC* strategy of limiting the League participation number generated a positive outcome for Globo Group, because the players adhered to the PRO mode in order to take part in more Leagues. Lehdonvirta (2009) addresses the need for a balance between scarcity and cost to make consumption attractive. This dialogues directly with the marketing strategy used for the PRO mode in *Cartola FC*. However, the prizes offered by Globo Group are whimsy compared to the external League bets, as in the *Catimba Scores* case. This kind of practice lead us to analyse the legitimacy of those practices and the challenges Globo Group faces because it cannot interfere, as this would damage its own product.

It is relevant to notice that *Cartola FC* increased the engagement with one of the main Globo Group products: soccer. The research results suggests that the game can potentially raise audience in the real matches and generate more followers in the official Globo channels online. Previous researches in other countries have also pointed out that there is a relationship between participation in fantasy sports and the increase in engagement with games in terms of audience (Nesbit and King, 2010; Shipman, 2001).

Moreover, it makes possible that content producers create channels related to *Cartola FC* to offer tips or coverage on the Brazilian Championship, allowing new profit forms to be created.

Cartola FC is a game imported from the American molds, but it was appropriated and has features that are “very Brazilian”. The image of the Brazilian “malandro” (or “trickster”, if roughly translated), that takes every opportunity to gain advantage over the others can be seen in the illegal League bets organized through the most popular service message in Brazil, WhatsApp. At the same time, it is possible to see the “warm” Brazilian that uses the game to get closer to friend through a ludic resource. The game may not be as beautiful as Pelé’s performance in the field⁶, but it reflects the complex reality or Brazilian fantasy sports fans, in which we believe there is plenty more room to investigate and explore.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alha, K., Koskinen, E., Paavilainen, J., Hamari, J., & Kinnunen, J. (2014). “Free-to-play games: Professionals’ perspectives” in Proceedings of Nordic DiGRA, 2014. Available at: http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digitallibrary/nordicdigra2014_submission_8.pdf
- Almeida, R. B. D., Almeida, V. M. C. D., & Lima, D. D. F. P. (2015). “Comunidades de marca de fantasy sports games: identificação, engajamento, intenção de continuidade e valor da marca do patrocinador” in Revista Brasileira de Marketing, 14(1), 33-48. Available at: <http://revistabrasileiramarketing.org/oj-2.2.4/index.php/remark/article/view%20article/2777>
- Batista, A. R. C. “A gamificação como recurso estratégico de marketing de conteúdo: estudo de caso do fantasy game *Cartola FC*”. (2018). 125f. Dissertation (Master’s Degree in Society and Communication) – Federal University of Tocantins, Post Graduation Program in Society and Communication, Palmas, TO, Brazil. Available at: <http://repositorio.uft.edu.br/handle/11612/1011>.
- Billings, A. C., & Ruihley, B. J. (2013). “Why we watch, why we play: The relationship between fantasy sport and fanship motivations” in Mass Communication and Society, 16(1), 5-25. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2011.635260>
- Billings, A. C., & Ruihley, B. J. 2014. *The fantasy sport industry: Games within games*. New York, NY, US: Routledge.
- Blizzard Entertainment. 2014. *Hearthstone*. Online Game. Blizzard Entertainment.
- Brazil’s Federal Government (1941). “Lei 3.688/41”. Available at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto-lei/Del3688.htm
- Consalvo, M., Mitgutsch, K., & Stein, A. (Eds.). 2013. *Sports videogames*. New York, NY, US: Routledge.
- Datafolha (2018). “Cresce desinteresse do brasileiro por futebol”. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/esporte/2018/05/cresce-desinteresse-do-brasileiro-por-futebol-aponta-datafolha.shtml>
- Davis, N. W., & Duncan, M. C. (2006). “Sports knowledge is power: Reinforcing masculine privilege through fantasy sport league participation” in Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 30(3), 244-264. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0193723506290324>

- Digital News Report (2018). "Urban Brazil". Available at: <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2018/brazil-2018/>
- Dwyer, B., & Drayer, J. (2010). "Fantasy sport consumer segmentation: an investigation into the differing consumption modes of fantasy football participants" in *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 19(4), 207-217. Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2457119
- Falcão, T; Marques, D. (2017). "Pagando para vencer: cultura, agência e bens virtuais em video games" in *Contracampo*, Niterói, vol. 36, no. 02, pp. 133-156.
- Fantasy Sports Trade Association (2018). "Media Kit". Available at: <https://fsta.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018-19-Press-Kit.pdf>.
- Farquhar, L. K., & Meeds, R. (2007). "Types of fantasy sports users and their motivations" in: *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(4), 1208-1228. Available at <https://academic.oup.com/jcmc/article/12/4/1208/4582982>
- Globo Group, 2005. *Cartola FC*. Online Game. Globo Group.
- Halverson, E. R., & Halverson, R. (2008). "Fantasy baseball: The case for competitive fandom" in *Games and Culture*, 3(3-4), 286-308. Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1555412008317310?casa_token
- Howard, K. (2018). "Free-to-play or pay-to-win?: Casual, Hardcore and Hearthstone" in *Proceedings of Digra, 2018*. Available at: http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/DIGRA_2018_paper_242.pdf.
- IBGE (2018). "Projeção da População 2018: número de habitantes do país deve parar de crescer em 2047". Available at: <https://agenciadenoticias.ibge.gov.br/agencia-sala-de-imprensa/2013-agencia-de-noticias/releases/21837-projecao-da-populacao-2018-numero-de-habitantes-do-pais-deve-parar-de-crescer-em-2047>.
- Juul, J. (2010). "A Casual Revolution: Reinventing Video Games and Their Players". Cambridge, MA, USA: The MIT Press.
- Kordick, J. 2008. "Behavior modification: How fantasy sports impacts fan behavior". Thesis. Masters of Arts Degree. California State University, Fullerton. Available at: <https://search.proquest.com/openview/482d546dbe9982071597cc67286bd590/1?cbl=18750&diss=y&pq-origsite=gscholar>
- Lee, S., Seo, W. J., & Green, B. C. (2013). "Understanding why people play fantasy sport: development of the Fantasy Sport Motivation Inventory (FanSMDI)" in *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 13(2), 166-199. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2012.752855>
- Lehdonvirta, V. (2009). "Virtual item sales as a revenue model: identifying attributes that drive purchase decisions" in *Electronic commerce research*, 9(1-2), 97-113. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10660-009-9028-2>
- Lomax, R. G. (2006). "Fantasy sports: History, game types, and research" in *Handbook of sports and media*, 383-392. Haney A. & Bryant J. (Eds.) New York, NY, US: Routledge.

- Mota, E., Coimbra, D., & Peixoto, M. (2018). “*Cartola FC* Data Analysis: A simulation, analysis, and visualization tool based on *Cartola FC* Fantasy Game” in Proceedings of the XIV Brazilian Symposium on Information Systems (p. 18). ACM. Available at: <https://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=3229366>.
- Nesbit, T. M., & King, K. A. (2010). “The impact of fantasy sports on television viewership” in *Journal of Media Economics*, 23(1), 24-41. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08997761003590721>
- Pearce, C.; Artemesia. 2009. *Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds*. Cambridge, MA, US: MIT Press.
- Ruihley, B. J., & Hardin, R. L. (2011). “Message boards and the fantasy sport experience” in *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 4(2), 233-252. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.4.2.233>
- Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E. 2004. *Rules of play: Game design fundamentals*. Cambridge, MA, US: MIT press.
- Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E. (2003). “This is not a game: play in cultural environments” in Proceedings of Digra, 2003. Available at: <http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/05164.10000.pdf>
- Shipman, F. M. (2001). “Blending the real and virtual: Activity and spectatorship in fantasy sports” in *Proceedings from DAC'01: The Conference on Digital Arts and Culture. Retrieved on April* (Vol. 8, p. 2007). Available at: <http://www.csd.tamu.edu/~shipman/papers/dac01.pdf>
- Smith, B., Sharma, P., & Hooper, P. (2006). Decision making in online fantasy sports communities. *Interactive Technology and Smart Education*, 3(4), 347-360. Available at: <https://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/17415650680000072>.
- Solomon, M. 2017. *Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being, Global Edition*. US: Pearson.
- Suh, Y. I., Lim, C., Kwak, D. H., & Pedersen, P. M. (2010). “Examining the psychological factors associated with involvement in fantasy sports: An analysis of participants’ motivations and constraints” in *International Journal of Sport Management, Recreation and Tourism*, 5, 1-28. Available at http://www.ijsmart.eu/onlinepic/vol5_1%20Choonghoon.pdf
- Tacon, R., & Vainker, S. (2017). “Fantasy sport: a systematic review and new research directions” in *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 17(5), 558-589. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2017.1347192>
- Taylor, T. L. 2006. *Play Between Worlds: Exploring Online Game Culture*. Cambridge, MA, US: MIT Press.

ENDNOTES

1. The game’s name is related to the expression “*Cartola*”, meaning the staff that do not actually plays matches in the field, but are involved with them, such as Team Presidents, Managers, Directors. The “*FC*” is an acronym for “*Futebol Clube*”, and can be translated to “*Soccer Club*”.

2. This information was gathered in the *Cartola FC* official app, in December 12th, 2018.

3. The free-to-play games can also be called Freemium games, and are defined by being free to play but having micro transactions, hard currency, soft currency and paid modes (Alha et. al, 2014).

4. All money values cited in the article were converted from the Brazilian currency (reais) to American dollars, based on the currency quotation on January 18th, 2018.

5. *Cartola FC* channels and their URLs:

CamilloJoga10 <youtube.com/CamilloJOGA10>; *Olheiro FC* <olheirofc.com.br>; *Cartola FC Dicas* <twitter.com/_CartolaFCDicas>; *Cartola FC Mix* <cartolafcmix.com>; *Cartoleiros* <cartoleiros.com.br>; *Cartola FC Brasil* <cartolafcbrazil.com.br>; *Cartola VIP* <cartolavip.com.br>

6. In reference to the expression “The Beautiful Game”, said by sports narrator Stuart Hall in 1958 and made popular by the Brazilian player Pelé, worldwide famous by his performance in soccer.