



THE STATE OF VIDEO GAME JOURNALISM IN BRAZIL

A survey with over 110 local video game journalists to understand the challenges faced during content production and how to make your game become big news.





With 75.7 million players and revenues of US\$ 1.8 billion per year, Brazil is the 13th largest game market in the world. It's a vibrant industry that's set to grow 5.4% by 2022. The market is filled with opportunities in many different segments, ranging from PC to consoles, as well as smartphones, eSports etc.

As a Public Relations firm specialized in the games market, Theogames closely follows the local press, which is bombarded daily with press releases, phone calls and many messages through different channels.

Invariably, there are more coverage opportunities being offered than there is a workforce that is capable of handling all of these opportunities. It's important to understand how the journalist's routine works to ultimately comprehend what leads one story to be published and another one not.

This is the main goal of the survey for **The State of Video Game Journalism in Brazil**.

We created a questionnaire that was sent to 159 journalists. It was sent by way of 93 different vehicles, including IGN Brasil, The

Enemy, Jovem Nerd, UOL, Terra, Globo, Canaltech, Folha de S. Paulo, Estadão and Exame.

By reading **The State of Video Game Journalism in Brazil** you will get to know valuable information about the local journalists, including:

- How many press releases they receive every week;
- Main reasons why journalists write about a particular game or subject;
- Most important channels for discovering games and subjects to cover;
- Major challenges faced by those who make a living from producing game content.

Enjoy the read!

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Sources: Newzoo (2020), PwC (2019)



Special thanks to Big Games Machine, whose research "Overworked, underpaid and passionate: a survey of gaming journalists" served as an inspiration for the survey: **The State of Video Game Journalism in Brazil**.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



A questionnaire was sent to 159 journalists and content creators. From all of these, 113 answered – a total participation of 71% –, representing 93 different vehicles from the online, print (newspapers, magazines) and television segments.



The vast majority covers several platforms, with PC and PlayStation 4 being the most popular, followed by Xbox One and Nintendo Switch. Android and iOS also feature prominently.



Among all of the respondents, 37.17% of them receive more than 50 press releases per week.



Three weeks in advance is the ideal amount of time to receive a review code.



Main reasons why journalists write about a particular game or subject:

- Empathy with the audience;
- SEO potential;
- Review code in the email, which “shortens the path”.



Now, the main reasons for not covering a suggested subject are:

- The game is for a platform that the journalist does not cover;
- Not providing a review code;
- The journalist does not see any potential for a good audience.



Most important channels for discovering games and subjects to cover:

- Directly from the developer or publisher;
- Social media;
- Press office.



Questioned about the balance between the audience and the relevance factor, 47.79% of respondents stated that “if the subject is important, the audience is a secondary factor.”



Major challenges faced by those who make a living from producing game content in Brazil are:

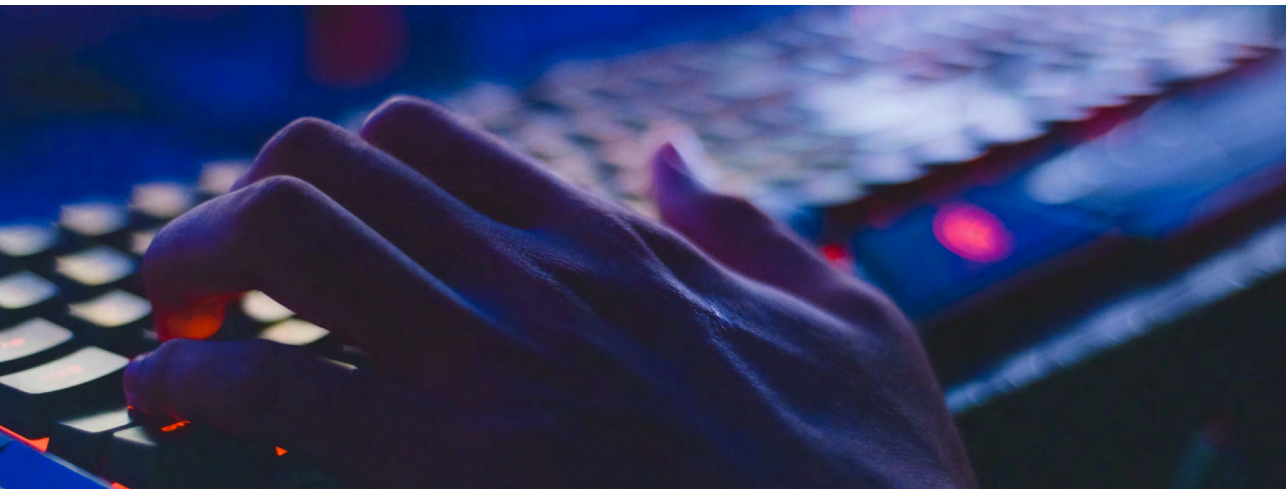
- Make the site profitable;
- Get access to major publishers or press offices;
- Newsroom staff increasingly leaner.



Main mistakes made by press officers or company representatives when contacting journalists:

- Abuse of follow-up;
- Warning about coverage opportunities at the last minute;
- Insisting on subjects that have no affinity with the vehicle.





1 PLATFORMS COVERED



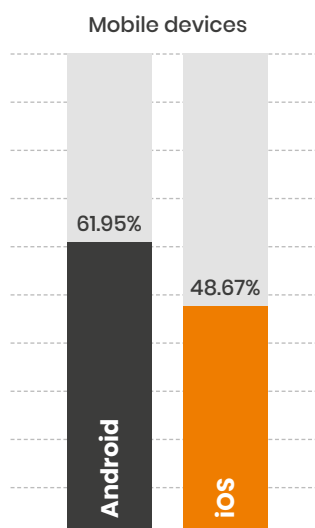
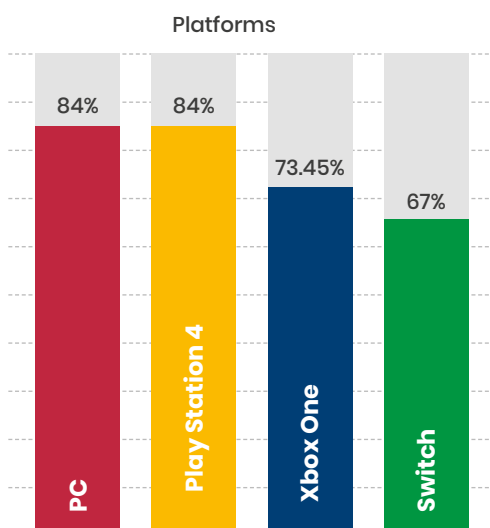
The vast majority of the specialized press covers several platforms, with PC and PlayStation 4 being the most popular, with around 84%, followed by Xbox One, with 73.45%.

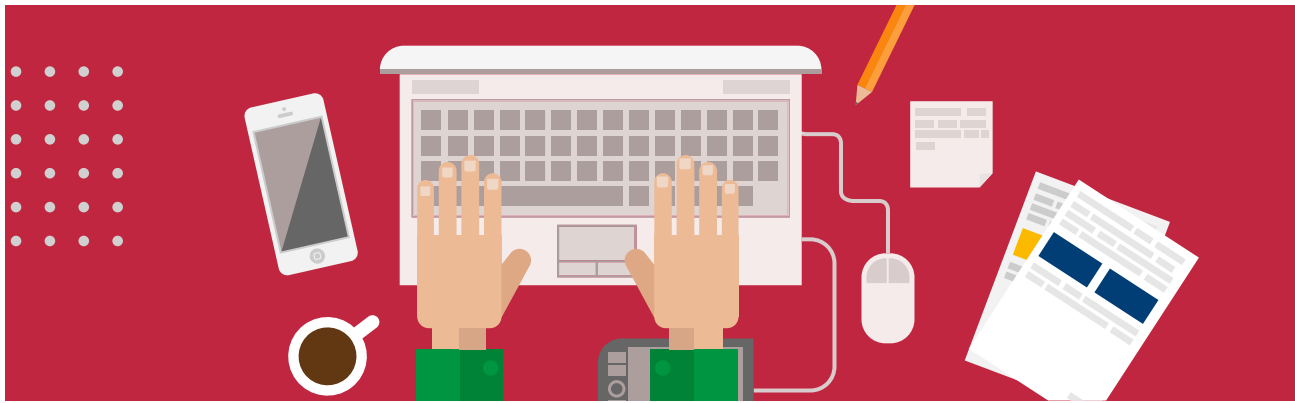
When it comes to mobile devices, Android is in the lead - 61.95% -, while iOS has 48.67%. Not bad for cell phones, which have already won guaranteed space in the daily coverage of game journalists.

It is important to highlight that there are only a few vehicles of large audiences and relevance in Brazil that usually receive consoles, cell phones and hardware equipment for evaluation purposes. Therefore, most journalists need to manage on their own to provide their “work equipment.”



My vehicle is small and I don't have the budget to have an ultra PC or all the consoles of the current generation.



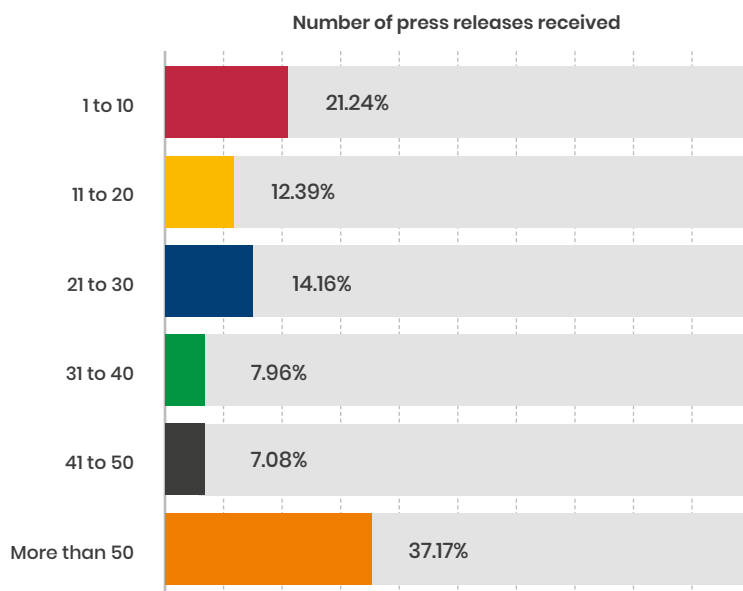


2 NUMBER OF PRESS RELEASES RECEIVED

There are many journalists – 37.17% – who receive more than 50 press releases or review requests per month. If we only take into account the business days of the week, it's more than 10 press releases per day.

Considering that only a small fraction of these guidelines will become news, articles or reviews, the publishers, developers and press offices need to focus on the pitch to capture the attention of the press.

The high number of press releases also points to a possible overuse of this resource. Before deciding to write and send a press release, it is advisable to carefully evaluate whether that subject is really relevant for those who will receive it. Otherwise, in addition to trivializing this means of communication, there is a risk of tiring out the journalist who may end up simply ignoring the message.



“

Random studios from around the world send emails with review codes and press releases. The more generic the first paragraph is, the less likely we are to read.

“

I understand that it is a simpler form of communication, but I often feel a certain exaggeration in the amount of press releases received, to the point that many become just white noise.

“

Mailbox with 45215465 unread messages.



When they send only on launch day, it's a problem. The timing does not favor the coverage and everything ends up being rushed. With three weeks notice in advance, there is time to play the game properly and have all the necessary information for the text.



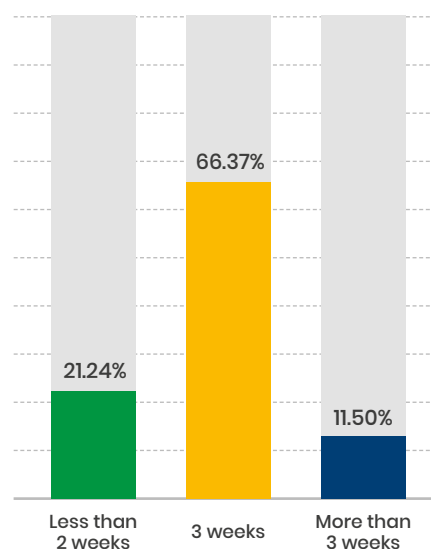
Since we have a small team, the short notice with which we receive review codes was one of the factors in changing our focus, moving to broadcasting and commenting on podcasts instead of traditional reviews.

3 BEST TIME TO RECEIVE A REVIEW BUILD?

It is not surprising that 77.87% of respondents prefer to receive a review build at least three weeks in advance. Given the complexity of several of the current games, in addition to the busy schedule of journalists, the sooner it is possible to start working on a review or any other type of content, the better.

Of course, the advance notice is directly linked to the game genre: an open-world RPG with the potential for dozens (maybe hundreds) of hours of gameplay is quite different, for example, from an indie game.

In addition, the sooner a journalist has the game in hand, the more time he will have to create content, such as texts, videos, guides, etc., thereby generating greater detailed coverage about the product.



In general, in two or three weeks it is possible to play, analyze the product and write a review, record content to produce videos, etc. The advance notice is nice, but in cases of games with a strong multiplayer component, it doesn't help much. In these cases, guaranteed access to closed beta stages is very productive.



4 MAIN REASONS TO DECIDE COVER A GAME

In general, it is easy to answer why a journalist would write about a game or product: good audience potential. For this reason, AAA titles and / or established franchises are a certain presence in the daily coverage of vehicles in the segment.

But, taking into account that only a minority of titles enjoy the privilege of extreme popularity, what to do if this is not your case? Well, the journalists themselves point out some important factors:



Good SEO potential, that is, indexing in search engines like Google



Review code available right in the email, which "shortens the path"



The game comes from a developer or publisher trusted by the journalist

It is also worth mentioning the role that the press office plays in the relationship with the journalist: for 26.55% it is very important when the coverage opportunity comes from a trusted public relations company, which reinforces the value of personal relationships in the industry.

I believe that one point to be considered is the potential of the game itself. Even though it is a game aimed at more specific audiences, the fact that it at least looks good is already enough to subsidize a review even if it is a new franchise, a specific genre or an indie game.

“

With more than three years working as a games journalist, I understand that AAA game reviews are what keep the site up and running, and, in the long run, it's what keeps giving access. These titles, coming from consolidated developers / publishers, are always searched on Google.

“

In a busy month, we really prefer bigger games. But in normal or calmer months we do any kind of review regardless of the size of the game and its fame. What we want is to create content.



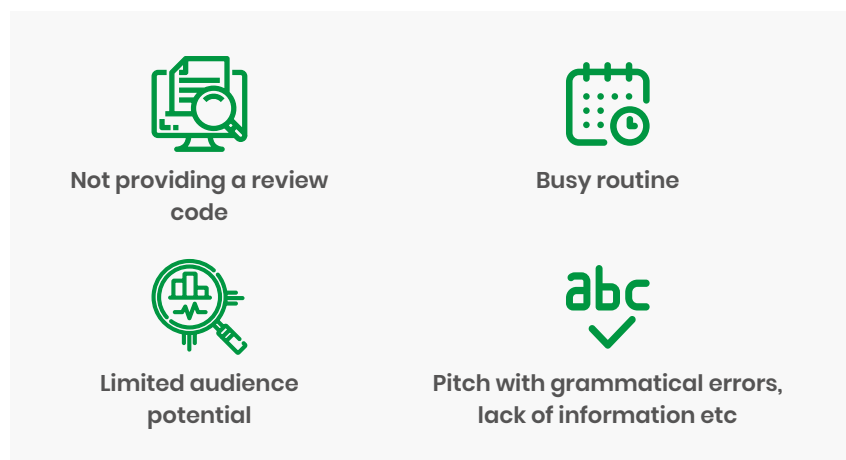


5 MAIN REASONS TO DECIDE NOT COVER A GAME



The main reason why a journalist decides not to talk about a particular game or subject is, in summary, the disconnection between the suggested content and the editorial line of the vehicle: 43.36% of respondents will abandon a coverage opportunity simply because they do not cover that platform.

Other factors that make a journalist dismiss a story include:



If the person tries to contact me through my personal networks (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook), and not through professional email (listed on the website), it is very likely that it will be ignored.

On the other hand, the responses suggest that the fact that the developer or publisher is not known does not pose a problem, nor does the game in question suit the preferences of those evaluating the coverage potential.



In other words, even if your game or product is not yet known, what really counts is how to present the coverage opportunity to the journalist. If you know how to build an efficient approach that clearly shows the relevance of the subject and has to do with the editorial line of the vehicle, your chances of getting noticed are great.

Other important lessons for press relations involve never leaving a journalist unanswered (even if it's a "sorry, I can't help") and using the follow-up practice – contacting the journalist after sending the press release to follow up on the agenda – must be used sparingly. That is, avoiding to be invasive or inconvenient.

Review requests that are not even answered with a “no”, leaving the editor/ editors not knowing what to do.

We are not necessarily focused on the traditional review/analysis format, with criticisms appearing in other ways, such as podcasts. I feel that there are press offices that sometimes do not understand this and are still waiting for an article with a written text, etc



The main thing is really the question of working time versus audience potential. If the game is interesting, if there is good content that can be explored, then I think that it doesn't matter if it's a little-known studio – part of our job is to present new things to the public. On the other hand, there are games that come from little-known studios that are phenomena with the public – and that the specialized sites ignore, catching the wave too late. Having an open mind is important.

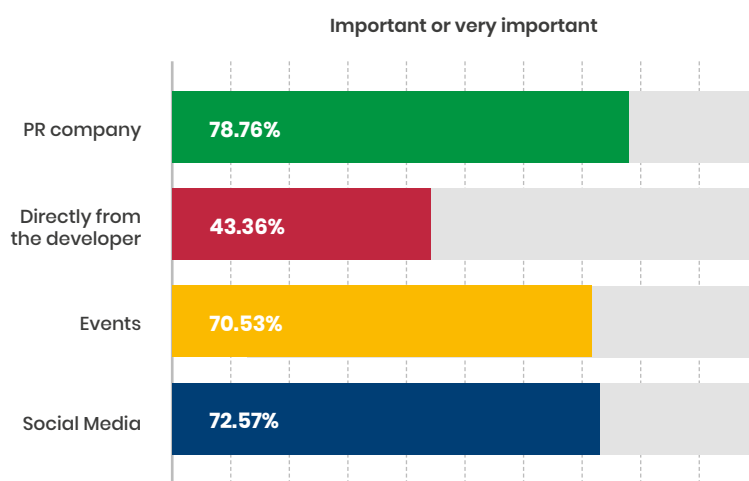


6 MOST IMPORTANT CHANNELS FOR DISCOVERING NEW GAMES

If you are a developer or publisher, do not be afraid of contacting the journalist to promote your product. For 43.36% of respondents, obtaining information directly from these companies is very important.

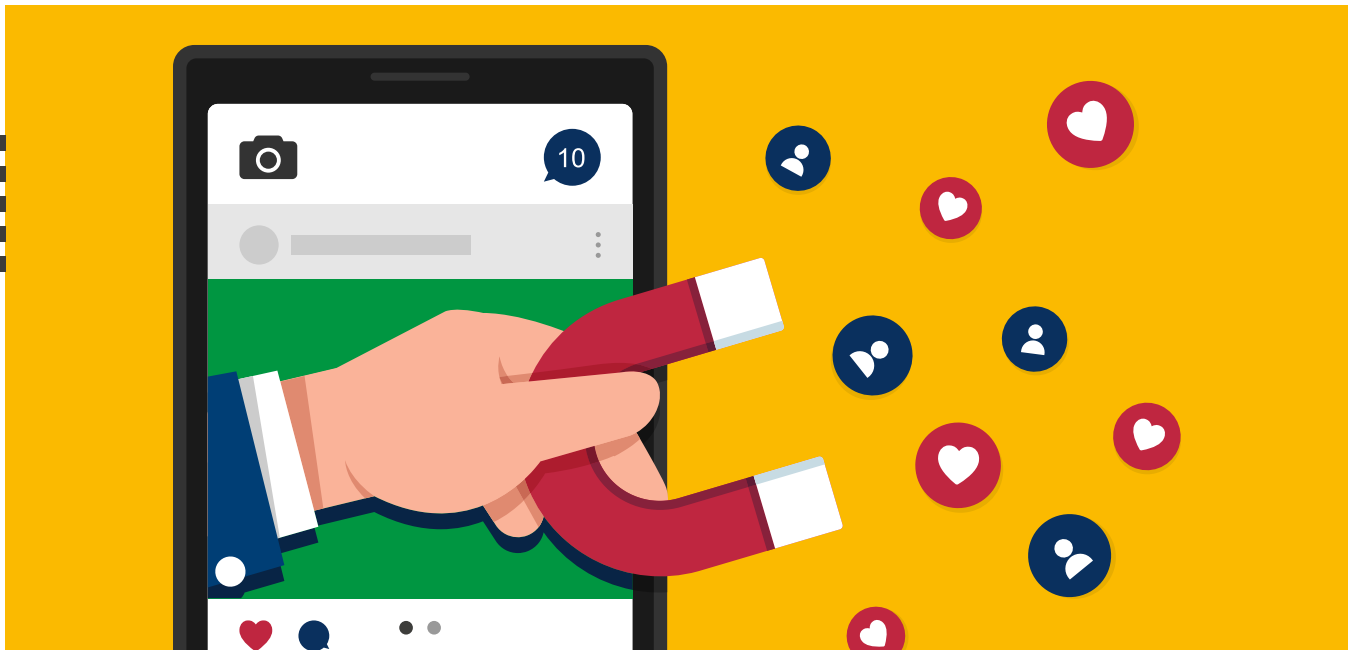
In addition, having a press office working for you can be very strategic. And not only because for about 85% this type of service is considered important or very important, but also because good PR usually helps to keep in touch with editors and writers, which guarantees more chances for your product to be noticed in the crowd.

Another widely used method to keep up with news and possible coverage targets are social networks, forums, communities and even tools that follow trends on Google, for example.



With the large amount of news and releases to cover, it is very important to receive news and updates through a PR company or directly from the developer or publisher. Social networks help to follow the topics that the public is discussing, while forums and communities did have the same role, but they have lost a lot of relevance to social networks in recent years.





7 RELEVANCE VERSUS AUDIENCE



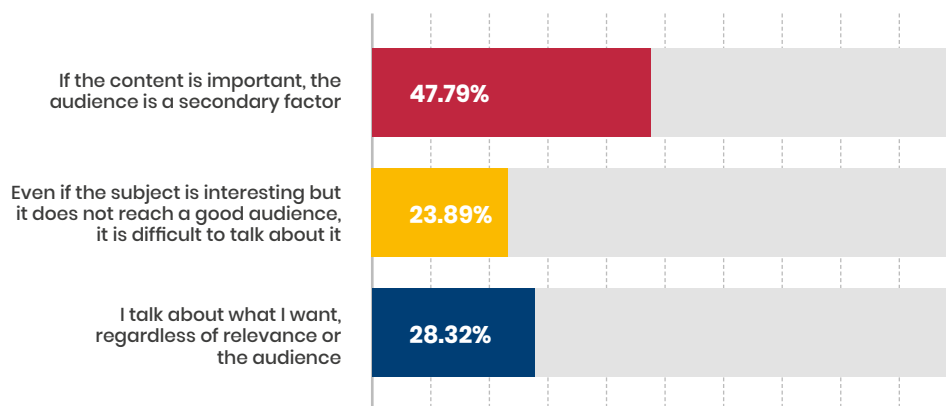
Have you ever realized how many games are released every week, on the most diverse platforms and in the most varied formats? Journalists receive far more content suggestions than they are able to publish, and whether they are self-employed or part of a company, everyone needs to pay the bills at the end of the month.

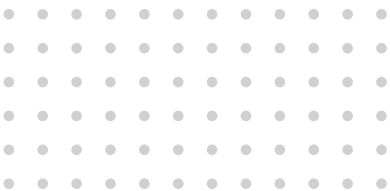
The currency of content production, in the vast majority of cases, is the audience. It is views, clicks and engagement that attract advertising campaigns and help keep the business running.

Even so, for 48% of respondents, the audience becomes a secondary factor if the content is important. This, in addition to being great news, shows that the media is not only concerned with views, but also with producing relevant content.



My initial focus when choosing to write a story, is the relevance of the subject, as it helps to put the site on search engines. Cold stories, from topics that have already been covered (recent or old) are not left out, but they appear more specifically.





So, if you have a valuable story to offer, and you can show it clearly, the chances of getting noticed are good.

However, make no mistake about it: the audience is still fundamental for those who work with content creation about games in Brazil, as well as the financial support of advertising campaigns.



“

Unfortunately, audience is the main objective – always. Of course, it doesn't mean that independent games will never have space on the website. However, most of the working time of each employee is dedicated to big releases.



“

An independent website does not bear the weight of the importance of a good audience. There is no budget for us to spend money to stand out on social media. We talk about what we find interesting and present new things to our audience. Sometimes we make mistakes, sometimes we get it right. Variety is really important. It 'draws' an audience.

“

There are things that NEED to be covered regardless of the audience and whom it may hurt. But most of the time the strategy is based on keywords and the top stories of the moment.



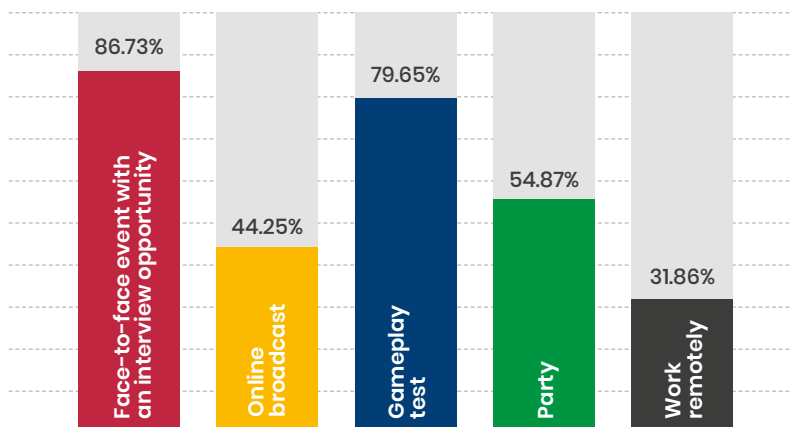


8 PREFERRED TYPE OF EVENT

Despite the difficulty of leaving the newsroom or home office today, face-to-face events continue to be preferred by journalists, who see an opportunity to test products, conduct interviews, do some networking or even – and why not? – relax a little at a party.

Only 32% of respondents said they prefer to solve everything remotely, either by email or phone.

So, if there is the possibility of hosting an event, it is still an effective way to capture media attention, but make sure that the content being presented will be worth the journalist's time and effort.



“

Face-to-face events are important, but the lack of time sometimes calls for flexibility so that the story can be produced by email or phone.

“

It all depends on the subject. If it is content that can be solved with a release, I prefer not to have to go to an event. If it is a long-awaited game that we will have the opportunity to test, then of course I will want to participate or send someone to cover the event.

“

There have already been events that we went to and returned with nothing. Interviews nowadays are a lot of work and usually result in little audience, so when the interview is with someone interesting, like a pro player or producer who understands the game, we turn it into a video, which is where we see more potential today.



9 MAIN CHALLENGES FACED TO CREATE CONTENT ABOUT GAMES IN BRAZIL

Making a living from game content production in Brazil is like playing in “Very Hard” mode. Journalism as a whole is going through difficult times and the segment that is specialized in electronic games is no different.

While smaller sites seek a place in the sun, struggling to monetize their work and receive attention from companies in the market, the most important vehicles deal with an increasingly leaner structure and an imbalance in relation to the opportunities for creating content when Brazil is compared to other regions of the globe.

Here are the challenges most cited by respondents:



As this was an open question, here are some of the journalists' responses:

“

The biggest challenge is the financial one. It is very difficult to survive on my own, in my case I do it purely out of love. I don't receive a financial bonus and my motivation ends up being the recognition of companies, who trust my work when sending a key for a game, and a job well done to show readers a little more about the subjects they like. Being useful is a very good thing.”

“

“Keeping the team motivated, without being able to pay is very complicated.”

“

“Not in order of importance: invitations to travel abroad at the last minute; confusing or poorly explained embargo rules that affect coverage planning; shortage of quality assets and/or packages of repeated assets from the beginning of the campaign until the launch of the game; late-hour (Friday night) ads, which are generally more common among eSports. In general: lack of time and (specialized) staff to focus on more detailed and in-depth coverage. We end up being very superficial.”

“

“The issue of not having access to developers or producers to talk to about a franchise in an open way makes good journalism work difficult. The permanency of companies outside of Brazil also makes us work as mere reproducers of content from outside as well.”

“

“Lack of opportunities to test games that often only occur abroad. We often feel that we are left behind in some aspects that could be solved if the developers were prepared to receive journalists also in Brazil. And also in many cases, games that do not have Brazilian press offices, thereby making access difficult.”

“

“I think there is a lack of recognition from some companies that have smaller sites. We have the impression that we are not that valuable. In the end, we know that it is what we produce and what we achieve.”

“

“To say that Brazilian gaming journalism is treated secondarily would be to sugarcoat it. Games that foreign vehicles receive two weeks in advance we receive on the day of launch (or even later). Games that we receive two weeks in advance are received one month in advance abroad. And so on. In general, the opportunities are rare and the work becomes much more speculative and ‘distant’ than it was a few years ago, when the industry seemed to have more faith in the Brazilian market.”

“

“There is often a lack of empathy with smaller vehicles, which are left out of events or not given a chance to carry out a review. It lacks the vision that even if the public is smaller, they still consume that content, often with more fidelity than on larger sites.”

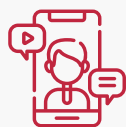


10

WORST MISTAKES A PRESS ADVISOR OR COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE MAKE WHEN CONTACTING A JOURNALIST

When contacting journalists, whether you are a company representative or a Press Advisor, keep in mind that your message is just one of several that circulate daily in the inbox of these professionals. So, to maintain a good relationship with the press, it is highly recommended to follow some “rules of etiquette”, so to speak.

Watch out for these “deadly sins” that have been pointed out by the press:



Abuse of follow-up;



Warning about coverage opportunities at the last minute;



Not answering emails;



Insisting on content that has no affinity with the vehicle;



Not providing assets (videos, high resolution images, logos, etc.).


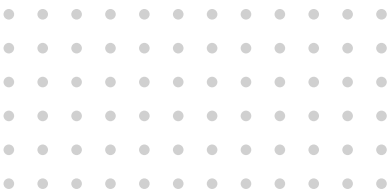
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I think it is very important to always send support material along with the Press Release (such as images and videos in high resolution). And, of course, a very explanatory text message”.

“

Calls outside working hours, too many phone calls in general”.





Sending an email and then right away reaching out to the journalist via WhatsApp, phone etc. to ask if “the content is worth an article” is an unpopular practice amongst the vast majority of respondents. This is the infamous follow-up, which can be useful, provided it is used with common sense.

What the journalists’ responses also indicate is that they expect that when they need something, they will at least be heard – and, if possible, taken care of.

In short, as in any relationship, it is a two-way street.

“

The excessive insistence in the face of a negative response. Or try to go over someone on the team who has already denied any comment or opportunity by looking for the person who is in charge “




“

Are we still on the age of ‘mandatory release’? But that still seems to be the standard. The impression we got is that the Press Officers know about that and agree, but their clients are still to be convinced – since they insist on this behavior instead of thinking about different approaches”.

“

I think there are some mistakes: offering a media pitch as an exclusive content when it is not exclusive; insistence on pitches that have already been denied; urgent tone on cooler pitches (example: five minutes after sending a press release, the Press Officers sends an email or a message to my private number or call me) ”.





11

ESPORTS COVERAGE

Not all gaming press covers eSports, but professional game competitions already have dedicated websites and content creators. In addition, news about eSports also appears in the traditional sports section, thereby increasing the subject's reach.

However, journalists still find it difficult to provide coverage with greater agility, variety and quality.

Today there is an increasing number of competitive games, each with its own "ecosystem:" rules, calendar of events, teams, pro players. In addition, many tournaments are played on weekends.

You can imagine what the size of the challenge is to cover eSports, right?

The lack of access to information about tournaments, in a centralized and effective way, negatively affects the daily life of the journalists, who also face problems when it comes to gaining access to teams and pro players, whether to confirm an announcement made on social media or to find stories that help enrich the coverage of eSports.

“

To give better support to the press in terms of understanding the mechanics of the tournaments and the game itself. In addition to being able to provide a better structure to follow such competitions.

“

Generally, I notice that the team PRs don't have a lot of information about the teams. And the teams themselves or the team manager are not trained to talk to journalists





“

Media training for players and more openness for dialogue and coverage opportunities discussed directly with each team’s PRs.”

“

“I feel that a little more subject diversity is missing in eSports press releases. I usually only receive promotional material for tournaments and signings. This is obviously important, but I believe that some suggestions about the backstage of competitions, audience engagement and audience reach, in addition to content with curiosities and broader themes would be very interesting as well.”

“

“I would say that one challenge for a journalist who covers eSports is to have access to a ‘hub’ that shows the scores of all the championships that are going on. The information is still very messy out there – regional, world, invitational etc. There are many modalities and little clarity about them even today.”

“

“Quite frankly: eSports press releases have terrible timing. They come a day or two after the final result actually happened and we have already watched the tournament and we have announced the results and the news is already old. If the timing problem cannot be solved, the interesting thing would be to add something relevant, like quotes from an executive or from participating Brazilian players.”

“

“For me, the gaming and esports scene in Brazil needs to start thinking about ways to reach more people, so that it becomes more interesting and open to new audiences. With the help of companies and journalism, this universe could grow both financially and in terms of the audience.”





7 TIPS TO MAKE YOUR GAME OR PRODUCT GET NOTICED BY THE MEDIA



There are good practices that anyone can follow to increase the chances of turning your product into news in the specialized gaming press. Here are a few:

- 1** Before sending an email or message, try to understand the editorial line of the vehicle and/or the journalist's preferences to make sure that the content to be offered fits the context.
- 2** Keep your pitch clear and concise, without sounding too much like a marketer, and remember to provide good quality assets (images, videos).
- 3** Avoid offering coverage opportunities at the last minute, except in extraordinary cases and never leave a journalist unanswered.
- 4** If possible, when sending a review code keep in mind that the best materials take time to produce. According to journalists and content creators, three weeks advance notice is an ideal deadline.
- 5** Be very careful with the follow-up so that this practice does not become invasive or inconvenient.
- 6** Try to develop a personal - real - relationship with the journalists you plan to approach in the future.
- 7** If you are a developer, don't be afraid to get in touch directly with the journalists, but be sure to follow the suggestions above.





ABOUT THEOGAMES

Theogames is a content and communication agency specialized in games. We help organizations – from industry leaders to independent developers – tell their stories and get the greatest possible return from their actions and projects.

We like to see ourselves as an extension of the client's team, acting to shape the perfect approach, identify the target audience and achieve the best and most effective result possible.

What separates Theogames from other companies in the segment is our relationship with the press and influencers. Theogames was founded by Theo Azevedo, a former game journalist with more than 20 years of experience covering the electronic games industry.

Based in São Paulo, Theogames is composed of journalists and content creators with a deep passion for games.



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