



Revival of phonocard collection as a hobby in Brazil

Wagner de Souza TAVARES¹

Abstract:

Phonocards have been collected as a hobby by Brazilian people with a peak in the number of collectors (around 300 thousand people) from 1994 to the beginning of the 2010s. The objective of this study was to report the revival of phonocard collection as a hobby in Brazil through estimating the number of collectors and other associated parameters from April to June 2021. The number of phonocard collectors was evaluated on Facebook groups for each Brazilian State and the Federal District (Brasília) on 16 April, 5 May and 5 June 2021. The number of phonocard collection groups on Facebook from other countries was also evaluated. The number of Brazilian groups was 44 and of members, 81,104 in the last assessment date on 5 June 2021, being the country with the highest number of collectors. In thirteen Brazilian States and the Federal District (Brasília), most of the groups (10) had been opened for around 10 years. Italy had the second highest number of phonocard collectors. The revival of phonocard collection as a hobby in Brazil is clear. This revival is suggested to be associated with the attractive images pictured on phonocards, financial condition of the collectors and locations where they live as well as an increase in the number of hours spent with recreational activities at home.

Keywords: collector; Facebook group; fusilatelist; Nelson Guilherme Bardini; Telebrás system; telephone.

Renascimento da coleção de cartões telefônicos como passatempo no Brasil

Resumo:

Os cartões telefônicos têm sido colecionados como passatempo pelos brasileiros com pico no número de colecionadores (cerca de 300 mil pessoas) de 1994 ao início da década de 2010. O objetivo deste estudo foi relatar o renascimento da coleção de cartões telefônicos como passatempo no Brasil, por meio da estimativa do número de colecionadores e outros parâmetros associados, de abril a junho de 2021. O número de colecionadores de cartões telefônicos foi avaliado em grupos do Facebook por estado brasileiro e Distrito Federal (Brasília), nos dias 16 de abril, 5 de maio e 5 de junho de 2021. O número de grupos de outros países de coleção de cartão telefônico no Facebook foi, também, avaliado. O número de grupos brasileiros foi de 44 e, de membros, 81.104 na última data de avaliação, em 5 de junho de 2021, sendo o país com o maior número de colecionadores. Em treze estados brasileiros e no Distrito Federal (Brasília), a maioria dos grupos (10) estava em atividade por cerca de 10 anos. A Itália teve o segundo maior número de colecionadores de cartão telefônico. O renascimento da coleção de cartões telefônicos como passatempo no Brasil é claro. Sugere-se que esse renascimento esteja associado às imagens atrativas estampadas nos cartões telefônicos, à condição financeira dos colecionadores e aos locais onde moram, bem como ao aumento do número de horas utilizadas com atividades de lazer em casa.

Palavras-chave: colecionador; grupo de Facebook; Nelson Guilherme Bardini; sistema Telebrás; telecartofilista; telefone.

Renacimiento de la colección de tarjetas telefónicas como pasatiempo en Brasil

Resumen:

Las tarjetas telefónicas han sido recolectadas como un pasatiempo por los brasileños, con un pico en el número de coleccionistas (alrededor de 300 mil personas), desde 1994 hasta principios de la década de 2010. El objetivo

¹ PhD and MSc in Plant Science by Federal University of Viçosa (UFV), BSc in Agronomy by Federal University of the Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys (UFVJM). Currently a Senior Research Officer at Asia Pacific Resources International Holdings Ltd. (APRIL), Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (RAPP) in Pangkalan Kerinci, Riau, Sumatra, Indonesia-28300. E-mail: wagnermaias@yahoo.com.br. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8394-6808>





de este estudio fue reportar el renacimiento de la recolección de tarjetas telefónicas como un pasatiempo en Brasil, mediante la estimación del número de recolectores y otros parámetros asociados, de abril a junio de 2021. El número de recolectores de tarjetas telefónicas fue evaluado en grupos de Facebook por el estado brasileño y el Distrito Federal (Brasília) el 16 de abril, 5 de mayo y 5 de junio de 2021. También se evaluó el número de grupos de recolección de tarjetas telefónicas de Facebook de otros países. El número de grupos brasileños era de 44 y de miembros 81104 en la última fecha de acceso al 5 de junio de 2021, siendo el país con mayor número de coleccionistas. En trece estados brasileños y en el Distrito Federal (Brasília), la mayoría de los grupos (10) estuvo activo durante unos 10 años. Italia tuvo el segundo mayor número de recolectores de tarjetas telefónicas. El renacimiento de la colección de tarjetas telefónicas como pasatiempo en Brasil es evidente. Se sugiere que este renacimiento está asociado con las atractivas imágenes impresas en las tarjetas telefónicas, la situación económica de los coleccionistas y los lugares donde viven, así como al aumento del número de horas dedicadas a actividades de pasatiempo en el hogar.

Palabras clave: coleccionista; grupo de Facebook; Nelson Guilherme Bardini; sistema Telebrás; telecartofilista; teléfono.

Introduction

The first public phonecard was printed in 1975 in Italy. That card used magnetic technology. The public use of those cards started in 1976 in a number of telephones accepting prepaid cards. Those cards were manufactured and supplied by the companies Pikappa and SIDA, respectively, and available for purchases from vending machines in the public telephone area of Villa Borghese, Rome. However, they revealed to be too thin and jammed the vending machines, thus being considered unsatisfactory. The cards showed no face value, but carried 50 lira units detailed on the back side (LUGHI, 2021a, 2021b). Similar to the European Urmet (Turin, Italy) card, it already had the corner cut and entered the machine in a vertical position, as the magnetic strip was perpendicular to this position (ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DOS INVENTORES, 2011).

Phonecards can be collected as a hobby (O POVO, 2016), and there are collectors from several countries, including Australia (TAVARES; SILITONGA, 2023a), Brazil (TAVARES, 2021), Indonesia (TAVARES; SILITONGA, 2022), Sierre Leone and South Africa (TAVARES; SILITONGA, 2023b). The number of members in phonecard collection groups was estimated to be around 300 thousand people in Brazil at the beginning of 2002 (TAVARES, 2022). The collectors were especially interested in the large variety of images and themes shown in phonecards, including advertising, artwork, attractive photography and celebrity portraits (TAVARES; SILITONGA, 2023c). The collection of phonecards was a popular pastime in Brazil from 1994 to the beginning of the 2010s. However, the use of phonecards for calls dropped by 50% in Brazil at the end of 2012, and the number of phonecard collectors dropped as well (G1, 2012).

The first Brazilian phonecard prototype was invented in 1978 and the first phonecard-





operated payphone prototype created in 1982 by the Brazilian civil engineer and electronic engineer Nelson Guilherme Bardini² in collaboration with Dalson Artacho³. The first sets of phonecard prototypes with inductive technology had up to 10 cells, while allowing an equal number of local calls. The inductive phonecards were created based on the law of induction of electricity, discovered by Michael Faraday, and they are immune to dust, magnetic fields and oil (CORREIO POPULAR, 2000). With this invention, Bardini participated in a competition sponsored by the company Brazilian Telecommunications S.A. (Telebrás; Brasília, Federal District) in the researcher category. Bardini won the first prize and received the Landell de Moura Award. However, the Research and Development Center in Telecommunications (CPqD; Campinas) board of Telebrás refused to deploy the invention. In mid-1984, Bardini established a partnership with the company “S” Eletro Acústica S/A (São Paulo, São Paulo State), where his friend Lauro Girardelli was working, to develop two inductive phonecard-operated payphones, one red for local calls and another blue for outsider calls (CLUBE FILATÉLICO E NUMISMÁTICO DE TAQUARA/RS, 1954; ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DOS INVENTORES, 2011).

In April 1985, Bardini was contacted by Mário Gualberto Pinto Ferraz, owner of the company Signal Ind. Com. Ltda., founded in 1976, with its factory based in Manaus, Amazonas State, Brazil. Bardini was requested to design electronic entertainment devices, which had been operated with metallic tokens, similarly to those used in payphones and who wished to replace them with a card. The result of this partnership was the development of a reader for arcade game devices and the beginning of the serial manufacturing of inductive cards. These cards were each loaded with one unit to operate the first arcade game store located in a mall in Santo Amaro, São Paulo, the FlipperShop inaugurated in March 1987, this being the first commercial application of inductive cards, invented by Bardini (CLUBE FILATÉLICO E NUMISMÁTICO DE TAQUARA/RS, 1954; ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DOS INVENTORES, 2011).

With the withdrawal of “S” Eletro Acústica S/A from the previously established partnership, Signal Ind. Com. Ltda. also took over the development of public payphones. In 1985, Signal Ind. Com. Ltda. had its name changed to Signalcard Consultoria em Tecnologia Indutiva S.A. In October 1987, Signalcard Consultoria em Tecnologia Indutiva S.A., in

2 Nelson Guilherme Bardini was born in Campinas, São Paulo State, Brazil, on 25 June 1935; he is currently 87 years old.

3 Dalson Artacho is not as well known. Your information about place and date of birth and current age (or if already deceased) could not be found.





partnership with Icatel Telecomunicações Ltda. (São Paulo, São Paulo State), developed a 10-unit inductive card-operated telephone and presented it at the Geneva International Fair, called Telecom 87, in Geneva, Switzerland, where it achieved great success (CLUBE FILATÉLICO E NUMISMÁTICO DE TAQUARA/RS, 1954; ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DOS INVENTORES, 2011).

Up to the 1990s, people usually paid for calls on Brazilian payphones through metallic tokens (RAFAEL, 2018). In this country, phonecard collection as a hobby started after the development of the inductive cards. Collectors have plastic covers and albums to keep and protect their phonecards. Today, collectors organize the cards according to their place of origin, printing company, telecommunications company, rarity, theme, mint and used value, issue date, etc. The phonecards are displayed in expositions (ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DOS INVENTORES, 2011) and sold and swapped among collectors through social media groups (TAVARES; SILITONGA, 2023a, 2023b; TAVARES, 2021). The first public tests to develop a Brazilian phonecard system were carried out by Telebrás System through the TP-Cartão pela Telebrás project in 1987 using a system with magnetic cards of the British company GEC Plessey Telecommunications (GPT) (ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DOS INVENTORES, 2011).

The deployed system, however, was the inductive one, which was invented by Bardini. The Telebrás System was privatized on 29 July 1998, resulting in its split into four companies, i.e. Embratel, Tele Centro-Sul, Tele Norte-Leste and Telesp. In contrast to that, the telephone companies Algar Telecom, Ceterp, CRT and Sercomtel were created separately without being part of that split (CLUBE FILATÉLICO E NUMISMÁTICO DE TAQUARA/RS, 1954).

The variety of images pictured on phonecards was reduced after the privatization of the Brazilian telephone companies because of the high costs associated with payment for new photos and copyrights, accusatory processes and utilization of spaces to display advertising information. State-owned companies used to design phonecards with more culture-based illustrations, while privatized companies used more standard ones. At the same time, Telefônica Brazil phonecard company in São Paulo, São Paulo State had printed, through Telefônica Foundation and civil society organizations, phonecard series to publicize services, provide important information to society and raise social awareness (TELEFÔNICA, 2004). In 2005, however, Telefônica Brazil produced a number of phonecards with thematic images, including the Brazilian Firearms and Ammunition Referendum (CAVALCANTI, 2017), which





resulted in an accusation against Telefônica Brazil of promoting weapons by the publicist Djalma Batigaglia (SINDICATO DOS POLICIAIS FEDERAIS NO DISTRITO FEDERAL, 2005). After this accusation, Telefônica Brazil stopped the production of phonecards with thematic images, thus reducing the interest in collecting phonecards as a hobby by people (O POVO, 2016).

The popularization of cell phones during the 2010s resulted in the reduction of phonecard usage for calls and led the numbers of groups of phonecard collection as a hobby in Brazil to decline. In addition, the development of automatic cell phone recharges triggered a drop in the production and selling of phonecards for calls. Despite this drop in the business of phonecards for calls, several phonecard collections were displayed at the Mato Grosso do Sul State Exposition - 31 years of history (organized by Brasil Telecom) in Campo Grande, Brazil on 1-11 October 2008 (DIGITAL, 2008) and at the 13th Multicollection Exposition in Fortaleza, Ceará State, Brazil, on 15-17 September 2016 (O POVO, 2016).

Studies on any aspects of phonecards are scarce. The number of phonecard collection groups, phonecard collectors, groups per Brazilian State and the Federal District (Brasília), as well as new members per certain period is unknown. The objective of this study is to report the revival of groups of phonecard collection as a hobby in Brazil by estimating the number of phonecard collectors and other associated parameters for three consecutive months in 2021. The number of Brazilian phonecard collection groups and other associated parameters were also compared among groups from other countries, including India, Indonesia, Italy and the Philippines.

Material and methods

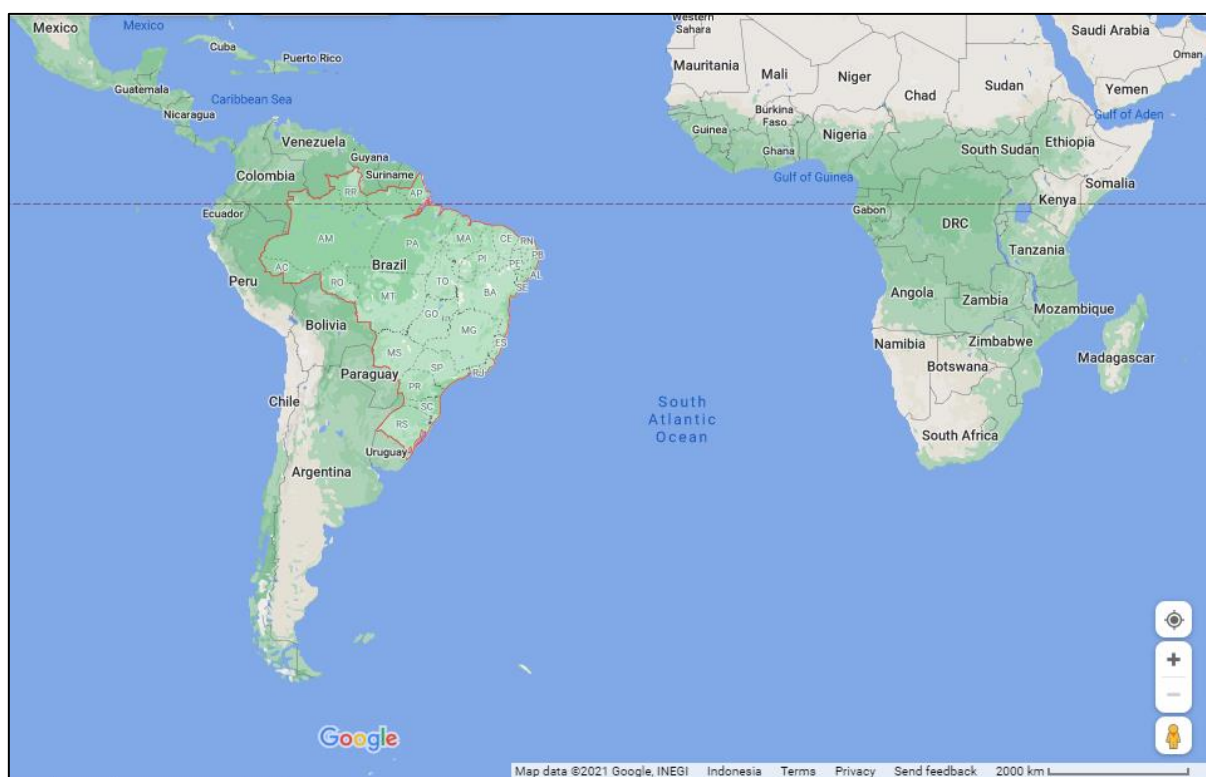
The study was carried out in an office in Pangkalan Kerinci, Riau, Sumatra, Indonesia (0°20' N × 101°51' E), where there is a large private collection of phonecards and other collectible items, which is maintained as a hobby.

All Brazilian groups of phonecard collection as a hobby on Facebook (Facebook, Inc.; Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.) were assessed on 16 April, 5 May and 5 June 2021 (Figure 1). Facebook is an online social media and social networking service (STRAUBHAAR, 2015; OLIVEIRA; HUERTAS; LIN, 2016). The number of members on each assessed date and the number of groups per Brazilian State and the Federal District (Brasília) were evaluated. The percentage of growth in the number of members was measured in the periods from 16 April to



5 May and from 5 May to 5 June 2021. The Brazilian States and the Federal District (Brasília) housing the groups were determined according to the municipality in which the group administrator(s) lived. The approximate age of the groups (in years) had on 5 May 2021 was also evaluated.

Figure 1 – Map of Brazil



Source: Google Maps (Google; Menlo Park, California, United States of America).

The numbers of members on 16 April, 5 May and 6 June 2021 and of new members in the periods from 9 to 16 April, 28 April to 5 May and 29 May to 5 June 2021 in all Brazilian phonecard collection groups on Facebook were also evaluated per Brazilian State and the Federal District (Brasília). Facebook was selected as an instrument for the study because of its function as an online social media and social networking service that is also utilized as a research tool to evaluate several aspects of life (STRAUBHAAR, 2015; OLIVEIRA; HUERTAS; LIN, 2016) and because it accommodates phonecard groups as identified from a preliminary assessment. All data were translated into visual formats such as diagrams. All calculations and figures were prepared using Microsoft Excel (Microsoft Corporation; Albuquerque, New Mexico, U.S.).

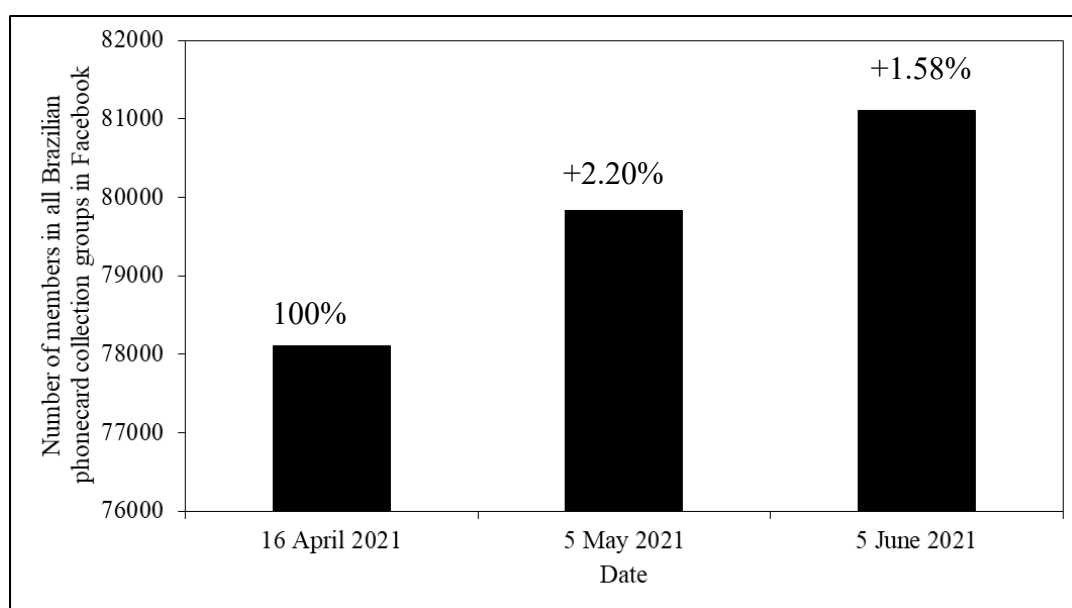
An extensive search for phonecard collection groups on Facebook from other countries (excluding Brazil) was also made on April 2021. The groups were filtered through

the following parameters: number of groups, group name, approximate age (in years) and country. The numbers of members on 5 May and 6 June 2021 and of new members in the periods from 28 April to 5 May and from 29 May to 5 June 2021 were also identified. The number of members in Brazilian phonecard groups and other associated parameters were compared between those of groups from other countries. The data of phonecard collection groups from other countries (excluding Brazil) were presented in tables.

Results

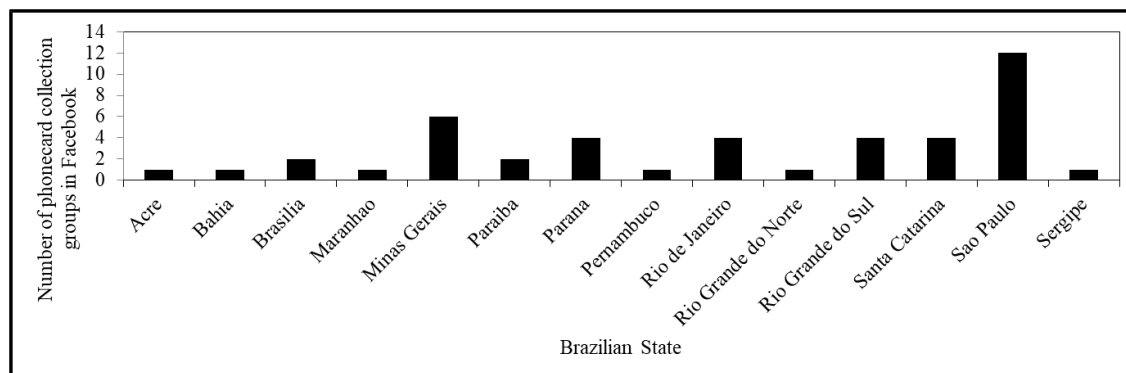
The number of members in all Brazilian phonecard collection groups on Facebook was 81,104 on 5 June 2021 as a result of an increase by 2.20 and 1.58% in the period from 16 April to 5 May and in that from 5 May to 5 June 2021, respectively (Figure 2). The number of groups was 44 on 16 April, 5 May and 5 June 2021 and represented the same groups in every evaluation date. A total of 13 Brazilian States and the Federal District (Brasília) had phonecard collection groups on Facebook. The Brazilian State with the highest number of groups was São Paulo with twelve, followed by Minas Gerais with six (Figure 3). On 5 May 2021, most Brazilian phonecard collection groups on Facebook (ten groups) were ten years, followed by six groups that were six years; the oldest group was thirteen years, while five groups were the newest with one year (Figure 4).

Figure 2 – Number of members in all Brazilian phonecard collection groups on Facebook as a hobby and growth rate (%) in the number of new members



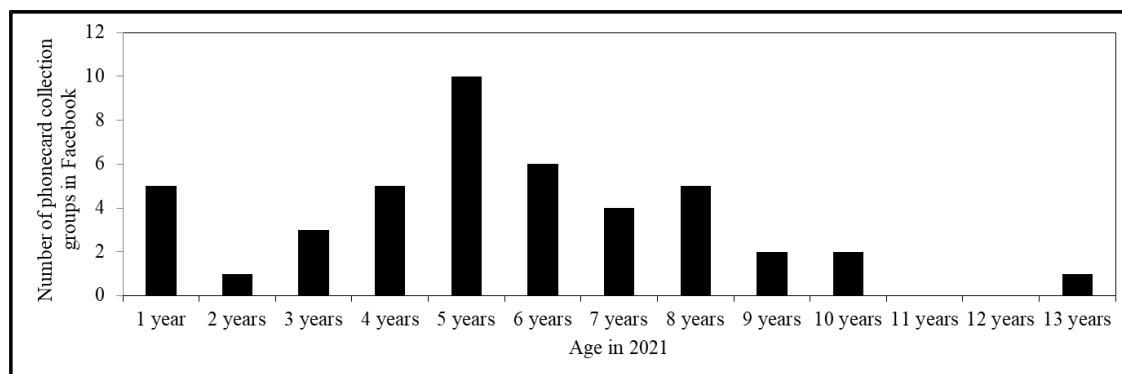
Source: Research data.

Figure 3 – Number of Brazilian phonecard collection groups on Facebook as a hobby per State and the Federal District (Brasília)



Source: Research data.

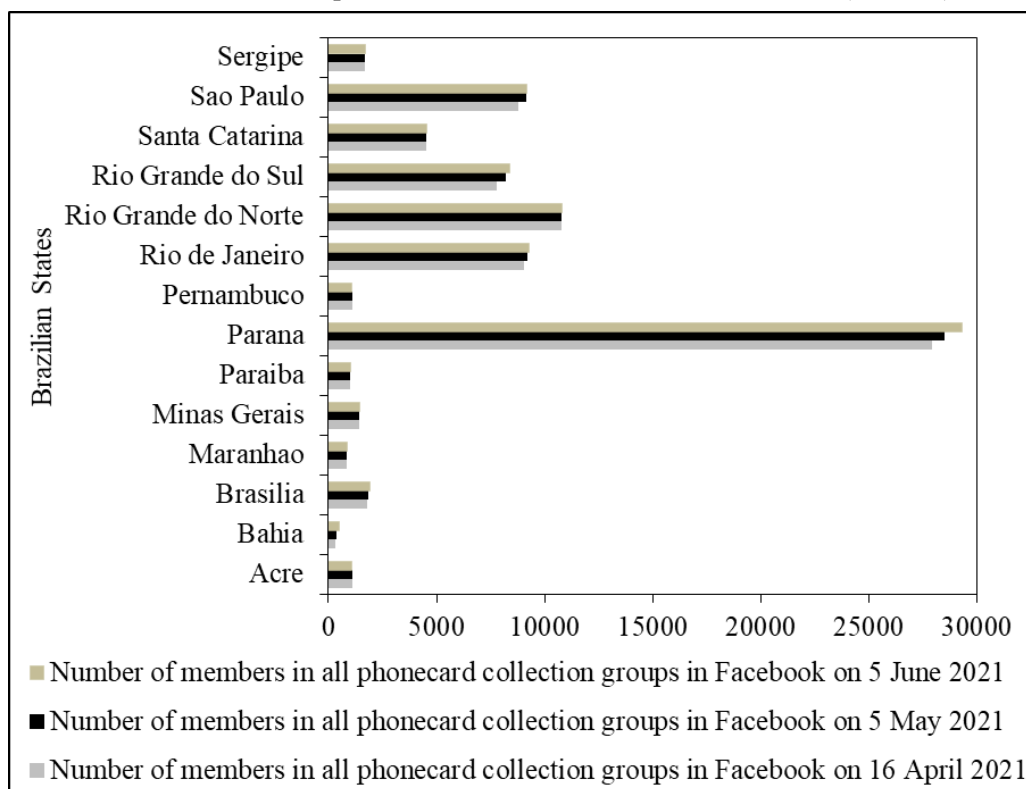
Figure 4 – Age (in years) of Brazilian phonecard collection groups on Facebook as a hobby on 5 May 2021



Source: Research data.

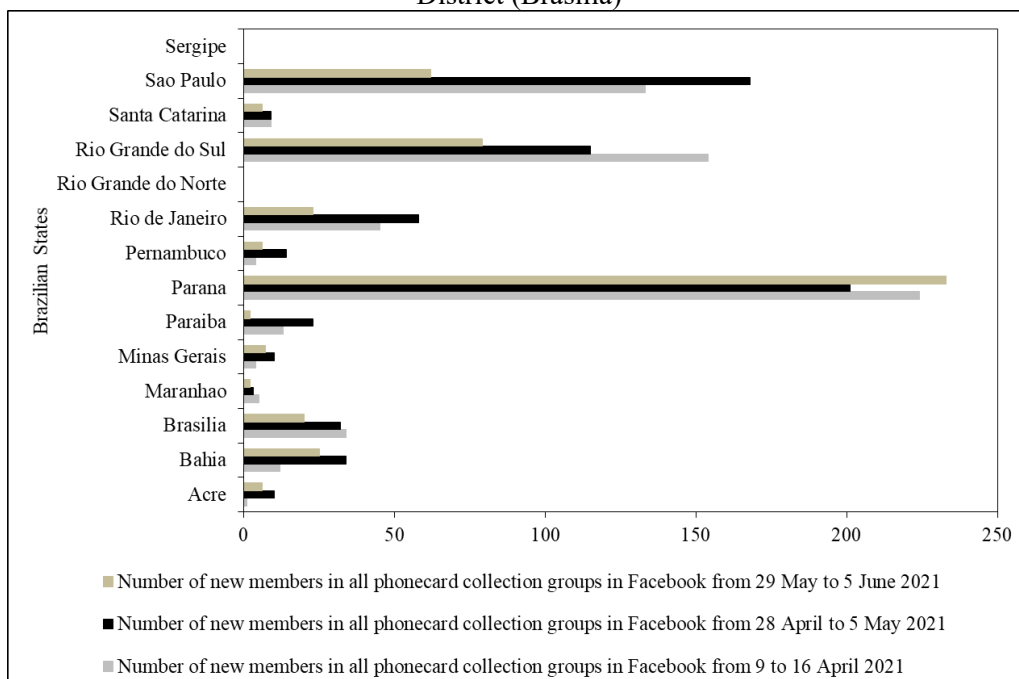
The Brazilian State with the highest number of members in phonecard collection groups on Facebook was Paraná with 27,898, 28,498 and 29,308 members, followed by Rio Grande do Norte with 10,800, 10,800 and 10,800 members on 16 April, 5 May and 5 June 2021, respectively (Figure 5). The Brazilian State with the highest number of new members in phonecard collection groups on Facebook in the periods from 9 to 16 April, 28 April to 5 May and 29 May to 5 June 2021 was Paraná, with 224, 201 and 233 people, followed by Rio Grande do Sul and São Paulo, with 154 and 133 in the first period, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul with 168 and 115 in the second period, and Rio Grande do Sul and São Paulo with 79 and 62 in the third period, respectively. All Brazilian States and the Federal District (Brasília) had new members in phonecard collection groups on Facebook in the period from 9 April to 5 June 2021, except Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe. The number of members increased in all Brazilian States in the period from 9 April to 5 June 2021, except Acre, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe, which remained with the same numbers (Figure 6).

Figure 5 – Number of members on 16 April, 5 May and 5 June 2021 in all phonecard collection groups on Facebook per Brazilian State and the Federal District (Brasília)



Source: Research data.

Figure 6 – New members in the periods from 9 to 16 April, 28 April to 5 May and 29 May to 5 June 2021 in all phonecard collection groups on Facebook per Brazilian State and the Federal District (Brasília)



Source: Research data.

A total of 18 phonecard collection groups on Facebook (excluding from Brazil) was identified. The newest group was one year (one from Oman and another from the United Kingdom) and the oldest, 14 years (from Spain). With few exceptions, the newer and middle-aged groups were from Asia and the older ones from Europe. No groups from Africa or Antarctica were identified. India, Indonesia, Italy and the Philippines were the countries with the highest number of groups, each with two; each of the remaining countries had one group (Table 1).

Table 1 – Phonecard collection groups on Facebook (excluding from Brazil), age (in years), country and continent

Phonecard groups*	Group's number of years on Facebook	Country	Continent
Oman telephone cards collection	1	Oman	Asia
BT phonecards	1	United Kingdom	Europe
Telecon phone card collectors New Zealand	2	New Zealand	Oceania
Philippine postcards, phonecards, stamps, coins, banknotes, magnets	3	Philippines	Asia
Cards collectors of India	3	India	Asia
All Turkish collectible postcards & phone cards & stamp & ticket	5	Turkey	Asia/Europe
Telecard online USB-chipcard reader	5	Belgium	Europe
Jual & beli kartutelephon dalam dan luar negeri/kolektor kartu telepon	6	Indonesia	Asia
Indonesian card collecting	6	Indonesia	Asia
Picture post cards and phone card collectors group	7	India	Asia
Phonecards	7	China	Asia
W/W GSM SIM cards collections	8	France	Europe
Phone card collector	9	Taiwan	Asia
Phonecard collector club	10	Honduras	America
Philippine phonecard postcard and other card collectable	10	Philippines	Asia
Schede telefoniche	12	Italy	Europe
Collezionismo - schede telefoniche	12	Italy	Europe
Colnect phone card collectors	14	Spain	Europe

Source: Research data. *Order from the newest to the oldest group.

The number of phonecard collection groups on Facebook (excluding those from Brazil) was, generally, low. However, other groups not mentioned in this study may exist. With the exceptions of a group from Indonesia and other two from Italy, the number of



members in phonecard groups on Facebook (excluding those from Brazil) on 5 May and 5 June 2021 was low. The number of new members from 16 April to 5 May and from 5 May to 5 June 2021 was also low, except in the group Schede telefoniche from Italy, with 142 and 132 new members in those periods, respectively (Table 2).

Table 2 – Phonecard collection groups on Facebook (excluding from Brazil), number of members on 5 May and 5 June 2021 and of new members in the periods from 16 April to 5 May and from 5 May to 5 June 2021

Phonecard groups*	Number of members on 5 May 2021	Number of new members from 16 April to 5 May 2021	Number of members on 5 June 2021	Number of new members from 5 May to 5 June 2021
Oman telephone cards collection	17	0	17	0
BT phonecards	64	4	77	4
Telecon phone card collectors New Zealand	120	2	125	1
Philippine postcards, phonecards, stamps, coins, banknotes, magnets	9	0	9	0
Cards collectors of India	46	2	73	4
All Turkish collectible postcards & phone cards & stamp & ticket	57	0	57	0
Telecard online USB-chipcard reader	134	2	140	1
Jual & beli kartutelephon dalam dan luar negeri/kolektor kartu telepon	1300	2	1300	6
Indonesian card collecting	339	2	344	2
Picture post cards and phone card collectors group	302	0	302	0
Phonecards	248	1	247	0
W/W GSM SIM cards collections	142	5	150	0
Phone card collector	778	4	811	16
Phonecard collector club	489	1	492	0
Philippine phonecard postcard and other card collectable	243	0	243	0
Schede telefoniche	6800	142	7300	132
Collezionismo - schede telefoniche	3200	21	3200	14
Colnect phone card collectors	826	4	827	0

Source: Research data. *Order from the newest to the oldest group.



Discussion

The numbers revealed that phonecard collection is presently a reemerging hobby in Brazil. This country is home to inductive cards, invented in 1978 and thousands of cards displaying different images have been issued over the years (COSTA NETO, 2005; SILVA; TRAVASSOS; GONÇALVES, 2023). However, after several years of experimentation, it was only in 1992 that the inductive system was installed for public use. In fact, five years earlier, in 1987, the magnetic system GPT had been presented in Telebrás with the issuing of two promotional cards, both of 1,000 units and with a mintage of 1,500. The first card depicted the Brazilian soccer player Romário de Souza Faria⁴ at the time of a friendly match of Brazil versus Ireland, played on 23 May 1987 and won by Ireland 1 × 0, while the second one reproduced an aerial view of Rio de Janeiro, with the Christ the Redeemer statue⁵ that stands on the top of the Corcovado mountain in Tijuca Forest National Park overlooking the Rio de Janeiro municipality. Two years later, in 1990, GPT conducted a field trial with a series of cards with the same images and four values: 5 units (49,000 mintage), 10 units (30,000 mintage), 100 units (20,000 mintage) and 500 units (10,000 mintage). These cards had to be returned after their use and they are currently difficult to be found by new collectors. At the same time, after the GPT trial, Telebrás concluded the experiments of the inductive system, which was officially presented at Telecom 91: 6th World Telecommunication Exhibition and Forum at the Palexpo Convention Center in Geneva and subsequently deployed for public use in Brazil (LUGHI, 2021c).

The current estimated number of phonecard collectors as a hobby, 81,104 people, represents 27.04% of the number of collectors in 2002, reported to be around 300 thousand people (TAVARES, 2022). There are few large blogs and websites maintained by private collectors to display, swap and sell phonecards, including All Cards for phonecards from several countries, by Andrea Lughi (LUGHI, 2021a, 2021b), Phonecards (Australia & New Zealand) for phonecards from these countries, by Bruce Sergent⁶ (SERGENT, 2021), Telephone Card Collector for British phonecards (TELEPHONECARDCOLLECTOR, 2021), KARS Unlimited by Scott and Anna Shapiro (SCOTT; SHAPIRO, 2018) and Collector Magic by Steve Schwartz (SCHWARTZ, 2021) for U.S. phonecards. Most aspects and images of phonecards are shown in these blogs and websites. Also, there are few online catalogs of

4 Romário de Souza Faria was born on 29 January 1966 in Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro State, Brazil.

5 The Christ the Redeemer statue was constructed between 1922-1931. It is 30 m high × 28 m wide and has 635 metric tons of weight.

6 Bruce Sergent was born in Palmerston North, New Zealand in 1952.





phonecards and other collectible items, including Colnect Collectors Club Community (Colnect) (COLNECT, 2021).

São Paulo being the Brazilian State with the highest number of phonecard collection groups on Facebook, followed by Minas Gerais is, possibly, because of the higher number of phonecard collectors in these States. Two of the largest phonecard dealers for collection from São Paulo State are Decards Cartões Telefônicos in Moji das Cruzes (DECARDS TELECARDIFILIA, 2021) and Shopping do Colecionador in Bauru (SHOPPING DO COLECIONADOR, 2021). The highest number of phonecard collector groups in São Paulo and Minas Gerais is also a consequence of being classified as within the top three richest States in Brazil in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (THOMAS; YOU; WOODSICHTRA; RU; BLANKESPOOR; KALVELAGEN, 2019). The number of phonecard collectors as a hobby as well as numismatic and philately items is, in most cases, directly associated with the financial potential of the community (GRIJP, 2012; BLANCO; COCA-PÉREZ; ROMÁN; GARCÍA, 2015). For instance, financial potential was necessary to support overseas travels to collect difficult and rare phonecards by Peter Harradine and Steve E.R. Hiscocks. Between 1988 and 1993, Hiscocks produced three British phonecard catalogues and Harradine's contributions were greatly appreciated and acknowledged within the latter two catalogues. Harradine also contributed greatly to and worked for the various published phonecard magazines, including the most popular TeleCard Collector International (TCI); he also wrote the British Telecom (BT) news for International Telephone Cards (ITC) magazine for many years in the mid-1990s (TELEPHONECARDCOLLECTOR, 2021). The oldest group, which was founded 13 years ago in Santa Catarina State, was created shortly after the arrival of Facebook in Brazil in 2007 (OLIVEIRA; HUERTAS; LIN, 2016), and therefore the group with the highest number of members is not necessarily the oldest one.

The highest number of members in Brazilian phonecard collection groups on Facebook is in Paraná State, followed by Rio Grande do Norte State, possibly due to the higher number of posts in these groups. Phonecards for collection are also publicized on WhatsApp (BAULCH; MATAMOROS-FERNÁNDEZ; JOHNS, 2020) groups as well as online shops of phonecard collectors, such as Casa do Colecionador de Curitiba in Curitiba, Paraná State (CASA DO COLECIONADOR DE CURITIBA, 2021). WhatsApp and other social media platforms, such as Instagram (AL-KANDARI; MELKOTE; SHARIF, 2016) and Telegram (SUTIKNO; HANDAYANI; STIAWAN; RIYADI; SUBROTO, 2016), are used by





collectors to display, swap and sell their phonecards. Blogs are also utilized to inform about several aspects of phonecards such as TelephoneCardCollector, particularly British phonecards, including BT, Mercury Communications and New World Payphones (TELEPHONECARDCOLLECTOR, 2021).

The revival of phonecard collection groups as a hobby in Brazil is, in part, associated with the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and its variants, which has increased the number of hours dedicated to recreational and work activities at home such as collection of philately items and home office, respectively (PEKESEN; ATAMAN; VATANOĞLU-LUTZ, 2021). The lockdown implemented in various locations has, in some cases, increased the number of hours spent by people with leisure activities at home, such as collections, gardening, painting, video games, watching television, etc. (PANARESE; AZZARITA, 2021; MORSE; FINE; FRIEDLANDER, 2021).

The collection of phonecards is also an eco-friendly activity because some phonecards are made of PVC plastic, whereas the Universal Integrated Circuit Card (UICC) is made of metal contacts and a pinned semiconductor. They pollute the environment, are difficult to recycle and harmful to both health and the environment. These phonecards can be recycled into crafts, which are turned into products that are benefic to the environment and human health (PUSPITASARI; PUJOTOMO; MUHARDIANSYAH, 2017).

Brazil and Italy are possibly the countries with the highest number of phonecard collectors. However, this number can be higher because some collectors may not show up their collections to the public and others use different online social networks to display their cards, including Google+ (Google), Pinterest (Pinterest, Inc.; San Francisco, California, U.S.), Qzone (Tencent; China), YouTube (Google; San Bruno, California) and Sina Weibo (Weibo Corporation; China). It might also be possible that there are other phonecard collection groups that have not been found in this study. The higher number of members and of new members in phonecard collection groups on Facebook (excluding Brazil) from Italy may be due to the fact that the first public phonecard was invented and utilized in Italy (ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DOS INVENTORES, 2011), which may have triggered Italians to collect their phonecards (LUGHI, 2021a, 2021b). Some collectors collect phonecards from a specific country, or a particular telecommunication company, such as France Telecom (Paris, France) and PT. Telkom Indonesia (Persero) Tbk (Jakarta, Indonesia) (TAVARES; SILITONGA,





2022). At the same time, other people simply buy a few phonecards to add to another collection centered on a theme, such as Star Wars⁷ or music-themed phonecards, or all phonecards that feature aircraft, cars or other vehicles (TELEPHONECARDCOLLECTOR, 2021). This is because each collector prefers to collect following a particular way.

Conclusion

Currently, phonecard collection is a hobby that is pursued by people the world over. Almost every country in the world has in the past or still continues to issue phonecards. Given the increasing interest in phonecard collection in Brazil, the present study has investigated 44 Brazilian groups on Facebook, with 81,104 members in total in the last assessment date on 5 June 2021, being the country with the highest number of collectors. Thirteen Brazilian States and the Federal District (Brasília) had such groups, and most of them (10 groups) had been founded 10 years ago. Italy had the second highest number of phonecard collectors. There is a clear revival in the number of phonecard collectors as a hobby in Brazil. This revival is suggested to be associated with the attractive images pictured on phonecards, financial condition of the collectors and locations where they live as well as an increase in the number of hours dedicated to in-house leisure activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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⁷ 1977, created by George Lucas, owned by Lucasfilm Ltd.; U.S.





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