

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The interest in happiness has become a global phenomenon, and the ability to be happy is a major determinant of a good quality of life (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade 2005). This causes humans to continue to seek happiness and pleasure to fill their daily lives. In the study of Wei et.al (2015) it was found that activities in leisure time have a positive impact on the happiness felt by humans. The human need to pursue pleasure and happiness is realized in various means in the form of games, as the majority of young people now spend their leisure time in games (Brooks et.al 2015). One of the games that is available to choose is the Trading Card Game.

Trading Card Game is part of tabletop games—which means games played on tables—which are used as a means of entertainment by the players (Emily 2019). TCG combines card collection, strategic deck building, and creative gameplay and it can be different for everyone. The practice of TCG as a hobby is not only for fun, but also part of a lifestyle for the players, starting from choosing the card of interest, buying the desired card, to communication and competitive tournaments between players (Limbert 2012).

Although at first glance anyone can enjoy the TCG subculture, actually, there is an unavoidable economic barrier that exists. Unlike other gaming options that might be enjoyed for free, TCG players undeniably must spend quite a bit of

money, even for the most casual game setups. Even at the entry level, new players have to spare quite a lot of money for cards and accessories. This makes it a kind of "gatekeeping" for new prospective players, who are already afraid of the prices they have to spend before trying. However, this means that TCG can only be played by people with certain economic standards, who are willing to spare several million just for cards. Even so, the money they pay actually pays not only for illustrated square papers, but also interesting game mechanics, easy competitive atmosphere, investment for the future, and other endless possibilities, which are very likely not understood by new people who just dive into this hobby. This is where the role of the petite bourgeoisie that will be investigated emerges, where this hobby becomes a gathering place for people in the economic class from middle to upper class, and their actions in responding to hobbies and lifestyles, in this case, in the Trading Card Game.

In the midst of the proliferation of games using electronic media such as consoles, cell phones, and computers, Trading Card Games are still in great demand by young Indonesians. As one of the few games with physical media that is still popular in the midst of the hegemony of digital games, there are thousands of TCG players who are still active, and run their communities in their respective regions in Indonesia (Putraniko 2022). TCG players usually buy products or find friends to play in their area for the first time through online groups on Facebook because the social media offers efficiency and easy access (Budijono, Susestiyono, & Budi 2016) and each TCG has its own group. Through a rough estimate of the members of these groups, of the many TCGs played in Indonesia, the three most

popular ones are *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, *Pokémon*, and *Cardfight!! Vanguard*, with an estimated player size of more than 20,000 people, and hundreds of players residing in Surabaya. To support this hobby, local business people have also established card shops and TCG communities that accommodate players to buy cards and accessories to play TCG, sharpen skills through tournaments, or simply interact and play together with fellow hobbyists. In Surabaya, there are several card shops and communities that have been established and routinely carry out their activities, such as Timewalk, OGRE Surabaya, and Vanguard Clinic. In this study, the author will be researching the one of the TCG communities in Surabaya, which is Timewalk community.

Timewalk was chosen to be the object of research from other TCG communities because it is one of the largest TCG communities in Surabaya, and is the oldest TCG community in Surabaya. Timewalk facilitates many types of TCG, such as *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, *Cardfight!! Vanguard*, *Magic: The Gathering*, *Battle Spirits*, *Digimon*, and more. Timewalk is a to-go-place for Surabaya players who want to play TCG competitively, as the place provides various events and tournaments that can hone players' skills, as well as a place to gather and play with friends casually. The various types of TCG will allow the results of research on the TCG community to more accurately describe the existing population of TCG players. Because Timewalk houses many types of TCG, the number of members are even bigger, containing players who love their each own favorite TCGs, as Timewalk has hundreds of members with their own TCG interests.

Furthermore, this community was chosen because it is the biggest card shop known in Surabaya region as it was established more than 10 years ago. In fact, the shop's location has moved four times during its establishment—starting from Galaxy Mall Surabaya on its early days, Klampis Ngasem, Geldboom, and finally affiliated with Insomnia cafe as Insomnia x Timewalk cafe located at Jalan Lombok No. 9, Ngagel, Wonokromo, Surabaya. Their long history in the world of TCG in Surabaya has made Timewalk a card shop that is known and taken into account by TCG players in this city, and has become a stepping stone for many card shops and other communities that have been established in Surabaya.

There have been several contributions from the Timewalk community in the realm of competitive TCG tournaments, such as winning the Cardfight!! Vanguard tournament in the City of Games event that competes various games, such as e-sports, diecast, Trading Card Games, and RC Drift located at PTC Surabaya on 12-15 September 2019 (Pratama 2019). In the tournament, participants from Timewalk filled all the Top 4 positions in the game, until one of them emerged as the winner and represented Surabaya in the national tournament in Jakarta. Timewalk's representatives also won the game of *Selector Infected WIXOSS* and *Yu-Gi-Oh!*. For the most recent gain, a Pokémon team representative from Timewalk of three managed to win the Pokémon Arena Championship on 6-7 November 2021 located in Galaxy Mall Surabaya, defeating 12 teams from other card shops domiciled in Surabaya.

Before playing the Trading Card Game, players must prepare a deck, which is a stack of cards played by each player. Everyone is free to make decks

according to their own preferences and play styles; however, due to the competitive nature of TCG, each deck that is built should have the proper combos and strategies to assure victory. Every game, the deck is randomized via shuffling to add an element of uncertainty. TCG combines deck building, strategy, and game adaptation skills. To determine the winner, each TCG has a unique numerical point system, such as *life points* (*Yu-Gi-Oh!*), *life* (*Magic: The Gathering*), or certain card counting (*prize cards* for *Pokémon* and *damage cards* for *Cardfight!! Vanguard*).

From the many types of TCG that exist and can be chosen and the tendency of the players to consume TCG and its accessories, it can be perceived how their characteristics are from the items they play, buy, or collect. Players who are aiming for victory obviously require strong cards and decks among the competitive tier lists. Winning in various tournaments, both small and large, is a source of pride for them. In the situation of a team format tournament, each team member researches what decks are on topping lists, and looks for the best combination of decks that can be used by each member (as in a team format tournament each team member is not allowed to use the same type of deck), and practice together. This is certainly different from players who only play TCG to just fill their spare time. They can play any deck even off the competitive charts, because in essence, all types of decks are playable and can be fun depending on the pilot. The things that underlie their choice can be in the form of personal preference on card images, game mechanics, playstyle offered, as well as their personal preference for a particular character or franchise.

On the other hand, collectors will try to complete their collections by getting all the items in the form of cards or other accessories they are after, including items with special prints and limited distribution periods or quantities. Even though these items are priced quite high, collectors do not hesitate to dig deeper into their pockets, or save for a while so that they accumulate a sufficient nominal value before they can obtain the item. The use of rare items can affect the "prides" they have, and it is noticeable by all players they fight and meet.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic that has hit the world has forced us to adapt to the circumstances, and alter the behavior and habits we used to live in. In order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, the Indonesian government has also imposed various new regulations to adjust to the situation. One of the regulations implemented by the government is to limit direct contact in the community, with quite strict restrictions on going out of the house, with regulations in the form of lockdown and PPKM. Due to these restrictions, there have been many changes in the lives of Indonesian people. These changes occurred in various sectors, as well as the entertainment sector, and are no exception, to the TCG community, including Timewalk.

COVID-19 pandemic certainly affects the lives of players, staff, and shop owners as well as the Trading Card Game community, and Timewalk is no exception. Due to the pandemic, TCG enthusiasts can no longer gather and play together. Announcements of the cancellation of TCG events from developers came one after another, followed by canceled tournaments that were held independently.

The community also seems to be suspended in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak. Lifestyle and consumption have changed drastically during difficult times, and have an impact on declining profits for the establishment concerned, as such experienced by players, as well as shopkeepers, shop owners, developers, and other related parties.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

1. How does consumption on TCG shape the identity of its players?
2. How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the consumption behavior of Timewalk community members?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. Understanding the consumption of TCG lifestyle in a community.
2. Identify changes in the lifestyle and consumption behavior of Timewalk community members after the COVID-19 pandemic strikes.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The economic layer of the petite bourgeoisie is a part of society that is endless to discuss. In addition to this research contributing to broadening the treasures of how these layers of society function and socialize with each other in a community, this research also explores their role as consumers of certain hobbies or lifestyles. Furthermore, their participation in this research is based on their

most recent experience, related to the pandemic that has hit all countries on the globe, including Indonesia.

The hobby and the Trading Card Game community were chosen because this hobby is one of the few hobbies that must be carried out face-to-face and with direct interaction, so that the impact they receive from the pandemic does affect their lifestyle and habits in the least. From here, the common thread that surrounds the lifestyles and hobbies of this economic layer of society can be drawn, and add deeper knowledge about the importance of togetherness in a community, the impacts and changes that followed after the pandemic, as well as consumption patterns that apply to that economic layer, sampled by related Timewalk community.

1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

Community: A group of people with the same interests, along with their interactions and habits between members that contain certain meanings and expectations based on the values, beliefs, and meanings that accompany each other (Bartle 2011).

COVID-19: Infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (WHO 2020).

Lifestyle: The typical way of life of an individual, group, or culture (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2022).

Petite bourgeoisie: An expanding class fraction centrally concerned with the production and dissemination of consumer culture imagery and information, is

concerned to expand and legitimate its own particular dispositions and lifestyle (Featherstone 2007).

Trading Card Game (TCG): A type of card game that is played by two or more people by using a pile of cards (deck) (Emily 2019).