

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS/INGLÊS E LITERATURA CORRESPONDENTE

ICONS OF CONTEMPORARY CHILDHOOD:
A VISUAL AND LEXICOGRAMMATICAL INVESTIGATION OF
TOY ADVERTISEMENTS

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Tese submetida à Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina em cumprimento
parcial dos requisitos para obtenção do grau de

DOUTOR EM LETRAS

FLORIANÓPOLIS

Setembro de 2006

To God,

*For making me see through difficult times and endowing me
with a positive approach to life to believe that all dreams are
possible.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Giving ‘birth’ to a PhD dissertation after a four-year commitment to accomplish it, involves, more than anything else, making a number of choices throughout the period of ‘gestation’. The choice to keep one’s motivation level high regardless of what may happen during the process, the choice to be positive when criticism strikes, the choice to be creative, inspired, assertive, reflective, critical. As humans, we all know that this is simply not possible at all times. In four years, we all have to cope with our personal gains and losses, with our ups and downs and the unclear pathways that guide our individual histories.

In being able to reach the finishing line, I feel both gifted and strong for not having surrendered to the pessimism I came across throughout this academic journey.

For those who encouraged me with positive words about my professional potential, my eternal gratitude:

To my family and friends, for the unconditional love and support;

To my teachers and colleagues from Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), University of New South Wales (UNSW) and Sydney University (USYD) for the sharing of critical thinking;

To Dr. Maria Luiza Belloni and Dr. Alexandre Vaz from the Centro de Ciências da Educação (CED) at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina/UFSC, for being the first ones to spark my interest on Children’s Studies and the Sociology of Childhood;

To my supervisor, Dr. Viviane Heberle, for the enthusiastic comments about my work;

To my co-supervisor at UNSW, Dr. Louise Ravelli, for the accessibility and enlightening discussions about the complexities of Visual Grammar;

To my colleagues at the Departamento de Letras Estrangeiras Modernas (DLEM/ UFPB) for understanding the importance of my academic development, in particular, Professors Félix Augusto, Carla Reichmann, Elinês de Albuquerque Vasconcelos e Oliveira and Cléa Lopes Aranha de Macêdo;

To CAPES, for the financial support which allowed me to pursue my studies abroad;

To God, for giving me strength to once again persevere in this accomplishment.

Florianópolis, 05 de setembro de 2006.

ABSTRACT

ICONS OF CONTEMPORARY CHILDHOOD: A VISUAL AND LEXICOGRAMMATICAL INVESTIGATION OF TOY ADVERTISEMENTS

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2006

Advisor: Dr. Viviane M. Heberle

The semiotic representations enacted by the world of toys have been challenging the common-sense belief that toys should only be regarded as domestic items incorporated to our daily lives. Toys constrain the way the child sees the world and in doing so, they play a fundamental role in the construction of social identities. Considering that, this dissertation investigates the discourse of doll advertisements in a comparative manner. Through the examination of ten Brazilian and ten North-American doll advertisements available on the websites of best-selling dolls *Susi* and *The Bratz*, it looks at how the verbal and the visual choices of these advertisements reverberate the social practices of Brazil and the United States and how they reinforce the 'status quo' of existing social structures, such as the ones related to gender issues. The theoretical framework provides the means to connect the contextual with the textual features of the data. For the macro, contextual dimension, it draws on studies on The Sociology of Childhood and Children's Studies as it also incorporates previous studies from philosophy, psychology, education, linguistics, sociology, cultural and media studies. As for the analysis of the micro, textual dimension, it is based on (1) Halliday's (1978; 1994) system of transitivity in order to account for the lexicogrammatical aspects of the advertisements as well as on (2) Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996) work on the interplay between verbal and visual language analysis. The verbal and visual analyses of the advertisements have pointed to the portrait of the female figure in predominantly passive, objectified positions which reinforces women's image as repositories of aesthetic attributes and perpetuates social practices and gender distinctions in representing the female universe in its compromise between the public and private sphere.

Number of pages: 215

Number of words: 49.105

RESUMO

ICONS OF CONTEMPORARY CHILDHOOD: A VISUAL AND LEXICOGRAMMATICAL INVESTIGATION OF TOY ADVERTISEMENTS

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2006

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As representações semióticas oriundas do mundo dos brinquedos têm desafiado a crença comum de que os brinquedos devem ser considerados itens domésticos, os quais são incorporados ao nosso cotidiano. Brinquedos definem a forma como a criança vê o mundo e, nesse sentido, exercem um papel fundamental na construção de identidades sociais. A partir dessas considerações, a presente tese investiga o discurso de anúncios de bonecas sob uma perspectiva comparativa. Através da análise de dez anúncios extraídos do *website* da boneca brasileira *Susi* e dez anúncios extraídos do *website* das bonecas norte-americanas *The Bratz* – campeãs em vendas nos dois países de origem, respectivamente – a pesquisa investiga seus aspectos visuais, contextuais e lexicogramaticais de transitividade, a fim de observar como as práticas sociais dos dois países são refletidas e como estas reforçam determinadas estruturas sociais, tais como as referentes a questões de gênero. O arcabouço teórico adotado visa situar os dados obtidos em sua dimensão contextual, valendo-se de estudos em Sociologia da Infância e Estudos da Criança, bem como de pesquisas realizadas nas áreas de filosofia, psicologia, pedagogia, lingüística, sociologia, estudos de mídia e estudos culturais. No que concerne análise textual dos dados, o estudo apóia-se na gramática sistêmico-funcional de Halliday (1978;1994), bem como no trabalho de Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) em semiótica visual. Os resultados da análise verbal e visual dos dados apontam para a representação da figura feminina em posições predominantemente passivas, as quais reforçam a imagem da mulher enquanto objeto de atribuições estéticas e perpetuam as práticas sociais e distinções de gênero à medida que representam o universo feminino em seu compromisso de combinar papéis da esfera pública e da privada.

Número de páginas: 215

Número de palavras: 49.105

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TOY MANUFACTURERS

M.G.A. *Micro Games America Entertainment*

TOY ADVERTISEMENTS

AmAds *American Toy Advertisements*

BrAds *Brazilian Toy Advertisements*

ANALYTICAL TERMS

V.G. *Visual Grammar*

S.F.G. *Systemic Functional Grammar*

RP *Represented Participant*

OTHER

WWW/Web *World Wide Web*

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Chapter 1

Introduction

(...) And it is equally tempting to try (...) to turn the clock back, to try to recreate for our children a nostalgic version of our own childhood. And this would mean to return to the wooden locomotive and ban the toys that introduce children to the brave new world in which they will have to live (...) (Caldas-Coulthard & van-Leeuwen 2001, p. 178).

The toy industry generates millions of dollars nowadays with its strong worldwide publicity campaign that launches an uncountable number of toy icons on the market every year, attesting to its role as a meaningful form of mass culture that helps to perpetuate the ideology of consumption through its fierce strategies of promotional and persuasive discourse (Kline, 1993; Seiter, 1993; Fleming, 1996).

As the co-operation between the media and the toy industry plays a fundamental role in the construction of identities initiated during childhood, toys have become relevant semiotic representations of children's world whose familiar figures are contemporarily found almost everywhere – from children's room décor to Internet sites of virtual entertainment (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2001).

Such semiotic representations have made some scholars (e.g. Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2001, 2002; Varney, 1999, 2002; Fleming, 1996; Kline, 1993, Seiter, 1993) attempt at demystifying the common-sense belief that toys should be regarded as trivialities conventionally incorporated to our day-by-day life as domestic things. What these scholars have tried to do is to bring to surface some of the social and cultural values that toys embed and that are largely transmitted to children from early age. Toys constrain the way the child sees the world as they say, and in doing so, they are assigned a fundamental role as cultural assets responsible for the construction of social identities.

Through aspects such as design, advertised images and marketing-language-produced texts, toys convey meanings that lead to the understanding of certain social practices. Also, contrarily to the way they have been historically constructed, toys do not only constitute “replicas of the real world” but a “central mass medium for contemporary social life” (Caldas-Coulthard & van-Leeuwen, 2002, p. 94). This intimately relates toys to “what ‘goes on’ in society, its ideology and values” (ibid.).

Taking advantage of the fact that many toys have become icons in the age of consumerism and that in the ‘toyland’ of every country, toys reflect the cultural and social meanings of the world that surrounds them, the present research attempts at unveiling the structures of signification behind the referring icons of contemporary children whose identity is constructed with a strong influence of the systems of values that these very toy models help to convey.

1.1. Purpose of Research

However true it is to say that toys have been given some attention by scholars, there has been very little mentioning of research done on girls’ toys as their potential subgenre. As Peers (2004) has pointed out in her seminal book *The fashion doll – from Bébé Jumeau to Barbie*, such omission constitutes a scholarly lacuna given that girls’ toys stand for reliable sources of historical and social information as the debates about them usually revolve around themes like sexuality, capitalism and consumerist values.

Taking advantage of the fact that very little research has been devoted to the “supposedly trivial, feminine and frivolous world of dolls” (Peers, 2004, p. 118) and its connection with the public domain, the present research aims at contributing to such an academic lacuna by proposing to investigate the interplay of adult and children’s values ingrained in girls’ doll advertisements.

Considering toys as semiotic representations of gendered social actors (Caldas Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2002), my main intention here is to look at the enacted verbal and visual properties of doll advertisements in a comparative manner. Through the examination of ten Brazilian and ten North-American doll advertisements available on the web sites of best-selling dolls *Susi* and *The Bratz*, I intend to investigate how the verbal and the visual choices of these advertisements reverberate the social practices of Brazil and the United States and how they reinforce the 'status quo' of existing social structures, such as the ones related to issues of gender.

The trajectory of the discussion foregrounding the present research will be guided by an approach that aims at apprehending the imbrications between adult and children's values which are attached to the representation of children's toys such as dolls. To do so, I will mainly draw on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) for the verbal analysis, and on multimodality for the visual analysis, incorporating studies from the areas of philosophy, psychology, education, linguistics, sociology, as well as cultural and media studies in order to connect the textual with the contextual features of the data so as to provide a discussion on both micro and macro dimensions.

The diagram shown next has been designed to more effectively illustrate the scope and purpose of the present research:

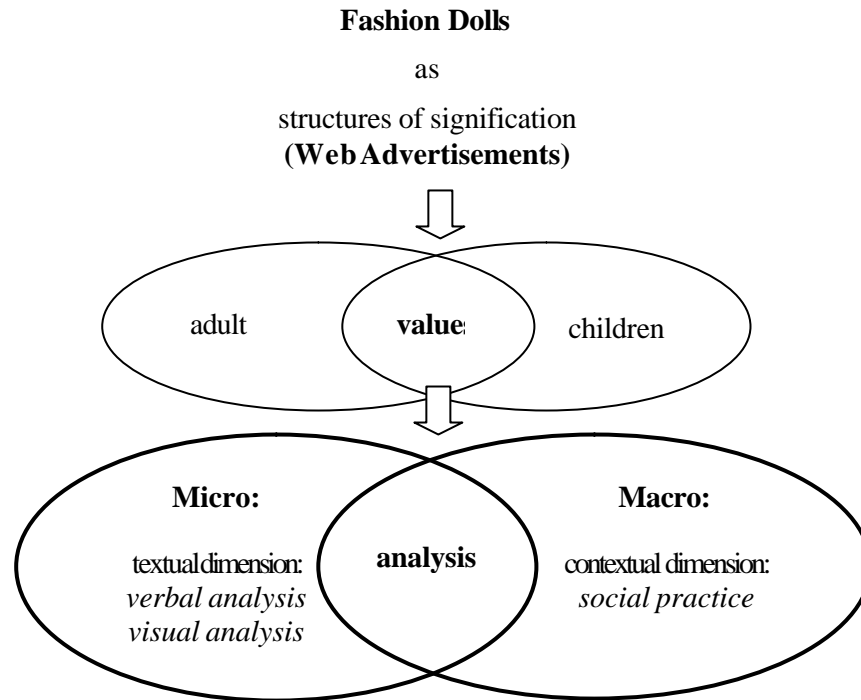


Figure 1.1 – Scope and Purpose of Research

My overall aim is therefore to

- (1) provide a view of how the female figure is represented through doll advertisements;
- (2) discuss the views related to the contemporary representation of femininity offered by these advertisements;
- (3) find intersections between the role of fashion dolls as both children's playthings and adult's gendered representations (Caldas Couthard & van Leeuwen, 2001), endowed with values such as consumerism, beauty, fashion, sexuality, marketing, childhood, ethnicity, socialisation and gender role and identity (Peers, 2004).

In doing so, I expect to contribute to academic research by situating a linguistic analysis of contemporary media texts such as toy advertisements within the debates of broader interrelated fields.

The following questions have been formulated in order to guide me through the investigation at both macro and micro levels:

- (1) How are social and discursive practices reflected in the toy advertisements?
- (2) To what extent do the advertisements embed specific assumptions?
- (3) What lexical sets predominate in the advertisements, what do they reflect and what roles do they convey?
- (4) What are the transitivity features present in the advertisements, namely, what types of processes, participants and circumstances are represented?
- (5) What type of relationship is established among the participants involved in the advertisements?

1.2. Criteria for the Selection of Data

As authentic sources of information constantly assessed by the new generation of children and their parents, web toy advertisements are believed to stand for genuine electronic representations of contemporary media based on recent technologies (Geest, 2001, Snyder, 1997, Kress, 1997).

In that respect, prior to the actual selection of the web toy advertisements used in the current investigation, I had been looking for toy advertisements in other types of media such as children's comic strips and toy catalogues. However, since I was interested in analysing both the verbal and the visual features of the advertisements, I opted to discard the data found in these two types of texts in that their visuals tended to predominate over their verbals.

The web advertisements ultimately selected and retrieved from the toy websites *Estrela* and *MGA*, on the other hand, presented a good balance of visual and verbal texts which allowed for an analysis on both semiotic features.

In order to decipher some of the meanings these advertisements convey and to place their outcomes within a broader social context, I decided to carry out an ethnographic approach to the analysis of data, which will be described as it follows.

1.3. Ethnographic Research

After refining the scope of analysis, I started looking for and getting surrounded by all possible means through which contemporary media manages to get its messages across to both children and their parents: TV, movies, magazines, comic strips, advertisements and websites.

My exploratory incursion into the child-related universe included the watching of children's TV programmes, commercials and videos, the reading of children's comic strips, toy catalogues and parents' magazines, personal visits to toy stores, toy museums and playgrounds, interviews with toy store staff, toy museum staff, children and parents, exchange of emails with toy manufacturing executives, researchers and publicity agencies as well as the manipulation of real toys and the exploration of toy websites.

In order to acquire a more realistic view of children's culture and get immersed in their environment in a more personal way, I had the chance to visit *Estrela Toy Museum Casa dos Sonhos*, located in São Paulo, Brazil, where I could interview the staff responsible for *Susi* collection, take photographs of the models available at that time (12th October 2004) as well as play with children so as to check for their preferred styles of the referring fashion doll.

My ethnographic, exploratory incursion into children's culture also included a temporary work position at a childcare centre in Sydney, Australia, where I was able to mingle and play with children, tell them stories, put them to sleep, supervise their play, watch their choices for particular toys as well as "observe and record their growth, behaviour and development" (HoneyPot Childcare Centre, Handbook of Philosophy and Policies 2005).

For 2 months (from September to November 2005), I assisted the children by acting as both an observer and a participant in their playing activities. According to

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), “the ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, in fact, collecting whatever data is available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned” (mentioned in Flick, 2002, p. 146).

Although observing children playing was not exactly the focus of my research – but the toy texts themselves – I assumed that by conducting an ethnographic observation on children playing with the actual toys I would be enriched with essential knowledge on the contextual dimension wherein toy texts are inserted, which a textual analysis solely would probably not do.

Given the fact the ethnographic character of my participation in the childcare does not imply a structured or formalised method, the outcomes of my exploratory incursion into the child-related universe will be referred to in the chapters where I interpret the data in terms of its contextual variables of field, tenor and mode (Halliday, 1978; 1994).

1.4. Method

The collection of data was carried out during Christmas 2003, when both sets of toy advertisements were retrieved from the websites of toy manufacturers *Estrela* and *Micro Games Entertainment (MGA)*. The main reason for choosing the period of Christmas for data collection relates to the fact that it is usually at Christmas time that most toy collections are released at the market, hence the variety of toy models available at this time of the year and the easy access one can have to the latest trends of the toy market (source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk>). Also, as emphasised by Kline (1993), Christmas has become

(...) a seasonal consumption rite in which toys not only provide the emotional fuel but the central interpretation of spiritual experience for the child (...) [which] always guarantees intense consumer socialization as children forage through catalogues, watch ads on TV and write lists to Santa in their attempts to impose order on their desires and guile their parents into appropriate acquisitions (ibid., p. 346)

That done, the following steps were taken in order to restrict the number and the nature of the advertisements to be selected:

- a) The first criterion was to select the doll advertisements out of other toy advertisements available during Christmas 2003 at *Estrela* website <http://www.estrela.com.br>. This included the *Bonecas* collection, the *Fofotele* collection, the *Susi* collection and the *Driks* collection¹.
- b) The second criterion concerned the selection of the doll collection to be analysed, which reduced the total number of 55 advertisements regarding all doll collections from *Estrela* to 29 advertisements related to *Susi* collection, the one selected for the purpose of the present analysis.
- c) Finally, out 29 advertisements from *Susi* collection 2003, 10 were randomly selected, which included the following models: *Susi Quatro Estações Susi Aeromoça*, *Susi Seleção By Milene Domingues*, *Susi Piscina e Diversão*, *Susi Baile de Formatura*, *Beto Estilo*, *Cartela Susi Visual da Moda*, *Susi Aula de Natação*, *Susi Moda Praia* and *Susi Patinadora*.

¹ Apart from *Susi*'s web advertisements, the main link within *Estrela* website also guided the user towards the advertisements of the (1) *Bonecas* collection, which included dolls from traditional *Amiguinha* to baby dolls such as *Bebezinho*; the (2) *Fofotele* collection, comprising various models of a miniature baby doll; and the (3) *Driks* collection, presenting four different models of a fashion doll based on Brazilian TV presenter *Adriane Galisteu*.

- d) Similarly, 36 doll advertisements available at M.G.A website (<http://www.mgae.com>) were retrieved during Christmas 2003, mainly from *The Bratz* and the *MGA Dolls* collection². Out of 36 advertisements, 21 belonged to *The Bratz* collection from where 10 were randomly selected to be analysed. This included *The Style It Fashion Collection*, *The Funk Show*, *Bratz Boys Formal Funk*, *The Funk'n'Glow Collection*, *The Bratz Collectors' Edition*, *WinterTime Wonderland*, *Bratz' Limited Collector's Edition Yasmin*, *Slumber Party*, *Bratz Boys*, *Fashion Packs*.
- e) The number of advertisements was then reduced to 10 from each collection for an investigation with 10 advertisements sounded both valid and feasible as far as representativeness of data is to be reached.

1.4.1. Procedures for Verbal and Visual Analysis

Based on Halliday's (1978; 1994) systemic functional grammar and the system of transitivity for the lexicogrammatical investigation and on the work of Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) for the visual investigation, I approached the analysis of data as it follows:

- a) The visual part of the advertisements was retrieved including their logos and details. Next, their textual part was selected, copied and then pasted into the *Microsoft Word* as single unities of text. This procedure was the same used for the data collection of both sets of advertisements.

² The web advertisements available from the *MGA Dolls* collection included the ones of *Baby ABC*, *Amy doll*, *My Beautiful Mermaid*, *Ballerina*, *Pia doll*, *Prayer Angel* and *Singing Baby*.

- b) In order to codify and quantify the data used in the present investigation, the Brazilian doll advertisements were identified as ‘BrAds’ and numbered from 1 to 10. In a similar fashion, the American doll advertisements were codified as ‘AmAds’ and subsequently numbered from 1 to 10.

- c) The selected advertisements were then analysed in their lexicogrammatical and visual features as for their micro, textual investigation and in their social and discursive aspects as for their macro, contextual investigation.

1.5. Outline of Dissertation

This dissertation has been divided into eight main chapters. The introductory chapter, Chapter 1, provides an overview of the context of investigation as well as a description of the procedures followed for the selection and analysis of data.

Chapter 2 presents the Sociology of Childhood and Children’s Studies as theoretical perspectives which contextualise the selected data in terms of its broader social context.

Chapter 3 reviews some of the most relevant studies which have been conducted on toys’ representations and establishes a connection between their salient issues and the ones contemplated in the present research.

Chapter 4 focuses on contemporary media representations such as toy web advertisements by exploring the homepages of toy manufacturers *Estrela* and *MGA*, from where the investigated doll advertisements have been extracted.

Chapter 5 encompasses a brief description of Halliday’s (1985; 1994) Systemic Functional Grammar and its system of transitivity as well as of (2) Kress & van

Leeuwen's (1996) work on Visual Grammar as two theoretical tools used in the analysis of data.

Chapters 6 and 7 examine the data – children's toy web advertisements – in relation to their lexicogrammatical and visual features and discusses their role as vehicles of intersected children's and adult's values.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 8, reports the general findings of the research, presents some final considerations on the investigated topic and offers suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

The Sociology of Childhood and Children's Studies

Crianças são as letras antigas
com que se escreve a única
palavra insuportavelmente viva
(Herberto Helder, In: Poesia
Toda)

The present chapter is aimed at presenting the Sociology of Childhood and Children's Studies³ as two theoretical approaches which situate the category of childhood in relation to contemporary society. Apart from offering a panoramic view of children's historical condition in society, the adoption of a sociological perspective to a linguistic study is believed to enlighten the discussion on new behaviour practices elicited by contemporary media representations of children's culture such as toy web advertisements as it has also proved to be valuable in helping to identify, among the various existing 'worlds' of childhood, the one that the present research is focusing on.

2.1. The Sociology of Childhood

The emergence of the Sociology of Childhood in the academic milieu occurred during the 90s when researchers proposed to treat childhood and its related issues as an "autonomous social category, analytical in its relations with action and social structure" other than "an investigation confined to the medical, psychological or pedagogical field" (Pinto & Sarmiento, 1997, p. 10)

In Sarmiento's (2005) words, the Sociology of Childhood is intended at constituting childhood "as a sociological object, rescuing it from the (i) psychological

³ The referential quotations on Children's Studies and The Sociology of Childhood presented in this chapter have been translated from their original language, Portuguese. For this reason, the translation into English remains under my responsibility.

approach, which tends to look at children as individuals who develop independently from (...) their conditions of existence (...)" (p. 362) and from the (ii) biological viewpoint, which reduces childhood "to an intermediate [stage of] maturation and human development" (ibid.). Instead, the Sociology of Childhood is concerned with treating children as objects of sociological investigation *per se*, and childhood as a "generational category that reveals the possibilities and constraints of social structure" (ibid.).

The adoption of a sociological approach to Children's Studies presupposes the consideration of the (1) "adaptations and internalizations of children's processes of socialization" as well as the consideration of their (2) processes of "appropriation, reinvention and reproduction" (Delgado & Muller, 2005, p. 351). Putting it simply, what the referring sociological approach implies is the abandonment of a view of children as receptacles of adults' indoctrination in order to observe "how children negotiate, share and create their own culture among themselves and with adults" (ibid.).

The conceiving of children as 'actors' of their own cultures and 'protagonists' of their specific contexts (Delgado & Müller, 2005) allows for reflection about childhood in the sociological discourse bringing childhood, its ambiguities and complexities to the forefront of a discussion aimed at emphasising studies *with* children and not *about* children (ibid., p. 353, *my italics*).

In effect, a methodological approach based on the Sociology of Childhood does not consider children as real participants of the research itself, but also as "active agents who construct their own cultures, who, in turn, contribute to production in the adult world" (Delgado & Müller, 2005, p. 354.). Taking this into account, in a sociological investigation more than objects of research, children are regarded as researchers of their own contexts wherein adults are encouraged to immerse not until they negotiate with

children themselves parameters for research such as the right to penetrate into their world, their permission for data collection as well as for revealing the results of research.

Following what Corsaro (as mentioned in Delgado & Müller, 2005) has defined as a “method of reactive entrance in the field” (p. 354), whereby adults “enter children’s playing area and wait for their reactions” (ibid.), I conducted my ethnographic incursion into the child-related universe of toys throughout an observational period at the Australian childcare Honeypot, as I have stated under Chapter 1. Based on core principles of the Sociology of Childhood which promote the “discovery” of childhood (Graue & Walsh, as mentioned in Delgado & Müller, 2005) through a closer physical, intellectual and emotional contact with children, while getting mingled amongst the childcare children, I tried to minimize any sense of asymmetric authoritarian power relation which could interfere with the ethical dimension that underlies the referring sociological approach to Children’s Studies.

In enabling children to act as “protagonists” (ibid.) of the methodological process, the Sociology of Childhood not only offers a different perspective in conducting academic research but also gives children voice and recognises them as authentic resources of their own universe, a contemporary view which ruptures with some traditional theoretical perspectives, detailed as it follows.

2.2. Perspectives on Children’s Studies: An Overview

Prior to the implementation of the Sociology of Childhood in academic milieu, the traditional contributions to Children’s Studies had been the pedagogically-centred perspectives advocated by thinkers such as Locke and Rousseau (cited in Pinto, 1997, p. 40), whose view on childhood was connected with education.

Locke, for example, proposed the *'tabula rasa'* theory which compared a newly-born child with a blank page or a malleable wax surface where parents and teachers could 'write' whatever they judged necessary to develop children's abilities. Rousseau, on the other hand, defended that men were inherently good in nature and for that reason, adults should make an attempt to preserve children's innocence and spontaneity by trying neither to teach them to correct answers nor to facilitate the resolution of their problems. He believed that adults should solely intervene in children's education in order to keep their "heart away from addiction and their spirit away from mistake" (Pinto, as cited in Belloni, 2004, p. 577). The convergence between what has been regarded as Locke's 'ambientalism' and Rousseau's 'romanticism' (Pinto, 1997) is the recognition of adults' intervention – albeit subtle – in children's education as essential to their development.

Other traditional contributions to Children's Studies have also stemmed from the psychologically-sustained theories proffered by Freud and Mead (cited in Pinto & Sarmiento, 1997). Instead of sharing with Locke the notion of children as *'tabulas rasas'*, Freud drew attention to children's psychical system, their instinctive impulses as well as their capacity to deal with obstacles whereas Mead advocated that children's perceptive development – the *self* – and their perception of others should be considered social products of a cognitive nature (Pinto & Sarmiento, 1997, p. 42).

Casting a different light on the subject, as one of the main advocates of the Sociology of Childhood, Pinto (1997) drew on Ariès'⁴ (1986, cited in Pinto, 1997, p. 34) pioneer historical study about the social construction of childhood in Europe to explain that the notion of childhood was actually a modern one, one that only started to

⁴ Ariès' seminal contribution to Children's Studies includes his pioneer study entitled "A Criança e a Vida Familiar no Antigo Regime", from his book 'História Social da Criança e da Família" (1981) (Brazilian translation of *L'Enfant et la Vie Familiale dans l'Ancien Régime*", 1960) and his article "La Infancia" 1986), originally published in the Italian Encyclopedia Einaudi.

“acquire pertinence (...) in social life from late 17th century onwards, especially during the 18th century” (ibid.).

Before this period, children were viewed as subjects with no self-specificity, being treated and represented as ‘adults in miniature’, as they used to work, eat, have fun and sleep amongst adults and “had no autonomy, separate status, privileges special rights or forms of social comportment that were entirely their own” (Ariès, mentioned in Kline, 1993, p. 46). Historian J. H. Plumb (ibid.) further illustrates such medieval imagery of children’s condition in early feudal society:

There was no separate world of childhood. Children shared the same games with adults, the same toys, the same fairy stories. They lived their lives together, never apart. The coarse village festivals depicted by Breughel, showing men and women besotted with drink, groping for each other with unbridled lust, have children eating and drinking with the adults. Even, in the soberer pictures of wedding feasts and dances the children are enjoying themselves alongside their elders, doing the same things (Plumb, mentioned in Kline, 1993, p. 46).

In view of the inexistence of prerogatives for childhood and children’s culture, the concepts of play and work were then used almost interchangeably. Regarded as cheap sources of labour ‘owned’ by their progenitors, feudal children as young as five years old used to “participate in the household economy as soon as they could walk” (Kline, 1993, p. 46) and handle the same cultural objects that adults had, at the same time that they shared with the whole community work and leisure activities (ibid.).

Children’s exclusion from the industrial environment only came with the factory acts of the opening decades of the 19th century (1802, 1816 and 1833), which focused on the complete removal of children from the industrial world (Kline, 1993). Concurrent with these protective acts, the ascension of the bourgeois society and the introduction of literacy in the social milieu also contributed to a major revision of the concept of childhood since during this period adults started developing a more tender view of children as ‘graceful, naïve little ones’ (Corsoni, 2003), which ultimately led to

their conceiving of children as “innocent beings in need of formation and learning, to be protected from the harsher realities of industrial society” (Kline, 1993, p. 48).

Contradictorily, the new framework of protection and sense of tenderness for children happened alongside with an emerging sense of ‘moralisation’ which made adults feel strongly the duty to severely educate their children, originating what Pinto (1997) has referred to as one of the various paradoxes of the social condition of childhood, described in the following section.

2.3. The Paradoxes of Childhood

The formal introduction of childhood in the social milieu has given emphasis to the ‘paradoxes of childhood’ (ibid.), namely, the paradoxical way children have been treated by adult society along the decades. One of these paradoxes, Pinto & Sarmento (1997) argue, is the fact that it is only nowadays, when children are statistically less representative in terms of the world’s population that society has proposed to investigate the factors related to childhood in the social context.

Belloni (2004) makes her point when she says that the paradoxical condition of children in contemporary society goes further beyond that. According to her, the ambiguity of children’s status as a recognised “defined social group, endowed with specific roles and behaviour” (ibid, p. 586) lies in two paradoxical social orders instantiated by (i) their condition of dependence and subordination in relation to adults on the one hand and (ii) their increasing significance as part of the consumer market on the other hand (ibid.).

Still according to Belloni (ibid.), children’s condition as a potential consumer market has led to the creation of a visible “universal young culture” (p.578-9), mediated by advertising discourse and characterised by a new process of socialization based on

the technological advances of contemporary society. As “objects of action” of institutions such as the publicity industry (ibid., p. 587), children thus become targets of media systems which perpetuate specific “knowledge, techniques, values, social roles and representations through images and behaviour patterns” (ibid., p. 585).

For Sarmiento (2005), such ‘universal young culture’ has been facing a continuous process of change not only instantiated by the “entrance and departure of its concrete actors” (2005, p. 361) but also by the effects of external social actions such as the introduction of electronic games into children’s universe. He argues that the representations introduced by the electronically-mediated world have modified the nature of the playing activity through different types of ‘toys’ and a new understanding of the dichotomy time-space by contemporary children. As a result, apart from fostering new roles, values, and behaviour patterns as Belloni (2005) has contended, the scope of these changes in playing has also affected social structure for it has helped to promote new languages and consumer patterns which are central to a contemporary analysis of childhood (Sarmiento, 2005).

The ambivalence between what is said about children’s condition in society and what is actually practised has been reinforced by Corsino (2003) who attests to the paradoxical factor that at the same time that children’s cultural production specialises in determining age boundaries for their subdivision in graduated ability levels within the educational system, media vehicles, on the other hand, unlimitedly provide children with access to all kinds of information and contents through social and domestic resources.

As a consequence of their unlimited access to media information, children’s distinction from the adult world gets diluted in a contemporary process which does not recognise their specificity and consequently relegates them to their previous condition

of 'adults in miniature' as in the 14th and 15th century, when children and adults were seen as a single one, "living in the same context, without secrets, feelings of shame or differentiation between the public and the private" (Corsoni, 2003, p.5).

To Pinto & Sarmiento (1997), the boundaries that put apart childhood from adult life are themselves paradoxical since they have been conventionally based on either the age limits established by institutional levels of education or by one's legal entrance in the economy of the labour market (ibid.). Taken into consideration that the referring boundaries vary significantly according to one's country, culture, community, social divisions and time period (p. 381), complexity is equally created when one considers that a child is also affected by the values that s/he assimilates in her/his immediate surroundings, which helps construct his/her identity as a social being (Giddens, 1991; Javeau, 2005).

According to Javeau (ibid.) due to so many variables, it is far easier to establish when childhood finishes than to set a limit to when it begins (ibid.). For him, there has been a contemporary tendency in developed countries towards the shortening of the childhood period – in former times finished at around the age of 14 when boys and girls started entering the labour market – to the age of 10 years old when children today are believed to be starting teenage-hood, a period which, in contemporary times, has been extended up to the age of 25, through a social phenomenon regarded as "post-adolescence" (Javeau, 2005, p. 381).

Be that as it may, considering the aforementioned variables pointed out by Pinto & Sarmiento (1997), supporting the view that "childhood is experienced individually in a rather distinct way" (p.14), it becomes easier to prefigure what Franklin (cited in Pinto & Sarmiento, 1997, p. 17) meant when he referred to "the several individual histories that help construct different worlds of childhood" (ibid.).

In a way, Franklin's (ibid) assertion aligns with Fleming's (1996) position that, for some societies, the concept of childhood being discussed here simply does not apply, for the conditions of living in these contexts are beyond any consideration on, for example, the impact that media exerts on children's consumer behaviour or ultimately, the parameters for their insertion in school levels or the labour market. As Fleming (ibid.) himself has underlined:

(...) three quarters of the world's children are born into contexts in which perhaps a fifth of them will die within a year and of the survivors something close to three-quarters will have no modern medical care throughout their childhood (...) (ibid., p. 77)

Given that the Sociology of Childhood is as concerned with the heterogeneity of factors which compose the various histories of childhood around the globe, as it is with homogenous, universal factors, the next section briefly examines the construction of childhood under a Brazilian perspective.

2.4. A Different World of Childhood: The Case of Brazil

Albeit historically relevant, the abovementioned reflections on the social construction of childhood relate much more to a European reality than a Brazilian one (Corsino, 2003). Constructed differently, the notion of childhood in Brazil developed in a non-homogeneous way, whereby social, financial and power discrepancies had their share in our historical tradition (ibid.).

The history of Brazilian childhood was neither based on the implementation of literacy in the social context nor on the ascension of the bourgeois society. Conversely, it was marked by a past of slavery wherein poor children shared with adults the responsibility of being labelled as 'productive force', whose economy was used to increment the domestic budget. Regrettably, with the advent of industrialisation, the

search for children's labour force continues to be experienced in Brazilian contemporary times through a verifiable regression to children's status of 'adults in miniature' which ends up relegating education to a second rank on these children's lives.

This being the case, the construction of the notion of childhood within a Brazilian perspective has developed on the basis of its diversity for it has been marked by the many histories of childhood which compose the various social, economical, political and cultural contexts of Brazilian children. The Brazilian notion of childhood has above all developed from a historical tradition of slavery, characterized by the distortions and social inequities (Corsino, 2003) which have deprived a great number of Brazilian children from their rights to protection, provision and participation, explicated in the section that follows.

2.5. Children's Universal Rights

In further analysing the formal status of children in contemporary society, Pinto & Sarmiento (1997) pointed out to what they have called the *three ps*, which encompass children's needs for *protection, provision* and *participation* in society (*my italics*). A closer look at the realisation of each of these three children's needs has revealed that it is children's participation in society – viz., their right to take decisions in the institutions where they belong – that has been less practised over the past decades (p.19).

By limiting their participation in society, children's status posit their previous consideration as homuncules, viz., human beings in miniature, deprived of rights as social actors to be receivers of the protective measures of adults, regarded as "inherently wise, rational and mature" (Pinto & Sarmiento, 1997, p.20).

The conceiving of children as unable to actively participate in society leads to a view of childhood as both a period and a “condition defined by powerlessness and dependence upon the adult community’s directives and guidance” (Kline, 1993, p. 44), which ultimately generates studies on the ‘cultures of childhood’ aimed at further understanding the disregard of children’s statute as social actors of their own context.

The attempt to capture aspects related to children’s culture— where contemporary toys are inserted – is not only believed to enlighten the discussion about toys as children’s prototypical cultural expressions but also to reinforce the necessity of creating new points of sociological reflection about childhood. This reflection is what makes it possible to decentralise the traditional, dominating concept of childhood to give place to new ways of recognizing the legitimacy of children’s world, through alternative perspectives aimed at interpreting the variability of factors which construct childhood in its social representations and accessing what Pinto and Sarmiento (1997) have referred to as the “dynamic social structures of children’s discourse” (p. 25).

2.6. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have highlighted some of the main principles of the Sociology of Childhood and Children’s Studies, theoretical perspectives which have helped to elucidate aspects related to contemporary childhood by providing its social and historical panorama.

As already pointed out, both perspectives have emerged out of the necessity to look at children not as mere receptacles of adult’s culture but as active agents of their own universe, where semiotic representations such as the toy web advertisements used as the data for the present research are inserted.

Paradoxically, as it has been discussed throughout this chapter, the outcomes of the attempt to construct a genuinely children's universe have ended up characterising children's culture as a 'replica' of the adult universe, taken that its foundations are laid on the same values that constitute the adult world. Among these values is the fostering of new consumer practices in children, which, mediated by recent technologies such as computers, have led to the creation of what Belloni (2004) has referred to as a 'universal young culture', one that not only lacks in specificity but also calls attention because of its 'globalized' behaviour patterns.

In times when the childhood period is being gradually shortened, traditional children's activities such as toy and street-playing are being slowly de-characterised in order to give place to new modes of being children – which entails being greatly exposed to media systems and being strongly influenced by them – and to new kinds of playing, explicated in the next Chapter.

Chapter 3

Toys and Children's Culture

Nós conhecemos aquela cena da família reunida sob a árvore de Natal, o pai inteiramente absorto com o trenzinho de brinquedo que ele acabara de dar ao filho, enquanto este chora ao seu lado. Não se trata de uma regressão irresistível à vida infantil quando o adulto se vê tomado por um tal ímpeto para brincar. Sem dúvida brincar significa sempre libertação. Rodeadas por um mundo de gigantes, as crianças criam para si, brincando, o pequeno mundo próprio; mas o adulto, que se vê acochado por uma realidade ameaçadora, sem perspectivas de solução, liberta-se dos horrores do mundo através da reprodução miniaturizada (Walter Benjamin, 1984. In: Reflexões: a criança, o brinquedo e a educação. Translated by Marcus Vinícius Mazzari)

As cultural signifiers, toys have become symbols that not only convey “the common preoccupations of children with play but also their changing experience of things” (Barthes, mentioned in Kline, 1993, p. 59), given that toys are endowed with social dimensions that go beyond their material spectrum.

Despite the fact that the present research is not primarily concerned with the analysis of toys as three-dimensional objects but with their two-dimensional representations as web advertisements, most studies to be discussed in Chapter 3 will contemplate a view of toys in their material, three-dimensional configurations, since the literature on the social and cultural values conveyed by such figures seems to be more prolific as far as the debate around their structures of signification goes.

Considering that a general view on childhood and children's condition has been provided in Chapter 2, the present chapter starts by describing the activity of playing as one of the most genuine activities that emerges from the child (Arendt, 1971) by focusing precisely on one type of playing activity – viz., toy-playing – and drawing attention to the influence that toys exert on the nature of the playing activity.

Prefaced by a brief account on the history of toys, the subsequent sections examine issues which contemplate the interrelation between (1) toys and socialization, (2) toys and market and (3) toys and gender relations.

With a view to further exploring the imbrications between toys and gender relations, the chapter rounds off by pondering on dolls' multifaceted roles and identities, especially those associated to a specific category within the dolls' world – the one of fashion dolls – where legendary dolls like *Barbie*⁵, the most representative of the kind, belong.

Having said that, the organisation of the current chapter has been arranged according to a general-to-specific sequence, illustrated through the following diagram:

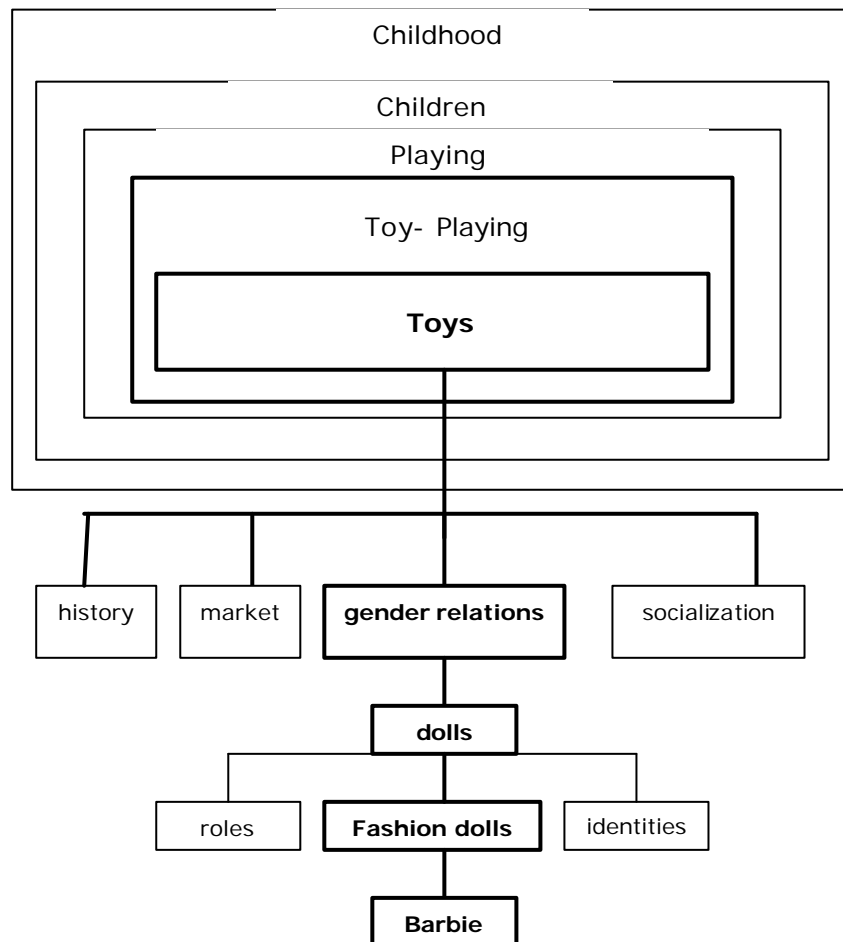


Figure 3.1. Chapter 3 organization

⁵ Just as *Barbie*, the Brazilian doll *Susi* and the North-American *The Bratz*, used as the data for the present analysis, are also considered representative kinds of the category of fashion dolls.

3.1. Children, Toys and the Playing Activity

The playing activity, Kline (1993) has judiciously asserted, is where the most genuine expressions of children's culture occur. As a social activity, the act of 'playing' takes various forms in "sports, drama, literature and rituals" (ibid., p. 143), but it is in its association with children's culture that the playing activity assumes its most powerful definition. Indeed, sociologist Hannah Arendt (1971) has called attention to this while describing the playing activity as "the child's most vivid and appropriate way of behaving in the world since it constitutes the only activity that emerges spontaneously from the child's existence" (p.231).

Although the playing 'instinct' is universal (ibid.), the playing activity is believed to be culturally-oriented, therefore its symbolic content and meaning have specific connotations according to the particular social context where it is held (ibid.).

In its traditional form, the activity of playing did not use to rely on objects such as toys to be structured. Instead, in the game of 'let's pretend' children used to seek for some socially-transmitted "repository of cultural memory" (ibid., p. 144) which implied their use of things they could find in their playground – such as "animals, butterflies, sticks [and] rivers" (ibid.) – or their adaptation of discarded objects such as "wheel hoops, sticks [and] rags" (ibid.), all of which were believed to stimulate children's interaction with each other while conveying a more "natural spirit of childhood" (ibid.).

Children's creative potential to transform multifarious, discarded objects into playthings was for long associated to their 'subjective inventiveness' (Benjamin, 1984), whereby their self-expression could be manifested. By experiencing the 'indeterminacy' of various objects to be used as toys, children had the chance to exercise their "object transformative pretending" thus ignoring the actual "appearance and form of the object

in itself (...) in order to view it only “as a symbol of something imagined in the play” (Kline, 1993, p. 250).

Such capacity has been considered as antithetical to playing with manufactured toys, whose gradual insertion into children’s culture over the last hundred years has changed the nature of the playing activity by assigning “industrial forms and functions and the meanings and uses of marketing to the realm of playthings” (Kline, 1993, p. 144).

With its ‘industrialization’, the playing activity (ibid.) slowly started to replace its organic imagery of handcrafted toys based on folk traditions by ‘inhuman’, industrial values materialised in uniform, mass-produced toys, a transition that Barthes (1957, p. 53) has regretfully reverberated:

(...) Current toys are made of graceless material, the product of chemistry, not of nature; (...) the plastic material of which they are made has an appearance at once gross and hygienic, it destroys all the pleasure, the sweetness, the humanity of touch (...)

The advent of industrialization in the 19th century and its consolidation in the 20th century has radically transformed the status of the playing activity by narrowing its connections with manufactured toys made out of materials such as plastic, nylon and metallic artefacts all of which pertain to our modern concept of playing. In effect, as Kline (ibid.) has pointed out, “the very word ‘play’ now conjures first and foremost the activities that revolve around the relationship between child and toy”, as the “twin dynamics of mass production and mass marketing has penetrated deeply into all aspects of children’s culture” (p. 147).

It can thus be argued that contemporary marketing has helped to shift the nature of playing by attaching specific symbolic meanings to toys’ design which, in turn, have restricted their representational fields. In promulgating, through advertisements, “object-specific social fantasies in which the child must enter the field of reference of

the toy and use it according to the symbols designed into it” (Kline, 1993, p. 250), marketing manages to convey a view of playing as more “vivid and enjoyable” (ibid.) if structured around a given toy. As a result, instead of relying upon their stored knowledge to engage in object transformations typical of the “as-if social dramatic pretending” (ibid.) in which dolls are used as warriors and dump trucks as strollers (ibid.), contemporary children are taught that the playing activity becomes much more exciting if they have the right toy to be used in the right way (Kline, 1993, p. 251).

Be that as it may, whether in its traditional form or post-industrial one, unquestionable has been the recognition of playing – particularly toy-playing – for the development of children’s physical and emotional skills (Fleming, 1996). Through the manipulation of toys, children have been attested to develop their (i) motor skills, (ii) interactional language skills, by playing and interacting with other children, as well as their (iii) emotional skills, through, for example, “winning and losing (...) in games” (ibid., p. 58).

From a more philosophical standpoint, literary critic Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) has also voiced his view on the importance of toy-playing by contending that toys represent social categories whose dimensions go beyond the material, cultural or technical scope. Through their representations, toys can send adults back to their childhood times through a process of remembrance – a recalling by the faculty of memory – and it is through the process of remembrance that adults comprehend and recognise the origin of their gestures (Benjamin, 1984). For Benjamin (ibid.), the real essence of the playing activity lays in the innovation of ‘doing again’, as playing is nothing but the inversion of real order, everyday activities; Benjamin saw playing as a habit, just as “eating, sleeping [and] washing oneself” (ibid., p. 75).

The intimate relation established between toys and the playing child has been further discussed by Benjamin (ibid.) while describing the activity of playing with toys as a symbiotic one, whereby toys and children become a single unity, in a mimetic⁶ process of dilution of one into the other (Benjamin, 1984).

Children's mimetic conduct during the action of playing posits symbiosis given that when the child becomes mimetised into the toy, it constitutes a hybrid and dialogic object which can acquire different roles according to the child's wish, curiosity and interest, "a stimulating material to make children's imagination flow" (Kishimoto, 1997, p. 26). This is when toys assume their greatest symbolic value as "tools for playing" (Benjamin, 1984, p. 70).

The concept of 'toys' as 'tools' has also been emphasised by Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen (2002) while mentioning Aristotle, the first philosopher to point out the distinction between 'play' and 'work'. Traditionally, 'working with tools' was considered a far more prestigious activity than 'playing with toys', hence the generalised emphasis on games and toys to be used in educational institutions as 'tools for learning' (ibid.).

The first mimetic and sensorial expression of playing occurs in the body of the child, which offers numerous possibilities and has often been regarded as the child's genuine "tool for playing" (Benjamin, 1985, p. 108). In this type of mimetic experience, the child transforms his/her body into an element that realises and actualises his/her social experience. Indeed, children's social experience in playing is pervaded by mimetic conducts whenever they allow themselves to go beyond their capacity to

⁶ The mimetic capacity, according to Benjamin (1984, 1985, 1987), is founded on the concept of mimesis, characterised as the faculty of recognising and reproducing similarities. With regard to this, Benjamin contends that "nature creates similarities" (ibid.) as he cites mimicry as an example. However, he adds that human capacity of producing similarities is higher than nature's as he situates mimesis not as a replication but as a way of representation or re-elaboration of the world (for a further understanding of the concept of mimesis, see also Benjamin, 1985).

produce similarities in order to be transmuted into the possible social roles they can assume – like, for instance, getting transformed into a sales person, a teacher, or personifying oneself as a train or a windmill (ibid).

Children's ability to incorporate numerous roles during the playing activity and their 'admirable' capacity to get easily transmuted has also been discussed by Sarmiento (2005), who emphasises children's inherent principles of identity and sequentiality, which allow them to transcend the factor 'time-space' and to reiterate a number of interpretative opportunities (ibid.). Considering this, children are genuinely endowed with both the ability to "navigate" (ibid., p. 375) between the real and the imaginary world and also with the faculty to deconstruct the logical and formal organisation of discourse so as to explore the multiple possibilities that their mimetic capacity allows (ibid.).

Albeit complex, the concept of mimesis involves the dilution of oneself in order to become the other. For this reason, the act of playing has been regarded as a mimetic ritual since the child is capable of becoming diluted in both spatial and chronological domains in order to signify the object that s/he is manipulating at the moment of playing by giving meaning to the various roles that it can play. In this regard, the multifaceted nature of toys transforms its physical character into one of both social and affective dimensions – an instrument that can promote interaction, dialogue and the reinforcement of cognitive skills as well as sociability.

This is why, irrespective of the form they take, in being represented as either three or two-dimensional figures, toys endow children with the mimetic capacity to get absorbed by the imaginary world they are dealing with and to transmute into the identities they choose, hence allowing them not only to transcend the logical time-space domain of real world discourse but also to venture on authentic imaginative acts.

Assuming as undeniable the relevance of providing an overview of the historical evolution of the concept of the word ‘toy’ and its multiple representations, the following section holds the function of prefacing the debates to be subsequently presented.

3.1.1 The History of Toys

Conventionally regarded as genuine expressions of children’s culture, the notion that bequeaths to our contemporary concept of ‘toy’ is, in fact, a modern one that only started acquiring specificity from late 18th century onwards. Prior to that, the term ‘toy’ was used to describe small pieces of art, miniaturised versions of everyday objects often made in “luxury materials such as gilded copper, ivory or silver” (Fleming, 1996, p. 82) for wealthy adults’ amusement (ibid.). The transition to the current concept of ‘children’s plaything’ was prodded by the manufacturing innovation of specialised industries and its marketing communication activity, which helped to consolidate a new sense of childhood and a consequent motif of children’s culture by the closing decades of the 19th century.

One of these motifs was the narrativised spectacle of the toy theatre (Benjamin, 1984; Fleming, 1996), which emerged in 19th century Europe as a form of entertainment for middle-class children, whose “evenings were often spent consigned to an austere playroom by absent parents” (Fleming, 1996, p. 83). Soon the visual vividness of its miniaturised cut-out, colourful characters and backdrops started attracting more and more children and adding elements such as narrative and spectacle to the concept of ‘toy’ (ibid.).

From miniaturised replicas of domestic objects to pleasant cut-out toy characters, with time and their specialised manufacturing, toys started gaining size and losing their minuscule and discreet character (Benjamin, 1984, *my translation*), which helped them

achieve recognition in the social milieu, shifting their status quo of traditional craft products to specialised, mass-produced ones (Fleming, 1996).

Alongside with the referring change of toys' status, a new imagery of childhood was being gradually constructed during the 19th century, triggered by an array of children's products that permeated the catalogues and advertisements of the early pioneers of merchandising (Kline, 1993, p. 54). In a sense, the expanding market of children's cultural products was being developed around an emerging perception on childhood as an autonomous category that needed to attach specific 'tools' – such as balls, bicycles and dolls – as symbols of children's cultural and developmental requirements (ibid, p. 59).

Among these symbols, the category of dolls stands out for its unique cultural role. Historically assigned a mystical function, dolls have, in societies such as Egypt and Melanesia, been seen as a way to “ward off illness or evil spirits, to give protection and, in some cases, to provide direct access to the spiritual dimension of life” (Fraser, mentioned in Kline, 1993, p. 193). Whether acting as “fetishes, (...) medicine, (...) religious devices” or “artistic models of forces beyond humanity's ordinary experience” (ibid., p. 192-3), the fact is that dolls' symbolic force should not be viewed as exclusive of the childhood period (ibid.).

In fact, as said, in their incipient phase dolls were targeted at an adult market and their initial versions were made of materials such as “papier mâché, wax, and bisque” (Fleming, 1996, p. 86). With time and their specialised manufacturing production, dolls gradually started being incorporated into children's culture by assuming roles as specific as little baby dolls whose realistic representations helped young girls to “develop the attachments and role behaviour of nurturing mothers” (Kline, 1993, p.

193). Features like variations in size and style were added to dolls' representations alongside with two tendencies that pertain to our present days:

- (1) the *tactile attachment*, related to the flexibility and sense of cuddliness of some dolls initiated with the Teddy Bear production in 1903;
- (2) the *harder representationality*, related to the high degree of realism of dolls like costume dolls – targeted at an adult-oriented consumer market – that culminated in a massive production of a range of realistic baby-like dolls named 'bébés'⁷(my italics; adapted from Fleming, 1996, p. 87) (see Appendix 5 for illustrations)

For these and other reasons, within the category of toys, the subcategory of dolls has developed along the centuries as a sign of adult's fascination for playthings which not only reveals children's "tactile, playful interests and feelings" but also mirror adults' "visualisation of the child itself" (Fleming, 1996, p. 88).

Taking their evolution throughout time into account, it can be said that the development of the notion of the word 'toy' has evolved from a "subtle and aware conception of the child itself" (Fleming, 1996, p. 113) based on the content of the traditional German toy industry into a contemporary frame of reference anchored in the narrative elements of Western popular culture (ibid.).

The process of transition from miniature replicas to production lines has attached the late 20th century toys to a "system of meanings" (Fleming, 1996, p. 147) which has resulted in an emergent new concept of toy, "inseparable from the culture of the media and the multinational phase of the toy industry" (ibid., p. 148) (See Appendix 3 for illustrations).

Prior to this interconnection, during the 'artisan phase of capitalism', toys "had far fewer channels through which the meanings of one toy might interrelate with the meanings of another" (ibid) as the traditional concept of toy had its roots on elements

⁷ Indeed, the massive selling of 'bébés' during the late 19th century has been considered one of the greatest phenomena of the toy market ever. Having the French firm Jumeau at the forefront of the toy industry of the time, it is estimated that by 1889 more than 300.000 dolls were being sold per week (Fleming, 1996, p. 87).

such as the playthings of German wood-carving, the doll as the adult's reinvention of the child and the narrativised spectacle of the toy theatre (ibid.), as heretofore described.

In order to further investigate the interconnections between contemporary manufactured toys and other social issues, the section that follows triggers the forthcoming debates by contemplating the relation between toys and socialization.

3.1.2 Toys and Socialization

The social changes experienced throughout time have affected the nature of traditional activities such as toy-playing. While in the past toys used to fit into the playing activity, in contemporary times playthings have been rendered a much greater force in often shaping and determining the structure of playing (Varney, 1999).

Indeed, according to Varney (ibid.), one of the most prominent aspects about toy-playing which has gone through deep changes is linked to the notion of socialization. She contends that contemporary, manufactured toys have deteriorated the way playing is realised in showing to be less conducive to participatory play as it becomes gradually more rare to see children “involved in joint activities, learning together, allocating roles, trying out ideas, agreeing, disagreeing, sometimes fighting, sometimes resolving differences” (p.15). However, it has not always been like that.

Traditional playing was marked by a strong participatory tendency and characterised by self-made toys that asked for children's imagination and inventiveness. From the latter half of the 1900s thereafter, the patterns of the playing activity shifted to a commodity-oriented, individual kind of playing with the prevalence of toys “owned by *individual* children rather than *groups* of children” (*my italics*, ibid.).

Thus, contemporary toys have helped to promote strong social changes in, for example, shifting children's patterns of socialization from a collective, group basis to an

individual one. One of the reasons to account for such dramatic change of socialization patterns in toy-playing is related to the capitalistic interests of the marketplace, although this is an issue “academic and journalistic commentaries on childhood seldom acknowledge (...)” (Kline, 1993, p. 13). Instead of bolstering socialization amongst real children, the toy industry has shown to be far more interested in promoting relationships between children and toys which can replace friends and peers (Varney, 2002; 1999).

Further reinforced by a contemporary tendency towards the devaluation of real relationships, the selling of what Varney (2002) has described as ‘love in toytown’ has made toys to be structured around love themes which underpin the marketing interests of today’s toy makers. Through a process regarded as ‘privatisation of playing’ (Varney, 1999), the appeal of ‘loving toys’ has modified the concept of socialization in toy-playing by promoting the idea that the companionship of a child needs no longer to be another child but a toy. Toy manufacturers have of course benefited from this trend and made good use of it, by explicitly offering ‘Best Friend Teddy Bears’ or ‘My Puppy Loves Me’ lines to substitute for real human friends or companions.

The turning of toys into imaginary companions has been claimed not only to strengthen children’s attachment bonds with these toys but also to “signify the emotional experiences of imaginary friends and family relations” (Kline, 1993, p. 259). One of the ways this can be connoted is through the child’s tactile relationship with the toy, a bond of love which is expressed through “kissing, hugging, and constant companionship” (ibid.).

In fact, toys have been designed and promoted in such a way to have their “lovability” (ibid.) accentuated, as the word ‘love’ has become a rather recurrent term in toy packages, advertising catalogues and other promotional media venues such as toys’

websites and advertisements, although the connotations it carries may assume any of the following four meanings suggested by Varney (2002):

- (1) *representational* love, aimed at picturing toys as true material proofs of love;
- (2) *substitutional* love, aimed at minimising working parents' feeling of guilt for not spending enough time with their children as a consequence of the pressures of modern life;
- (3) *obligatory* and (4) *romantic love*, regarded as strongly gendered, as toys contributing to a concept of love as obligation train girls for a motherhood role that ensures they will be emotionally as well as physically equipped (extracted and adapted from Varney, 2002, p. 03).

Paradoxical as it may sound, the connotation evoked by the 'substitutional loving toy' ends up further emphasising its non-socialising aspect as a 'solitarizing' object: at the same time that it is used as an attempt to 'substitute' for parents' absence, its solitary character conducive to individual play is reinforced by what Sutton-Smith (as mentioned in Varney, 2002) has described as 'ritualised family gift relationships':

Parents give their children toys to bond with them but also simultaneously facilitate separation [*by saying*]: 'I give you this toy for you to play with (...) but now go away and play with it by yourself. (Sutton-Smith, *ibid.*, p. 02)

With that in mind, it can be inferred that the substitutive nature of marketed toys like the ones above mentioned helps to deconstruct traditional patterns of family relations established by older, non-commercialised toys. Kline (1993) has substantiated this view by further specifying:

(...) we give a child a musical tape of children's songs because we don't have time to sing to or with them; (...) we give them a My Little Pony colouring book as a substitute for drawing; (...) we let them watch fantasies on TV, without reading to them or exposing them to the intimacy of personal storytelling; (...) we give them Nintendo, but fail to teach them the finger games or craft skills (knitting, carpentry, gardening) that have been traditions within our families (Kline, 1993, p.13).

As noticed, the way contemporary mass-marketed toys have pervaded the lives of billions of children has inhibited, rather than fostered, participation amongst them, by shifting traditional patterns of socialization in toy-playing from a group-oriented basis

to an individual-oriented one. Such transition has been done with a view to matching the capitalistic interests of the marketplace, which has offered 'loving' toys conducive to solitary play to substitute for a real child companion under the attached headings of 'best friends' or 'I love you' toys. The so-called 'privatisation of playing' has operated through marketing mechanisms which involve, among other things, the overt encouragement of children to 'participate' as agents and buy toys as commodities (Varney, 1999).

With the aim to further explore other mechanisms through which the marketplace interferes with the nature of the playing activity, the following section draws on the interrelation between contemporary toys and market.

3.1.3 Toys and Market

With the emergence of what Langer (as mentioned in Varney, 1999, p. 19) has called "commoditoys", the attractive design of some contemporary, manufactured toys has been believed not only to negatively interfere with children's inherent creative capacity in playing but also to diminish the value of some toys as real instruments of playing (Benjamin, 1984).

The appeal of contemporary toys has been constructed to the extent of surpassing their functionality as the market has invested large amounts of money in making visual and sound effects tantalise every possible sense of the consumer. As emphasized by Fleming (1996), most toys today need to exert a sensory attraction on the child so as to 'hypnotize' him/her and effectively transpose the child from his/her immediate reality.

In effect, dolls have been specially designed to smell like flowers, fruits or other flavours while "lighting and sound effects are maximised across the full spectrum of toys" (ibid.) a phenomenon that has been described as the "technocracy of sensuality"

(Varney, 1999, p. 20). The technocracy of sensuality happens via the relationships that toys have with each other, and “with a great many other commodities and events to which they are tied” (ibid.). For Benjamin (1984), however, the more imitative a toy becomes, the more it deviates from real life playing activity (ibid.).

Most contemporary toys today are sold on the basis of an endless number of marketing mechanisms supported by the toy industry, the entertainment and commodity industry. The cross and multi-layered promotions that surround toys include a plethora of merchandising in advertisements, competitions, mall entertainment, catalogues, magazines for children and movie and television programmes, all of them aimed not only at making the child familiar with the toy itself but also with the storyline which goes with it (Varney, 1999).

Kishimoto (1997) explains that the over-determined characters and pre-established scripts (Varney, 1999) of contemporary toys are within the scope of reproduction of children’s reality as their contexts may or may not incorporate the representations of a universe apart, the one of comic books, TV series and fairy tales (ibid.). It is nevertheless their delicate and anthropomorphic dimensions which allow toys to metamorphose into and photograph the “many types of realities, reproducing not only objects but a social totality” (ibid., p. 24).

The intersection between toys and elements of popular culture has been vastly addressed by Fleming’s (1996) influential book entitled *Powerplay: Toys as Popular Culture*, which traces the history of toys back to 1960s when the narrativisation of the toy industry became utterly dependent on cinema and TV series characters, a phenomenon that Fleming (ibid.) has associated to the concept of ‘total multimedia marketing’ (see Appendix 3 for illustrations). According to him, in this type of marketing the toy industry establishes strong connections with media networks such as

cinematic, televisual and printed resources, all of which help to sustain the marketing profitability⁸.

For Fleming (ibid.), the meanings offered by these resources evolve around four generalised themes, these being:

- (1) the theme of *young womanhood*, embodied by a doll (where *Barbie* stands out as its main icon);
- (2) the theme of *animality*, materialised in hard plastic or soft fabric and presented to the consumer in different forms;
- (3) the theme of the *machine*, where toy cars, trucks, construction sets and model spacecrafts fit;
- (4) the theme of *imaginary play space*, represented by what goes on inside the computer video chip (*my italics*; adapted from Fleming, 1996, p. 40-1)

The interconnections that construct the network between elements of popular culture such as characters of TV series and the toy industry not only help to sustain the marketing profitability but they also constrain, through a system of offered meanings, children's meaning-making potential while playing with these toys.

In relation to the marketing profitability, the over-determinacy in toy-characterising can be viewed as a process "essential to the image identity being sought for the toy" (Varney, 1999, p. 22), which means that by segmenting play themes and pre-determining storylines whereby toys come with highly specific functions and are needed for specific scenarios, the toy industry manages to keep control not only of the key characters but also "of the accessories and assorted characters that make up the elongated toy lines that exist today" (ibid.). No rarely do toy lines for boys include "male companions, enemies, vehicles and weaponry while girls' toys have friends, abodes, shops, horses and lots of fashionwear" (ibid) (See Appendix 6 for illustrations).

⁸ Prior to Fleming's (1996) account on the interrelation between media networks and the toy industry, Kline (1993) had his say on the subject by associating the enormous growth in toy sales between the 70s (US\$ 2 billion) and the 80s (US\$ 12 billion) to three changes in the toy market: the new TV services, the deregulation of children's TV programming and the competition within the electronics and toy industries.

Based on Benjamin's (1984) assertion on the diminished value of imitative toys, such array of offered meanings can be said to enhance children's discourse of 'imitation' rather than 'imagination'. The close system of playing that pre-defines the toy roles and its serial storyline has been argued to limit the opportunities of negotiation and participation that traditional toys used to enhance and "reduce the possibilities for imaginative ideas and creative acts on the part of the child" (Barthes, 1973, p. 53). As playthings now come "with their own book of rules, as though some invincible mastermind has already played with them and determined the parameters of their place in a child's life" (Vincent, as mentioned in Varney, 1999, p. 28), the ideology of the toy marketplace keeps on dictating the consumption patterns that pervade children's lives in a type of totalitarian system, leading to the reshaping of toy-playing as a "less imaginative, more solitary, more commodity-based and more pre-determined activity" (ibid.)

Yet, this view is not shared by Fleming (ibid.) who defends that, despite coming with some pre-defined physical props and storylines, it is ultimately children themselves who organise the course of their playing activity, for they are inherently endowed with the capacity to move out from media's pre-imposed frame levels in order to reframe them according to their needs (ibid.). According to him (ibid.), the narrative elements of popular culture which clearly establish the "teams of characters and basic story structures" (p. 104) offered to the toy industry can still allow children to produce an array of "endless plots around those characters" (ibid.), extending them with their own variations.

Be that as it may, the apparently innocuous relationship that is established between the toy and the child during the playing activity is, in fact, ideologically loaded, as toys should be taken as any other type of text which overtly expresses its position. This is

why toys, as Caldas-Coulthard & van-Leeuwen (2002) have contended, constitute multimodal semiotic signs that:

- (1) are located within the discourses of gender, age, and social class among others;
- (2) are essentially interdiscursive, as they are positioned within multiple, overlapping and even conflicting discourse;
- (3) hold intertextual links with other mass media;
- (4) are dialogical, in that, through toys, different kinds of conversations can be established (extracted and adapted from Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2002, pp. 95-96).

As both dialogical and ideological instruments, what Caldas-Coulthard, van Leeuwen (2000) and Fleming (1996) seem to support is the thesis that contemporary toy designers do not always “explicitly formulate to themselves that the toys represent” as they may bring more “diffuse kinds of cultural knowledge” (van Leeuwen & Caldas-Coulthard, 2000, p. 09) to children’s productive and interpretive work. Such perspective takes for granted children’s ability to negotiate toys’ offered meanings by adjusting the toy’s ‘language’ to their own narrative and adapting it to their context:

The same signifier may represent different things in different contexts, depending on the discursive resources we bring to [its] interpretation, and on the interests prevailing in a given situation. (van Leeuwen & Caldas Coulthard, 2000, p. 07)

Notwithstanding children’s argued capacity to move beyond toys’ offered meanings, it is nevertheless important to remember that manufactured toys are designed by adults who “use them to communicate specific messages to the child” (Caldas-Coulthard & van-Leeuwen, 2001, p. 166). In other words, as already stated in Chapter 2, despite being constructed to compose children’s universe, it is the adult who voices and determines the shapes, adornments and designs that culminate in the toy production and who enacts toys with values that are genuinely meaningful to the *adult world* and which are incorporated by children from very early stages in life (*my italics, ibid.*).

Some of these enacted values are diluted in the aforementioned toy themes proposed by Fleming (1996), particularly in the one of young womanhood actualised by

dolls like *Barbie*, which revolves around the female figure involved in roles that emphasise its motherly duties and aesthetic appearance.

Regarding this issue, the following section focuses on the interrelation between toys and gender.

3.1.4 Toys and Gender Relations

As it has been seen, the co-operation between the marketing and the toy industry has promoted individual playing through the introduction of specific toys which do not foster children's collective playing. In effect, some contemporary toys have been designed in such a way to discourage children from different sexes from playing together, based on gender segmentation strategies to augment the profitability of the toy market. According to Varney (1999), this has ultimately helped to construct "vast differences in the types of play in which boys and girls are supposed to take part" (p. 23).

While promoting these toys, advertisers have been requested to specify "the particular strata they are targeting" (Kline, 1993, p. 248), by picturing only boys as the reference group in advertisements of vehicles and male action dolls and only girls in advertisements for fashion, baby and female action dolls (ibid.). When criticised for acting in a 'narrow and sexist' manner, toy marketers argue that what they promote is "the most popular and acceptable kinds of play" and that "sex-stereotypic play existed long before advertising" (Kline, 1993, p. 252).

Nevertheless, as already attested, before the Industrial Revolution the gender-specific symbolic design of most toys was not clearly determined as "most toys were home-made so that dolls would frequently be crudely fashioned lumps of clay or some other material which children felt could stand in for a doll" (Varney, 1999, p. 16). It was

only after the Industrial Revolution that self-made toys lost their potential to be created upon to give place to factory-made toys, which became increasingly available. That was the time when toys started to gather ideological concepts and acquire gender identities, marking the beginning of the 'girlish pink world' (ibid.).

From then on, dolls started to be perceived as girl-related toys which represented the social need to encourage the practice of nurturing and motherhood from early age and doll-playing as a prelude to the limited opportunities that girls would have to face thereafter. Within the restricted boundaries of their universe of family-gathering, child-rearing, shopping and household affairs, doll-playing was therefore believed to help acquaint little girls with the roles they would have to follow, according to the socially-dictated rules. As Fleming (1996) has noted, whichever the doll's image is, the very activity of doll-playing has ever since been conceived of as the opportunity "where girls rehearse the traditional domestic, mothering role" (p. 43).

For some writers (e.g. Caldas-Coulthard & van-Leeuwen, 2002), even dolls like the grown-up, big-breasted and sexually-appealing *Barbie* – play a role in reinforcing the discourse of 'domesticity' through her represented narrative universe which typically revolves around activities such as going to work, going shopping, etc.

Drawing on Butler's assertion (as mentioned in Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2002) that "gender is not something that we have or are but rather something we perform" (p. 97), one may speculate that the toy industry does not allow for such performativity to take place since the gendered representations attached to toys are clearly pre-determined before children can have access to them. Take, for example, unchangeable features in toys like *Barbie's* feet specially designed for high-heeled shoes. Features such as this embed toys with values that may otherwise be interpreted as 'given gendered meanings' (ibid.).

Given gendered meanings like *Barbie*'s high-heeled feet corroborate Varney's (1999) argument that the design of some contemporary toys constructs a visible gap between girls' and boys' types of play especially when toys' kinetic features are used to convey specific gender representations. One of the ways this can also be done is through the way the toys are designed to move, that is, through their kinetic possibilities.

In fact, while analysing texts available on the web pages of *Barbie* (<http://www.barbie.com>) and *Action Man* (<http://www.actionman.com>), Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen (2002) observed that some contemporary toys are designed for "action", whilst others are designed for "posing" (ibid., p. 98). This seems to be the particular case of boys' dolls, usually located 'out there' and endowed with flexibility to move sideways, open their legs, hold objects and stand by themselves without falling (ibid.). Contrastively, girls' dolls are commonly represented living "entirely in [their] own enclosed world" (Fleming, 1996, p. 53) and are kinetically designed to be restricted in their action potentials.

Toys' given gendered meanings can also be seen in pictures found in toy catalogues and boxes, which commonly feature the inability of movement of girls' dolls like *Barbie* when she is, for example, located in places related to domestic life. This evokes a sense of submission that clearly contrasts with boys' dolls like *GI Joe* and the *Action Man*, often "placed in specific contexts involving exterior setting, danger and movement" (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 99).

Just as dolls' kinetic features, the choice of colours constitutes another relevant aspect of gender. Traditionally, the colour pink has commonly been associated to girl-related items whereas blue has been used to refer to the boys' world. Along the years, these colours have been found stamped in toys' packaging, advertisements, catalogues and the background of most web pages associated with children's toys. Such colour

distinction leads to the assumption that more than simply colour tones, the meaning that the 'pinkish girl world' and blueish boy world' embed, attach, in fact, values of femininity and masculinity, which are not 'explicitly codified' in contemporary popular culture (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 101).

In *Barbie's* catalogues, for instance, different shades of pink have been used to denote ideas of childhood (light pink) and teenagehood (darker shades) or even sexuality (ibid.). Other shades and colours have also attested to gender distinctions although their meaning potential may have not been so easily interpreted. This has been the case of certain shades of pink, mauve or purple which only "the context, and degree of darkness and intensity will (...) narrow this meaning further (...) in the direction of mystery, danger, or sexuality" (ibid, p.104).

At the textual level, gender representations in these texts have been revealed by the ideational meanings and their concepts of classification and evaluation. In this respect, Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, (2002) have pointed out to a high incidence of relational and mental structures, as in the case of *Barbie's* texts, in opposition to a profusion of material structures verified in the *Action Man's* texts.

Also, as already stated, toys for boys have frequently been located in action-oriented settings and named after their super-natural powers (e.g. *Ninja*), which stresses the naturalised classification of their power relations.

Constructed differently, the texts of girls' dolls frequently locate them within the domestic space and their classifications, instead of containing 'super human evaluations', attach values connected to female roles and professions such as *the shopper, the cook, the mother, the ballerina*, etc, pointing to "romantic, idealised constructions of womanhood" (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 105).

A closer look at these two sets of texts has also revealed that through linguistic devices such as long nominal groups that positively evaluate *Barbie* and her adorns in terms of their *stunning* and *graceful* ‘aesthetic values’ (my italics), *Barbie*’s ideational representation is characterised by the use of mental and material processes such as ‘*is, wears or represents*’, which portray *Barbie* more statically, as if she is “not in control of what is happening to her body” (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 106).

Comparatively, although the *Action Man* texts are also characterised by the positive evaluation of his super skills through epithets such as *greatest, fabulous* and *super-cool*, this is often done in terms of some pre-established social judgement (ibid.). Further, his ideational portrait usually occurs on the basis of his controlling position as the main actor in the material processes identified, such as *leaps, goes into action, opens* and *descends*’ (ibid.).

By analogy, whereas *Barbie*’s text can be said to belong to a “catwalk genre”, whereby “models are described and adults are interested in attributes and features of the doll” (ibid.), the *Action Man* texts can otherwise be said to “belong to a TV ad type of genre addressed to a child interested in imaginary play” (ibid., p. 106-7).

In a similar study, this time about the gender features of toys’ TV advertisements, Kline (1993) noticed that while boys’ advertisements tend to predominantly present boys as emotionally involved in forceful action, girls’ advertisements, on the other hand, tend to portray girls as involved in what he calls an act of ‘performative role enactment’ (p. 253), whereby instead of being actively engaged in creative make-believe, girls are depicted looking at their dolls in wonder or excitement. For Kline, (ibid.) in such ‘toy-based dramas’ more than simply spectators, boys actively engage in the activities portrayed “playing at being specific personalities rather than taking up

social roles” (ibid.) whereas girls, contrarily, are shown manipulating their dolls through ‘simple domestic rituals’ (ibid.) in which they rehearse their motherhood roles.

That said, toys and their representations can be assumed to enact gender distinctions as it has been verified in the way male and female roles are constructed through toys’ ‘given gendered meanings’, viz., their kinetic features, colour distinctions and textual representations. In that regard, not only do toys represent and reproduce social relations and values but they are also “closely related to many larger cultural patterns in society” (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 107).

In doing so, their representations continue to transmit a “damaging, gendered and unequal world” (ibid.) in which dolls are kinetically limited and unquestionably placed in domestic environments whereas action toys for boys keep on heroically risking their lives to save the planet.

The subsequent section is aimed at further examining the roles and identities which are attached to toys’ representations – or more specifically, to dolls’ representations – as well as children’s capacity to challenge these roles.

3.1.4.1 Dolls: Roles and Identities

Fleming’s (1996) reference to doll-playing as a ‘highly loosely-structured activity’ implies indeterminacy in that he assumes that the ‘ritualistic’ processes involved in doll-playing – like washing and dressing – may “take on meanings other than those they originally came with” (ibid.)

From a similar perspective, Wright (2003) has acknowledged that “some dolls are sold with identity cues that are highly *suggestible*” (p. 3) but not *deterministic* (*my italics*). By stating that, she means that the cues offered by the toy maker do not prescribe the functions of dolls as they remain under a constant “state of revision”

(ibid.) by the child during the action of playing, thus allowing, for example, ‘*Barbie* Mary Osmond’ to become “*Barbie* Eliza Doolittle” (ibid.).

One of Wright’s (ibid.) main arguments is that the ‘imager’ – viz., the child – has total freedom to suggest a number of identities that *Barbie* or any other doll can assume if so s/he wishes, hence creating an infinite number of modal possibilities for the fictional truths⁹ that the representation of dolls can generate.

According to Wright (ibid.), in automatically transferring their social-cultural values to the way they represent a doll’s world – its ‘fictional truth’ – children are creatively (re) interpreting their own social identity, which might as well reflect dolls’ function as representative icons of the social roles and aesthetic values of a larger, real-world domain, thus vindicating their value as both “fictive and non-fictive objects” (ibid.). Sometimes such socio-cultural values come already attached to some dolls’ representation, as it is case of Syrian doll *Fulla*, an enormous sales success in 22 Middle-Eastern countries, whose representation conveys strong elements of the Islam religion such as the use of the *hijab*, the traditional veil that covers the face and the body of Muslim women (Source: *Veja*, 5th October 2005; see Appendix 3 for illustration).

Be that as it may, through a process of self-creation, doll-playing leads children to an “exploratory form of imagining about themselves and the potential roles they may play in adult lives” (p.4) by prompting “imaginative acts about one’s anticipated role in society” (ibid., p.7). Dolls like *Barbie*, for example, may provide children with images of what is aesthetically preferred although their function as a source of imagination might go beyond that in order to allow for a transgression of rules during the process of image-construction instantiated by the child.

⁹The definition of ‘fictional truths’, following Wright’s (2003) perspective, are those “propositions that are true in some fictional world or other” (p. 2).

Further consideration on the views heretofore described leads us to infer that although some dolls' identities are indeed suggested, by renaming dolls, changing their roles and giving them tattoos, children feel free to ignore such cues and work on their meaning-making possibilities. By instantiating changes in the appearance of dolls, for example, children can use these representational female figures as props to "(...) be morphed and changed from one person to another, sometimes in extraordinary ways" (Wright, 2003, p. 10).

In a compendious survey carried out by Kline (1993), aspects of doll-playing such as children's potential to negotiate the meanings offered by dolls' media marketing were investigated, mainly triggered by the question "Who or what is the child identifying with when playing with media-marketed toys?" (mentioned in Fleming, 1996, pp. 29-30).

While reporting his results, Kline (ibid.) explained that his respondents tended to fall into two categories. The first one composed of the extreme pessimists, who contended that identification with media-marketed toys such as *GI Joe* and *Barbie* generally occurs on the basis of

(...) simplistic, male-dominated perspectives, reliant on violence to solve problems or glamour-doll objectification, primping and posing for the invisible watcher who is always assumed to be there – whether Daddy, boyfriend or envious other girls (...) (Kline, mentioned in Fleming, p. 30)

In other words, pessimists tended to view the opportunities for meaning-making negotiation as "too tightly scripted in advance to allow any genuine imaginative activity" (ibid.), as according to them, "all that the child can do is copy the formulae" (ibid.).

On the second category were the optimist ones, who believed on children's "inherent capacity to transcend such pre-imposed limitations to use given identifications

and opportunities as starting points, as resources to be imaginatively reworked” (ibid.). This seemed to be the particular case of the children I had the chance to observe during my ethnographic observational period at the HoneyPot childcare center in Sydney, Australia. Indeed, while playing with toys like the fashion doll *Barbie*, they seemed to rely more on their own capacity to restructure media’s pre-imposed playing frameworks than to conform to them. Among their ways to renegotiate these frameworks was to use *Barbie* as a baby-doll who needed to be fed, changed and caressed instead of complying with her pre-established identity as a grown-up, independent fashion doll.

Fleming (1996) himself seems to fall into the category of the optimist respondents, and this becomes particularly noticeable when he defines the *Barbie* doll as a “plastic paradox” (p. 42), whose imagery carries more connotations than the “stereotypical bimbo she is often made out to be by detractors” (ibid.). Fleming’s (ibid.) main contention is that *Barbie*’s representation is not as deterministic as it is said to be for neither does she fall into the category of an “insultingly pacified and plasticized image of woman” (ibid.) nor into the category of a totally “emancipated and progressive” one (ibid.).

The fact is that *Barbie*’s sense of “vitality and independence” (ibid.) in taking part in adventurous activities such as “jeep-driving and scuba diving” (ibid., p. 43) has been represented alongside with her sense of compliance to the domestic activities which compose her ‘*Barbie Kitchen*’ and ‘*Barbie Bedroom*’ universe, allowing children to look for their own answers to *Barbie*’s “open-ended questions” (ibid.).

Be that as it may, whether children are either constrained by toys’ offered ‘narrative universe’ (Kline, 1993) or whether they are able to transcend it, a balance of all views herein presented somehow ponders on the determinacy of the toy industry in shaping and pre-determining the nature of children’s playing activity.

By considering the active role of the child-imaginer as essential to challenge the suggested identities so that s/he can create his/her own fictive scripts, *Barbie* and other similar dolls can acquire the status of effective mediums for children's socialization and expression of reality.

In the next section I will provide an overview of category of fashion dolls, a subgenre within girls' dolls, whose advertisements have been chosen for the sake of the analysis herein proposed.

3.1.4.1.1 The Category of Fashion Dolls

Dolls, with their myriad versions around the world and across the centuries, are far better recognised for their part as three dimensional playthings belonging to children's world. An unmistakable sign of childhood, the world of dolls has infrequently been exposed to academic analysis since there are relatively few studies which emphasise the importance of the doll-world as a body of social, historical and cultural knowledge (Peers, 2004, p. 4).

The category of fashion dolls, as a subgenre apart, extends the concept of dolls to embody their relation with fashion. The most representative fashion doll of all times stands for the name of *Barbie*, the twentieth-century doll that "scholars love to bash" (Peers, 2004, p. 2), whose undeniable significance for popular culture is reflected in a number of academic studies which contemplate *Barbie's* potential as a source of critical and cultural analysis (Peers, 2004).

Generally speaking, educationalists tend to react rather negatively towards the world of fashion dolls for the fact that dolls like *Barbie* tend to prematurely engage children in narratives which revolve around themes like sexuality, capitalistic consumerism and female beauty. Juliette Peers (2004) cites a few academic

commentators (e.g. Rand 1995; Rogers, 1999; Varney, 2002) to express the widespread concern about the ideology behind fashion dolls:

Fashion dolls not only deliver a supposedly 'inappropriate' sexuality to young girls, as well being sexual/sexualised performers themselves, in the mind of the prudent and puritanical the fashion doll encourages 'foolish' girls and women to buy, buy, buy: each new dress, each new edition, to a stooge, a running dog of the capitalism. *Barbie* is regarded as an education to consumerism and Mattel is believed to exemplify the hegemonical strategies of a malign capitalism (Peers, 2004, p. 106-7).

In her seminal book *The Fashion Doll: From Bébé Jumeau to Barbie*, Peers (ibid.) tracks back the history of fashion dolls over the past four decades in a cultural, art historical perspective. For her, the term 'fashion doll' implies four different types of dolls. The first one refers to dolls prior to the 19th century which conveyed information about Parisian fashion. The second type of fashion doll can be exemplified by the collectable Parisian adult female dolls with porcelain heads produced from 1850's to 1890's. The third type relates to the adult female plastic dolls manufactured in the United States during the 1950's, which also reflected 'French Haute Couture'. The fourth and last type of fashion doll, developed through the late 1950's and used up to the present day, is linked to the contemporary usage of the term which includes 'adult female-styled' dolls like *Barbie* and their strong relation with the various expressions of popular culture, such as "fashion [...], entertainment, film, cult television and the music industry" (Peers, 2004, p.15).

This close connection between dolls and fashion, however, has not always been the ideological intent working behind the manufacturing of fashion dolls. The demise of the French doll industry by the end of 17th century and the emergence of the German doll-making in the beginning of the 18th century, instantiated an elaborated vision of the concept of femininity conveyed by dolls (Peers, ibid.). Instead of fashion-related

objects, the German dolls “highlighted the doll as an object for training girls in domestic and mothering responsibilities rather than consuming fashion” (Peers, 2004, p. 98).

It was only after the launching of fashion doll *Barbie* that such a view started being deconstructed. Ironically as it may sound, despite the uncountable feminist denunciations of *Barbie* and her discourses centred on capitalism and a “shallow, sensualised vision of the female body” (Peers, 2004, p. 99), Bruzzi (as mentioned in Peers, 2004) sheds a different light on the subject by suggesting that the “seductively, quintessentially, femininely dressed woman can exert a significant and transgressive power over conventional and domestic characters or male weakness” (ibid., p. 100) thus constituting a ‘polyvalent feminist power’ (ibid.).

Certainly fashion dolls like *Barbie* instigate a plethora of reactions from the public as their narratives are situated somewhere between the realms of reality and fantasy. Fashion dolls never get old, pregnant or sick. They belong neither to childhood (or teenage-hood) nor to adulthood for the messages they convey contradict both of these worlds. For example, fashion dolls like Brazilian *Susi* are regarded as ‘teenagers’ but can be seen placed in domestic contexts which evoke marital life and household duties.

Peers (ibid.) seems to share Formanek-Brunnell’s (1993) and von Boehn’s (1966)¹⁰ view that different from baby and little girlie dolls, fashion dolls resemble real adult ladies dressed up like adults and for that reason they are neither intended for cuddling nor for awakening maternal feelings in little girls.

Contemporary fashion dolls play around with the narratives of popular culture by evoking a sense of ‘cool’ lifestyle that assumes lifelikeness in the verbal and visual composition of their advertised texts. However, they are generally portrayed in poses

¹⁰ Both Formanek-Brunnell (1993) and von Boehn (1966) are cited in Peers’ book *Fashion Doll: From Bébé Jumeau to Barbie*, under Chapter 5, p. 105.

and activities reflecting 'dynamic and flexible' kinetic properties which most times do not match the actual kinetic value of the doll (Peers, 2004, p. 28).

As contemporary, cultural representations of the feminine in society, the fashion dolls of our days convey far beyond the relation between dolls and fashion; as three-dimensional objects, they provide evidence of how women's participation in society has been progressively shaped and this can also be seen in their accompanying advertorial and promotional texts.

Take *Barbie*'s representation as an example. Along almost fifty years of existence, her depiction in a variety of career options ranging from 'Astronaut *Barbie*' (1986) to 'Dr. *Barbie*' (1988) somehow reflects contemporary women's force into the labour market demanding for working equality. In that respect, *Barbie*'s transition from candy striper and housewife in the sixties to not only stewardess but pilot in the nineties has represented a way to counter the several feminist attacks she has received over the years: *Barbie* was indeed becoming a symbol of female emancipation for she worked and did not depend on men for her wealth and possessions (Wolff, as mentioned in Riddick, 2001). Contrarily to what feminists' expectations had been, *Barbie* had not succumbed to a life of conformity with her boyfriend Ken, but he had instead turned out to be a mere accessory in her busy, albeit exciting world (Riddick, 2002).

As an artefact of female representation, *Barbie*'s lifestyle, based on somewhat unrealistic standards – she was created to be “perpetually thin, young, and happy” (Wright, 2003, p. 10) – has inspired girls from four different generations to fantasize about their adult lives and transcend some of their social and cultural boundaries, such as the need to be recognised in the workplace. As such reference model, there can be no denial of *Barbie*'s tenacious influence on the change of some behaviour patterns by women along her almost five decades of existence. Yet, *Barbie* has been claimed to

promote the wrong aesthetics through an idealised image of beauty which trivialises the challenges which constitute women's experiences and their senses of themselves, like "fat thighs, under-developed chests, and wrinkles" (Wright, 2003, p. 10).

The truth is that as long as she exists, *Barbie* will probably never stop inflaming public opinion for her deceptive image of femininity and beauty will possibly keep on being easy scapegoat for feminists, her narratives incite controversy from parents and her representations constitute a creative and effective means for children's game of make-believe (Wright, 2003; Riddick, 2002; Kline, 1993). Be that as it may, the fact is that *Barbie* and her fictitious "trendy, swinging, independently wealthy lifestyle" (Grassel, 1999, p. 4) may rarely capture the essence of the world of real-life women, inherently struggling, elderly, overweight or even disabled.

In that respect, Grassel (1999) makes a point when she says that *Barbie* should not stand for women's symbol of freedom, for surely the doors are left open for "that certain woman who is impossibly tall, impossibly blonde, who always wears the right outfit, and keeps her mouth shut" (ibid., p. 4).

3.2. Concluding Remarks

The intersection between the notion of childhood and the role that toys play during this phase reveal a great deal about the way children's identity is constructed on the basis of the values that toy icons convey. Issues like the origin of toys and the gradual manner they have been incorporated by society so as to ultimately acquire the status of children's most cherished domestic objects (Kline, 1993) have been discussed in this chapter as well as toys' relation with socialization, market and gender. These aspects are believed to contribute to the creation of new practices incorporated by contemporary children, among which is the use of computer-based resources and access to multimodal media texts such as web advertisements, further discussed in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 4

Toys' Websites: Analysis of Media Representations of Children's Culture

There is little sense in having a child in a commercial explain how a toy works or what it can do, or even why he or she likes it. Such testimonials never occur in children's advertising. Rather, action speaks louder than words: it draws kids to the product and dramatises its qualities. The art of children's advertising design might therefore be described as dramatic condensation [where] the visuals and musical registers (...) resonate throughout children's culture (Kline, 1993, p. 246-7)

In contemporary days, children get immersed and involved in innovative forms of seeing the world (Smith & Curtin, 1997, p. 224), which include computer-based practices and mastery of media technologies. These practices contribute to the construction of new social identities as well as to the vast spreading and maintenance of certain ideologies which reflect current social issues.

One of the main ways media gets its message across to children is through advertisements. When represented in their electronic version, via *websites*, children's advertisements are made even more appealing by connecting visual, verbal and auditory resources to compose multimodal structures aimed at attracting their target group.

With a view to understanding how this is done in the homepages of the manufacturers of the dolls under investigation, from where their web advertisements were retrieved, this chapter prefaces the investigation on verbal and visual properties of the web advertisements of Brazilian doll *Susi* and North-American dolls *The Bratz* presented under Chapter 6 by preliminary analysing the homepages of *Estrela* and *MGA*, available at <http://www.estrela.com.br> and <http://www.mgae.com>, respectively.

4.1 Advertisements in the Age of Multimedia

In the contemporary age of ‘multimedia’, the shifts in the semiotic landscape have led to a comprehension of language which had been previously overlooked in “educational contexts, linguistic theorising [and] popular common-sense” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 39), one that takes multimodality into account and entails the combination of verbal with non-verbal modes of communication (ibid.).

The prominence of visual images in texts of popular culture and school texts during the 1980s and 1990s (ibid.) as well as the emergence of computer-based texts mediated by the electronic world has indeed fostered the development of a “re-theorization of textual communication to include the multimodal nature of contemporary texts” (Unsworth 2001, p. 71).

As composite, multimodal structures which “involve a complex interplay of written text, images and other graphic elements” (Kress & van Leeuwen, p. 15), texts of the so-called ‘media of entertainment’ such as advertisements have raised the interest of critical discourse analysts, for an investigation on their preponderant features may help to reveal ideological elements like hidden signs of power relations as well as some socio-cultural issues.

Within the context of advertisements, images not only hold the function of “illustrating an argument carried out by the written word” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 38) but they also operate as reliable sources of factual evidence (Collier, 2001) and autonomous resources endowed with “social, political and communicative dimensions” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 18). These multiple functions emphasise the role of images as a unified communication unit whose meaning can be conveyed irrespective of the verbal discourse and which can work for rhetorical purposes as an effective means of persuasion (Harrison, 2003).

With the aim of unveiling some of the structures of meaning concealed in advertising discourse, especially the one devised for children, the next section discusses the means through which the advertising industry operates within children's culture so as to lead to its ultimate goal, consumption.

4.1.1 Advertisements, Children and the Consumer Culture

Advertisements, as vehicles of what Bignell (1997) refers to as 'mythic meanings', exert a major influence on our experience of reality by shaping and constructing values most times taken as natural and commonsensical.

Numerous images surround our living space day after day imposing their presence and confronting us through what Berger (1972) regards as "a density of visual messages" (p.129). Attached to them are ideologically constructed values that stimulate the viewer's expectations and create necessities through the proposal of transformation of one's life via a process of 'manufacturing glamour', one that feeds up real life by enhancing one's appetite for pleasure (ibid., p. 131-32).

According to Berger (ibid.), the major force of advertisements lies in the propagation that such a pleasure is only achievable through consumption, as the promise of happiness and transformation only occurs once one has acquired the advertised product.

In the media world, everything looks tangible and achievable, or, as Berger (ibid.) puts it, in 'awaiting acquisition' (p. 153). Media and publicity, as he points out, work upon consumer's anxiety by reinforcing the rhetoric that says "in having nothing you will be nothing" or that promulgates that "you are what you have" (p. 139).

Recent figures have substantiated the force of advertising as a medium of influence and persuasion in underlying its role as both a "creator and a perpetuator of

the dominant attitudes, values, and ideology of the culture, social norms, and the myths by which most people govern their behaviour” (Wright, 2003, pp. 4-5). This seems to be particularly true in the case of children, who represent a potential consumer market of an annual 130 billion-dollar-investment by the advertising industry (ibid. p. 5).

As a potential, lucrative target market, children are not different from adults in their ‘appetite’ for consumption (Seiter, 1993). Advertisements ideologically work upon the enhancement of their consumerist desires by creating necessities for consumption through, for example, the promotion of toy extension lines which offer them an endless array of versions and accessories of their preferred product lines.

For the toy industry, advertisements have become key elements mainly due to their two core functions: firstly, because they announce “the availability of the product, differentiate it from other products in the market, and make its ownership desirable” (Kline, 1993, p. 237). Secondly, because they show children “what they are to do with the product, how to play with it and what the benefits of having it are” (ibid.). To be successful, advertisements must be as direct as possible, attract children’s attention, and “deliver the product concept” (ibid.) by creating in children the deep desire to request and ultimately acquire the product.

Despite being conventionally classified as an inexperienced and vulnerable consumer group, incapable of resisting or “rejecting the cultural messages produced by advertising” (Wright, 2003), mainly because of the typical insecurities that they face during this phase of life, children have been differently described by Seiter (1993) as a ‘complex’ and ‘sophisticated’ target consumer for they are fickle and many times hard to be manipulated.

Seiter’s (ibid.) main argument is that children are in fact, ‘media wise’ in that their ability to recall commercials, demonstrate product awareness, repeat jingles, catch

phrases and identify misuse of slang and poor production values, has, throughout the years, changed their passive status as an audience to a status of 'media experts', able to critically evaluate the quality of the product being advertised. In that respect, Kline (1993) seems to align with Seiter's (ibid.) viewpoint while drawing attention to children's marketing awareness which posit their understanding of the media communications aimed at them:

(...) Research has shown that by five years of age about 50 per cent of children understand the persuasive purposes of advertising. By eight, almost all know that advertising is intended to make them buy things. Moreover, they do have the ability to formulate product choice: they think more than one attribute of a product, and in certain product areas they base their decisions on product information. (Kline, 1993, p. 169)

Important, though, is to perceive that children are not the only potential target aimed at by the market. Their parents, as the ones who ultimately decide whether or not a given product will be purchased, are also implicated in the careful construction of media texts by advertisers. For this reason, through a process regarded as 'double addressivity' (Seiter, 1993), advertisers aim at speaking to these two audiences of consumers: parents and their children.

Their goals, however, differ considerably. Whereas parents seem to be more interested in the educational value (s) of an advertised product like a toy, children make their own judgement about it based on its appeal to their peers (Seiter, 1993, p. 5). Bearing that in mind, toy advertisers are pushed into a creative process of design of advertisements so as to work on a handful of motivations implicitly aimed at ultimate parental toy buying. Among the most appealing motivations, according to Seiter (ibid.), are the ones which operate at the level of parents' desires for their children, such as "that children have fun, that children get ahead in life, that children achieve in school, that children grow up to resemble their parents, that children be active rather than passive, that children amuse themselves without attention" (p.53-4), all of which can be

translated into product claims such as “toys that create happiness; toys that teach skills; toys [that] bring parents and children close together; toys [that] keep children busy, toys [that] inspire activity”(ibid.).

Thus, apart from emphasising toys’ educational values to fulfil parents’ purchase requirements, media texts to children also promote ideologies many times made unnoticeable within their discourse. Some of these ideologies, as pointed out in this section, are related to stimulus to excessive consumption or concern with beauty and fashion, as it is the case of toys like fashion dolls, whose media texts help to promote a somehow mythic view of the female identity.

The subsequent section further explores this issue in light of the social ideologies conveyed by the female portrait offered by children’s doll advertisements.

4.1.2 Advertisements and the Construction of Female Identity

As a powerful tool of persuasion, the practice of coercion and consent appear common-sensical and universal and co-occur through advertising discourse by means of ideological power (Fairclough, 1989). This usually happens without the consumer’s awareness as it originates from the ‘dominant bloc’, formed by those who compose “an alliance of capitalists and others who see their interests as tied to capital” (ibid.), like the “pervasive and persuasive genre expressions of the mass media” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 184).

Indeed, van Dijk (1998) shares Fairclough’s (1989) point of view while discussing the issues of ‘inculcation’ and ‘imposition’ by the dominant ideologies, which are usually and largely acquired through discourse as a means of ideological reproduction, especially in the mass media. Such practices become ‘naturalised’ and in doing so,

people – or, in the case hereto described, consumers – “often embody assumptions which directly or indirectly embody existing power relations” (Fairclough 1989, p.33).

Of course the ‘dominated’ public does not always fully agree with the imposed ideologies of the dominant bloc as media users may reject certain persuasive ideological statements or even “adapt ideologies to their own needs, interests or circumstances” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 183). Nevertheless, the force of such ideologies is believed to lie on the broad consensus they can reach: in having prominent access to the mass media, the discourses and opinions of the dominant bloc manage to reach the public voice (ibid.).

In the case of the doll advertisements under investigation, they have the ideological function of conveying mythic structures of meaning which serve to reinforce the stock of connotations related to the feminine universe. They encode social values usually associated with beauty, youth, fashion and physical attributes which help to perpetuate somehow “oppressive ideological myths about real women” (Bignell, 1998, p. 37).

In being culturally-specific, the ideological representations of women through iconic signs may vary according to the part of the world where they are conceived, hence the major contribution of the cross-cultural investigation proposed in this study. Given this fact, not only do advertisements “endow products with a certain social significance” (Bignell, 1998, p. 38) but they can also function as ‘indexical signs’ (ibid.), which means that they connote certain ideologically-related cultural values like the “buyer’s good taste, trendiness, or some other ideologically valued quality” (ibid.).

Assuming the dual role of fashion dolls as both children’s playthings and adult’s gendered representations, the discussion brought forth in this research will consider the imbrications between children and adult’s universe by situating dolls in relation to a

broader social debate on values such as consumerism, beauty, fashion, sexuality, marketing, childhood, ethnicity, socialisation and female role and identity.

Since the primary aim of this semiotic analysis is to investigate media representations of dolls through advertisements in their online version, I shall now provide a brief explanation of the terms employed in hypermedia so as to clarify them before the actual analysis on the homepages of the dolls' manufacturers is presented in this chapter.

4.2 Revisiting Hypermedia Terms: From Websites to Hyperlinks

In the so-called age of hypermedia, terms like 'website', 'webpage', 'homepage', 'hyperlink' and 'hypertext' have quickly become the language of the electronic mediated world.

To start with, the term 'hypertextuality', which has been used interchangeably with the term 'hypermedia', refers to the relation established between text units and visual and/or audio resources (Djonov, 2005, p. 9).

On the WWW world, *websites* have been described as the site or location for most *webpages*. Having said that, it is through its *webpages* that a user is able to explore all information available in a *website*, since *webpages* hold the function of being "the interface through which users interact with websites" (ibid., p. 37)

Taken that *webpages* can only be explored individually, they have been regarded as the "basic building blocks of websites" (ibid, p. 112) hence their "crucial role in the presentation of a *website's* content organisation and navigation options" (ibid.).

According to Djonov (ibid.), the structure of websites is essentially multimodal in that it includes three different channels: the visual, the aural and the hypertextual. Djonov (ibid.) further explicates each one of them:

The aural [channel] still plays a marginal role in meaning-making as it is reserved for use primarily in video-clips and music/sound files (played with plug-ins) and rarely used on the webpages of a website to signal, say, how information is organised. The hypertextual is the channel that distinguishes hypermedia from other print- or screen-based multimodal texts, but is dependent on the visual for its materialisation. For example, hyperlinks are only visible to users due to the conventions for signalling their presence (...), which are all visually perceived (Djonov, 2005, p. 68).

Within *websites*, *hyperlinks* (or *links*) play a fundamental role: the one of revealing and expanding the website structure by, for example, joining existing webpages and websites, therefore allowing for what Djonov (ibid.) has referred to as “website fluidity” (p.5).

Indeed, hyperlinks’ potential in allowing for website fluidity by creating interactivity between webpages reinforces its value as an integration tool without which “the activity of navigating, essential for the field of website use, cannot be performed” (ibid., p. 64).

Prototypically, a *website*’s introductory page is described as its *homepage* or as its ‘official entry gate’ (ibid., p. 115). Briefly stating, a *website*’s *homepage* serves three main functions:

- (1) to ascribe an identity to the *website*;
 - (2) to provide a panoramic, global view of the *website*;
 - (3) to present the *website* content structure as well as its navigation options.
- (adapted from Djonov, 2005, p. 113).

The pages subsequent to the *homepage* hold the function of dividing the *website* into sections, as each one of them commonly have their *main page*. With respect to this, the differing function of *homepages* and *main pages* from *webpages* has been reverberated by Djonov (ibid.):

The homepage and main pages differ from a website’s other pages (...) in that their primary aim is to offer an overview of and access to content presented on other pages rather than present this content themselves (p. 114)

Having clarified the terms which will be brought up in the analysis of the *homepages* of the dolls' manufacturers involved in this study, the next section further refines these concepts and introduces a new term, the one of *web advertisements*, as found in *websites*.

4.2.1 Web Advertisements: Representations in the Electronically Mediated World

As contemporary signification modes, multimodal structures such as *websites* recognise in the screen their new space of representation (Kress, 1997, p. 72). This change in the 'semiotic landscape', as Kress contends, "relates to other [fundamental] changes in social, cultural, economical and technological domains" (p. 74) taken that the growing production of multimodal and multimedia texts alongside with the profusion of *hypertexts* not only offer new paths to the structural organisation of information (Djonov, 2005) but also reflect contemporary means to construct new interaction relations among its participants.

Taking the case of children's *websites*, there are three distinct human participants involved in such interaction relations:

1. *people* who design and maintain the website;
2. *children*, for whom the website is designed;
3. *caregivers* (parents and teachers) who control the activities children play on the www world. (extracted and adapted from Djonov, 2005, p. 64)

In effect, as already stated, not only children but also their caregivers are kept in mind when designers are producing media texts, hence the 'double addressivity' of websites' *hypertexts* by offering not only entertainment but also educational activities to children (*ibid.*).

According to Burbules (1997), whereas printed texts are by nature, 'selective and exclusive', *hypertexts* on the web are 'inclusive', as they offer multiple ways of

organising the message by means of changes in the size of the text and *links* to innumerable other texts (p. 103). In this respect, *links* play a key role in the organisation of *webpages* in that they promote choices made on the basis of the viewer's meaningful relations, which, in turn, not only trigger new reading practices but also new *consumer* practices [my italics] fostered by the electronically mediated world.

In being structures exclusively existent online, *hypertexts* offer "different pathways to users" (Snyder, 1997, p. 126), by providing the means of arranging information in a non-linear manner and allowing for the accommodation not only of "printed texts but also [of] digitalised sound, graphics, animation, video and virtual reality" (ibid.).

Indeed, the composition of *web pages* goes beyond the use of a single semiotic mode (Kress, 1997). According to Kress (ibid.), contemporary technologies try to effectively orchestrate sound and visual modes with a view to superseding what he calls 'older textual organisations' (p. 66). To do so, he adds, they make use of resources such as *arrangement* and *display*, as these constitute "essential features of the logic of the visual" (ibid., p. 69).

The nature of the language of *web pages* is also worth to be emphasised. Its linguistic structures are generally characterised by their simplicity, which typically serves to encourage informality and social proximity (Kress, 1997, p. 54) and posits its potential user and/or consumer. The *websites* of toy manufacturers which include toy advertisements constitute a good example. Despite being essentially characterised by non-linguistic communication and reliance on sophisticated iconography – which children adeptly absorb – whenever these *web advertisements* present linguistic structures, this is often done in a rather simple manner, since children's vocabulary is

usually limited to fully process complex language and understand its abstract concepts (Kline, 1993).

Conversely, just like their websites, toys web advertisements need to be doubly addressed, intelligible and appealing not only to an audience of children but also to their parents, the actual ‘consumers’ who ultimately are going to purchase the chosen item. As Crouse (2003) has pointed out in her article about the hit of *The Bratz* dolls:

(...) the makers of *The Bratz* dolls, *MGA Entertainment*, has racked up \$ 1 billion in sales since the dolls’ introduction in 2001, and (...) their market research indicates that mothers of pre-teens are the prime customers (p.1).

Comparing the advertisements found in toy catalogues, which place sheer reliance on the visual component, *web advertisements* generally integrate the visual and the verbal component, corroborating the idea that they are indeed also targeted at parents, commonly interested in reading about what the toy includes, what it offers, how it is played, that is, its educational and instrumental properties (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2001).

Furthermore, the so-called web advertisements are fundamentally distinct from the ones found in print media in that they contain information with many communicative functions (e.g. entertainment, instructional, factual, etc.), presented to the viewer in a variety of modes (Geest, 2001, p. 14). Putting it simply, web advertisements not only target at the viewer in verbal and visual terms, but they are also intentionally designed to appeal to other senses, such as sound.

According to Kline (1993), stylistic preferences identified in toys’ advertisements such as visual and musical detailing are, in fact, the result of a careful research carried by the toy and the advertising industry, as the design conveyed by music and graphic elements are crucial not only for communicating the ‘affective aspects’ of the toy’s identity but also for “reaching the right audience segment” (ibid., p. 246). As he

contends, music plays a rather relevant role in toys' advertisements "not just as background or simple theme tune but as means of organising (...) [their] narrative dimension" (ibid.).

In his study, Kline (1993) has associated "cute and melodic nursery songs" to the "caring-friendship feelings (...) destined for the younger audiences" (ibid.) as well as "pop-rock female vocals [and] rock video special effects" to audiences of girls older than six years of age. Kline (ibid.) has also related the common use of basic pastel colours to younger girls' advertisements and the use of "star-burst colours to convey the glamour and excitement of [older] girls' fashion dolls" (ibid.).

With a view to unveiling these structures of signification in the homepages of the manufacturers of the dolls under investigation, the next section presents a brief analysis on some of their prominent features such as their visual and audio resources as well as their arrangement and display elements.

4.2.2 A Preliminary Analysis on *Estrela* and *MGA* Homepages

Designed to look appealing to a large number of children and teenagers, the *homepages* of *Estrela* and *M.G.A.* – the toy manufacturers of fashion dolls *Susi* and *The Bratz*, respectively – make use of a vast range of visual, verbal and auditory resources to attract their contemporary, multicultural young audience.

Estrela, whose homepage is presented in Figure 4.1, for example, draws on the traditional song of the brand to greet the viewer/user¹¹ and mimics the sounds of a laboratory in a fictional toy factory before the viewer actually makes his way towards the link to the toy of his choice. The predominant use of vibrant colours such as blue, yellow and pink are also aimed at greeting and attracting the viewer's attention in visual

¹¹ The terms 'viewer' and 'user' will be used interchangeably in this section.

terms, taken that in hypermedia design, colour-coding, as a “specific interface design element” (Djonov, 2005, p. 9) has been claimed to “support orientation by making the organisation in hypermedia texts explicit” (ibid).

The main link within *Estrela* homepage guides the user to its toys by picturing a toy-making machine that keeps producing a series of different toys such as trucks, dolls, robots and cars. Within this link, *Estrela* toy categories are organised in alphabetical order not until the category ‘Lançamentos’, which refers to the latest released toys by *Estrela*, is strategically placed at the top of the list, followed by other categories ranging from electronic games to teddy bears.

By selecting a toy category, the user is guided towards the pictures related to that category, which commonly display the product in a variety of versions. Next, in choosing to look for the details of the product, the user finally finds his/her way to the toy web advertisement, which not only presents a picture of the product (its visual part) but also comprises its verbal description of how it can be played, what it includes, etc.

Subsequently presented, Figure 4.1 further illustrates the referring virtual paths by using the links to *Susi*'s collection as a reference:

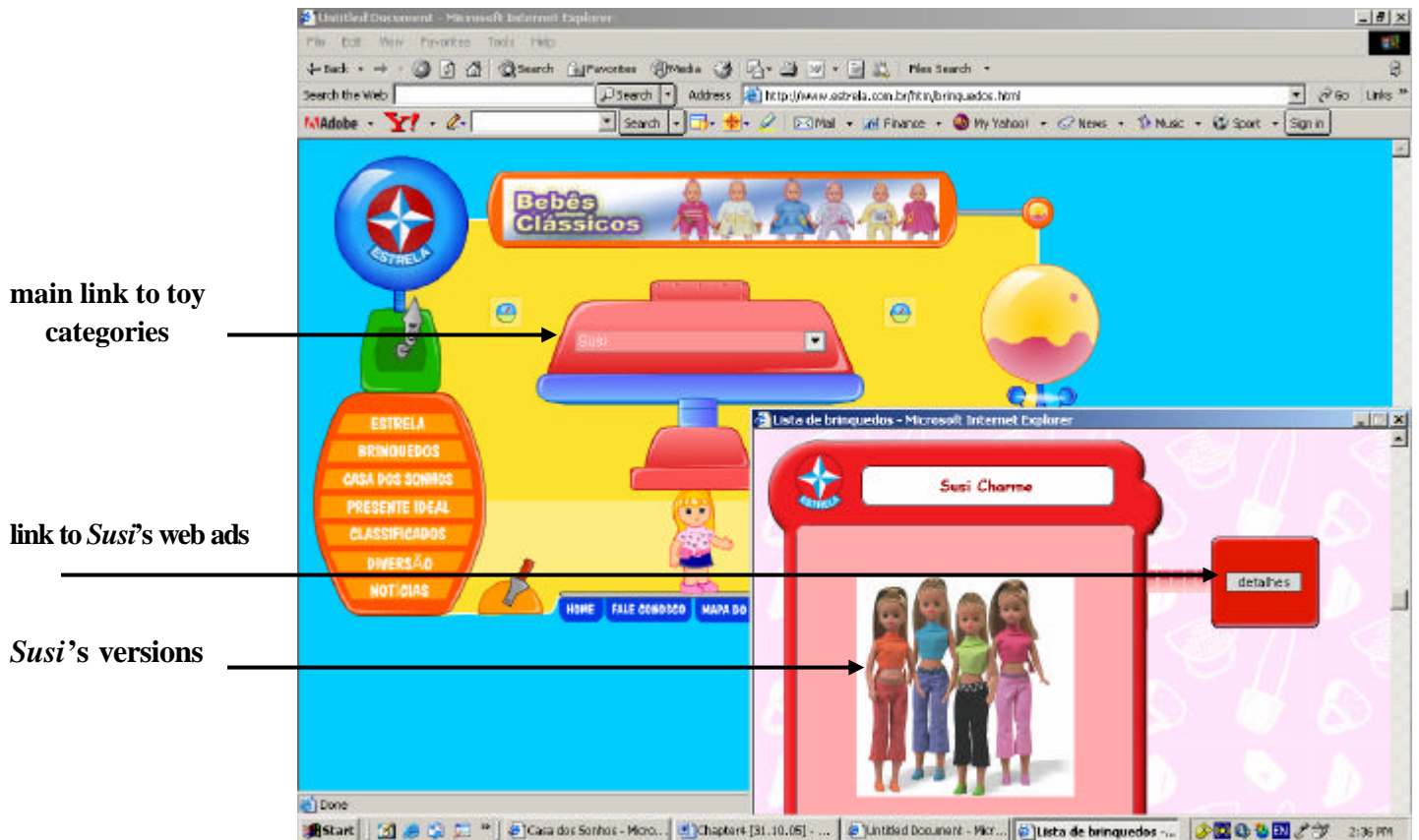


Figure 4.1: *Estrela* homepage and the links to *Susie*'s web advertisements

Due to her importance as *Estrela*'s 'poster girl' and its best-selling doll, *Susie*'s collection is presented to the user as a toy category apart, separately from other dolls. Her varied most recent versions are updated on a regular basis, following the trends of the fashion world, the characters of TV series and soap operas as well as the models of the sport, music and cinema industry, thus establishing a phenomenon which Fleming (1996) has described as 'total multimedia marketing', namely, the powerful connection between the toy market and media networks, as it has been spelt out in Chapter 3 of the present dissertation.

Apart from navigating through the main link to the selected toy categories, the user might as well choose to visit virtually any of the following seven options displayed at the left-hand side of *Estrela* homepage:

- (1) *Estrela*, aimed at providing the viewer/user with historical information about the toy manufacturer;
- (2) *Brinquedos*, aimed at guiding the viewer/user towards the newest toy categories released by the toy manufacturer;
- (3) *Casa dos Sonhos*, aimed at presenting information about *Estrela* Toy Museum, its location and visiting times;
- (4) *Presente Ideal*, aimed at helping the viewer/user to find the most appropriate toy to give as a present, by filling a form with the receiver's profile;
- (5) *Classificados*, aimed at promoting interaction among the users of the website by encouraging them to exchange toy items as well as to find toy rarities;
- (6) *Diversão*, aimed at offering entertainment options whereby the user can play games, solve quizzes and send e-cards;
- (7) *Notícias*, aimed at keeping the viewer/user updated about the current events in his/her city/town. It includes options of the leisure activities available such as cinema, museum exhibitions, theatre, circus, book fairs, etc.

In stark contrast with *Estrela* homepage, *M.G.A* homepage welcomes its viewer/user by showcasing its products in five different boxes which resemble a TV screen, placed in central position within the main viewing area, against a black backdrop. The largest box, positioned in the middle, features the *Bratz* collection, one of *MGA*'s most successful products.

Coherently articulated with the *Bratz*' style, *M.G.A* homepage relies on less infantile tones to adopt stronger, darker and somehow more 'aggressive' hues that help to convey the idea of the hip-hop culture of contemporary teenagehood, which can be better visualised through Figure 4.2 displayed as follows:

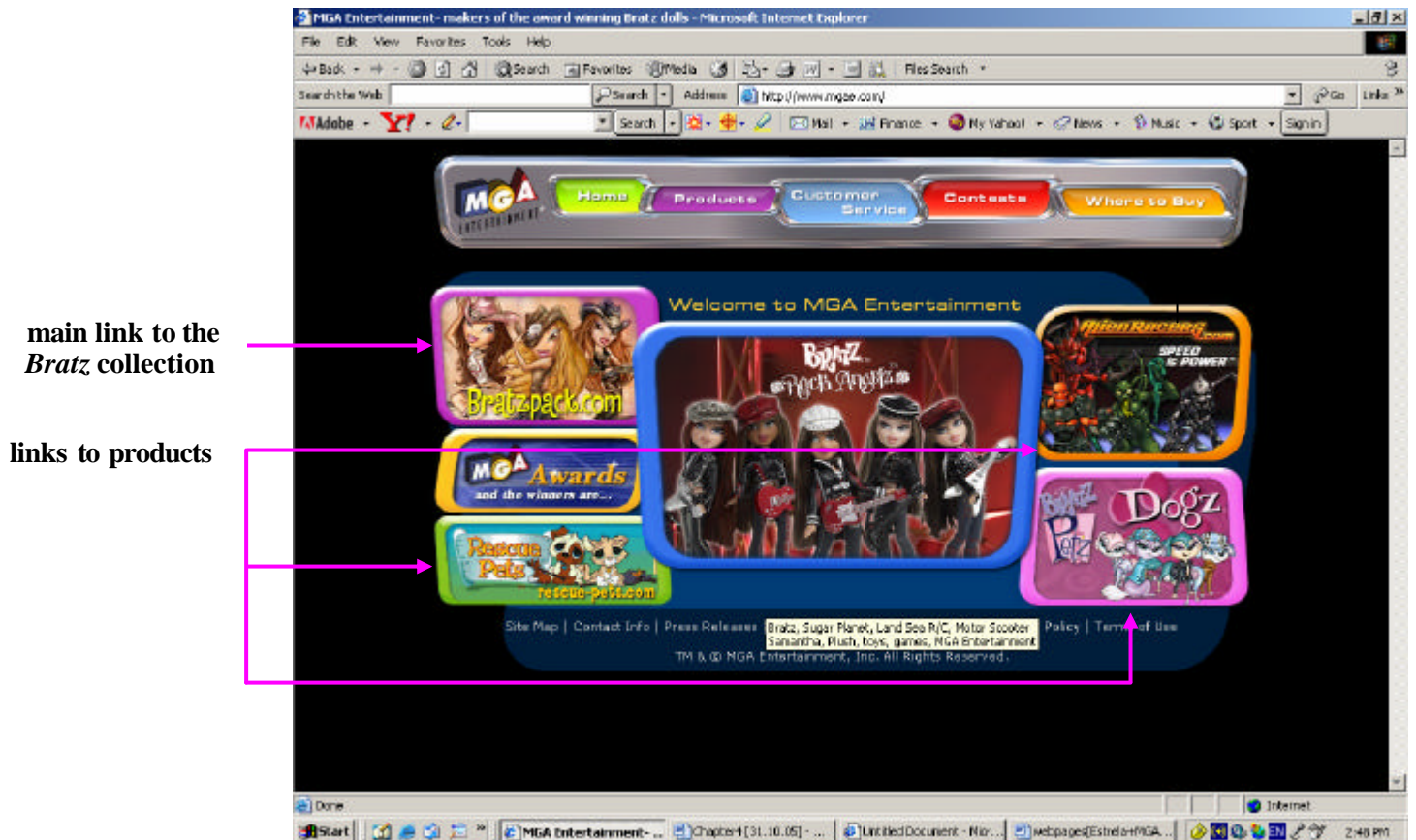


Figure 4.2: M.G.A homepage and the link to *The Bratz* web advertisements

By clicking on the small *Bratz* box situated at the left-hand side of the viewing area, users are transported directly to the www.bratz.com homepage, which offers information about latest released *Bratz* products as well as a number of entertainment activities such as games, videos and music.

While accessing this homepage, users get the chance to play games, watch The *Bratz* TV commercials and listen to their featured hip hop songs which rely on elements such as solidarity and identification with the ‘cool’, contemporary, teenage culture of the 21st century to attract its target consumer group.

Visually displayed next, Figure 4.3 captures the main structure of The *Bratz* homepage:

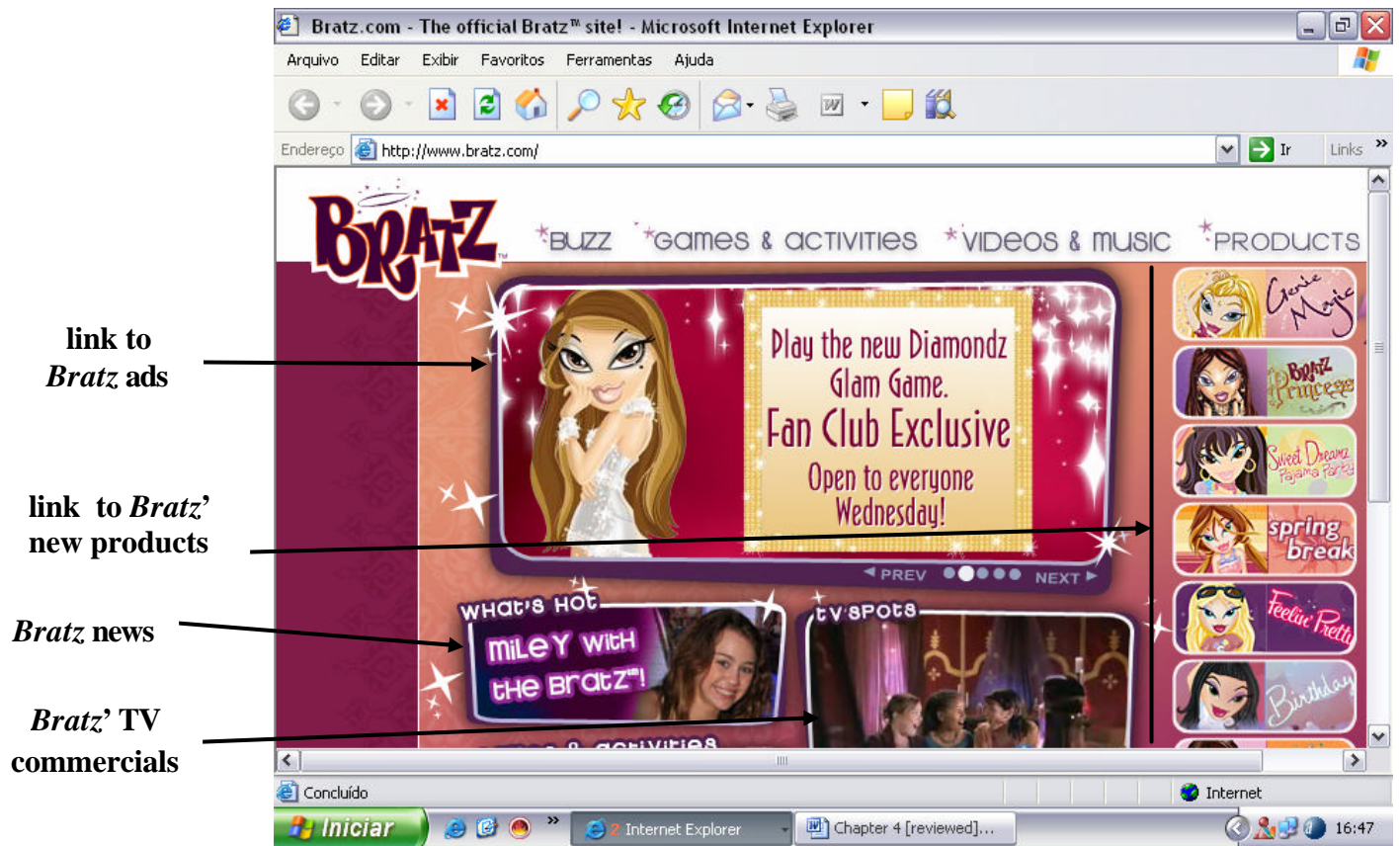


Figure 4.3: Structural organization of The *Bratz* homepage

It was through the main link, which leads the viewer/user to the *Bratz* advertisements, that the data for the present analysis were retrieved.

4.3 Concluding Remarks

In hindsight, the following diagram captures the main topics which have been exposed throughout the present chapter:

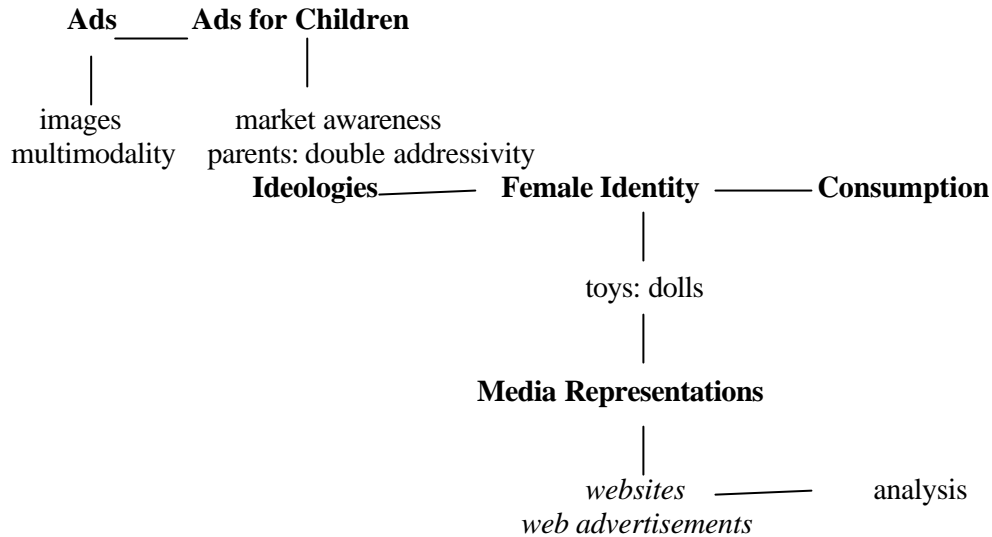


Figure 4.4: Main Topics in Chapter 4

This chapter started by underlining the importance of recognising the new multimodal structures applied to the composition of contemporary media texts, such as advertisements. It focused particularly on the advertisements devised for children, as they consist of representations directed not only to children but also to their parents, a process regarded as ‘double addressivity’. As vehicles of persuasion, the advertisements for children’s products, especially toys, help to promulgate ideologies such as consumption and lead to the creation of mythic views about the female identity, most times associated to appearance, as it is the case of dolls’ advertisements, which predominantly rely on issues such as beauty, fashion and physical attributes.

Taken that the focus of this study is on advertisements in their electronic version, Chapter 4 clarified existing terms related to hypermedia before it actually presented a brief analysis on the homepages of the dolls' manufacturers.

In a nutshell, by acknowledging toys' new multimodal representations - e.g., web advertisements – as resulting products of the pervasiveness of computer-based practices and media technologies in the child-related universe, toys' potentiality as meaning-making 'significant cultural assets' (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2002) could therefore be further explored.

The next chapter, Chapter 5, offers an overview of the theoretical tools used for the analysis of data, through an account of Halliday's (1985; 1994) Systemic Functional Grammar and Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996) Visual Grammar.

Chapter 5

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Visual Grammar (VG) as tools for linguistic investigation

There is a basic difference, that we become aware of at a very early age (three to four months), between inner and outer experience: between what we experience as going on 'out there', in the world around us, and what we experience as going on inside ourselves, in the world of consciousness and imagination. (Halliday, 1994, p. 106)

Along the current chapter, I will provide an overview of the most relevant tools for my analysis of the micro, textual dimension which I will base on (1) Halliday's (1978; 1994) systemic functional grammar and its system of transitivity in order to account for the lexicogrammatical aspects of the advertisements, as well as on (2) the work of Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) on the interplay between verbal and visual language analysis.

5.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

The study of language under a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective has been used to explain lexicogrammatical choices in a way one is able to view language use as embedded in its social contextual environment. By utilising both social and contextual clues to deconstruct texts, Halliday's systemic functional grammar offers a ground-breaking means of text analysis and interpretation in a range of different contexts.

Compared to its counterpart, the traditional or formal grammar, a 'functional' view on language, as the name itself suggests, goes beyond a set of prescriptive rules to classify the parts of speech to dare at a conceptualisation of texts as entities embedded in two distinct contexts, namely context of culture – the context in which it is possible

to shape meanings in order to achieve specific goals in a particular culture – and context of situation – a context within the context of culture in which it is possible to determine the choices that users make either consciously or subconsciously by means of three parameters regarded as Field, Tenor and Mode of discourse. These variables are realized by what Halliday (1994) has referred to as ‘metafunctions’, namely, the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunction, all of which belong to semantics.

5.1 1. Ideational Metafunction

The ideational metafunction involves looking for the processes in a text – linked to the notion of verbs, in traditional grammar – these being events or relationships among things (Martin et al.,1997, p. 5). In Hallidayan (ibid.) terms, the ideational metafunction is encoded by transitivity structures whereby language is used to convey the user’s picture of reality, his/her experience of the world. In the ideational component of language, the system of transitivity is used to construe experience in terms of three functional constituents: Participant, Process and Circumstance. The participant constituent can be assigned one of the following roles: Actor, Agent, Goal, Carrier, or Sayer. The process constituent can also be divided into six basic types: the material, mental and relational – which Martin et al (ibid.) consider the major ones and can be described in terms of their subcategories – and the behavioural, verbal and existential.

The following figure summarises the six types of processes of the ideational metafunction:

Process type	Subcategory	Participants involved
Material	event (i.e. happening) action (i.e. doing)	Actor/goal
Mental	perception cognition affection	Senser/phenomenon
Relational	attributive identifying	Carrier/attribute Identifier/identified
Verbal		Sayer/Receiver
Behavioural		
Existential		

Figure 5.1– Process types in English (adapted from Martin et al, 1997, p. 102)

By recognizing that ideational meanings are conveyed by transitivity structures that express the user’s conception of reality (ibid.) through his/her choice of Process, Participant(s) and Circumstance, it thus becomes natural to infer that the realization of meaning in a systemic functional perspective occurs within the *clause* dimension. In this respect, its grammar is structured around the *clause*, since its formal constituents can provide access to both syntactic and semantic features of language (ibid.). The way this is realized in the clause is through *verbal*, *nominal* and *prepositional* groups, layers below the clause level which relate to Process, Participant and Circumstance, respectively. These relations can be better visualized through the following Figure:

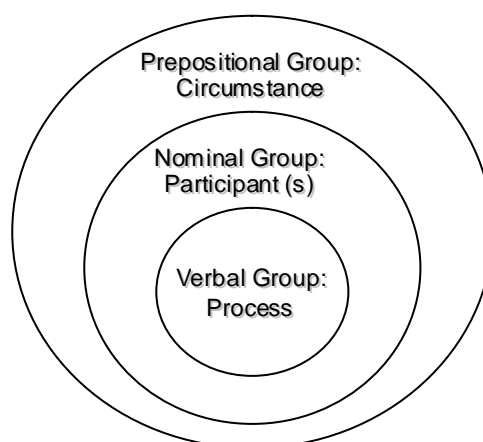


Figure 5.2. – Representation of reality within and below the clause level (extracted and adapted from Butt et al, 1998, p. 42)

Prototypically, the Participant is realised by the *nominal group*, whose *head* or *nucleus* may be *pre* and/or *post* modified. *Premodifiers* define the ‘thing’ by means of *Deictics*, *Numeratives*, *Epithets*, and/or *Classifiers*. Pre-modification via *deictics* can be done through demonstratives (e.g. *this*, *that*), possessives (e.g. *my*, *her*), as well as determiners or articles (e.g. *a*, *the*, *both*). *Numeratives* pre-modify the ‘thing’ in terms of *cardinal* (*one*, *two*), *ordinal* numbers (*first*, *second*) or *adjectives* (*few*, *many*, etc). *Epithets*, on the other hand, qualify the ‘thing’ via adjectives (e.g. *glamorous*, *fashionable*) whereas *classifiers* specify the category of the ‘thing’ through adjectives (e.g. *Brazilian dolls*) or nouns (e.g. *fashion dolls*) (Halliday, 1994).

Postmodifiers classify the ‘thing’ by giving more details about it, and this is usually done through *Qualifiers* actualised by prepositional phrases (e.g. *girls with a passion for fashion*).

The Process, on the other hand, actualised by the *verbal group*, revolves around the concept of ‘eventness’, since the ‘Event’ in a *verbal group* stands for its central verb, which may or may not be preceded by other words.

Lastly, prepositional and adverbial groups surround the clause by constructing relations between the Circumstance and the Process.

5.1 2. Interpersonal Metafunction

The interpersonal metafunction encodes interaction and treats texts as a ‘dialogue’, whose most relevant interactive distinction is between language to be used (1) to exchange information and (2) to exchange goods and services (Martin et al 1997, p. 58; Butt et al, 1998, p. 64). The interpersonal component involves either exchanges of information – or propositions – such as a statement or a question, or exchanges of goods

and services – or proposals – like an offer and or a command, all of which are realised by the system of Mood.

5.1 3. Textual Metafunction

The textual component conceives language as a whole, coherent entity, whose messages are organised according to their relationship at a sentential, individual-clause level, or at a macro, overall textual-structure level. This way of conceiving clause as a message is done through the system of Theme, which “organises the clause to show what its local context is in relation to the general context of the text (...)” (Martin at al., 1997, p. 21). Thus, the clause is organised within a Theme and Rheme structure (ibid.)

Having spelt out the three metafunctions proposed by Halliday (1994) and the meanings they convey, I shall restrict my analysis to the ideational metafunction and the semantic concept of transitivity for my central interest is to identify the nature of the material reality represented by the selected toy advertisements through the events, objects, participants and circumstances in which they occur (Unsworth, 2001). Nevertheless, although my focus is on the patterns of world experience encoded by the transitivity choices of the toy advertisements, along my analysis I do address a few features regarding the interpersonal interaction which constructs the relationship between the participants of that social reality (ibid.).

Based on Halliday’s (ibid.) systemic functional description of language, the three visual metafunctions offered by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) have been used to account for the interpretation of visual signs on the basis of the functional role of participants in the context of images (Unsworth, 2001). These three resources for visual analysis will be dealt with in detail in the next section.

5.2 Visual Grammar (VG)

The contemporary dominance of visual semiotics in mass media has exerted a major influence in the educational context for it has reinforced the need for a re-theorization of the concept of literacy towards the adoption of a theoretical perspective which integrates resources of visual grammar with the already consolidated account of verbal grammar so as to enable “(...) learners to develop the critical multimodal literacies that are necessary for taking an active interpretive role in the societies of the information age” (Unsworth, 2001, p, 71).

Visual literacy made possible through a systematic analysis proposed by visual grammar helps to demystify a view of images as neutral vehicles of entertainment and replicas of reality to attempt at a comprehension of visual modes from the perspective of social critique, as elements endowed with culturally-oriented, political and communicative potentials.

The analysis of visual structuring viewed from the paradigm that pictorial structures do not merely reproduce structures of reality but “are bound up with the interests of social institutions within which the pictures are produced, circulated and read” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 45) sets the ground for the semantic realisation of pictures as indeed ideological. Having said that, an analysis of images like the ones underlying the current research, supported by a structured mode of analysis such as the visual social semiotic approach, permits not only the categorization of pictorial patterns as representatives of a broader domain of experience but also serves to shed some light on possible contradictions that may appear between the verbal and the visual message (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001).

With a view to mapping out the meaning potentials offered by visual semiotic codes such as advertising images, Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) have come up with a

system of networks adapted from the work of M.A.K. Halliday (1994) which, as said, provides a means for visual analysis that is essentially functionalist in nature. Such as the semiotic coding of language, the semiotic coding of images also “represents the world (whether in abstract or concrete ways), (...) plays a part in some interaction and, with or without accompanying text, constitutes a recognizable kind of text (a painting, a political poster, a magazine advertisement, etc.)” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001,p.140).

In other words, the analogical bridge drawn between Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and Kress & van Leeuwen’s Grammar of Visual Design (VG) can be described in terms of the three types of functions which operate simultaneously via the patterns of experience, social interaction and ideological positions that both linguistic and non-linguistic types of representation encode, namely, *metafunctions*. In order to create a theoretical framework for visual syntactic patterns, Kress & van Leeuwen (ibid.) have adapted Halliday’s functional terminology by calling these metafunctions ‘representational’ or ‘ideational’; ‘interactive’ or ‘interpersonal’; and ‘compositional’ or ‘textual’(Unsworth, 2001; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001).

Such interconnection between both semiotic modes can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

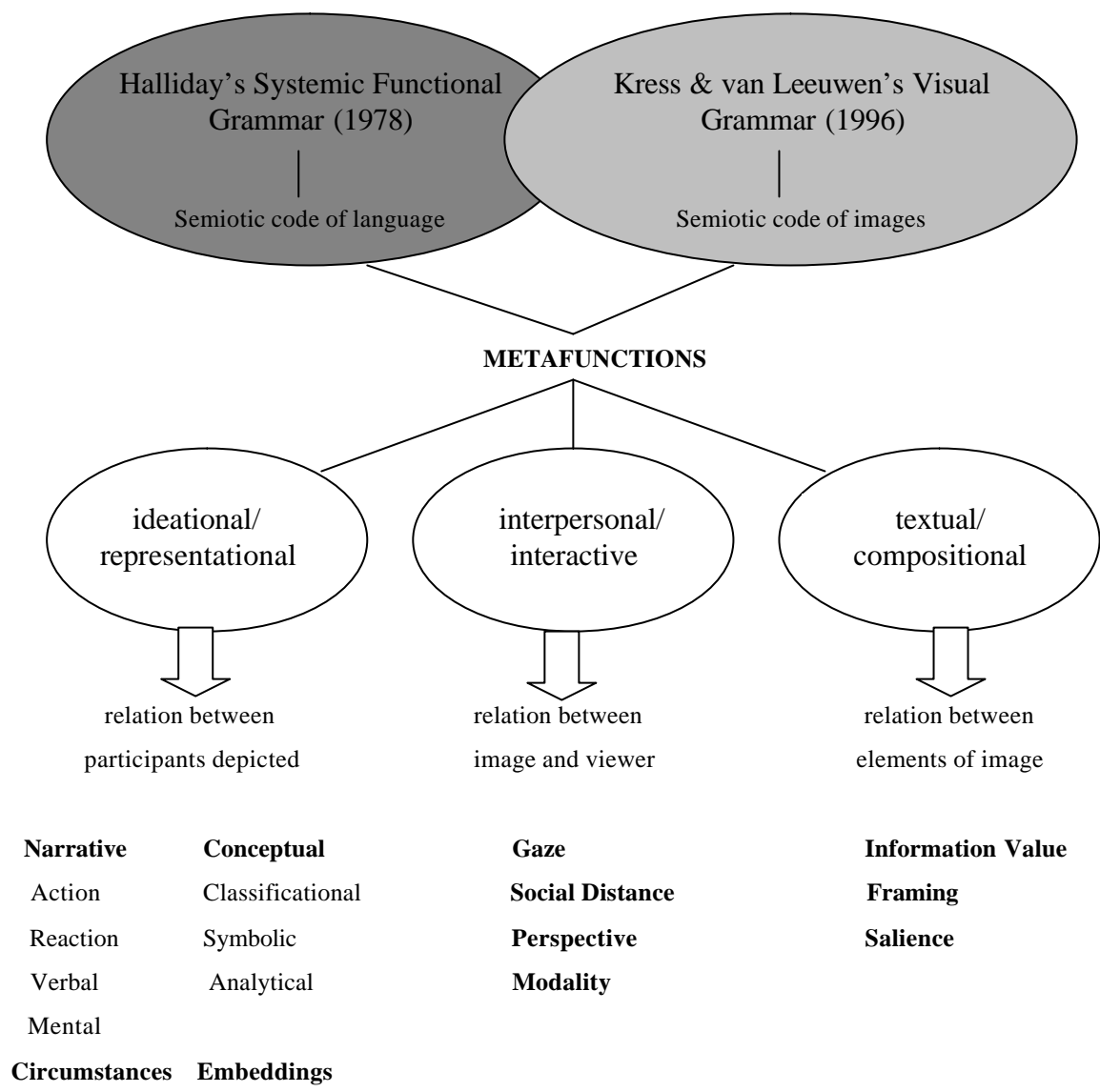


Figure 5.3 – Summary of Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996) framework for Visual Grammar (VG)

In the next section, I will attempt at explicating the features of each of the three main kinds of visual semiotic meanings.

5.2.1 Representational Meanings

Equivalent to Halliday's ideational metafunction, the visual *representational* meaning conveys the relationship among the participants depicted in a visual structuring.

According to Jewitt & Oyama (2001), the creation of a visual representational meaning has contributed to the field of visual semiotics in proposing a syntactic, ‘space-based’ mode of analysis centred on the placement of objects within the semiotic space, whereby the relationship between the *visual participants* in a given image is realised by elements defined as *vectors*, which correspond to the category of action verbs – or *processes* – in language (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

In a semiotic act, the *participants* can be of two types: *interactive participants*, those “who speak and listen or write and read, make images or view them” (ibid., p. 44) or *represented participants*, “who are the subject of the communication, that is, the people, places and things (...) represented in and by the speech or writing or image, the participants *about* whom or which we are speaking or writing or producing images” (ibid.).

The *vectorial relations* which connect *participants* in pictorial structuring may be depicted as either *narrative* or *conceptual* processes. *Narrative processes* “serve to present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements” (ibid., p. 56), that is, they depict participants in an action movement, in terms of dynamic ‘doings’ and ‘happenings’ (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 141).

The participants in a *narrative process* can be referred to as (1) *Actor/Reactor* and *Goal/Phenomenon*, (2) *Sayer* and *Utterance* or as (3) *Senser* and *Phenomenon*. If the image contains both an *Actor* and a *Goal* connected by means of a vector – or an *action line* – this image is said to be *transactional*, which means that it portrays “an action taking place between two parties” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 143). Figure 5.4. presents this type of relation through the vector that departs from the Actor – MGA doll *Pia* – towards the Goal, the blackboard, wherein she writes.

Transactional images may or may not contain *bidirectional vectors*. When they do, the participants of an image alternate the roles of *Actor* and *Goal* (Figure 5.5.). When they do not, the action only involves the *Actor* performing some action since “there is no apparent participant to whom the action is directed, [hence] there is no *Goal*” (Unsworth, 2001, p. 73). In this case, this image is said to be *non-transactional*, such as Figure 5.6., which portrays *MGA doll Singing Baby* waving goodbye to a participant who is not visually depicted:



Figure 5.4: *MGA Pia Chalkboard*
Narrative: Action: Transactional



Figure 5.5: *Estrela Amiguinha*
Narrative: Bidirectional Vectors



Figure 5.6: *MGA Singing Baby*
Narrative: Action: Non-Transactional

Whenever the action performed by the participant of the image involves his/her looking at something, that is, whenever it involves a *vector* “formed from the eye line of one or more participants” (Unsworth, 2001, p. 76), this process is said to be a *reaction* rather than an *action* and the ‘thing’ s/he is looking at is referred to as a *Phenomenon* rather than a *Goal* (Figure 5.7.). If in the image there is only the participant looking at something but no apparent *Phenomenon*, this image must be described as a *non-transactional reaction* (ibid.), as shown in Figure 5.8.:



Figure 5.7: *Estrela Caca Cambalhota*

Narrative: Reaction: Transactional



Figure 5.8: *MGA Pia*

Narrative: Reaction: Non-Transactional

Insofar as the concepts of *narrative* visual semiotics are concerned (namely, *action, reaction, transactional, non-transactional*), they are of use to the analysis of images since they “can help interrogate a visual text [as well as] (...) frame questions such as who [is] playing the active roles of doing and/or looking and who [is playing] the passive roles of being acted upon and/or being looked at in visual texts with certain kinds of participants” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 143).

In addition to the [1] *action* and [2] *reaction* processes, there are the [3] *verbal* and [4] *mental* processes, visually represented by speech and thought bubbles, respectively, and vastly used in contemporary educational materials (Lewis, 2001; Unsworth, 2001). In these processes, rather than being described as *Actor* or *Reactor*, the participant is generally referred to as the *Sayer*, as in the case of verbal processes, and the *Senser*, as for mental processes. Figures 5.9. and 5.10. present visual representations of verbal and mental processes in images of dolls:



Figure 5.9: *Estrela Caca Cambalhota*
Narrative: Verbal Processes



Figure 5.10: *MGA Mommy's Little Patient*
Narrative: Mental Processes

Narrative representations are also characterised by their *circumstances*, that is, the settings in which the participants are placed and their ‘adjuncts’, “such as the artefacts, tools and minor figures that complete the meanings to be found in an image” (Lewis, 2001, p. 148). Regarding the categorisation of the *circumstances* of narrative representations, Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) have proposed the following systems of choice:

- [1] *circumstance of setting*, which locates participants in terms of the background of their visual structuring and is concerned with the choices and degrees of colour saturation and contrast, the level of details and the overlapping of elements;
- [2] *circumstance of means*, related to the use of discrete objects, artefacts and tools;
- [3] *circumstance of accompaniment*, regarding the connection established between the participants of an image not by means of vectorial relations – such as an eye-line – between them but by means of the attributes used to describe their features, as usually done in *conceptual, analytical structures* (adapted from Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, pp. 71-73).

Differently from *narrative processes*, *conceptual processes* represent participants in a more static way, “in terms of their generalised and more or less stable and timeless essence” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 81). The *conceptual* processes in visual communication correspond to the *relational* and *existential* processes in language in that “they represent the world in terms of more or less permanent states of affairs and truths, rather than in terms of actions or mental processes” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 114).

Conceptual processes are visually characterised by the absence of vectors as they commonly “define, analyse or classify people, places and things” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 142), including abstract ones. *Conceptual processes* can be of three main types: *Classificational*, *Symbolic* and *Analytical*.

Classificational visual structures arrange people, places or things together in a given visual space in order to show that they are somehow similar, that is, they belong to the same class, order or category. In *classificational* images, participants are represented in a sort of “tree structure” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 81), in which one or more superordinate, top-level participant is related to a number of other subordinate, lower-level participant in the hierarchy of the taxonomy. Whenever the superordinate participant is suppressed and only the subordinate one is represented, the taxonomy is said to be *covert* (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Lewis, 2001; Unsworth, 2001). If, contrarily, the taxonomic display includes the superordinate participant in an explicit manner, this taxonomy is referred to as *overt* (ibid). Figures 5.11 and 5.12 illustrate these two types of conceptual relations:



Figure 5.11: MGA Style It Bratz
Conceptual: Classificational: Covert taxonomy



Figure 5.12: MGA Funky Fashion Furniture
Conceptual: Classificational: Overt taxonomy

Apart from including the superordinate participant, overt taxonomic images generally show the intermediate participants displayed to the viewer in the form of a multi-levelled tree diagram (Unsworth, 2001, p. 62), as previously noted. In electronic texts, however, such hierarchy assumes the form of hypertext links which account for the taxonomic relations of the image shown on the screen. While pointing out to the contemporary necessity of implementing the teaching of multi-literacies at the school level, Unsworth (2001) has argued that “students need to be able to read taxonomic relations in the traditional copy tree diagram formats as well as the hypertext versions of electronic texts” (p. 83).

Symbolic structures help to establish the participant’s identity in a visual representation by means of attributes made conspicuous through elements such as size, choice of colours, positioning, use of lighting, etc, thus constituting what Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) regard as a ‘carrier-attribute’ type of relation. Kress & van Leeuwen (ibid.) have talked about two distinct types of Symbolic structures:

(1) *Symbolic Attribute*, where the participant’s attribute in an image is made salient through elements such as being placed in the foreground, through exaggerated size, through being especially well lit, being represented in especially fine detail or sharp focus, or through conspicuous colour or tone;

(2) *Symbolic Suggestive*, where the symbolic meaning derives from within the Carrier (ibid.) (extracted and adapted from Unsworth, 2001, p. 92)

Figure 5.13 displays a Symbolic Attributive image whereby, through the conspicuous depiction of the doll’s face and her make-up kit further implicit meanings are evoked, e.g. that the doll is trendy, that she cares about appearance, that she values fashion, etc:



Figure 5.13: MGA Funky Fashion Make-Up
Conceptual: Symbolic Attribute

Instead of being constructed on the basis of ‘carrier-attribute’ relation, *analytical* structures portray participants in terms of a ‘part-whole’ relation wherein ‘the whole’ stands for ‘the carrier’ and ‘the parts’ for its ‘possessive attributes’ (ibid.). *Analytical* images may be classified as (1) *structured*, whenever they present labels which relate to their parts or (2) *unstructured*, when no labels are used to show part-whole relationships (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 94). Typical *unstructured analytical* images are computer-based informational texts, where the so-called ‘zoom-in’ feature “allows the viewer to select a part [of the image] and zoom in so that a magnified version of this part of the image fills in the computer screen” (Unsworth, 2001, p. 86).

Figure 5.14 depicts a set of three images in which the attributes of the participant – the fashion doll *Susi* in its ‘rollerblade’ version – are ‘zoomed-in’ in order to be shown in further detail:



Figure 5.14: Estrela Susi Patinadora
Conceptual: Analytical: Unstructured

Analytical images may as well be classified as either (1) *exhaustive*, when “all of the image space depicting the Carrier is taken up by [its] Possessive Attributes” (ibid.) or (2) *inclusive*, if the Possessive Attributes of a Carrier are shown but “leave much of the Carrier as a blank space, not filled up by [its] Possessive Attributes” (Unsworth, 2001, p. 88). According to Kress & van Leeuwen (1996), some analytical images like maps may carry simultaneously *exhaustive* and *inclusive* features.

Still within the conceptual realm, the analysis of more complex image structures might as well require for an investigation of the *embeddings* of the image, the different layers of subordination that establish intrinsic relations of interdependence between the elements of a given image structure.

As seen, images can be ideationally realised not only by means of *narrative* structures which involve *action*, *reaction*, *verbal* and *mental* processes along with the type (s) of *circumstances* that accompany them, but also by *conceptual* structures of the *classificational*, *symbolic*, and/or *analytical* type and its *embeddings*.

Figure 5.15 summarises the main realisations of the *representational* visual metafunction and its *narrative* and *conceptual processes*:

Representational Meanings	
Narrative: presence of vector	Conceptual: absence of vector
<i>Action:</i> transactional: <i>Actor/Goal</i> non-transactional: <i>Actor</i>	<i>Classificational:</i> <i>overt/covert</i> taxonomy
	<i>Analytical:</i> <i>structured/unstructured</i> <i>exhaustive/inclusive</i>
<i>Reaction:</i> transactional: <i>Reactor/Phenomenon</i>	
<i>Verbal:</i> <i>Sayer /Utterance</i>	<i>Symbolic:</i> <i>Attribute/ Suggestive</i>
<i>Mental:</i> <i>Senser/Phenomenon</i>	
[1] <i>setting</i>	<i>Embeddings</i>
<i>Circumstances:</i> [2] <i>means</i>	

Figure 5.15 – Representational Meanings: Types of Narrative and Conceptual Representations and their participants (adapted from Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 75-76):

Considering the analysis proposed in this dissertation, aside from the categorization of the toy advertisements in their *representational* meanings – viz., their *narrative* and *conceptual* structures – features such as gaze, framing, perspective and modality will also be considered. As constituents of the *interactive* meanings of visual structures, they will be further detailed in the section that follows.

5.2.2 Interactive Meanings

Aspects such *gaze* (or *contact*), *distance* (or *size of frame*), *perspective* (or *point of view*) and *modality* (or *reality value*) play a major role in creating a particular relation between viewers and the image within the pictorial frame.

For instance, whenever a represented participant in a visual semiotic structure is presented looking directly at the viewers' eyes, s/he brings about an imaginary, pseudo relation with them. In this case, explicit contact is established via direct address with the viewer, who is invited to engage interpersonally with the represented participant, who may, in turn, “demand deference, by unblinkingly looking down on the viewers, or pity, by pleadingly looking up at them” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 145). For this reason, the type of gaze described in this visual image has been referred to as *demand*. Alternatively, if the represented participant is depicted not looking at the viewer's eyes and offered as the subject of viewer's look and object of his/her scrutiny, this image is said to be of an *offer* kind, for it impersonally ‘offers’ the represented participant (s) to the invisible onlooker's contemplation and/or inspection (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 124). Figures 5.16 and 5.17 below display examples of a demand and an offer picture, respectively:



Figure 5.16: *Estrela Noivinha*
Gaze: Offer



Figure 5.17: *Estrela Lica*
Gaze: Demand

Just like the choice between an *offer* and a *demand* type of gaze, the *size of frame* or *distance* of a shot also alludes to different relations between represented participants and viewers. Depending on the distance between them, a different degree of intimacy is established, therefore suggesting a more intimate personal relationship or a more impersonal one. When participants are pictured from a *close-up*, every detail of their appearance is captured, including their facial expression, which helps to reveal traces of their personality and makes us feel more intimately acquainted with them (Figure 5.18). This does not happen when we see participants being pictured from a *long shot* which, reversibly, contributes to their portrait in a more unattached way, as if they were “types rather than individuals” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 146). Figure 5.19 depicts this type of pictorial relation. The intermediate degree between a *close-up shot* and a *long* one, that is, between “the most intimate relations and the total absence of [one]” (ibid.) can be found in the *medium shot* whereby participants are cut off somewhere between the waist and the knees indicating that the relationship between the depicted participant (s) and viewer (s) is of a social kind (Figure 5.20).



Figure 5.18: *Estrela Susi Aventura*
Distance: Close-up

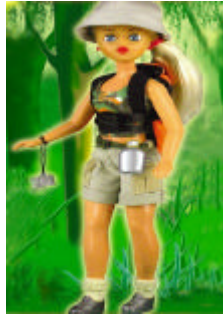


Figure 5.19: *Estrela Susi Aventura*
Distance: Long shot



Figure 5.20: *Estrela Susi Aventura*
Distance: Medium shot

The concept of *perspective* or *point of view* applied to the analysis of a visual semiotic structure denotes the audience's 'subjective attitudes' towards the represented participant (s), which is instantiated by means of *frontal*, *oblique* and *vertical angles*. In the specific case of the analysis herein proposed, an examination of the type of perspective involved in the visual construction of the selected toy advertisements helps to reveal the kind of subjective attitude (s) that the advertisement producer has aimed at eliciting from its target consumer.

The use of a *frontal angle*, for example, has been associated with an attitude of involvement whereby the viewer is invited to become part of the world depicted in the image. On the other hand, a sense of detachment is conveyed by the use of an *oblique angle* whereby the participant is presented in profile, thus implying that what the viewer sees is not part of his/her world (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 143).

In Figure 5.21 below attitudes of involvement and detachment are concomitantly invoked through the depiction of four of its five participants – The *Bratz* dolls – in a *frontal angle* and one in an *oblique angle*:



Figure 5.21: MGA Bratz Cruiser
 Perspective: Angle: Frontal and Oblique

The *vertical angle* and its variants (e.g. *high*, *low* or *eye-level*) signal power in different levels and relations. For example, whenever a represented participant is pictured from a *high angle*, s/he is seen from the perspective of the viewer's power (Figure 5.22). Conversely, if the represented participant is shown from a *low angle*, s/he is said to have power over the viewer (Figure 5.23). Finally, if the image is at the *eye-level*, it encodes a relation of equality in which the level of power of each part is equivalent (Figure 5.24). The images displayed next further illustrate these three types of visual levels.



Figure 5.22: MGA Lil Bratz
 Perspective: Angle: Vertical: High



Figure 5.23: MGA The Bratz
 Perspective: Angle: Vertical: Low



Figure 5.24: MGA The Bratz Collections
 Perspective: Angle: Vertical: Eye-Level

The term *modality* applied to the conceiving of a visual semiotic medium is linked to the notion of 'reliability of message' (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2002) or as

Jewitt & Oyama (2001) prefer to put it, to its ‘reality value’, concepts used to talk about how truthfully a given image is represented.

Broadly speaking, the ways to modulate reality in visual representations can be based on different truth criteria, viz., *naturalistic* (or real) or *sensory* (or fantastic) *modality*. The *naturalistic modality* is defined on the basis of how much congruence there is between the object of an image and the one you can see with the naked eye (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Put simply, the greater the correspondence, the higher the modality of an image.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), colour exerts a great influence on naturalistic modality. They have contended that naturalistic images have (1) high colour saturation, rather than black and white; (2) diversified colours, rather than monochrome and (3) modulated colours, for they use “many shades of the various colours” (ibid., p. 99). Naturalistic modality is also influenced by the contextualization of the image, that is, by its background. Generally speaking, the presence of background in an image increases its modality from a naturalistic perspective whereas the absence of background lowers it (ibid.).

Another way to lower the modality of an image is through the creation of a *sensory modality*. If an image is depicted so as to produce some sort of sensory impact, a ‘more-than-real’ effect which may evoke subjective feelings from the viewer, its *naturalistic modality* consequently decreases to give place to what Kress & van Leeuwen (ibid.) have alluded to as *sensory modality*.

Figure 5.25 presents *Estrela* doll *Amiguinha* in a highly contextualized background, whereas *Estrela* baby doll *Piscina de Bolinha* (Figure 5.26) is depicted on a sensory basis, aimed at creating a ‘more-than-real’, hyper effect through its

colourfully illustrated background picturing some fish which simulate the context of an ocean.



Figure 5.25: *Estrela Amiguinha*
Modality: Naturalistic



Figure 5.26: *Estrela Piscina de Bolinha*
Modality: Sensory

Having said that, Kress & van Leeuwen (ibid.) have pointed out that sometimes the referring standards of naturalism are not always benchmarks for judging an image as more or less real. Their assertion is also shared by Unsworth (2001), who has stated that from a scientific or technological point of view, “what counts as real can be established by the methods of science, so a technical line drawing without colour, perspective or context can have higher modality than a photograph” (p. 101-103). Unsworth’s quote leads to two further concepts of modality, namely, *scientific* (or *technological*) and *abstract* modality which are based neither on verisimilitude nor on impact, “but on how things are in general and regularly, or according to some deeper, hidden truth” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 151). In such types of modality “there is often no background, detail is simplified or left out, colour and depth regarded as superfluous” (ibid.).

As seen, the four underlined constituents of the *interactive* metafunction of visual semiotic structures can play a key role in establishing relations of interaction between the represented participant(s) in images and the viewer(s), by fostering different attitudes from them. For a more effective view of the realisations and meanings of the

visual *interactive* metafunction, Figure 5.27 depicts a summary of the *interactive meanings* that have been described in this section:

Interactive Meanings		
	<i>Realization</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
Gaze /Contact	<i>demand</i> : gaze at viewer <i>offer</i> : absence of gaze at viewer	<i>demand</i> : social affinity with viewer <i>offer</i> : contemplation, scrutiny by viewer
Distance/ Size of Frame	<i>close-up</i> : head and shoulders <i>medium shot</i> : from waist up <i>long shot</i> : full body + surrounding space	<i>close-up</i> : intimacy with viewer <i>medium shot</i> : social distance <i>long shot</i> : detachment from viewer
Perspective/ Point of View	<i>frontal angle</i> <i>oblique angle</i> <i>vertical angle</i> : high, low, eye-level	<i>frontal angle</i> : involvement <i>oblique angle</i> : detachment <i>vertical angle</i> : power relation: [1] <i>high angle</i> : viewer power [2] <i>eye-level angle</i> : power equality [3] <i>low angle</i> : represented participant power
Modality	<i>naturalistic</i> : high degree of realism <i>sensory</i> : low degree of realism <i>scientific/technological</i> : low degree of realism, abstracts from detail <i>abstract</i> : low degree of realism	<i>naturalistic</i> : sense of 'real' <i>sensory</i> : 'more-than-real' sense, evokes subjective feelings <i>scientific</i> : effectiveness of visual representation as 'blueprint' <i>abstract</i> : indication of 'high art'

Figure 5.27 – Realizations and Meanings of Visual Interactive Metafunction
(adapted from Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p.121-154)

The third visual metafunction, which encapsulates the *compositional* meanings of visual semiotic structures, will be further detailed in the next section.

5.2.3 Compositional Meanings

Having described the relations between the participants depicted in visual semiotic structures and the relations between images and viewers, I now turn to the description of the elements which make up the composition of images as a whole, i.e., how they are placed together in order to encode specific messages.

Textual or *Compositional* meaning, as Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) contend, integrate representational and interactive elements to compose a “meaningful whole”

(ibid., p. 181). This is usually done via the three main resources of compositional structures, viz., *information value*, *framing* and *saliency*.

The *information value* of an image is mostly given through the placement of the elements of a composition. Depending on whether an element is placed within the three dichotomies of pictorial ‘zones’ (ibid.) (*left/right*; *top/bottom*; *centre/margin*), it is believed to endow the picture with a specific idea. Applying this notion to the analysis of advertising images as in the case of the current research, an observation of what is placed on the *left* and what is placed on the *right* of the picture leads to a discussion on how conspicuous and ideological the value of an element is aimed to be by the image producer.

In the words of Kress & van Leeuwen (ibid.), “the *right* seems to be the side of the key information, of what the reader may pay particular attention to, of the message (...)” whereas “the *left* is the side of the ‘already given’, something the reader is assumed to know already, as part of [his/her] culture” (p. 186-187). A further understanding of the concept of a *Given-New* structure is also offered by Kress & van Leeuwen (ibid.), who explain that in order for an element to be regarded as *Given* it should be presented as something whose meaning potential is both commonsensical and self-evident to the viewer, something s/he already knows, as “a familiar and agreed-upon point of departure for the message” (p. 187). Likewise, for an element to be considered *New*, its meaning potential should be presented as a problematic and contestable information ‘at issue’, something which is not yet known to the viewer, or perhaps not yet agreed upon, hence as something to which s/he must pay special attention (ibid.). Broadly speaking, in advertising images the *Given* space is usually where the verbal text is accommodated, while the *new* space is filled by one or more pictures (ibid., p.189). This can be seen in Figures 5.28 and 5.29:



Figure 5.28: *Estrela Nenezinho*
Given-New structure



Figure 5.29: *MGA Prayer Angel*
Given-New structure

The information value of *top* and *bottom* placements also carries distinct features in that the upper section of a visual composition is believed to contain what is presented as *Ideal* whereas the lower section what is *Real*. In this respect, an *Ideal* element epitomises “the promise of a product”, the “idealised or generalised essence of information” (ibid., p. 193) therefore being shown as the most prominent part of the visual composition, one that calls for an emotive appeal by showing us ‘what might be’ (ibid.). In opposition, a *Real* element tends to be presented to the viewer in a less ostensible way, including more practically-oriented information of ‘what a product is’: the details on how to obtain it, where to order it and/or how to request further information about it (ibid.).

Figure 5.30 shows this type of layout by describing the ‘promising’ purpose of the product at the top part of the advertisement (e.g. what it can do, its multiple functions, etc.) and its concrete, more observable information (what it includes) at the bottom part:



Figure 5.30: *MGA Organizer*
Real-Ideal structure

Finally, the *central* and *marginal* spatial arrangements of elements of a given visual composition imply preponderance, as in the case of the *central* element or subservience to the nucleus of information, as in the case of the ancillary, *marginal* items. A subtype of Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996) *Centre-Margin* layout is the *trptych* whereby three distinct image elements are presented to the viewer in a row. These three elements may or may not convey the sense of polarization typical of the *Given-New* structure as the *Centre* may contain the nucleus of the information whilst the *Margins* may provide the contextualizing information (Unsworth, 2001, p. 108).

Figure 5.31 shows an example of a triptych picturing Santa Claus as the Central element at the nucleus of information and the icon of the brand *Estrela* as well as its inviting sign as Marginal elements that provide the contextualizing information.



Figure 5.31: *Christmas Estrela 2003*
Centre-Margin structure: A Triptych

In a nutshell, the disposition of elements within the spatial dimensions of visual compositions is said to attach rather specific meanings and values which are instantiated by the visual syntactic patterns of *Given-New*, *Ideal-Real* and *Centre-Margin* structures, all of which can be perceived in a more or less conspicuous way, by means, for example, of a dividing line that serves to connect or disconnect visual elements. This is

realised by the second resource of the compositional meaning of visual semiotic structures, namely, *framing*.

According to Kress & van Leeuwen (ibid.), *connection* is created when the junctures which mark off the distinct units of texts are absent, so that “elements are connected in continuous flow” (p. 214). In visual terms, *connection* can be achieved through similar colours, forms, connective vectors, overlapping or superimposition of images, that is, through the absence of *framing* lines around the elements of an image, thus stressing their sense of group identity (Figure 5.32). *Disconnection*, on the other hand, can be created by the presence of *framing*, through contrasts of colours and forms and white space between the elements which visually signify individuality and differentiation (ibid., p. 215). Whenever the elements within the layout of an image are *disconnected* or marked off from each other, they are said to be *strongly framed* and therefore are presented to the viewer as a separate piece of information (Figure 5.33). If, however, these elements are presented to the viewer in a *connected*, joined together manner, they are described as *weakly framed*.

The visual relations of *weak* and *strong* framing can be better illustrated in the subsequent images. Whereas in Figure 5.32 the overlapping of elements signals unity, in Figure 5.33 disconnection is stressed through the separation of elements within the pictorial frame:



Figure 5.32: *Estrela Paty Gatinha*
Framing: weak: strong connection



Figure 5.33: *MGA Pia*
Framing: strong: weak connection

Lastly, the compositional component of *salience* stands for the way some elements in a visual composition are arranged in order to look more eye-catching than others. Aspects such as the placement of an element in the foreground or background of a picture, their size, their colour contrasts and sharpness can reinforce or decrease its level of conspicuousness by creating a “hierarchy of importance among the elements, selecting some as more important, more worthy of attention than others” (ibid., p. 212). Thus, the perception of the most conspicuous element (s) in a visual structure through these objective clues for salience allows for the identification of the main participant (s) in a visual process (Grimm, 1999, p. 33).

Figures 5.34 and 5.35 show images whose most salient elements – the styling salon and the disco – are made prominent not only by means of their centrality and conspicuous size but also by the colour contrasts which equally compete for their salience:



Figure 5.34: *MGA Salon Spa*
Saliency



Figure 5.35: *MGA The Runaway Disco*
Saliency

Figure 5.36 below summarises the distinctions among the three main resources for the *compositional* meanings of visual semiotic structures made in this section:

Compositional Meanings		
	<i>Realization</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
Information value	<i>Given-New</i> <i>Ideal-Real</i> <i>Centre-Margin: Triptych</i>	<i>left/ right:</i> given/new information <i>top/bottom:</i> ideal/real information <i>centre/margin:</i> preponderant/ancillary element
Framing	<i>strong framing</i> <i>weak framing</i>	<i>disconnection:</i> individuality/differentiation <i>connection:</i> sense of group identity
Saliency	<i>Colour, size, place</i>	identification of most conspicuous represented participant

Figure 5.36 – Realizations and Meanings of Visual Compositional Metafunction
(adapted from Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p.181-225)

5.3. Concluding Remarks

As it has been noted, the visual semiotic mode, just like the verbal one, can function as an autonomous communicational system in providing a full descriptive framework for the analysis of images through the Visual Grammar (VG) under Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996) perspective. Drawing on a terminology which may sound complex at first sight (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 154), Kress & van Leeuwen (ibid.) have nevertheless succeeded in providing a systematic exploratory method for pictorial

analysis which added to the visual semiotics of Roland Barthes (1977) and to the field of iconography by proposing visual syntactic patterns as analytical categories.

The following Chapters, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, will deal with the verbal and visual analysis of the Brazilian toy advertisements (*BrAds*) and the American toy advertisements (*AmAds*), respectively.

Chapter 6

Verbal and Visual Analysis: The Representation of Reality in the Brazilian Toy Advertisements (*BrAds*)

(...) Whether French or American, toys convey a great deal about how adults wish children to grow up, and as Barthes observes, toys prepare us for the roles we wish children to think of as 'natural'. What roles do we wish girls to grow up and assume are 'natural'? (Sherrie, A. Inness, 1999, as mentioned in Peers, 2004, p. 97)

The current chapter is concerned with the verbal and visual analysis of 10 advertisements from Brazilian doll *Susi*, extracted from the website of toy manufacturer *Estrela*, available at www.estrela.com.br.

The chapter has been arranged in the following fashion: (1) a brief introduction where I explain how the analysis will be conducted and how the advertisements will be labelled; (2) a contextual background on the toy manufacturer and the doll analysed and (3) the actual analysis, introduced by the verbal analysis, subdivided into (i) nominal groups and (ii) transitivity features and followed by the visual analysis.

Drawing on Halliday's (1994) grammar for the concepts of nominal groups and the transitivity analysis and on Kress' and van Leeuwen's (1996) grammar of visual design for the analysis of visual features, I have attempted at apprehending the topics that doll advertisements reflect, the roles they convey and the type of relationship that is established among the participants involved, as a way to answer the following research questions:

- (1) How are social and discursive practices reflected in the toy advertisements?
- (2) To what extent do the advertisements embed specific assumptions?
- (3) What lexical sets predominate in the advertisements, what do they reflect and what roles do they convey?
- (4) What are the transitivity features present in the advertisements, namely, what types of processes, participants and circumstances are represented?
- (5) What type of relationship is established among the participants involved in the advertisements?

A key objective of the analysis to be presented in this chapter and the next will be to bring to the forefront some of the meanings visually and verbally conveyed by the advertisements of fashion dolls in a cross-cultural, comparative perspective.

6.1. Brazilian Toy Ads (*BrAds*)

As a means to codify and quantify the data, the Brazilian doll advertisements will be henceforth identified as ‘BrAds’ and will be numbered from 1 to 10. Regarding their discursive construction, I will present some of the most salient aspects of the vocabulary and grammar features found in the referring advertisements.

In order to contribute to the understanding of the socio-cultural aspects related to my data, I shall now start by giving the reader a background of toy manufacturer *Estrela* and its *Susi*, the Brazilian doll under research.

6.2. Background on Toy Manufacturer *Estrela* and *Susi* doll

Toy manufacturer *Estrela* was founded in 1937 when it used to produce cloth dolls and little wooden cars. In more than 60 years on the toy market in Brazil, *Estrela* has created and launched more than 25 thousand different toys, a total of approximately one billion items which have been distributed all over the country (information available at <http://www.estrela.com.br/htm/default.htm>).

Estrela’s leadership in the Brazilian toy market has been consolidated along the years and the expansion of the national production of toys in Brazil has taken the referring industry to inaugurate two new toy factories in Brazil – one in Manaus, opened in 1989 and another in Três Pontas, in the South of the state of Minas Gerais, founded in 2002 (ibid.).

Since its production of polystyrene dolls during the 1950s, *Estrela* collections of dolls started being a sector within the company which has deserved further attention given that 37% of the annual toy sales in Brazil are dolls (Downie, 2000). To highlight its importance as the 'poster girl' of the company, *Estrela* doll *Susi* and its 30 varied versions occupy today the position of the best-selling fashion doll in Brazil (ibid.).

Among the market targets aimed at by toy company *Estrela* is the reduction of the number of imported toys in Brazil – which is believed to favour the growth of the internal market of toys – and the sustaining of the leadership that *Estrela* has been achieving in holding the percentage of 35% of the formal market of toys in Brazil.

In a personal visit made to *Estrela's Museu Casa dos Sonhos* – *Estrela's* official toy museum in São Paulo, SP – on Children's Day, 12th October 2004, I had the opportunity to talk to the people responsible for the *Susi* Collection, take photographs of its various models, see children playing with them, take notes about their preferred versions of *Susi* and learn more about the historical background of the referring doll under research (see Appendix for pictures).

During my visit to the museum, I was told that a new *Susi* is launched on an annual basis at the *Abrinq Fair* – the national toy organization in Brazil – based on a market research on current trends related to children. On the specific occasion of my visit to the toy museum *Casa dos Sonhos*, the following *Susi* versions were being exhibited: *Susi Shopping Center*, *Susi Loja de Perfumes*, *Banheiro da Susi*, *Susi Sala de Estar*, *Susi Salão de Beleza*, *Susi Super Cozinha*, *Susi vai à Floricultura*, *Susi Cores*, *Susi Vôlei de Praia*, *Susi Praia*, *Susi Praia e Piscina*, *Susi Brasil* and *Susi Celular*¹².

According to the museum staff, every year Design students from universities all over Brazil are invited to take part in an annual contest organised by *Estrela* in which

¹² Translation into English of the referring exhibited models of *Susi* would be, respectively: *Shopping Centre Susi*, *Susi's Perfume Shop*, *Susi's Bathroom*, *Susi's Living Room*, *Susi's Hairdresser*, *Susi's Super Kitchen*, *Susi goes to the Florist's*, *Susi Colours*, *Volleyball Susi*, *Beach Susi*, *Brazil Susi* and *Celular Susi*. All translated items remain under my responsibility.

the best outfit created for *Susi* is both awarded and exhibited on *Susi*'s section at the toy museum.

Susi fashion doll has been produced by *Estrela* since 1968 although its production was ceased during the 1980's when *Estrela* got the license to produce Mattel's *Barbie* in Brazil. "*Susi* and *Barbie* are not rivals, though", one of the factory employees insisted on clarifying (my notes, 2004, personal communication, 12th October). "*Barbie* personifies a grown-up, successful and sexually-appealing woman whereas *Susi* stands for any typical middle or upper-class adolescent", she contends (ibid.). Proof of this, so she says, is the fact that, in contrast to *Barbie*'s body – she has got big breasts and a surrealistic tiny waist – *Susi*'s physical attributes evoke an average girl in her teens, "with her trim waist, small chest, wide thighs, and darker skin" (Downie, 2000). "This is why there is no point in comparing both dolls", concluded one of *Estrela*'s staff (ibid.).

Be that as it may, some of *Susi*'s representations *do* entail adult contexts and activities such as the ones I could see at the toy museum and which were mentioned above, like being located in a 'super kitchen' or in a living room context, going to the florist's or to the hairdresser's.

Susi's image also displays contradictory cultural values. Despite her pseudo validation of 'Brazilianness' (Downie, 2000), *Susi*'s physical representation calls, in fact, for the prototype of a typical American girl with her large blue eyes and straight, long, blonde hair.

In fact, Downie (2000) admits that at first glance, *Susi* and *Barbie* are not that different, as "both have impossibly long hair and clear blue eyes". Yet he also agrees with *Estrela*'s marketing director Aries (quoted in Downie, 2000) that *Susi*'s prototype has been moulded to look more Latin and therefore, more 'voluptuous'. Indeed, Aries

(ibid.) fiercely defends that “*Susi* resonates with Brazilian girls” for a number of reasons:

(...) she has a body like them and all the themes and clothes are very Brazilian;
(...) *Susi*'s face is more circular than *Barbie*'s and her mouth is rounder. Her eyelashes are longer and her skin is slightly darker (...);
Although the two dolls both have waistlines measuring four inches, the willowy *Barbie* has defied time to maintain her legendary hourglass figure and slim hips;
Susi (...) has a more modest bust and a pair of thighs measuring a whopping half-inch more than her American rival;
[Differently from Mattel's *Barbie*, who provides a role model for girls to aspire to], *Susi* shows them as they are, not as they want to be, (...) [as she] sees life through the eyes of a carefree young girl more interested in parties (*'festas'*) (Downie, 2000)

Contradictorily, the label '*Susi*' itself does not seem to capture the arguable genuinely Brazilian essence of the referring doll. Instead, more appropriate label choices would be '*Susana*', '*Ana*' or '*Maria*' all of which would somehow convey more authentic expressions of the Brazilian culture.

Another issue about *Susi* that deserves some reflection upon concerns her ethnicity. Although black *Susi* was launched in 1974, it is still blonde *Susi* who rules the roost. I could clearly notice this in the playground area at *Casa dos Sonhos* where children of all ages interacted and played with all sorts of *Estrela* toys. “Undoubtedly blonde *Susi* is far more preferred to the black, dark-haired or red-haired ones. No question children go for it”, one of the employees at the toy museum alleged (my notes, 2004, personal communication, 12th October).

All in all, the ethnographic and exploratory purpose of my visit to *Estrela* toy museum allowed me to substantiate some of my perceptions prior to the visit itself, to refute others and to bring some of these issues to surface for their subsequent discussion. In brief, what I intend to do in the sections that follow is to further examine such issues.

6.3. Verbal Analysis

Ten texts extracted from their corresponding advertisements from *Susi Collection* will be shown and subsequently analysed according to their lexicogrammatical features.

Consider the following texts from <http://www.estrela.com.br/htm/default.htm>:

<p align="center">BrAd 1 – Susi Quatro Estações</p> <p>Primavera, verão, outono, inverno....</p> <p>Não importa a estação, SUSI está sempre na moda. E com muita versatilidade: o top é dupla-face e as peças de roupa podem ser combinadas para criar visuais transados e diferentes! Na PRIMAVERA, SUSI usa o vestido com saia florida e sobre ele, o top rosa. No VERÃO, põe a calcinha de biquíni, o top rosa, o [sic] óculos e curte o sol numa boa. Quando chega o OUTONO, ela usa sobre o vestido o top azul e por baixo, a calça com barras dobradas. E.... BRRRRR! Nos dias frios de INVERNO, SUSI veste top azul, calça comprida, casaco e botas de cano alto. Sempre linda, o ano todo, com muito charme e bom gosto!</p> <p align="center">SUSI não pára em pé sozinha.</p> <p>DETALHE Primavera!!!! Vestido com saia florida e parte superior em tela com mangas compridas, top rosa e tamanco!</p> <p>DETALHE Outono!!!! Vestido com saia florida e parte superior em tela florida com mangas compridas, top azul, calça com barras dobradas e tênis!</p> <p>DETALHE Você ganha um lindo porta-lápis para montar!</p>	<p align="center">BrAd 2 – Susi Aeromoça</p> <p>Com todo o charme de uma aeromoça VARIG, SUSI viaja pelo mundo, faz novos amigos e traz muitos presentes para você!</p> <p align="center">SUSI não pára em pé sozinha.</p> <p>DETALHE Superelegante, SUSI veste camisa branca por baixo do blazer e tem até um sobretudo para viajar para lugares mais frios!</p> <p>DETALHE Sua mala tem rodinhas, abre e fecha de verdade e a altura da alça pode ser ajustada!</p> <p>DETALHE Para completar a brincadeira, você ganha um mundo de presentes: passaporte, revista do Variguinho, "bottom", jogo da memória e adesivos para enfeitar a mala!</p>
<p align="center">BrAd 3 – Susi Seleção By Milene Domingues</p> <p>Susi ama o futebol brasileiro e é fã de Milene Domingues. E nada melhor do que torcer pelo Brasil vestindo as cores da seleção. Inspirada no uniforme da Milene, Susi está linda e superfashion, prontinha para torcer como nunca. Vai lá, Brasil!</p> <p align="center">Susi não pára em pé sozinha.</p> <p>DETALHE SHOW DE BOLA! Uma faixa de cabelo de presente pra você usar!</p>	<p align="center">BrAd 4 – Susi Piscina e Diversão</p> <p>SUSI e BETO não páram em pé sozinhos.</p> <p align="center">Deu sede? Que tal um "suco"?... HUUM!</p> <p>SUSI adora sair para baladas. Superproduzida e gatíssima, ela não deixa escapar nenhum detalhe!</p> <p>DETALHE Para você acompanhar SUSI nas baladas, ganha cinco enfeites de cabelo coloridos e brilhantes e mais dois apliques!</p>
<p align="center">BrAd 5 – Susi Baile de Formatura</p> <p>SUSI vive o sonho de sua formatura. Uma data muito especial, superesperada por todos! As fotos com os colegas, a sessão solene de entrega dos diplomas com a turma toda vestindo beca e com o capelo na cabeça, o baile - dançando a noite toda com Beto.... Puxa, este é um dos dias mais felizes de sua vida!</p> <p>SUSI não pára em pé sozinha e não segura o canudo como nas fotos.</p> <p>DETALHE Para receber o diploma, SUSI usa beca e capelo!</p> <p>DETALHE E no baile, dança a noite toda com o BETO!</p> <p>DETALHE Um lindo "anel de formatura" para você!</p> <p>DETALHE Tem diploma, convites e "álbum de fotos"!</p>	<p align="center">BrAd 6 – Beto Estilo</p> <p>Com seu estilo fashion e descontraído, Beto está sempre "antenado" com as novidades do mundo da moda, pronto para um passeio com a galera!</p> <p align="center">Beto não pára em pé sozinho.</p>
<p align="center">BrAd 7 - Cartela Susi Visual da Moda</p> <p>São três conjuntos diferentes para você deixar sua SUSI no maior visual da moda. E as cartelas têm a forma de uma bolsa!</p> <p align="center">Sapatos e enfeites de cabelo não incluídos.</p>	<p align="center">BrAd 8 – Susi Aula de Natação</p> <p>Nado de costas, borboleta ou nado livre? SUSI é campeã em todos os estilos! Ela flutua de verdade e vem com um montão de acessórios superdivertidos!</p> <p align="center">Marcador de raíais não incluído.</p> <p>DETALHE Tem mochila, touca, toalha!</p> <p>DETALHE Tem prancha e bóias!</p> <p>DETALHE E até "prancheta de anotações"!</p>
<p align="center">BrAd 9 - Susi Moda Praia</p> <p>SUSI está linda e super na moda para curtir uma praia. E com um montão de acessórios ultralegais!</p> <p align="center">QUE SOSSEGO! Ela curte uma gostosa sombra na rede!</p> <p>DETALHE QUE DEMAIS!</p> <p align="center">A bolsa vira toalha!</p> <p>DETALHE Um montão de acessórios superlegais!</p> <p>DETALHE QUE LINDA!</p> <p>Sem a saia e com o biquíni, óculos e bolsa, Susi está pronta para "pegar um sol"!</p>	<p align="center">BrAd 10 – Susi Patinadora</p> <p align="center">SUSI adora patinar!</p> <p>Mas com toda a segurança e sempre linda, com uma roupa supertransada, leve e confortável!</p> <p>DETALHE Capacete, joelheiras e cotoveleiras para patinar numa boa!</p> <p>DETALHE Os patins têm rodinhas que giram de verdade!</p> <p>DETALHE A bolsinha e a "garrafinha de água" vão presas na cintura!</p>

Figure 6.1.- Brazilian Toy Advertisements (BrAds)
(extracted and adapted from www.estrela.com.br)

6.3.1. Nominal Groups

One major characteristic of the Brazilian ads under analysis is the creation of a high degree of intimacy between the addresser of the message and the addressee. In general terms, the higher the formality of a text, the greater is said to be the social distance between the interlocutors of a given discursive event (Oliveira, 2000) while the opposite is also said to be true. In their investigation on the verbal and visual patterns of women's magazines, Eggins & Iedema (1997) have spelled out the ways language choices can be used to construct solidarity between addresser and addressee. They argue that interpersonal closeness can be created, for instance, by means of direct interaction with the reader through the use of questions and the pronoun *you* whereas social distance can be fostered via the use of static linguistic structures such as noun phrases and nominal groups. As they contend, a nominal group "represents reality as 'things' rather than as 'doings' [and therefore it] offers only limited ways to include reference to the reader" (p. 170).

Taking into consideration that the lexical choices in the Brazilian ads reveal an interpersonal exchange with emphasis on informality and closeness, one can say that this is indicated by the use of (1) Epithets and Qualifiers such as *superfashion*, *superesperada*, *superdivertidos*, *super na moda*, *supertransada*, *transados*, *antenido*, *gatíssima*, and (2) clauses such as *curte o sol numa boa*, *curtir uma praia*, *curte uma gostosa sombra na rede*, *pegar um sol*, *sair para as baladas*, *estar pronto para um passeio com a galera*, *patinar numa boa*, etc.

The role of vocabulary in a text is believed to be twofold: it shows and at the same time it influences – explicitly in the case of ads – the way one views reality. Through rather specific lexical choices, the values and beliefs of a discourse community are

unveiled, thus portraying its ideological, political and social experiences (Faiclough, 1989; Heberle, 1997).

In the case of the ten Brazilian ads under investigation, the most prominent lexical sets deal with issues related to fashion, beauty, diet, leisure, sports, career, studies and style, all of which seem to reflect the way women are portrayed and expected to behave in society (Johnson & Gannon, 1997). They are filled with what Riddick (2002) refers to as “positive reflections of society and femininity” (p.2) in which the goals achieved by the dolls are nothing but the “socially accepted ones” (ibid.). They also help to convey some aesthetic expectations of women by reinforcing the unattainable standards of feminine beauty by means of the creation of an ideal miniaturised female representation, one that is at the same time “thin, tall, long-legged, young, vibrant, sexy, and beautiful” (Wright, 2003, p. 5). The following figure summarises the occurrences of nominal groups and Epithets related to *Fashion and Beauty* in the Brazilian advertisements (*BrAds*) 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 9:

<i>Fashion/Beauty</i>					
BrAd 1	BrAd2	BrAd3	BrAd 4	BrAd7	BrAd 9
com muita versatilidade visuais transados e diferentes sempre linda, o ano todo com muito charme e bom gosto vestido com saia florida top rosa tamanco parte superior em tela com mangas compridas tennis	com todo o charme de uma aeromoça VARIG superelegante	inspirada no uniforme da Milene linda e superfashion prontinha faixa de cabelo de presente	superproduzida gatíssima cinco enfeites de cabelo coloridos e brilhantes dois apliques	três conjuntos diferentes no maior visual da moda enfeites de cabelo	linda (2 occ) super na moda com um montão de acessórios ultralegais (2 occ) sem a saia com o biquíni, óculos e bolsa pronta

Figure 6.2. – Epithets and Nominal Groups in *BrAds* related to Fashion and Beauty

As can be seen in Figure 6.2, the high incidence of lexical items related to fashion and beauty present in the selected Brazilian doll advertisements points to the role they assume for women in society, the contexts where women are placed, as well as the ideological – and idealized – constructions of womanhood made explicit in the discourse of advertising. It also naturalises contemporary practices of consumption associated to certain standards of living by making reference to a woman who is expected to be permanently pretty through the use of attitudinal Epithets and Qualifiers such as ‘*sempre linda*’ (BrAds 1, 3 and 9; 4 occurrences); ‘*gatíssima*’ (BrAd 4, 1 occurrence), always endowed with all her charms (‘*com muito charme*’, BrAd 1; ‘*com todo charme*’, BrAd 2; 2 occurrences), highly elegant and with a strong sense of fashion (‘*superelegante*’, BrAd 2; ‘*superfashion*’, BrAd 3; ‘*superproduzida*’, BrAd4; ‘*super na moda*’, BrAd 9; ‘*no maior visual da moda*’, BrAd 7; ‘*visuais transados e diferentes*’, BrAd 1; ‘*prontinha*’, BrAd 3 and ‘*pronta*’, BrAd 9; 1 occurrence each).

The Brazilian doll *Susi* is also evaluated in relation to the clothes she wears, all of which contribute to create her versatile and trendy look:

- (..) o **top é dupla-face** e as **peças de roupa** (...) **visuais transados e diferentes!** (BrAd1)
- (...) o **vestido com saia florida** e sobre ele, o **top rosa** (BrAd1)
- (...) a **calcinha de biquíni**, o **top rosa**, o [sic] **óculos** (BrAd1)
- (...) o **vestido o top azul** e por baixo, a **calça com barras dobradas** (BrAd1)
- (...) **top azul, calça comprida, casaco e botas de cano alto** (BrAd1)
- Vestido com saia florida e parte superior em tela com mangas compridas, top rosa e tamanco** (BrAd1)
- Vestido com saia florida e parte superior em tela florida com mangas compridas, top azul, calça com barras do bradas e tênis** (BrAd1)
- (...) **camisa branca** por baixo do **blazer** e tem até um **sobretudo** (...) (BrAd2)
- (...) **cinco enfeites de cabelo coloridos e brilhantes** (...) (BrAd4)
- Sem a **saia e com o biquíni, óculos e bolsa** (...) (BrAd9)
- (...) **com um montão de acessórios ultralegais!** (BrAd9)

By focusing on items such as her flowered skirt (‘*saia florida*’, BrAd 1; 3 occurrences), pink and blue tops (BrAd 1; 4 occurrences), dress (‘*vestido*’ BrAd 1; 4 occurrences), bikini underwear (BrAds 1 and 9; 2 occurrences), bag (‘*bolsa*’, BrAds 7 and 9; 3 occurrences) and coloured, bright and ultra-stylish accessories (‘*enfeites de*

cabelo coloridos e brilhantes', BrAd 4; '*acessórios ultralegais*', BrAd 9; 2 occurrences), *Susi*'s text could be inserted in what Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen (2002) have named a "catwalk genre", whereby the "models are described and adults [become] interested in the attributes and features of the doll" (p. 106).

Indeed, the Epithets, Classifiers and Qualifiers employed in the nominal groups identified in the *BrAds* contribute to positively evaluate Brazilian female doll *Susi* in her advertising discourse. Placed in rather specific contexts within the public or the private sphere, *Susi* plays roles which vary from that of a flight hostess to that of an undergraduate student out at her graduation party, from that of *Beto*'s girlfriend to that of a football player or supporter, and whenever she assumes the position of a sportswoman like a swimmer or a roller-skater she is placed in hot, sunny environments. Her social practice (Fairclough, 1995; 1992; 1989) is thus constituted by a compromise between the public and the domestic sphere in both of which she is expected to match the demands of a society that sees in the juggling of work, home and leisure activities the true function of women's representation (Morin & Rosenfeld, 1998).

This is also revealed in the lexical items found in *Susi*'s advertisements in which concern with diets, body image and professional career help to compose the image of a multi-skilled woman whose responsibility is foregrounded by the evaluative lexis in the advertisements. To illustrate these complementary, albeit paradoxical roles attributed to women, the following figure includes other prevalent lexical sets found in the doll advertisements together with their number of occurrences:

<i>Diet</i>	<i>Leisure</i>	<i>Studies/Career</i>	<i>Sports</i>
BrAd 4	BrAds 4 and 9	BrAd 5	BrAds 8 and 10
Sede suco	baladas (2 occ) praia	sonho de sua formatura data muito especial, superesperada por todos fotos sessão solene de entrega dos diplomas turma toda vestindo beca capelo na cabeça baile (2 occ) um dos dias mais felizes de sua vida diploma beca e capelo anel de formatura convites álbum de fotos	nado livre, de costa, borboleta campeã acessórios superdivertidos mochila touca toalha prancha bóias prancheta de anotações com toda a segurança capacete joelheiras cotoveleiras patins bolsinha garrafinha de água

Figure 6.3.– Epithets and Nominal Groups in *BrAds* related to Diet, Leisure, Studies, Career and Sports

The focus on lexical items related to Studies and Career through positive Qualifiers in nominal groups such as *sonho de sua formatura*, *data muito especial*, *superesperada por todos*, *um dos dias mais felizes de sua vida* (BrAd 5) help to support the view that the over-represented “practices of domesticity” (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2002, p. 97) – which include placing the doll in the context of a house taking care of a baby or preparing the food – are no longer the only potential social meaning conveyed in toy advertisements. The emphasis given to women’s professional roles in doll advertisements like *Susi*’s calls attention to the gradual change of social position experienced by women over the last decades.

By no means do they suggest the elimination or the substitution of old domestic roles for new ones but they convey the multiplicity and eclecticism of the activities which compose the agenda of the contemporary woman. This includes women’s [1] participation in a range of activities like going shopping, going to work, playing sports (*‘charme de uma aeromoça’*, BrAd 2; *nado livre’*, BrAd 8) and women’s [2] achievement, like following a career and being successful (*‘sessão solene de entrega dos diplomas’*, *‘anel de formatura’*, BrAd 5).

Another role which contemporary women are expected to ideally accomplish is related to man's companion in their lives and love-related issues. For this reason, the presence of *Beto* in *Susi's* universe deserves some further attention. Lexical items found in *Susi's* advertisements have revealed that, such as *Susi*, her boyfriend *Beto* is deeply concerned with fashion, and his style is taken as modern and casual as can be exemplified by the following lexical choices present in *Beto's* advertisements: '*estilo fashion e descontraído*' (a nominal group with two Qualifiers, *fashion* and *descontraído*); and Qualifiers such as '*sempre "atenado" com as novidades do mundo da moda*' (BrAd 6).

All in all, what these examples from the analysis and discussion on the lexical choices of *Susi's* advertisements seem to reveal is the portrayal of *Susi's* universe in a highly evaluative manner given that they point to a world mainly construed in terms of aesthetic values through words and nominal groups like *superfashion*, *maior visual da moda*, *superproduzida*, *sempre linda* and *gatíssima* all of which are marketed to reinforce the construction of an idealized discourse of contemporary womanhood through the semiotic representation of women's professional career, their leisure activities and their pursuit of female beauty.

6.3.2. Transitivity Features

Brazilian doll advertisements, as previously suggested, are pervaded by words related to affairs such as fashion, beauty, diet, sports, leisure, studies and career which contribute to categorise girls' patterns of experience as an upper-middle-class, children consumer market within the boundaries of the private and public sphere.

Looking at the patterns of experience in terms of the linguistic realisations encoded by the grammatical features of a text involves the identification of the choices

of processes, participants and circumstances with a view to establishing how one's world is ideationally construed. Halliday's (1994) systemic functional perspective on text analysis and interpretation provides a helpful framework for such a task.

Generally speaking, transitivity structures are believed to provide a picture of reality based on the user's "model of experience" (Halliday, 1994, p. 107). In other words, the investigation of the grammatical features of texts "amount to choices about how to signify (and construct) social identities, social relationships and knowledge and belief" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 76).

In what regards the investigation of the Brazilian doll advertisements under discussion, one can notice that *Susi*'s textual world is predominantly construed in terms of relational – *is, has* – and material processes – *uses, wears, travels, dances and makes friends*.

Out of 33 existing processes in which *Susi* appears as the protagonist of the actions performed in the referring advertisements – the *Actor*, the *Senser* or the *Carrier* – 19 are material as opposed to 9 which are relational and 5 which are mental. The following table summarizes the types of verb processes and their respective number of occurrences, as found in *Susi*'s advertisements:

Type of Process	Processes	Number of Occurrences
<i>Material</i>	<i>veste, usa, viaja, faz novos amigos, traz muitos presentes, dança, põe, torce, flutua, recebe, não deixa escapar, "pega" um sol, adora sair, patinar</i>	19
<i>Relational</i>	<i>Está, é, tem, vem</i>	9
<i>Mental</i>	<i>ama, curte, vive o sonho</i>	5

Table 6.1. – Types of processes and number of occurrences in *BrAds*

Prototypically, material verbs deal with concrete doings and happenings as they serve to construe the world in terms of physical experience (Martin et al, 1997). In the data under investigation, this occurs in terms of the activities performed by *Susi*, all of which compose the framework of her routine, through actions such as travelling,

imaginative acts, Walton (as cited in Wright, 2003) argues, provide the practice roles children “might someday assume in real life” (p. 2) as they allow them to fantasise about adulthood.

According to Halliday’s (1994) category of relational processes (*Rps*) these relate the participant to his/her identity or description by means of two different modes, the ones of attribution and identification (Martin et al, 1997, p. 106). This can be verified in a clause like *Susi está linda e superfashion* in which the relational clause type is constructed on the basis of a Carrier + Attribute relation:

(9) *Susi* *está* *linda e superfashion*
 Carrier Rp Attribute

Another relational clause type identified in *Susi*’s advertisement is constructed on the basis of a Possessive relation with the Possessor and the Possession roles within the Identifying mode of relational processes, such as:

(7) *Susi (...)* *tem* *até um sobretudo* *para viajar para os lugares mais frios!*
 Possessor Rp Possession Circumstance

Being either *Attributive* or *Identifying*, a relational clause is based on the classification and categorisation of the entities involved in a process. Taking this into consideration, the importance given to the attributes *linda*, *pronta*, *superfashion*, *super na moda* and *sempre na moda* reflect the value that is granted to women’s appearance in their social representation in doll advertisements. By ascribing aesthetic values to *Susi*, the advertiser is helping to create an ideological frame of reference in which she is supposed to fit – just like *Barbie*’s text in Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen’s corpus (2001), *Susi* is predominantly appraised in terms of her physical attributes. Such a gendered representation helps to unveil the ideological position of women in a society that classifies them mostly according to their looks (Wright, 2003).

The social conventions established by doll advertisements are reinforced in relational clauses by means of the two meanings conveyed by two different exponents of relational processes in Portuguese which relate to a single one in English: *to be*. Whereas *estar* refers to a temporary state of being, *ser* relates to a permanent one. With regard to this, when one says *Susi é campeã em todos os estilos* (BrAd 8), the idea is that such an attribute constitutes an inherent quality of *Susi*, a constant trait of her personality. Contrarily, the clause *Susi está pronta para "pegar um sol"* (BrAd 8) evokes a sense of “presentification” to the action by highlighting *Susi*’s current predisposition to go sunbathing.

Mental processes (*MEps*), on the other hand, construe a person in terms of “processes of perception, cognition and affection” (Martin et al, p. 105) as they deal with a participant who is involved with conscious processing (ibid.), namely, the *Senser*. In this respect, the occurrence of mental processes such as *ama*, *curte*, and *vive o sonho de sua formatura* in *Susi*’s advertisements seems to point to an affective representation of women’s activities, which, in stark contrast with male-dominated activities, are characterized by their emotive dimension. Indeed, *Susi*, as a female representative, takes a passionate attitude in everything she does: *Susi loves* football, *enjoys* taking a rest in a hammock and *lives out* the dream of her graduation party. The following occurrences from the data show *Susi* as the *Senser* who performs the mental processes experienced in the doll ads:

(8)	<i>Susi</i> <i>Senser</i>	<i>ama</i> <i>MEp</i>	<i>o futebol brasileiro (...)</i> <i>Phenomenon</i>
(11)	<i>SUSI</i> <i>Senser</i>	<i>vive</i> <i>MEp</i>	<i>o sonho de sua formatura</i> <i>Phenomenon</i>
(16)	<i>Ela</i> <i>Senser</i>	<i>curte</i> <i>MEp</i>	<i>uma gostosa sombra na rede!</i> <i>Phenomenon</i>

The analysis of the Phenomenon – a second participant of mental clauses which can involve “any kind of entity entertained or created by consciousness” (Martin et al, 1997, p. 105) – in the clauses above is mostly characterised by nominal groups that point to the nature of the activities which the *Senser* is exposed to: resting in a hammock, enjoying football matches and living out the dream of her graduation constitute eclectic issues in the agenda of the contemporary, twentieth-century woman who knows well how to perform her juggling act.

6.4. Visual Analysis

The prevalence of the industry of imagery in modern society has led to a way of conceiving visual language as whole texts endowed with a discourse of their own, one that manages to get its message across in an effective manner by mutually associating the visual aspect of language with its verbal form (Fairclough, 1989).

Although Fairclough’s most seminal contribution lies within the field of critical discourse analysis, it is his a quote that contemplates the uttermost importance of visual language:

[...] a photograph is often as important in getting across the ‘message’ of a report in a newspaper as the verbal report, and very often visuals and ‘verbals’ operate in a mutually, reinforcing way which makes them very difficult to disentangle” (Fairclough 1989, p. 28).

As advertisers try to seek for the visual and linguistic symbols that create specific needs for potential consumers of particular products, they attain significance to the “accustomed beliefs or conceptions that constitute prevailing cultural perceptions of reality” (Fry, 2000, p. 2). In doing so, they manage to reach their main ideological function, which is the creation and selling of identities and lifestyles through an

effective exploitation of the “versatile capacities of language and image to influence peoples’ thoughts and actions” (ibid.).

In light of the interpretive nature of visual design and within the context of the referring analysis, my main aim here is to verify, at the pictorial level, how ideological assumptions can be embedded in media discourse so as to promote further discussion on how the images used for toy advertisements allow for the reproduction and maintenance of certain cultural conceptions, such as the ones related to gender identities.

In analogy with the semiotic code of language, the semiotic code of pictures has its own particular way of positing the semantic and syntactic relations between the elements of an iconographical structuring. Halliday’s (1994) ideational metafunction and its system of transitivity have been used in the verbal analysis of the *BrAds* to apprehend the ideological ways in which the world is represented through verbal choices. As for the visual analysis, I will draw on Kress & van Leeuwen’s (1996) three main visual social semiotic resources, which have derived from Halliday’s functionalist grammar, namely, the *representational*, *interactive* and *compositional* meaning, all of which will account for the overall pictorial configuration of the toy ads.

The *BrAds* shown below were extracted from the website of Brazilian toy manufacturer *Estrela* available at www.estrela.com.br during the Christmas of 2003. They showcase the range of dolls available at that period by bringing verbal and visual text together in order to promote the dolls for merchandising purposes.

Important, though, is to notice that neither are these advertisements used in the printed catalogues of the referring toy manufacturer nor do they display the purchase price of the advertised product. Equally relevant is to notice that the original size of the advertisements has been dimensionally modified to fit this page and that despite being randomly selected, the advertisements have been arranged to appear in sequence from 1

to 10. Presented next, they will be subsequently followed by a discussion on their most prominent visual patterns.

BrAds
Brazilian Advertisements

BrAd 1 – Susi Quatro Estações



Figure 6.4. – Four pictures extracted from *Estrela's Susi Quatro Estações*

BrAd 2 – Susi Aeromoça



Figure 6.5. – *Estrela's Susi Aeromoça*

BrAd 4 – Susi Piscina e Diversão



Figure 6.7. – *Estrela's Susi Piscina e Diversão*

BrAd 3 – Susi Seleção By Milene Domingues



Figure 6.6. – *Estrela's Susi Seleção* by Milene Domingues

BrAd 5 – Susi Baile de Formatura



Figure 6.8. – Three pictures extracted from *Estrela's Susi Baile de Formatura*

BrAd 6 – Beto Estilo



Figure 6.9. – *Estrela's Beto Estilo*

BrAd 7 – Cartela Susi Visual da Moda



Figure 6.10. – *Estrela's Cartela Susi Visual da Moda*

BrAd 8 – Susi Aula de Natação



Figure 6.11. – *Estrela's Susi Aula de Natação*

BrAd 9 – Susi Moda Praia



Figure 6.12. – *Estrela's Susi Moda Praia*

BrAd 10 – Susi Patinadora



Figure 6.13.
Estrela's Susi Patinadora

Taken together, the analyses of the 10 advertisements of *Susi* doll show her being predominantly depicted as the main *represented* participant – that is, the most conspicuous participant about whom the advertiser is speaking – in most images, except for BrAd 6, where *Beto* appears as the main represented participant and BrAds 4 and 5

(3rd image), where *Susi* appears as an interactive participant alongside with *Beto*. Whenever *Susi* is shown as the main *represented* participant, however, her image takes centre stage in the advertisement (see BrAds 1,2,3,5, 1st and 2nd images;7,8,9 and 10) and she is somehow presented to the viewer as a product subjected to his/her dispassionate evaluation.

In order to provide a more detailed and explicit account of the visual syntactic patterns of the Brazilian advertisements under question and given the fact that a social semiotic approach to the analysis of images takes into consideration not only the syntactic relations between the represented participants in images (*representational meaning*), but also the things that images do to and for the viewer (*interactive meaning*) as well the organisation of the components within the pictorial framework, such as the information value, the layout and the framing of the image (*compositional meaning*) (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001, p. 3), I will now resort to these meanings in the subsequent sections.

6.4.1. Representational Meanings

When analysed in their *representational* semiotic meaning, the *BrAds* under investigation seem to generally fit into a *conceptual* type of *process* of visual structuring, wherein *Susi* is presented in rather static way, as an object to be defined, classified and even assessed by the viewer, as it can be seen in the Figures below:



Figure 6.14. *Susi Quatro Estações*
Conceptual structure



Figure 6.15. *Susi Baile de Formatura*
Conceptual structure

Nevertheless, when looked at in a more careful, systematic basis, each of the *BrAds* presents itself as a rather complex source of information about the way *Susi* is visually depicted. One of the ways such complexity is created derives from what Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) have addressed as *Circumstance of Setting* of the narrative visual structure. It accounts for the relationship established between the represented participants (RPs) and the *setting* – or *background* – of the pictorial framework, which, in pictures like *Susi*'s advertisements can 'anchor' the images and provide the viewer with a further comprehension of the nature of the activities performed by the depicted doll. This can be further visualised through the following Figure, which pictures *Susi* laid in a hammock against a tropical and sunny background, in a predominantly narrative visual structure characterized by its dynamic vectors:



Figure 6.16. *Susi Moda Praia*

According to Kress & van Leeuwen (ibid.), the required contrast between foreground and background of the image can be realised in four distinct ways:

- [1] the participants in the foreground overlap, and hence partially obscure the *Setting*;
- [2] the *Setting* is drawn or painted in less detail (or, in the case of the photography, has softer focus);
- [3] the *Setting* is more muted and desaturated in colour, with various colours tending towards the same hue, for instance the blue of distance;
- [4] the *Setting* is darker than the foreground, or lighter, so that it acquires an 'overexposed' ethereal look (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 71, *my italics*)

The absence of essentially dynamic vectors in *BrAds* 6 and 7 and the de-contextualised background in which *Beto* and the three versions of *Susi* are placed point to a sort of 'passive' portrait – or conceptual process – in which these toys assume the

role not of actors or agents of the visual structuring but of *carriers* of the *possessive attributes* which are pictorially assigned to them by virtue of their outfit and their physical appearance. The Figures shown next illustrate this relation:



Figure 6.17. *Brad 6*



Figure 6.18. *Brad 7*

On the other hand, BrAds 1,2,3,4, 5, 8, 9 and 10 are presented to the viewer as complex images in that they are embedded with a few narrative processes instantiated by the role that the background plays and the dynamic vectors which point to the sort of activities which *Susi* pictorially performs. This includes:

[1] *sports* as conveyed shown in BrAds 3, 8 and 10:

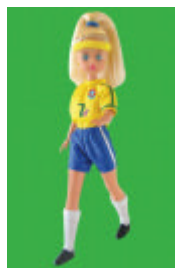


Figure 6.19: *BrAd 3*



Figure 6.20: *BrAd 8*



Figure 6.21: *BrAd 10*

Dynamic vectors portraying *Susi*'s sport activities

[2] *leisure* activities as in BrAds1,4 and 9:

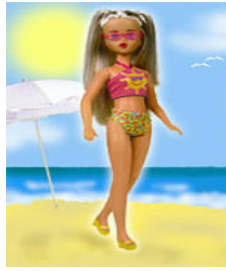


Figure 6.22: BrAd 1



Figure 6.23: BrAd 4



Figure 6.24: BrAd 9

Background portraying *Susi's* leisure activities

[3] *professional* activities such as the ones depicted in BrAds 2 and 5:



Figure 6.25: BrAd 2



Figure 6.26: BrAd 5

Background portraying *Susi's* professional activities

Notice that images like BrAd 3 can pose rather complex relationships regarding its visual structuring in that the plain, decontextualised background in which *Susi* is placed initially points to a conceptual type of visual structuring. Yet this is contradicted by the dynamic vector of her walking and the sense of movement that her sporty clothes convey, these being typical of a narrative image:



Figure 6.27: BrAd3

Complex relations created by background

The same applies to BrAds 8 and 10, whereby *Susi* is depicted swimming and roller-skating. The way *Susi*'s background – or her *Circumstance of Setting* – is pictorially constructed evokes in itself a sense of movement which signals to her narrative portrait:



Figure 6.28. BrAd10

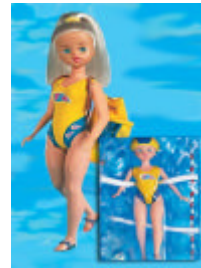


Figure 6.29. BrAd8

Complexity created by Circumstance of setting

Constructed differently, BrAds 1,2,4,5 and 9 picture *Susi* against highly contextualised backgrounds such as a sunny beach, an airport, a recreation area or a ballroom all of which serve to add more credibility to her naturalistic depiction:

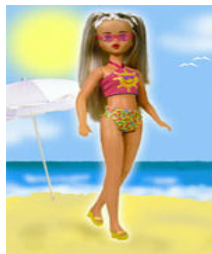


Figure 6.30. BrAd1



Figure 6.31. BrAd2



Figure 6.32. BrAd5

Credibility through background: naturalistic representation

In images like BrAd1, for example, *Susi* is presented within four different contexts – winter, summer, spring or autumn – whichever one she is expected to be appropriately dressed:



Figure 6.33. BrAd1

As can be in Figure 6.33, the colour schemes of such advertisement produce some affective meanings linked to the social signification of each season of the year: whereas winter and autumn are enacted by darker tones which predominate – even in *Susi*'s outfit – such as a tone of bluish purple used in the first advertisement, summer and spring are represented by a hot mix of yellow and pinkish tones which contribute to attach the idea of femininity related to these two seasons of the year. In the same vein, BrAd2 adopts more conventional, naturalistic colours to get closer to reality, as an attempt to come as close as possible to the real representation of an air hostess who walks along the aircraft path.

Insofar as their degree of realism is concerned, Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) have pointed out that girls' toys like dolls, for example, are represented in far more naturalistic detail than are boys' toys like the popular Playmobil figures or the “make-believe world of science-fiction vehicles and weapons, or [the] world of dinosaurs and other monsters” (ibid., p. 257). Conversely, girls' toys are typically represented by “highly naturalistic versions of adult objects” (ibid., p. 256), like “realistic washing machines, beauty shops, vacuum cleaners, dolls' cots” (ibid., p. 257). This, as both authors contend, is believed not only to emulate the adult universe but also to anticipate girls' roles as both mothers and housewives (ibid.).

Variations in the degree of realism of toys can also be verified according to the child's age range. According to Kress & van Leeuwen (ibid.), the younger the child, the more abstract and essentialised the representation of his/her toys. Just like the old Playmobil figures, whose eyes are generally represented by “two dots, the mouth [by] a curved line, the hair [by] an almost featureless helmet with a few indentations suggesting texture and the length signifying gender” (p. 257), young children's toys are marked by featureless shapes and textures (ibid.). However, as the child grows older,

the level of specificity and details of his/her toys increases, as in the case of the Brazilian doll *Susi*, who has reached such a reasonable level of realism from the point of view of representational detail, that she is presented to the viewer under various models, different outfits, “with blushes on cheeks, shadows under eyes [and] a shine on the lips” (ibid., p. 258), traces which surely resemble a real teenage woman. This can be observed in Figure 6.34 displayed next, which shows *Susi Baile de Formatura* in magnified version so that its high level of representational detail becomes more visible:

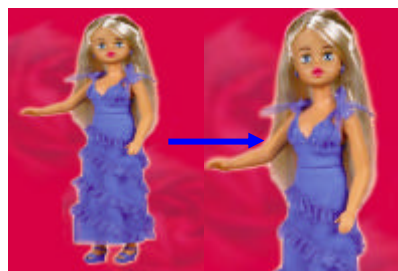


Figure 6.34. *Susi Baile de Formatura*
High level of representational detail

In *Susi*'s advertised images, the level of representational detail is conveyed not only by means of her naturalistic appearance but also by the way her activities are constructed through vectors which communicate her process of interaction with both her *Circumstance of Setting* and with other represented participants. Take, for example, BrAds 4 and 5 (3rd image):



Figure 6.35. *BrAd4*



Figure 6.36. *BrAd5*

In these advertisements, *Susi* is shown as an interactive participant connected to a second interactive one by means of a vector which expresses the ‘dynamic’ relationship going on between them. In BrAd4, for example, *Beto* is presented as the main

participant of the visual structuring, the *Actor* from whom the vector emanates towards *Susi*, the *Goal*, who, in turn, is looking away. In this particular case, both participants are involved in a *non-transactional action*, in which the vector does not convey a *reaction* from whom the action is done to. Here *Susi* assumes a more passive role in not having ‘responded’ to *Beto*’s gaze probably because she had not yet taken notice of his arrival.

Studies of narrative processes and the nature of women and men’s participation in images have indicated that women are indeed chiefly presented as more passive and more involved in non-transactional actions than men, who are often presented as involved in transactional actions which portray them as seizing the initiative in, for example, starting sexual activities (Jewitt & Oyama, p. 2001, p. 143).

In a similar vein, in her account on toy advertisements from the 1950’s and 1960’s, Seiter (1993) also draws attention to the ‘passive’ representation of girls in these images, with the girl often ‘watching’ while the boy plays or with “mother and daughter often [taking] the place of observers of the action, spectators to the male bonding of father and son at play” (p. 81). On this respect, Seiter (ibid.) claims that the inclusion of girls as active participants in images like toy advertisements is virtually irreconcilable with “traditional notions of maleness” (p. 93) albeit acknowledges a few incorporations of girls’ active appearances while featured alone in contemporary toy advertisements. This is particularly the case of *Susi*’s advertisements, which do include a number of images wherein *Susi* is portrayed as actively involved in varied activities, which, in a sense, serves to demystify the traditional passive role ascribed to women in representations such as toy advertisements.

As narrative images embedded within *classificational* structures, pictures such as BrAd1 relates the participant(s) through a *covert taxonomy* which communicates to the

viewer how, for example, *Susi*'s four identities promoted by her outfit possibilities are realised by being 'of the same kind' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 83). The same happens to the three instances of *Susi*'s graduate ball shown in BrAd5, whereby the viewer is presented with interrelated moments of what has been verbally described as 'one of the happiest days of her life'.

Next, I shall spell out the ways by which interpersonal relations can be enhanced through *Susi*'s advertisements.

6.4.2. Interactive Meanings

As interpersonal relations can arouse from the establishment of interaction between the represented participants of a given image and/or between the represented participant (s) and the viewer of the image, one can say that this occurs in the *BrAds* under analysis in a number of ways.

Firstly, by portraying *Susi* and *Beto* holding hands and dancing while their gaze is directed to the camera in the 3rd picture of BrAd5, the viewer is somehow 'demanded' to establish an imaginary relationship of social affinity with them, as if invited to become part of the moment they are experiencing:



Figure 6.37.BrAd5

This type of gaze categorised as *demand* and actualised in pictorial genres such as doll advertisements, foregrounds persuasion at the same time it backgrounds instruction and exposition, as Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) assert (1996). The sense of connection

invoked by the demand picture is equally instantiated in images like BrAds 1,3,5,6,7,8,9, and 10 whereby *Susi* addresses the viewer directly, as if explicitly demanding to be scrutinised.

As said, the meaning expressed by a *demand* picture reinforces the bond between the viewer and the participant(s) depicted, although such an empathetic relation is not utterly fostered in that the doll is frequently depicted in a slightly *oblique* manner, which foregrounds a sense of detachment from the part of the represented participant. As highlighted under Chapter 5, whenever the participant is presented in profile, the viewer tends to conceive of him/her as not belonging to their world (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 143).

In further exploring the question of involvement of the audience with the depicted dolls, it can also be noticed that both *Susi* and *Beto* are predominantly shown from a *long shot* whereby their full body and the surrounding space can be observed. This is believed to entail an unattached view of them in ‘outline’ as if they were “types to be analytically examined rather than individuals with their own specificity” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p.148). Pictorially speaking, such a ‘far social distance’ as Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) put it, has a more formal and impersonal character, inasmuch as it allows the viewer to carefully scrutinise the depicted participant as if saying “stand away so that I can look at you” (ibid., p. 131).



Figure 6.38.BrAd1



Figure 6.39.BrAd5

Scrutiny through far social distance

Identification is therefore fostered through the depiction of the dolls as whole figures and this can also be noticed through an examination on the way the viewer is aligned in perspective with the represented participant(s). As pointed out under Chapter 5, the concept of perspective is linked to the type of subjective attitude (s) established between the represented participant (RP) and the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). In that respect, the use of a *frontal angle* in Figures 6.38 and 6.39 is believed to produce an attitude of involvement from the part of the viewer, who is invited to become part of the world depicted in the images.

Also, by virtue of an *eye-level gaze*, a relationship of equality between *Susi* and the viewer is encoded, to the point that there is no power difference between them (ibid., p. 146). The use of this type of angle is particularly effective in advertisements such as toys', for they help to invoke an attitude (s) of friendship and empathy with the viewer established through power equality, thus fostering consumption, the ultimate goal of advertising.

Insofar as the reality value – or the degree of *modality* – of *Susi*'s advertisements is concerned, it can be said that the choice for differentiated tones on the bare, 'de-contextualised' setting in most of the *BrAds* increases the *sensory modality* of the image by adding a 'more-than-real' effect to the product being advertised, thus rendering it the impression of a 'fantasy' or the 'promise of bliss' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

Indeed, the placement of represented participants against a void, unmodulated background assigns them the value of a more generic type, the status of a 'typical example' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 166). By nature, naturalistic images like *BrAd7*, for example, are characterised by a contrast range of brightness values, "often in ways which have no explanation in terms of the logic of illumination" (ibid., p. 167). Here, again, the variation from a darker tone of pink to a lighter one, mixed with the

brightness created by the yellowish ‘lit’ areas and the dolls’ shadows brings about an ethereal sensation triggered by the dolls’ hyper-real appeal caused by a high modality value. Also, props such as the use of lighter tones in these advertisements (e.g. BrAds 1,2 and 4), suffice to lower the sensory modality of the image to the extent of giving them a sense of ‘photographic naturalism’ (Kress & van Leeuwen, p. 166).

In the next section, I will attempt at highlighting the ways representational and interactive features in *Susi*’s advertisements integrate in order to produce a coherent, meaningful whole.

6.4.3. Compositional Meanings

Compositionally, the visual configurations of *Susi*’s advertisements are organised around the placement of elements within the pictorial framework according to the following patterns: (1) top/bottom, left/right and centre/margin structures; (2) salience; and (3) framing.

As aforementioned, *Susi* is mainly placed in shaper focus in the foreground of the image, mostly in a central position (e.g. BrAds 1,2,3,5,6,7,9 and 10), which posits her preponderant role in the image over other ancillary elements. In Brad 1, for example, all four pictures display *Susi* as the most important element within the images by placing her in central position:



Figure 6.40. *Susi Quatro Estações*

Differently, BrAd 4 pictures *Susi* at the bottom, right-hand corner of the image, in a marginal pictorial zone which implies her subordinate, secondary position in relation to *Beto*, who is placed on top of the right-hand corner of the referring visual composition. In line with what has been said on Chapter 5 about the *informational value* of such dichotomies of pictorial zones, BrAd4 is therefore believed to portray both *Susi* and *Beto* as the key information ‘at issue’ within the image, the message to which the viewer must pay particular attention:



Figure 6.41. *BrAd4*

Likewise, the depiction of *Susi* in her swimming costume on the left of the picture in BrAd8 implies that this is information with which the viewer is already acquainted, something s/he is assumed to know already. Nonetheless, her depiction at the bottom, right hand corner of the image conveys the *real* information of what this specific model of *Susi* can do, that is, she can get wet and perform her swimming abilities:

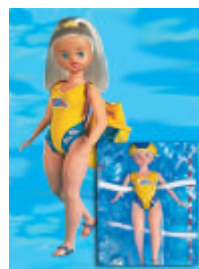


Figure 6.42. *BrAd 8*

The value of the colour schemes used in the advertisements under analysis also serves to question if the elements within the images are meant to be connected together as ‘one unit of information’ (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 215) or if, contrarily, their absence of connection – that is, of *framing* – denotes the individual character of each

pictorial item (ibid.). On this matter, the strong framing formed by the repetitive use of bright, vibrant colours on the background of many advertisements (e.g. BrAd1,3,5,6,7,8 and 9) not only serves to catch the viewer's attention to the most salient element(s) of the picture – *Susi* and *Beto* dolls – but also functions as a disconnective device that clearly demarcates the outlines of the dolls thus enhancing their *salience* and underpinning their individuality.

An example of this is BrAd3, in which *Susi*'s presence is stressed at the foreground of the image by being placed against a bright green backdrop that contrasts with the vivid yellow and deep blue hues of her outfit:

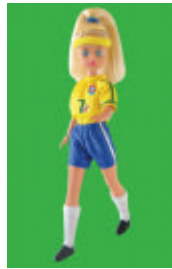


Figure 6.43. *BrAd3*

Similarly, BrAd6 makes *Beto*'s figure even more conspicuous through the use of strong, vibrant colours such as deep purple, dark pink and bright green at the background of the image and through the highlighting contours around *Beto*'s body:



Figure 6.44. *BrAd3*

The subsequent section summarises the most relevant findings concerning the lexico-grammatical and visual analysis of *Susi*'s advertisements.

6.5. Concluding Remarks on the Analysis of *BrAds*

All in all, the discussion on the verbal and visual features of the advertisements of Brazilian doll *Susi* has helped to shed a light on how the image of Brazilian young women is verbally and visually conveyed through two-dimensional vehicles such as fashion dolls' advertisements.

Along the lines of the verbal analysis, the visual analysis has corroborated the hypothesis that Brazilian women are generally portrayed as being more passive than men, as receivers of the attributes assigned to them mainly on the basis of their aesthetic qualities. Proof of such an objectivisation of the female role is the high incidence of conceptual, analytical visual structures in the *BrAds* under analysis which present and categorise *Susi* in terms of her looks. Nevertheless, there has also been a verified revamp of this submissive image through the depiction of *Susi* as involved in professional and leisure activities as the *BrAds* have shown and I have confirmed during my personal visit to the *Estrela* toy museum.

Still, *Susi*'s kinetic properties constitute another key to the meaning potential conveyed by the visual representation of the Brazilian doll. Her inability to stand by herself has been verbally made explicit in the clause *Susi não pára em pé sozinha* virtually present in all of her ads, including BrAd 5 in which the reader is reminded that *Susi não pára em pé sozinha e não segura o canudo como nas fotos*¹³. Such a limitation in dolls' movements has been extensively addressed by Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen (2001) while discussing the construction of gender in the representation of toys. According to them, "some toys are designed for action, others for posing" (p. 98) and here dolls like *Barbie* – one of their objects of investigation – and *Susi* are included.

¹³ The translation into English would be: *Susi cannot stand on her feet nor can she hold her certificate as pictured in the images.*

The fact that dolls like *Barbie* and *Susi* can neither stand by themselves, hold anything in their hands, open their legs wide apart nor move their head in any direction (ibid., p. 98) certainly conveys some gendered meanings as for the way women are semiotically represented through girls' dolls. In stark contrast to women's 'submissive' representation, boys' dolls – except for *Susi's Beto* – are endowed with a movement potential which allows them to stand by themselves without falling over, hold objects, move their head sideways and open their legs wide apart (ibid.). The referring kinetic differences encoded by the visual representations of toys help to capture the essence of the social view on men's and women's roles in contemporary society.

In order to check how the female image is visually and verbally portrayed and cross-culturally perceived, I shall now move to the presentation of the analysis concerning the North-American *Bratz* dolls.

Chapter 7

Verbal and Visual Analysis: The Representation of Reality in the American Toy Advertisements (*AmAds*)

My customers are not the shops, they are the little girls. And I know little girls who are white, brown, black and yellow, and that is the world they live in. Every kid can say, I am Cloe, or I am Yasmin, or I am Jade. The dolls reflect the reality that modern children live in (Isaac Larian, *The Week*, 10th January 2004)

Just as done in Chapter 6, the present chapter includes the verbal and visual analysis of 10 advertisements from North-American dolls *The Bratz* available at www.bratz.com.

In a similar fashion, the chapter is organised into (1) an introduction about the toy advertisements to be analysed; (2) a background on the dolls and their manufacturer and the (3) analysis itself, subdivided into (i) verbal analysis (nominal groups and transitivity features) and (ii) visual analysis.

7.1. American Toy Ads (*AmAds*)

Applying the same methodological procedure used for the analysis of the Brazilian toy advertisements, the American toy advertisements will be subsequently examined in what concerns their verbal and visual features, following Halliday's (1985) concepts of nominal groups and the system of transitivity for the verbal analysis and Kress' and van Leeuwen's (1996) theoretical framework for the visual analysis.

Likewise, I will bear the research questions under Chapter 6 in mind while discussing the data results. In line with the classification of the Brazilian doll

advertisements, I will henceforth identify the American toy ads as ‘AmAds’ and number them from 1 to 10.

Prior to the analysis proper, I will present the reader with a background to the American toy manufacturer *M.G.A.* and its doll collection *The Bratz*, used for the comparative purpose of the underlying study.

7.2. Background on Toy Manufacturer *M.G.A. Entertainment* and *The Bratz* dolls

Toy company *M.G.A. Entertainment* was set up as a consumer electronic business in 1979 but its début on the toy market occurred in 1987 when the company won the license to import Nintendo from Japan (information available at <http://www.mgae.com/about.asp>). However, *MGA*’s highest achievements as a toy manufacturer only came in 2002 when the Award-Winning fashion dolls *The Bratz* collection gained the recognition from a number of toy experts and received a great number of toy awards, including The 2003 Outstanding Toy Manufacturer Recognition of Excellence Award from Dr. Toy, the First Place for Girls Toys – 2003, Toys R Us 2003 Vendor of the Year Award, among others (ibid.).

As one of the most successful products of *M.G.A.*, the *Bratz* brand was released in 2002 mainly targeted to clothing items and footwear. Since then the *Bratz* brand has gained extensions in “stationery, school supplies, video games, board games, puzzles, Halloween costumes and party goods, to name a few” (ibid.).

Being a huge market success since then, the *Bratz* earned more than two and a half billion dollars worldwide in 2003 and this number keeps on growing in impressive figures, ending *Barbie*’s 44-year reign as queen of the global toy cupboard since her ‘birth’ in 1959, according to British magazine *The Week* (10th January 2004).

The *Bratz* dolls are composed of Dana, Yasmin, Cloe, Jade and Sasha and their male counterparts, the *Bratz* boys, Dylan, Cameron, Eitan and Koby. They stand for

rather contemporary-looking teenagers who, in the particular case of the female dolls, stick out for their protruding lips, heavy-lidded eyes and flashily-trendy appearance.

The *Bratz* creator, the Iranian-born entrepreneur Isaac Larian, has claimed that children identify with the *Bratz* simply because they project themselves as the *Bratz* in the present or near future. Differently from *Barbie* – whose age, according to a market research done by *M.G.A.*, ranges from 35 to 45 years old – the *Bratz* are seen by children as either teenagers or pre-teenagers, which validates their credit as toy references (*The Week* 10th January 2004).

As typical teenagers, the *Bratz*'s aesthetical features also contribute, as claimed by *Bratz* producer Isaac Larian, to create an image of 'shapeless little girls' in that their big heads, big feet and multicultural, funky looks do not reflect an idealized image of teenagehood, as *Barbie* does in her adulthood.

Indeed, Larian's insistence on making the *Bratz* echo "all races and ethnic cultures, from white to black, Asian, Jewish and Hispanic" has added a multicultural element to these dolls' image (ibid.). His main contention in 'toyalising' white, brown, black and yellow little girls from all over the world is that the dolls will then contribute to add realism and consequently revamp the representation of real-world contemporary children's reality.

7.3. Verbal Analysis

In line with the analytical procedure applied to the verbal analysis of *Susi*'s advertisements (BrAds), ten texts have been randomly selected from the web site of *The Bratz* at www.bratz.com, with a view to discuss the ideological aspects represented through their lexical, grammatical and visual features.

AmAd 1 – The Style It Fashion Collection	AmAd 2 – The Funk Show
<p>It's a fashion spectacular with Bratz, the girls with a passion for fashion™!</p> <p>With new fashion looks that keep these funky and hip dolls at the top of their game, Cloe™, Sasha™, Jade™, Yasmin™ and the newest addition to the BratzPack™, Dana™, prove once again that looking good means feeling good!</p>	<p>Spend a funky evening out and about looking top-notch with everybody's favorite fashion friends!</p> <p>With a funky formal fashion look plus an awesome after-party outfit, this totally-stylin' dress-up themed set also features tons of sizzlin' accessories, an exclusive memory book with exclusive Bratz pics, and a display mannequin to hang the fashions on! Available in nine Bratz and Bratz Boyz styles, formal wear was never this funkadelic!</p>
AmAd 3 – Bratz Boys Formal Funk	AmAd 4 – The Funk'n'Glow Collection
<p>Meet the boys with a passion for fashion...and the Bratz!</p> <p>The Boyz, like the Bratz themselves, have a highly developed fashion sense for styles cutting-edge and super-cool! No matter the time or place, these Boyz love to hang out with their girl counterparts the Bratz, whether it be out and about, or just chillin'!</p>	<p>On Saturday night, it's time to hit the town and dance the night away!</p> <p>At the clubs, the Bratz know how important it is to be seen! With the Funk 'N' Glow™ Collection, the girls can do just that, with awesome cutting-edge fashion styles that actually light up!</p>
AmAd 5 – The Bratz Collectors' Edition	AmAd 6 – WinterTime Wonderland
<p>It's a fashion extravaganza with these limited edition, holiday-themed Bratz!</p> <p>These Bratz are so hot, you just may never take 'em out of the package! Unlike previous Bratz outings, each Holiday Collector's Edition Bratz release will feature only ONE of the girls with a passion for fashion™ each year in a unique stylin' look that you can't get anywhere else, making them highly collectible! With more elaborate detailing and fashions, plus tons of incredible fashion accessories, these holiday-themed Bratz are sure to be the highlight of every Bratz collection!!</p>	<p>Snow is on the ground and that can only mean one thing: It's time to experience the winter season, Bratz-style!</p> <p>Join all the girls with a passion for fashion™ as they bundle up and hit the slopes. Specific "sport 'n' style" item ensures that necessities, each girl, in addition to bringing the beauty brings a little something extra to make the fun a little more fashionably sporty! With over 15 accessories in total, plus the hottest fashions ever, it's sure to be one totally-cool season! Available in five Bratz styles!</p>
AmAd 7 - Bratz' Limited Collector's Edition Yasmin	AmAd 8 – Slumber Party
<p>The girls with a passion for fashion™ just became "Real-ly" Stylin' with this large-sized Limited Edition Bratz Exclusive!</p> <p>Standing over two feet the Bratz have never looked more beautiful or fashionable! Available in only one exclusive style to ensure collector status, and including the hottest fashions and accessories ever, bigger is definitely better!</p>	<p>It's Friday night and that can only mean one thing: It's time for a Stylin' Slumber Party!</p> <p>Join all the girls with a passion for fashion™ as they spend a fabulous night together doing all things girls love to do when they're up at two in the morning!</p> <p>Specific "party responsibility" accessories ensure that each girl, in addition to bringing the beauty necessities, brings a little something extra to make the party extra stylin'! With over 30 accessories in total, and fashions to put everybody else to rest, this is one party you'll never forget! Five Bratz Slumber Party packs in all!</p>
AmAd 9 - Bratz Boys	AmAd 10 – Fashion Packs
<p>Meet the boys with a passion for fashion...and the Bratz!</p> <p>The Boyz, like the Bratz themselves, have highly developed fashion sense for styles cutting-edge and super-cool! No matter the time or place, these Boyz love to hang out with their girl counterparts the Bratz, whether it be out and about, or just chillin'!</p>	<p>Three Different Fashion Styles Designed Exclusively to Fit All Bratz!</p> <p>As everyone knows, the most important thing to the Bratz is what they are wearing at any one time. Therefore, it is very important to have the newest and coolest clothes to mix and match at all times! With these new Bratz Fashion Packs™, they can do just that!</p>

Figure 7.1. American Toy Advertisements (*AmAds*)
(extracted and adapted from www.mgae.com)

7.3.1. Nominal Groups

Inasmuch as the lexical choices of a text are built upon to create an ideological picture of reality, it becomes possible to say that the structure of the nominal groups identified in the examined *AmAds* seems to reinforce the ideology of consumption by treating the industry of beauty as a 'necessity' and inculcating in children consumerist values which are often associated with the culture of the USA (Wright, 2003; Faludi, mentioned in Gauntlett, 2002, p. 9).

Consumerism, in the case of the *AmAds*, is translated into *fashion* and *style* consumption, recurrent terms which attest to the importance given to these issues in contemporary girls' lives. This can be noticed in the following nominal groups taken from the selected *AmAds*:

- (...) a **fashion** spectacular with Bratz (AmAd1)
- (...) the girls with a passion for **fashion!** (AmAds1,5,6,7)
- With new **fashion** looks that keep these funky and hip dolls at the top of their game (AmAd1)
- (...) looking top-notch with everybody's favorite **fashion** friends! (AmAd2)
- With a funky formal **fashion** look plus an awesome after-party outfit (AmAd2)
- (...) totally-**stylin'** dress-up themed set also features tons of sizzlin' accessories (AmAd2)
- (...) a display mannequin to hang the **fashions** on! (AmAd2)
- (...) formal wear was never this funkadelic! (AmAd2)
- (...) the boys with a passion for **fashion** (AmAd3)
- (...) a highly developed **fashion** sense for **styles** cutting- edge and super-cool!! (AmAds3, 9)
- (...) with awesome cutting-edge **fashion style**s that actually light up! (AmAd4)
- (...) a **fashion** extravaganza (AmAd5)
- (...) a unique **stylin'** look (AmAd5)
- With more elaborate detailing and **fashions**, plus tons of incredible **fashion** accessories (AmAd5)
- Specific "sport 'n' **style**" item (AmAd6)
- (...) more **fashionably** sporty (AmAd6)
- (...) hottest **fashions** and accessories ever! (AmAds6, 7)
- (...) the Bratz have never looked more beautiful or **fashionable**(AmAd7)
- Specific "party responsibility" accessories (AmAd 8)
- (...) beauty necessities (AmAd 8)
- (...) a little something extra to make the party extra **stylin'**! (AmAd 8)
- (...) **fashions** to put everybody else to rest (AmAd 8)
- Three Different **Fashion Styles** (AmAd 10)
- (...) the newest and coolest clothes to mix and match at all times (AmAd 10)

As seen, the extensive emphasis given to the ideology of fashion in the *AmAds* substantiates the assumption that these advertisements manage to consolidate the

creation of a universe socially shared by *girls with a passion for fashion*, a recurrent Qualifier in AmAds 1,5,6,7 and 8. What they portray, in fact, is the lifestyle of a generation of teenage girls who have their lives dictated by the capitalistic rules of the consumerist market. The referring *AmAds* attach materialistic values to these girls' sense of satisfaction as if they sufficed to tether their self-confidence to their appearance.

The relevance granted to the issue of fashion in the *AmAds* under analysis can be better visualised through the following table, which summarises the figures related to the number of occurrences of the word *fashion* and its derivatives as regarding the entire corpus:

Lexis related to Fashion	Number of Occurrences
fashion	20
fashions	5
fashionable	1
fashionably	1
number of words in AmAds: 8.978	number of occurrences: 27

Table 7.1– Occurrences of lexis related to fashion in *AmAds*

In that respect, the lexical choices of the referring *AmAds* help to convey specific ideological structures of meaning such as the encouragement of fashion consumption through nominal groups which appraise girls' 'fashionable' world in terms of recurrent Epithets, Classifiers and Qualifiers such as *spectacular* (AmAd 1), *awesome* (AmAd2), *exclusive* (AmAd2), *super-cool* (AmAd3), *hottest* (AmAd 6), *newest*, *coolest* (AmAd 10) and *totally-cool* (AmAd 6). Other prevailing Qualifiers and Epithets and their corresponding number of occurrences have been identified in Table 7.2 as follows:

Nominal Groups related to Fashion & Style	Number of Occurrences
girls with a passion for fashion (Qualifier)	5
boys with a passion for fashion (Qualifier)	2
styles cutting-edge and super-cool (Qualifier)	2
beauty necessities (Epithet)	2
highly developed fashion sense (Epithet)	2

Table 7.2. – Nominal Groups related to Fashion & Style in *AmAds*

The sort of Numeratives identified in the *AmAds* also posits the idea of excessive indulgence associated to the North-American culture, as it can be observed in the examples shown below:

tons of sizzlin' accessories (AmAd 2)
 With more elaborate detailing and fashions, plus **tons of** incredible fashion accessories (AmA 5)

Likewise, the nature of the intensifiers employed in the advertisements of the *Bratz* seems to validate the idea that their advertisers persuasively operate at the textual level to perpetuate ideological structures of domination such as a tendency towards unwarranted consumerism in teenage girls:

(...) **totally**-stylin' dress-up themed set (AmAd 2)
 (...) **highly** developed fashion sense (AmAds 3 and 9)
 (...) making them **highly** collectible (AmAd 5)
 (...) **totally**-cool season (AmAd 6)

For a broader viewing on the most significant and recurrent nominal groups identified in the *AmAds*, take the following Figure:

<i>Fashion/ Style</i>		
AmAd 1	AmAd2	AmAd 3
fashion spectacular girls with a passion for fashion new fashion looks fashion spectacular girls with a passion for fashion funky hip dolls at the top of their games	looking top-notch favorite fashion friends funky formal fashion look awesome after-party outfit totally-stylin' dress-up themed set tons of sizzlin' accessories exclusive Bratz pics display mannequin formal wear funkadelic	boys with a passion for fashion highly developed fashion sense styles cutting-edge and super-cool
AmAd 4	AmAd 5	AmAd 6
awesome cutting-edge fashion styles	fashion extravaganza holiday-themed Bratz girls with a passion for fashion a unique stylin' look elaborate detailing and fashions tons of incredible fashion accessories holiday-themed Bratz	Bratz-style girls with a passion for fashion "sport 'n' style" item beauty necessities fashionably sporty the hottest fashions ever one totally-cool season five Bratz styles
AmAd 7	AmAd 8	AmAd 9
Girls with a passion for fashion beautiful or fashionable! one exclusive style the hottest fashions and accessories ever	the girls with a passion for fashion specific "party responsibility" accessories beauty necessities extra stylin' fashions	boys with a passion for fashion highly developed fashion sense styles cutting-edge and super-cool
AmAd 10		
The newest and coolest clothes		

Figure 7.2. – Epithets and Nominal Groups in *AmAds* related to Fashion and Style

Concisely, one can say that the *Bratz*' advertisements are prolific insofar as words related to fashion ad style are concerned. However, when compared to *Susi*'s ads, they are more general and less descriptive in what regards the lexis used to specify the items of clothing that compose the dolls' outfit. On the other hand, the prevalent lexical choices operate as structures of signification embedded with ideological meanings based on the rhetoric of consumerism, which help to portray the social identities conveyed by the referring advertisements.

The following section will deal with the most significant transitivity features found in the *Bratz*' advertisements.

7.3.2. Transitivity Features

As the semantic concept of transitivity entails world representation and signification through linguistic choices regarding the types of processes, participants and circumstances within the ideational metafunction, one can say that in the case of the *AmAds* under discussion this signification preponderantly occurs by means of 'doing' actions whereby material processes outnumber relational and mental to reveal aspects of the activities performed by the participants involved in the processes.

The following instances extracted from my data provide an overall picture of the type of actions accomplished by the *Bratz*, the main participants of the processes detected in the ads:

No matter the time or place these Boyz **love to hang out** with their girl counterparts (...) (AmAd 3)
(...) they **bundle up** and **hit** the slopes. (AmAd 6)
(...) each girl, in addition to **bringing** the beauty **brings** a little more fashionably sporty (AmAd 6)
(...) they **spend** a fabulous night together **doing** all things girls **love to do** (...) (AmAd 8)

As seen in the excerpts above, the *Bratz* are mainly recognized as the Actors of their material processes such as *hanging out with their girl counterparts* (AmAd3),

bundling up and hitting the slopes (AmAd 6) or *spending a fabulous night together doing all things girls love to do* (AmAd 8). The actions of hanging out and spending the night together point to the gregarious nature of the activities performed by the *Bratz*, a characteristic of the language used in the ads which enhances a higher degree of intimacy and acts as a persuasion tool in evoking closeness and interaction with the consumer, who is directly invited to be ‘part of the group’ through imperative statements like *Spend a funky evening out* (AmAd 2) and *Meet the boys with a passion for fashion* (AmAds 3 and 9) and *Join all the girls with a passion for fashion* (AmAd 8).

Other verbal choices include occurrences of relational processes in which the *Bratz* are identified according to their attributes:

These Bratz	Are	so hot
The Bratz themselves	have	a highly developed fashion sense for styles cutting- edge and super-cool!
These holiday-themed Bratz	Are	sure to be the highlight of every Bratz collection!!
the most important thing to the Bratz.	Is	what they are wearing at any one time
it	Is	very important to have the newest and coolest clothes to mix and match at all times!
Carrier	Relational Process: attributive clause	Attribute

Figure 7.3. – Relational Processes in *AmAds*

As it can be inferred from the examples above, just as reflected through the analysis of their nominal groups, the analysis of the relational processes of the examined *AmAds* also posits the extreme importance that is granted to issues like fashion and appearance. A further look at the nature of the Attributes identified in the referring *AmAds* reveals that not only do the *Bratz* dolls and their potential customers value fashion but they also consider this to be *the most important thing* in their lives (AmAd10).

The Mental processes detected in the examined *AmAds* constitute a representation of how values and beliefs are portrayed through these processes of perception, as it can be noted in examples shown in the following Figure:

The Bratz	Know	how important it is to be seen
these Boyz	Love	to hang out with their girl counterparts the Bratz
All things girls	Love	to do when they're up at two in the morning!
Senser	Mental Process	Phenomenon

Figure 7.4. –Mental Processes in *AmAds*

Corroborating what has been stated in the analysis of the relational processes of the *AmAds*, *The Bratz* view social judgement about their appearance as a way to be included and accepted in society (*The Bratz know how important it is to be seen*; AmAd4). As the *Bratz* value fashion and style, they are expected to conform to society's aesthetic requirements in that for them, *looking good* (relational process) means *feeling good* (mental process). Their concept of happiness is thus dependent on values such as *looks* and *fashion*.

Indeed, as pointed out by Kline (1993), issues like *looks* and *fashion* circumscribe the contents of dolls' advertisements in that for girls, "fashion is a social drama where popularity is the ultimate achievement and popularity is achieved through 'the look'" (p. 270). In that respect, the advertisements of fashion dolls like *The Bratz* ultimately convey a "female world where each is judged not so much for *what* the dolls can *do* as *how they look*" (ibid., *my italics*).

Other mental processes identified in the *Bratz*' advertisements point to the passionate nature of their actions (*These Boyz love to hang out with their girl counterparts the Bratz*; AmAds 3 and 9; *All things girls love to do when they're up at two in the morning*, AmAd 8), which seems to suggest that these girls have developed a

strong affective bond with their peers, thus expressing values such as friendship and intimacy in their advertisements.

To sum up, Table 7.3 below describes the types of processes in which the *Bratz* appear as the main participants in their advertisements together with their corresponding number of occurrences in percentage:

Type of Process	Processes	Number of Occurrences in whole corpus (69 processes)
Material	prove, spend a fabulous night together, make the party extra stylin', put every one else to rest, bundle up, hit the slopes, bring the beauty necessities	38
Relational	looking good, became, are up at two, are hot, have a highly developed fashion sense, to be seen	26
Mental	feel good, love to hang out, know	5

Table 7.3. – Processes and number of occurrences in *AmAds*

As it could be noticed in the Table above, just as *Susi*'s texts, the *Bratz*' texts are mainly construed in terms of material and relational processes. A further investigation on the nature of these processes has shown that the material processes employed in the investigated *AmAds* point to the establishment of a friendship relation between the dolls and their potential consumers through the depiction of activities which are typical of their age group, such as *hanging out with their counterparts* (AmAd3), *hitting the town and dancing the night away*(AmAd4), *bundling up and hitting the slopes* (AmAd6) and *spending a fabulous night together* (AmAd8).

Another relevant aspect in the investigated *AmAds* has been revealed through a closer look at their relational processes. They emphasise the priority given to fashion over other issues in contemporary girls' lives by placing the utmost importance on girls' appearance and on society's judgement about one's looks. For the *Bratz* dolls and their customers, not only is it essential to dress well, to have the right outfit, to have a strong fashion sense, but above all, to be seen.

The next section examines the most prevailing visual features in the *AmAds*.

7.4. Visual Analysis

As it has been done with the Brazilian doll advertisements (*BrAds*), the ten North-American advertisements belonging to the *Bratz*' collection (*AmAds*) have had their dimensional features modified for the purpose of fitting the format of the page of the underlying study. The referring set of ten advertisements will be numbered from 1 to 10 and examined in terms of their most recurrent design features with a view to unveiling some of their embedded significations. Let us consider the following advertisements:

AmAds American Advertisements

AmAd 1 – The Style It Fashion Collection



Figure 7.5. – MGA Bratz' The Style It Fashion Collection

AmAd 3 – Bratz Boys Formal Funk



Figure 7.7. – MGA Bratz' Boys Formal Funk

AmAd 2 – The Funk Show



Figure 7.6. – MGA Bratz' The Funk Show

AmAd 4 – The Funk'n'Glow Collection



Figure 7.8. – MGA Bratz' The Funk'n'Glow Collection

AmAd 5 – The Bratz Collectors' Edition



Figure 7.9. – Four pictures extracted from *The Bratz Collectors' Edition*

AmAd 6 – WinterTime Wonderland



Figure 7.10. – *MGA Bratz' WinterTime Wonderland*

AmAd 7 – Bratz' Limited Collector's Edition Yasmin



Figure 7.11. – *MGA Bratz' Limited Collector's Edition Yasmin*

AmAd 8 – Slumber Party



Figure 7.12. – *MGA Bratz' Slumber Party*

AmAd 9 – Bratz Boys

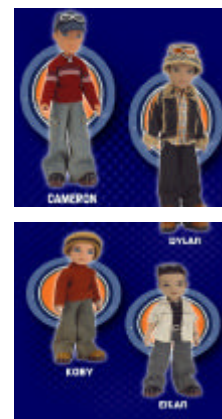


Figure 7.13 – *MGA Bratz' Boys*

AmAd 10 – Fashion Packs



Figure 7.14. – *MGA Bratz' Fashion Packs*

Iconic signs like toys tend to incorporate the different social and cultural contexts in which they are embedded. In that respect, the visual features of the above advertisements are noteworthy in that they reflect the identities ingrained in the socio-cultural traditions of North-American society.

Proof of this is the depiction of the five ‘multicultural’ North-American dolls that comprise the *Bratz* collection – Dana, Yasmin, Cloe, Jade and Sasha – each of them belonging to a particular race and/or ethnic group, “from black to white, Asian, Jewish and Hispanic”, as *Bratz* producer Isaac Laarian contends (*The Week*, 10th January 2004, p. 33).

The multi-ethnicity of the *Bratz* is marked by their rather distinct aesthetic features like the colour of their skin and their hair type and style, which turn them into semiotic representations of a broad range of racial classes. Yet such an ethnic diversity gets elided in their standardised bodily features: big-sized heads and eyes, protuberant lips and unrealistic popped-off feet.

Be that as it may, the portrayal of such multiculturalism through a semiotic representation like the *Bratz* dolls conveys the social and cultural hybridism which is deeply rooted in the historic formation of North-American society. The absence of fixed aesthetic parameters to describe the looks of the typical North-American citizen leaves the semiotic representation of North-American women open to the multiplicity of possibilities that these pluralistic dolls can offer.

By presenting a variety of semiotic possibilities to the image of North-American women, the *Bratz* advertisers have managed to extend the concept of femaleness so that it encompasses a range of cultural – and hereby visual – representations instead of merely attaching one singular aesthetic model – a ‘prop’ – to be taken as ideal.

The wish to escape from a fixed idealised female image has also led the *Bratz* producers to intentionally design the dolls to look disproportionate in their measures – the heads and feet of the dolls are depicted larger in size which somehow accentuates their glittering, exotic looks. As toy manufacturer Isaac Larian has alleged, “the *Bratz* have big heads and big feet because this takes them away from the unattainable ideal of the Barbie look, and lets ordinary girls of all shapes and sizes see *Bratz* in their mirrors” (*The Week*, 10th January 2004, p. 33).

Whereas it sounds reasonable to claim that the *Bratz* portray more ‘realistic’ body proportions than dolls like *Barbie*, one should also attend to the fact that neither of the *Bratz* are portrayed as being overweight neither short nor too tall. This being true, it is arguable to conclude that the *Bratz* do not offer any aesthetic ‘props’ at all in that they do provide children with aesthetic parameters on what is considered ‘cool’ in contemporary teenage culture by means of their post-modernist, hip-hop visual expressions.

When considered as a whole, however, the visual representation of the North-American dolls under analysis are particularly significant in that they promulgate the contemporary looks of five trendily-dressed dolls – and their accompanying products – who predominantly take central position in the images.

To further specify the components of the overall configuration of the *AmAds* under analysis, I shall now turn to the description of each visual meaning.

7.4.1. Representational Meanings

Insofar as their *representational metafunction* is concerned, virtually all *AmAds* portray the *Bratz* dolls in a *conceptual* manner with no *transactional* actions taking place. As seen under Chapter 5, in a *transactional* image, the two parties involved – e.g.

the *Actor* and the *Goal* – interact by means of a vector, an action line that connects them (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). In this sense, differently from Brazilian doll *Susi*, the depicted *Bratz* dolls are not shown carrying out any actions through *narrative* structures since they are grouped together to be presented to the viewer in a conceptual, *classificational* fashion thus being pictorially arranged as members of the same ‘class’. This can be clearly seen in Figures 7.15 and 7.16 below:



Figure 7.15. MGA Bratz' *The Funk Show*



Figure 7.16. MGA Bratz' *Fashion Packs*

Conceptual Structure: Classificational

In being symmetrically organised across the picture space in a classificatory, *covert taxonomy* type of visual structure, not only do the *Bratz* dolls show that they have something in common, that is, they share the sense of belonging to the group of ‘fashionably-dressed girls’ but they also succeed in drawing the viewer’s attention to their individual traits in a rather particular way.

An exception, however, is AmAd7, displayed next:



Figure 7.17. AmAd7

Conceptual Structure: Analytical

As observed, it portrays a single doll, *Yasmin*, in an *analytical, conceptual* fashion whereby she is identified through a *part-whole* structure which relates her as a Carrier

(the whole) to the attributes which compose her outfit and help to construct her identity as one of the ‘fashionably-dressed girls’ who value trends and fads. *Yasmin* is therefore presented to the viewer as an exclusive larger-sized doll, available in only one style for the purpose of ensuring the collector’s uniqueness.

Thus, unlike the Brazilian doll *Susi*, which is mostly portrayed on an individual basis, the *Bratz* are presented to the viewer on a predominantly collective basis, whereby the concept of group identity assumes a crucial importance in the visual representation of the referring dolls. In that respect, being the ‘same’ as others and sharing the ‘same’ tastes for clothes and fashions, relates to being accepted and consequently included in the ‘team’, which, in teenage years, is of uttermost relevance.

7.4.2. Interactive Meanings

Interpersonally, the use of a *frontal, objective angle* reveals an intention, from the part of the advertiser, to establish a subjective rapport between the represented participant and the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

In the case of the *AmAds* under analysis, this rapport is promoted by the way the *Bratz* are depicted at frontal position, which not only helps to enhance the viewer’s identification with the dolls in exhibition but also allows the viewer to go through a meticulous evaluation of the dolls’ features, thus emphasising the fact that they have been visually represented as objects to be looked at rather than as objects which the viewer can engage with (ibid.).

In a sense, the viewer’s evaluation of the dolls is facilitated by the *far social distance* from which they are depicted, which enables him/her to see the represented participants as whole figures with the space surrounding them. Such a distance, as it has been discussed under Chapter 5, consists of a level of visual perception between the

total intimacy promoted by a close-up shot and the complete detachment promoted by a long one. From a far social distance, the viewer's judgment about the represented participant (s) has, by and large, "a more formal and impersonal character than [that] in the close phase" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 131).

Engagement is nevertheless fostered by the use of a *demand* type of *gaze* in the *AmAds* under analysis, which implies that the *Bratz* are portrayed engendering a strong rapport with the viewer by means of direct address as if requesting to be acknowledged, as it can be verified in *AmAds* 6 and 8, shown below:



Figure 7.18. *Amad6*



Figure 7.19. *Amad8*

Demand gaze: engagement

To further support this, the depiction of the dolls from a *medium, vertical angle* and the *eye-level* of their *gaze* signal power equality in relation to the viewer, which possibly posits to an attitude of friendship intended to be established between the represented participant (s) and the viewer, thus corroborating what has been argued about the enhancement of a closer and more intimate relationship with the viewer under the section on the verbal analysis of the *AmAds*.

Indeed, there has been a verified tendency in the advertising industry towards treating children and teenagers as 'peers' and 'equals' for this facilitates communication with them, as noted by Young (mentioned in Peers, 1993, p. 106):

The advertising industry prefers to present the advertiser as friend and equal to the child, who, in this scenario, is a streetwise, robust kids with abilities that academics have underestimated.

In fact, the dolls in the *AmAds* promote, both at the visual and the verbal level, the creation of an intense bond with the viewer by gradually constructing their identities as ‘one of them’, as teenage friends children can rely on as they share the same types of feelings and interests. Through verbals and visuals which intermingle to convey significations that encourage a relation of friendship, the *AmAds* also foreground an attitude of independence typical of the ‘hip-hop’, ‘urban-funk’ girls by inviting girls to become part of their team and encouraging them to celebrate independence via puns which ‘celebratze’ ‘independance’ (sic), as illustrated in AmAd5, depicted through Figure 7.20 below:



Figure 7.20. Amad5

Such a sense of independence has also been visually expressed through the distinctive features that compose the *Bratz*’ looks, such as, for example, their protruding lips, heavy-lidded eyes larded with spangly make-up and skimpy clothing. In a way, the dolls’ appearance not only reflects their identities as contemporary, American teenage girls, but they also allow for associations to be drawn between their scarcely-covered little bottoms and the suggested sexual overtones they entail. Another interesting aspect related to the sense of independence attached to the *Bratz*’ representation refers to the fact that, differently from Brazilian *Susi*, the North-American dolls have been kinetically designed to stand on their own over two feet, a material property which suffices to reiterate the discourse of autonomy and independence that pertains to their semiotic representation in the referring ads.

As for their modality value, virtually all *AmAds* make use of photographs instead of drawings. As images of the ‘real’ (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001), photographs imprint a reality which is closer to that seen with the naked eye than that shown through drawings. In Shapiro’s words (1998, as mentioned in Harrison, 2003, p.20):

Of all modes of representation, [photography] is the one most easily assimilated into the discourses of knowledge and truth for it is thought to be an unmediated simulacrum, a copy of what we consider the ‘real’.

Based on that, the use of photographs in all analysed *AmAds* – except for *AmAd 5*, which couples the use of drawings with photographs – enhances the high, naturalistic modality of the images for their reality value is, by nature, founded on “the conventions built into the most widely used realistic image technologies” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 151). This can be better visualised through *AmAd 4*, pictured below:



Figure 7.21. *AmAd 4*
Naturalistic modality

Therefore, inasmuch as the dolls are represented through the contemporary standard of high naturalistic modality, it can be said that from the point of view of naturalism, there is great congruence between the way the dolls are depicted in the investigated *AmAds* and the way they are visually perceived with the naked eye (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

7.4.3. Compositional Meanings

Further *compositional* aspects contribute to integrate the *representational* and the *interactive* metafunctions of the *AmAds* in such a way the message conveyed by the analysed images make sense as a meaningful whole, just as verbal language does with its set of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings.

For example, the placement of the *Bratz* dolls occupying a *central position* in the foreground of virtually all *AmAds* (namely, AmAds 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10) evidences their salience within the pictorial framework, as depicted in the examples below:



Figure 7.22. AmAd1



Figure 7.23. AmAd10

Information value: central position

Nevertheless, insofar as the information value of their compositional meaning is concerned, the depiction of the *Bratz* dolls in AmAds 2, 5 and 9 become particularly interesting in that they either follow a predominantly *top-bottom* fashion (AmAd 2) or a *left-right* one (AmAd 5):



Figure 7.24. AmAd2

Information value: top-bottom



Figure 7.25. AmAd5

Information value: left-right

Given that a *top-bottom* visual structure realises an *ideal-real* relation, one can therefore say that the depiction of the dolls wearing two different types of formal outfits entitled 'Formal Funk' in AmAd 2 posits to both (1) what they are *expected* to wear –

the ideal, more covered look presented at the upper section of the advertisement – and (2) what they *actually* wear – the real, less covered and consequently sexier look entitled ‘After Party’ and shown at the lower section of the advertisement, reflecting what *The Bratz* girls probably prefer (my italics). Such realizations can be better perceived through Figure 7.26 displayed next:

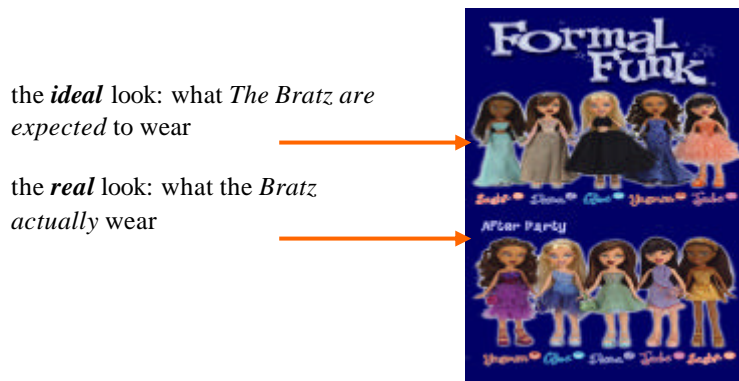


Figure 7.26. AmAd 2
Realizations of *top-bottom* structure

In a similar trend, the *Bratz* boys are portrayed in a *top-bottom* fashion in AmAd 9 where their figures are made more salient against a dark blue background contrasting with a bi-coloured, round-shaped element that emphasises the highlighted contours around their bodies, as observed in the Figure below:



Figure 7.27. AmAd 9

A possible reason for the placement of Dylan and Cameron at the top, upper section of the picture and Eitan and Koby at the lower section refers to the level of details regarding their respective outfits.

As it can be seen through a closer inspection in the referring *AmAd*, the outfits worn by the male dolls which are depicted at the top of the image contain a larger number of features which include sunglasses, caps, a jacket with some plush details, a necklace, a striped sweater and a checked shirt. For this reason, when compared with the outfits of the *Bratz* boys depicted at the bottom of the image, one can say the ones at the top are more elaborate insofar as the level of details of their clothes is concerned and hence, deserve to be placed at the most prominent pictorial section.

Another way of interpreting the compositional meanings of *AmAd 9* is to use Kress & van Leeuwen's concept of *reading path* (1996) to argue that composition in this specific picture promotes its reading in a circular fashion, conducive to the interpretation of the four *Bratz* boys as being the 'same'. As Kress & van Leeuwen (ibid.) contend, non-linear texts such as images are gradually becoming more widespread as new technologies develop, leaving the choice up to the reader so as "how to traverse the textual space" (p. 222). According to both authors, whereas linear texts impose syntagmatics on the reader, non-linear ones impose a paradigmatics:

Non linear texts impose a paradigmatics. They select the elements that can be viewed and present them according to a certain paradigmatic logic, the logic of Centre and Margin or of Given and New, for instance, but leave to the reader to sequence and connect them. In the design of such texts there will be pressure to put more of the meaning in the individual elements of the composition, to use more highly coded images – symbolic and conceptual images, stereotyped characters, drawings or highly structured images rather than realistic photographs and so on (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 223)

Stylish as they certainly are, in approaching the visual profile of the four *Bratz* boys through a closer look at *AmAd 3*, for example, it can be observed that they value fashion probably as much as the *Bratz* girls do:



Figure 7.28. AmAd 3

As seen, the appearance of the *Bratz* boys is notably carefully esteemed and their highly trendy looks corroborate the assumption that being ‘cutting-edge’ is not an aspiration exclusive to the female public. Just like *The Bratz* girls, *The Bratz* boys care about their self-image, as their fashionable looks and stylish outfit reveal that concern with reaching an ideal appearance is also priority in the agenda of contemporary men (Jaroudy, 2005, p. 121)

Following an essentially *left-right* visual structure regarding their informational value, the four advertisements which comprise AmAd 5 portray the caricatures of the *Bratz* girls and their respective related products:



Figure 7.29. AmAd 5

Since a *left-right* pictorial arrangement deals with a *given-new* conceptualization, it can be said that the caricatured dolls presented on the left-hand side of the images are meant to be shown to the viewer as *given* information, that is, something s/he is already familiar with. As the point of departure for the message intended by the advertiser, the image on the left leads the viewer to the actual product being offered to him/her on the right, that is, the placement of the *new* information, where the viewer must centre

his/her attention on. The product in question is a kit containing the actual doll which has been depicted through the caricature and her accompanying fashion accessories.

Not less important are the *top-bottom* values evoked by AmAd5, wherein puns like *celeBratzion* and *independAnce* appear at the top of the images – where the *ideal* information is usually put – to invite girls to share these dolls’ joyful celebration of independence, as illustrated below:



Figure 7.30. AmAd 5 (1st and 3rd pictures)

The connotation of independence is reinforced by the choice of colours used in 1st and 3rd pictures of AmAd 5 in that the dark blue backdrop against which the dolls *Yasmin* and *Cloe* stand contrasts with the stronger, more saturated tones of red, white and blue used in the emancipation-oriented titles which encourage their feelings of ‘celebration’ and ‘independence’. A possible analogy to be drawn here tethers the choice of the colours red, white and blue in these *AmAds* to the colours of the American flag which equally enhance a sense of ‘celebration of independence’.

Other expressions which appear at the top of AmAd5 are *Sweet Heart* and *Spring Fling*, both of which play a role in evoking more placid, emotive feelings by attaching traditionally romantic motifs to the representation of the *Bratz* dolls. This shown below:



Figure 7.31. AmAd 5 (2nd and 4th pictures)

Colour schemes like dark blue and mauves like lilac, purple and violet are employed in AmAds5, 7, 9 and 10 not only to stress the coloured features of the *Bratz* dolls but also to attach a different concept of femininity to the representation of the contemporary, female figure. As rather relevant signifiers of gender, intense colours like the ones used in these *AmAds* demystify the common association between the colour pink and everything that is meant to be related to the feminine world.

Through dark shades which range in their degree of intensity – darker tones are employed in AmAds 1, 2, 3,4, 5, 9 and 10, whereas lighter tones are used in AmAds 6 and 8 – these advertisements manage to move from a traditional concept of frail and innocent ‘pinkish’ femininity to attempt at the mysterious and sexual overtones which these colours entail. According to Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen (2002), it is the rarity of mauves, pinks and purples in nature that assures their meaning potential. They contend that the use of such intense colours in post-modern society evokes the feelings of “mystery, (...) danger and [even] sexuality”, especially in the context of children’s toys, whereby “sexuality (...) will be mysterious and dangerous, (...) and danger [will be] sexually exciting” (p.104).

Last but not least, still concerning the placement of elements within the dichotomies which relate to the informational values of the analysed images, the fact that the black doll *Sasha* never occupies a central position in the *AmAds* is worth examining. As subsequently indicated, she is placed:

- (1) at the right and left extremities of AmAds1 and 2:



Figure 7.32. AmAd 1



Figure 7.33. AmAd 2

(2) at the background of AmAd 8:



Figure 7.34. AmAd 8

(3) does not appear in AmAds 4 and 5:



Figure 7.35. AmAd 4



Figure 7.36. AmAd 5

and (4) occupies an intermediate, secondary position in AmAds 6 and 10:



Figure 7.37. AmAd 6



Figure 7.38. AmAd 10

As it could be noted, the common placement of *Sasha* in marginal, ancillary positions provide substantial evidence that the issue of ethnicity does become epitomised in representations like doll advertisements. In effect, Seiter (1993) has attested to the superiority of white children over black children in toy advertisements by discussing the ways through which children of colour are generally portrayed in media images. She argues that the visual positioning of black children within the pictorial framework tends to favour white children when they appear together in the

advertisements by usually depicting black children with their back to the camera, their face turned away and/or in passive roles.

7.5. Concluding Remarks on the Analysis of *AmAds*

After tallying up the major visual syntactic patterns within the context of the analysed *AmAds*, it becomes apparent that features like the predominantly classificatory, conceptual manner in which the represented participants are depicted and the highly naturalistic modality used to portray the American dolls have a lot to say in terms of the embedded social and cultural significations that these miniaturised semiotic representations enact.

As verified, contemporary advertised representations of women like the American dolls under investigation, place ubiquitous emphasis on women's physical appearance and their sheer reliance on fashion trends and beauty necessities end up relegating them to a position of subservience in relation to the industry of consumerism.

Finally, but not less importantly, it has been also noted that the *AmAds* under analysis tend to foster children's sense of group identity through the depiction of the dolls grouped together on a *classificational* basis, as members of the same class who share the same type of interests. As it has been argued, such depiction fosters identification and involvement by evoking a sense of solidarity and encouraging certain patterns of consumption through values such as positive self-enjoyment and fashion consumption.

7.6. Concluding Remarks on *BrAds* and *AmAds*

Through a blend of visual codes like colour, framing and the depicted role of represented participants with verbal codes like nominal groups and transitivity features, advertised images manage to evoke a stock of connotations which, many times, rely on stereotyped gender representations that reinforce somehow oppressive views on women's role in society.

In observing the visual and verbal representations of women in the analysed advertisements under the perspective of the two cultures involved – Brazilian and North- American – some of the expectations towards these women have been brought to light, especially the ones related to the never-ending quest for beauty.

Regarding the representational meanings of their visual analysis, one can say that both sets of advertisements have tended to portray the dolls in a passive, conceptual basis, although a few narrative processes have been identified in the *BrAds* under analysis, pointing to a more active participation of women in society.

Generally speaking, the advertisements have predominantly depicted the dolls in an analytical and/or classificatory fashion – especially in the case of the *AmAds* – which has substantiated their identification as receivers of the attributes assigned to them by virtue of their looks and as objectified participants, subject to the viewer's scrutiny.

As objects to be evaluated, the interactive meanings of both sets of dolls' advertisements have pointed to the establishment of a direct rapport with the viewer mainly by means of a demand gaze, through which they directly address the viewer as an idealised model of a class which demands to be scrutinised.

As far as their compositional constituents are concerned, the choice of colours applied in both sets, has nevertheless constituted a major visual semiotic difference. Whereas the Brazilian toy advertisers have opted for lighter and brighter tones of blue,

pink and green, the North-American ones have primarily selected dark shades of blue and mauves to compose the backdrop of the *Bratz* advertisements, which posits to a less traditional and romanticised representation of ‘femininity’.

Concerning the verbal features of the advertisements, it can be said that, in the analysed *BrAds*, *Susi*’s identity is constructed in terms of her individual, active participation in society – as someone who *does* things and *goes* to places. *Susi* plays the role of *Beto*’s girlfriend, of an air hostess, a graduate student, a sportswoman.

The Bratz dolls, on the hand, represent the class of contemporary teenage girls, since they are mostly depicted as members of a group, either male or female, and therefore identified on a collective basis. Rather than *doing* things, the *Bratz* are something: *top-notch*, *funky*, *fashionable*, *cutting-edge* and *super-cool*. Their looks epitomise the upper-middle class, ideal teenage appearance, given that the verbal features of their advertisements are based on an ideology which conceives beauty as a necessity and prioritises values such as fashion consumption and social judgement about one’s appearance.

7.6.1. Fashion Dolls and the Consumer Culture

One relevant issue raised by the analyses of the dolls’ advertisements links the values they promulgate to the ideology of consumption, discussed by Fleming (1996). As socially-constructed objects, toys like *The Bratz* dolls dictate ‘routines of consumption’ since the values they are embedded with convey some of the “complex interactions between the desiring individual and the massified demand” (p. 8) through which the marketing operates.

Kline (1993) has also emphasized the role of fashion dolls not only as consumer objects but also as toys which “induce the anticipation of consumer style in a social-dramatic form” (p. 347). As he puts it:

(...) [while] playing with her fashion dolls, a girl quickly discovers she can exercise and express some of the most important social attitudes and judgments of her consumer lifestyle – ideas she can barely express in language and rarely talk with either friends or parents – as a style, aesthetic or look associated with clothes.

Consumerism, Kline (ibid.) has added, has given toys a new meaning within the practices of socialization. In his exploitation of the interrelation between toys, children and the consumer culture, he emphasized the role of the market as the matrix of socialization, together with the family, technology and education, a view that is also shared by Sutton-Smith (mentioned in Fleming, 1996) and which has been pinpointed under Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Kline (ibid.) uses the term ‘synergy’ to describe the link between media marketing and children’s wants. He argues that whenever children are exposed to heavy doses of media marketing, this ‘synergy’ tends to be extended, whilst without such strong intervention from the media, children tend to express more genuine and ‘inner-oriented’ needs, an epiphenomenon that he describes as a ‘direct link’ between what they want and what they ask for (p. 323).

Powerful as it has been argued to be, throughout the present research the marketplace has been referred to not only as a mediator between children and the toy industry but also as a responsible vehicle for changing children’s socialization patterns in toy-playing, constraining children’s imaginative potential through pre-established toy storylines, creating new gendered identities and dictating consumption patterns that many times do not correspond to children’s intimate consumer desires.

Through mechanisms which naturalize acquisition as a way to achieve happiness (Kline, 1993) and teach children the significance of acquisitiveness as the first articulation of their rights of possession, the toy industry follows moving cycles guided by fashion-driven toys based on popular culture, whose life span lasts for an average of three months, a time when they start to be cleared from toy-shelves in order to be replaced by new promoted lines (Fleming, 1996).

As pointed out by Fleming (ibid.), by placing emphasis on the individual aspect of acquisition, the new consumer child expresses its wants through the rhetoric of persuasion, thus antithetically denying the interactions derived from traditional toy-playing:

(...) independent of how [contemporary toys] are (or are not) played with, they naturalise acquisitiveness (...) for they make it normal to say 'I want' and then 'this is mine' (Fleming, 1996, p. 31).

Apart from educational toy lines such as *Lego* and the *Early Learning Centre* shops in Britain – which have relied on niches to protect them against the fades of the marketing moving cycles – the ephemeral nature of most 'must-have toys' today makes them suddenly lose their appeal and need to be replaced by others, therefore littering "children's lives and domestic spaces (...) with abandoned toys" (ibid., p. 31).

According to Kline (1993), of all consumer products, toys are the ones with a more limited lifespan. With time, children "lose interest in particular toys and quickly move to new ones (...), as "new psychological needs and states are being regularly expressed and worked out through a child's imaginative play" (ibid., p. 224). Also, in being strongly influenced by their peers and consequently "subjects to the collective whims of their immediate cultural environment" (ibid.), children end up as 'victims' of marketing tendencies which ultimately train them for consumption.

7.6.2. Fashion Dolls: Artefacts of Female Representation

Another relevant issue that the analysed *BrAds* and *AmAds* have raised is the fact that contemporary doll advertisements seem to have adjusted to the social transformations women have gone through over the past decades to the extent of incorporating these changes to their verbal and visual representations.

Whereas past doll advertisements explicitly enacted the gender divisions present in society where women were regarded as icons of domestic life, representatives of compliance with nurturing activities, today's advertisements still depict women in such passive roles but they also seem to favour the representation of a woman who is as involved in her household chores as she is in her professional and leisure activities.

Take *Barbie's* advertisements, for example. They certainly construct *Barbie's* image on the basis of her active and engaged participation in the world by tethering a sense of independence and financial success to her representation (Wright, 2003). In this respect, looking good and feeling beautiful and healthy are granted the same importance as being successful in one's career and taking care of a family in contemporary women's lives (Morin & Rosenfeld, 1998).

From another perspective, however, Seiter (1993) has claimed that women's representation in girls' toy advertisements has undergone few substantial changes over the past fifty years in that it is still girls' portrayal as miniaturised versions of their mothers' domestic work which prevail in this type of advertisement. She contends that through the realistic depiction of home furnishings and utensils such as vacuum cleaners and strollers, which "have remained remarkably stable since the twenties" (p.74), little girls have been encouraged to replicate their mother's domestic labour as an 'institutionalised' form of play (p.74, See Appendix for illustration). She extends her standpoint by emphasising that, different from the way boys have been dominantly and

collaboratively depicted in images of toy advertisements especially when accompanied by their fathers and/or peers, girls, on the other hand, have been traditionally depicted in such images 'side by side' with their mothers, "the only difference between them [being] the scale of [their] equipment" (p. 77).

Yet Seiter (ibid.) admits that by 1960's, girls' toy advertisements started experiencing quite a few changes particularly because at that time, consumption and shopping were becoming a relevant aspect of playing (p. 76). As a consequence, girls' restricted domestic toy world, which basically revolved around "cooking, cleaning, childcare and shopping" (ibid., p. 80), also started to be described in terms of appearance and fashion matters, thus acquiring overtones of adult sexuality (ibid).

From thereafter, issues related to fashion, beauty and appearance were incorporated by girls' toy advertisements, helping to spread an ideology which is rather recurrent in the analysed *AmAds*: the conceiving of beauty as a necessity.

Concurring with other doll advertisements, such as the ones of fashion doll *Barbie*, there seems to be a tendency in the representation of North American dolls to promote the ideology of beauty through the depiction of unattainable aesthetic models.

According to Wright (2003), in her essay entitled "The Wonder of Barbie: Popular Culture and the Making of Female Identity", representations of women such as *Barbie* enhance the creation of surrealistic aesthetic standards which lead to feelings of discontentment and insecurity, especially in the case of young teenage girls, who, when confronted with these standards tend to devalue their own appearance, given that these promulgated representations of women promote some idealized concepts of feminine beauty which include being "flawlessly built, sculpted, wrinkle-free, and eternally young" (Wright, L. 2003).

Indeed, the overemphasis placed on feminine aesthetic appeal becomes particularly noticeable within the context of the North-American culture where recent figures have substantiated the accelerated run for ‘the essence of feminine beauty’, as Kilbourne puts it (mentioned in Wright, 2003). The cultural influence that beauty exerts on the shaping of American women’s female identity proclaims the emulation of referential female images which vindicate a healthy look promoted by a sun-tanned, bronzed skin colour and the maintenance eternal youth, since “America worships youth and hates growing older” (Wright, L. 2003). By assigning such female parameters, Wright (ibid.) argues that these advertisements end up encouraging little girls, teenagers and adult women to see themselves and their aesthetic limitations (e.g. fat thighs, wrinkles, etc) as inappropriate and in need of a ‘solution’, which, evidently, becomes materialised in the form of a beauty ‘necessity’ (ibid.).

On the whole, what the analysed *BrAds* and *AmAds* seemed to be portraying through their verbal and visual representations reflect the multiple, cumulative social roles that compose the agenda of contemporary women and which girls need to be familiar with from early age as a prelude of what they will face later in life. Some of these roles involve their ‘juggling’ in old domestic activities like taking care of the house, caring for the children, caring for themselves, caring for their husbands and their assimilation of contemporary trends, fads and technologies that the new millennium awaits.

Overall, it can be concluded that both sets of advertisements tend to promote the culture of consumption through the creation of necessities which range from beauty to fashion and through the indoctrination of values such as the conformation to previously established standards of living.

Although the analysis of toys as three-dimensional objects has not exactly been the focus of the present dissertation, an observation of the kinetic properties of the actual dolls pictured in the advertisements hereby analysed has led to preliminary assumptions about the type of results that a study of this nature would produce. For example, the observation of the kinetic properties of the Brazilian doll *Susi* has helped to reveal a meaning potential that her visual representation in the advertisements conceals: her inability to stand by herself is verbally made ambiguous in the recurrent clause *Susi não pára em pé sozinha*, virtually present in all of her ads, including *BrAd 5*, in which the reader is reminded that *Susi não pára em pé sozinha e não segura o canudo como nas fotos*, as illustrated below:



SUSI vive o sonho de sua formatura. Uma data muito especial, superesperada por todos! As fotos com os colegas, a sessão solene de entrega dos diplomas com a turma toda vestindo beca e com o capelo na cabeça, o baile - dançando a noite toda com Beto.... Puxa, este é um dos dias mais felizes de sua vida!

SUSI não pára em pé sozinha e não segura o canudo como nas fotos.

DETALHE Para receber o diploma, SUSI usa beca e capelo!

DETALHE E no baile, dança a noite toda com o BETO!

DETALHE Um lindo "anel de formatura" para você!

DETALHE Tem diploma, convites e "álbum de fotos"!

Figure 7.39: The kinetic Properties of *Susi Baile de Formatura*

Through pictures like the ones above, the viewer is led to believe that *Susi* doll is able to stand on her feet, which is by no means accurate. Along with her inability to stand still are several connotations regarding gender. One of them has been addressed by Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen (2001) in their study which discusses the construction of gender in the representation of toys. According to them, the generalised

limitation in most dolls' movements can be related to the fact that "some toys are designed for action, others for posing" (p. 98) and here dolls like *Barbie* – one of their objects of investigation – and *Susi* are included.

Also, a closer look at the *Susi*'s physical attributes, leads us to conclude that her appeal does not seem to be concurrent with the aesthetical stereotype of the vast majority of Brazil's female population. Her visual and verbal representation reverberate the ideal looks of a conventional and contemporary model of adult beauty, based on standardised aesthetic patterns which do not match her national origins.

Multicultural as Brazil certainly is, the most representative doll model of the country since 1968 is neither black nor does she mirror the physical type of the vast majority of Brazil's racial and ethnic varieties. Conversely, the three-dimensional miniaturised representation of the typical Brazilian teenage girl is tall, blonde and blue-eyed.

Indeed, when personally manipulated, it is possible to observe that dolls like *Barbie* and *Susi* can neither stand by themselves, hold anything in their hands, open their legs wide apart nor move their head in any direction (ibid., p. 98) , which certainly conveys some gendered meanings as for the way women are semiotically represented through girls' dolls.

Kinetically constructed to look different, dolls like *The Bratz* have been designed to stand by their own, although the removal of their vinyl shoes involves the popping-off of their feet, which, for some kids, is a reason of discontentment and even embarrassment, as I had the chance to observe in one of my personal conversations with the children who play with *The Bratz* dolls.

The kinetic ability of *The Bratz* to stand on their feet concurs with the connotations of independence and autonomy that pervade the values that these dolls

indoctrinate. In a sense, their movement potentials can be compared to boys' dolls, most of which are endowed with the kinetic flexibility to stand by themselves without falling over, hold objects, move their head sideways and open their legs wide apart (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 98). The way *The Bratz* are kinetically portrayed certainly conveys a lot about the way contemporary women want to be seen by society, leaving behind the notions of fragility, passivity and domesticity which characterised the semiotic representation of girls' dolls in past decades.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, subsequently presented, will recapture some of the most relevant findings brought forth by this investigation as well as offer some suggestions for further research.

Chapter 8

Final remarks

Children learn best by interactive play. And one of the first and most immediate ways that children get to know themselves and others is by playing with dolls.... They [dolls] are representations of the human spirit, soul, self. (Moog, 2002, p. 1)

After discussing the results from the analyses of the two sets of advertisements and compiling them for a comparative study in Chapter 7, I now present a panorama of the implications of the verbal and visual patterns identified in the investigated advertisements. Aimed at the de-construction of women's portrait through mass media vehicles such as doll advertisements, the present cross-cultural research has proposed to unveil the connotations that help to create and naturalise behaviour patterns by examining *what* these patterns are and *why* they are meant to be accepted and naturalised. The analyses of the advertisements have been triggered by the following research questions, raised under Chapter 6:

(6) *How are social and discursive practices reflected in the toy advertisements?*

Generally stating, the social and discursive practices verified through the verbal and visual analyses of the *BrAds* and *AmAds* have pointed to a somehow stereotyped representation of the female figure, whereby her identification occurs on the basis of the clothes and accessories which compose her looks, thus characterising a generalised objectified view of women as repositories of aesthetic attributes. Nevertheless, it has also been observed that doll advertisements have also seemed to follow the social changes experienced by women throughout the decades by attaching issues such as profession and career to their representation.

(2) To what extent do the advertisements embed specific assumptions?

As further developed under Chapter 7, the visual and verbal features of contemporary doll advertisements such as *Susi's* and *The Bratz* have incorporated issues such as consumerism, beauty, fashion as well as gender identities in their representation.

(3) What lexical sets predominate in the advertisements, what do they reflect and what roles do they convey?

The prevailing lexical sets identified in the analysed *BrAds* and *AmAds* have relied on issues such as *Beauty, Fashion, Style, Diet, Sports, Leisure, Study* and *Career* to convey the image of a contemporary teenage woman who needs to couple activities from the private with the public sphere. In effect, the choice for such items reflects the multiple social roles in the agenda of the eclectic and multifaceted contemporary female figure.

(4) What are the transitivity features present in the advertisements, namely, what types of processes, participants and circumstances are represented?

The patterns of experience encoded by the transitivity features of both *BrAds* and *Amads* have pointed to the construction of a textual world predominantly characterised by participants typical of an upper-middle class whose activities revolve around *material* and *relational* processes such as travelling around the world, going shopping for clothes and being as beautiful and fashionable as one can be.

(5) What type of relationship is established among the participants involved in the advertisements?

The analyses of the advertisements have posited the creation of a relationship of closeness and intimacy between the depicted dolls and their potential consumers through the use of contemporary slangs and expressions and the description

of activities such as ‘hanging around’ with friends and staying up together until late, which helps to invoke identification with its teenage young audience.

8.1. Toy Research

Within the realm of the present cross-cultural, comparative analysis on doll advertisements, a closer look at the data and the findings has corroborated some of the assumptions that generated the investigation herein proposed.

As demonstrated, there has been a contemporary tendency in verbal and visual advertised representations towards the depiction of women in passive, objectified positions, thus reinforcing their image as pretty fixtures, repositories of aesthetic attributes. The representation of women in doll advertisements draws predominantly on passive roles which identify them on the basis of the accoutrements that compose their outfit or the aesthetic features that make up their looks. The few narrative visual processes verified in the investigated *BrAds* and *AmAds* and the prevailing number of conceptual, classificational, or analytical visual processes identified in both sets of doll advertisements have proved to this effect.

On the other hand, considering the negotiation of gender roles throughout the decades, the traditional representation of women as *home*-related items seems to be not the only possibility conveyed by doll advertisements. Other *career* and *event*-related representations – such as *Susi Aeromoça*, which portrays *Susi* as an air hostess leaving an aircraft, *Susi Seleção* by *Milene Domingues*, which depicts *Susi* wearing a football uniform and *Susi Baile de Formatura*, which shows her taking part in her graduation ball – have come to the forefront suggesting that mass media is well aware of contemporary women’s active engagement in society.

Indeed, there has been a verified revamp on the image of 'blissful domesticity' (Gauntlett, 2002) propagated by former doll advertisements which used to portray little girls playing the role of simpering young housewives within the domestic context of their kitchen or living room. Although such representations continue to be promulgated nowadays – maybe as a reflection that this is a role with which women still have to cope – they are not as expressive as they used to be in the past.

Instead, the concept of traditional femininity has been revised and replaced by another concept which, in contemporary times, has been associated to female identity – the one of 'girl power' (ibid.). The notion, which embodies concepts like assertiveness, independence and autonomy, has been clearly incorporated into dolls' representations like *The Bratz* and associated with the huge success these miniaturized representations of emancipated women have been reaching in the toy market. Concurring with that, Moorhead (mentioned in Gauntlett 2002), has called attention to the fact that the sales of dolls like *Barbie* "are reported to be falling because only youngest girls will accept such a 'girly' toy nowadays, whilst young women have a range of assertive 'girl power' role models to choose from in magazines, movies, and pop music" (p. 10).

Differently from *Susi*, the *Bratz* are rarely – if ever – seen within the context of the domestic or private sphere. As noticed, the visuals and verbals of their advertisements promote a sense of independence and assertiveness typical of contemporary girls who seem to have neglected traditional concepts related to femininity such as passivity and reticence, to venture to new performances of being 'feminine', like 'hitting the town' in order to '*cebratze independance*' or 'hanging out with their girl counterparts', recurrent expressions in the referring dolls' advertisements.

Alongside with the celebration of the independence women have been conquering throughout the years, also runs their fear of becoming victims of an objectified

representation that over-stresses their aesthetic appearance. In the case of the analysed doll advertisements, although both sets are said to belong to toys labelled as 'fashion dolls', each one has approached the topic of 'fashion' in a slightly different way. Whilst *Susi*'s focus on fashion has been blended with career and leisure-related activities like *flying around the world* and *going roller-skating*, the nature of the *Bratz*' activities has been essentially fashion-oriented.

Indeed, the consumerism-driven character of *The Bratz* is verbally expressed when their advertisers assert that "the most important thing to *The Bratz* is what they are wearing at any one time" (AmAd 10) and that "it is very important to have the newest and coolest clothes to mix and match at all times" (AmAd10). The statements, based on the rhetoric of consumerism, concur with Faludi's argument that our media-saturated consumer culture has led both men and women in contemporary society to become "victims of the culture of consumerism, appearances and glamour" (mentioned in Gauntlett, 2002, p. 9).

In a sense, the insights borrowed from the Sociology of Childhood, discussed under Chapter 2, have been essential to the understanding of the macro dimension where values such as the recurrent consumerism promulgated by the advertisements of *Susi* and *The Bratz* seem to fit. As 'replicas' of an upper-middle class universe, these fashion dolls epitomise a 'world' within the various existing 'worlds' of contemporary childhood whose construction was not based on the precarious economical condition which typifies so many histories of the Brazilian reality.

With this regard, the world represented by dolls like *Susi* and *The Bratz* does not apply to those children who can not afford to buy toys nor partake of the sort of activities conveyed in their advertisements, such as travelling around the world, buying presents, going shopping, going out to dance with friends and wearing fashionable

outfit. Excluding as it probably is, these dolls' worlds posit a different reality, one that views materialistic acquisitions as the pathway to happiness and prioritizes self-image above other issues.

As advocated by the sociological approach underlining the Sociology of Childhood, the dissemination of values like consumerism through media representations such as doll advertisements sets the ground for new modes of being children, or, as Belloni (2004) has put it, fosters the creation of a 'universal young culture' not only characterised by its 'globalised' behaviour patterns but also strongly influenced by technologies such as the Internet.

To a certain extent, the substantiation of the findings brought forth by this dissertation was only achievable due to its ethnographic nature. Through the experience I had at both *Estrela Toy Museum Casa dos Sonhos*, in São Paulo and at the HoneyPot Childcare Center in Australia, I could observe, take notes and more importantly, have real contact with children for entire days in an exclusively playground area. The outcomes of such experiences have been reflected along the lines of the present research for they certainly help to bridge theory and practice, the macro, contextual dimension of the data with its micro, textual one.

Last but not least, importance must also be granted to the opportunity to further develop this research at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), in Sydney, Australia, where it was possible to refine my views on Visual Grammar, Multimodality and Systemic Functional Linguistics as well as to present my research and get valuable feedback from a number of experts in the referring areas through seminars carried out at both the UNSW and the University of Sydney.

8.2. Suggestions for Further Research

Mediated by advertising discourse through modern narratives such as Internet *webpages*, girls' toys can be 'textualised' in various ways, from cartoons to comic strips, as they consist of "both already produced communications and tools to produce communications with" (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 96).

Given that this dissertation has concentrated on an analysis of two-dimensional texts such as dolls advertisements, there are still a number of possibilities for a linguistic investigation to be carried out on the world of toys and children's culture. An interesting follow-up would be to revisit the analysis initiated here by using the actual dolls as three-dimensional objects as the data.

Extending the concept of multimodality explored under Chapter 5, an investigation on the visual aspects of dolls as multimodal, three-dimensional objects would open up the possibilities for a broader semiotic analysis on toys' meaning potentials supported by design features such as their iconography, composition, material qualities and the degree of realism of their representations.

As done by van Leeuwen & Caldas- Coulthard (2000) in their investigation on baby toys (pram rattles), the choice for an iconographical approach to the analysis of the dolls' multimodal properties could lead to a deeper interpretation of these toys' *given motifs* – or 'visual pointers' (ibid.) – as clues to the meanings that their symbolic, somehow 'unnatural' features convey (such as the absence of their genitals).

Observation on toys' kinetic design perceived at the tactile level could also lead to some relevant findings on their attached gendered meanings. Following van Leeuwen & Caldas Coulthard's (ibid.) assumption that "when a toy is kinetically designed (...) the shape of an entirely rigid object is immutable" (ibid.), a deeper analysis on toys' three-dimensionality of toys might therefore function as a structure of message with a

“socially ascribed unity” (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 6) aimed at revealing toys’ apparently ‘innocent and innocuous’ (Caldas-Coulthard & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 95), visual properties commonly taken for granted in their ‘extended semiotic sense’ (ibid.)

Thus, a semiotic analysis that privileges not only a two-dimensional perspective but also a three-dimensional investigation of the visual, tactile and kinetic properties of toys might help to capture the essence of the social view on men’s and women’s roles in contemporary society.

8.3. Concluding Remarks

Mediators between “the internal world of the child and the more remote objects of the outer world” (Fleming, 1996, p. 64), toys are believed to engage children in make-believe fantasies whereby they are ‘freed’ from their outer reality and transposed to an inner world that keeps them ‘safe’ for a while.

Nevertheless, toys’ enacted representations have many times been neglected by academic scholars in being conventionally conceived of as ordinary, everyday entertainment objects to be manipulated by children during their free time. In acquiring the *status quo* of icons of contemporary children, though, girls’ dolls such as *Barbie*, *Susi*, and *The Bratz* have conveyed model roles that seem to exert a strong influence on the systems of values that help to construct children’s identity.

Given that toys like dolls function “as models of things that invoke in play the behaviours or skills required in later life” (Kline, 1993, p. 15), the roles introduced by toys like these are believed to prefigure what modern adult life will bring about in the sense of preparing children to conform to these standards (Barthes, mentioned in Peers, 2004, p. 97).

Among the roles children are elicited to desire for themselves is the gendered representation of the female figure involved in household chores and placed in domestic settings or being described in terms of her aesthetic attributes, which resonates some of the naturalized assumptions about womanhood that have been traditionally incorporated by girls' toys.

For this reason, the research presented here has proposed to unveil the enacted verbal and visual properties of girls' dolls' advertisements not only by helping to reveal legitimate expressions of children's world but also by showing the representation of the strong ideological meanings that saturate the social acting of adults.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

BrAds and AmAds

BrAds
Brazilian Advertisements

BrAd 1: Susi Quatro Estações



BrAd 2: Susi Aeromoça



BrAd 4: Susi Piscina e Diversão



BrAd 3: Susi Seleção By Milene Domingues



BrAd 5: Susi Baile de Formatura



BrAd 6: Beto Estilo



BrAd 7: Cartela Susi Visual da Moda



BrAd 8: Susi Aula de Natação



BrAd 9: Susi Moda Praia



BrAd 10: Susi Patinadora



AmAds
American Advertisements

AmAd1: The Style It Fashion Collection



AmAd 4: The Funk'n'Glow Collection



AmAd 2: The Funk Show



AmAd 3: Bratz Boys Formal Funk



AmAd 5: The Bratz Collectors' Edition



AmAd 6: WinterTime Wonderland



**AmAd 7: Bratz' Limited Collector's Edition
Yasmin**



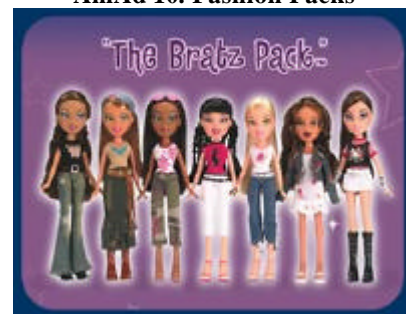
AmAd 8: Slumber Party



AmAd 9: Bratz Boys



AmAd 10: Fashion Packs



APPENDIX 2

Estrela Toy Museum Casa dos Sonhos
(Children's Day, 12th October 2004, São Paulo, Brazil)



Susi's* shop window at *Casa dos Sonhos
Source: Personal Photograph



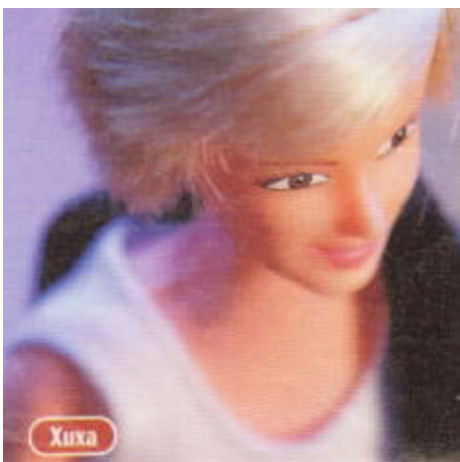
***Susi's* fashion over time**
Source: Personal Photograph



**Enlarged *Susi* placed
at the Toy Museum front door:
prominent position as *Estrela* 'poster girl'
(Chapter 6)**
Source: Personal Photograph

APPENDIX 3

Toy Illustrations





Varied versions of Brazilian dolls *Xuxa*, *Sandy*, *Kelly Key* and pop music group *Rouge* associated to ‘total multimedia marketing’: interconnections between the toy industry and media culture (Chapter 3)

Source: *Contigo!*, 6th May 2004 (n.1494)



**Middle East popular *Fulla* doll:
influence of social-cultural values in dolls' representations**
(Chapter 3)

Source: *Veja*, 5th October 2005 (number 1925)

APPENDIX 4

Toy Figures



BONECA	ALTURA	PREÇO	VENDAS	FABRICANTE
Xuxa Só para Baixinhos	27 cm	entre R\$ 23 e 32	fabricante não divulga	Multibrink
Xuxa Fashion Doll	27 cm	entre R\$ 23 e 32	fabricante não divulga	Multibrink
Xuxa Princesa	1 m	R\$ 170 e 200	fabricante não divulga	Multibrink
Eliana	1,10 m	R\$ 199,99	100 mil em 2003	Estrela
Kelly Key	1,05 m	R\$ 129	35 mil em 2003	Acalanto
Sandy	1,05 m	R\$ 129	40 mil por ano	Babybrink
Sandy Aquária	1,05 m	R\$ 129	10 mil	Babybrink
Rouge	50 cm	R\$ 69	80 mil em 2003	Babybrink
Wanessa Camargo Fashion	1,10 m	R\$ 140	fabricante não divulga	Cotiplás



Mainstream Brazilian dolls: Sizes, Prices and Sales Figures

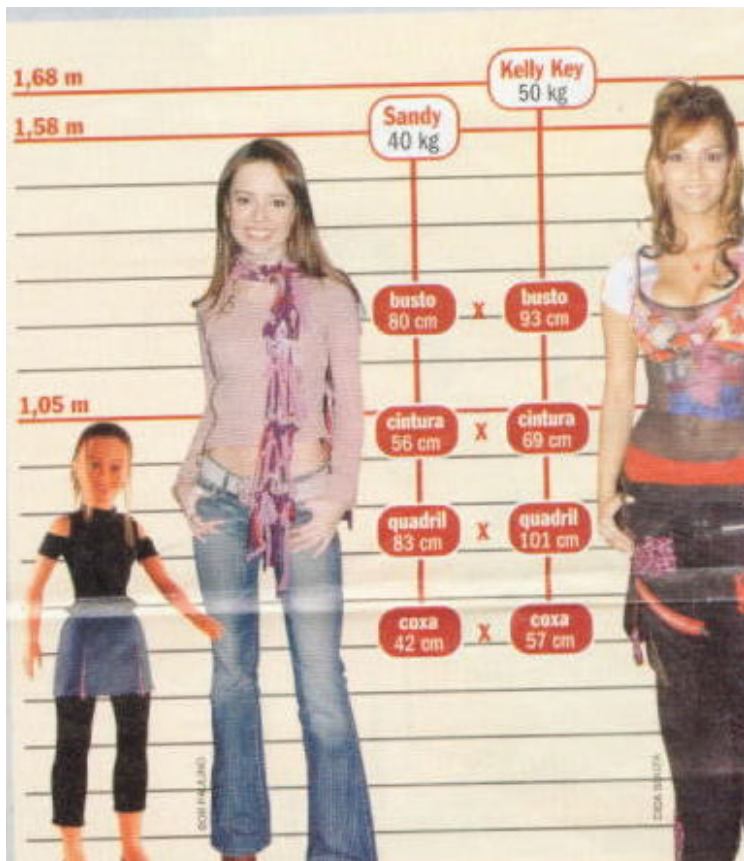
Source: *Contigo!*, 6th May 2004 (n.1494)

APPENDIX 5

Toy Manufacturing



The assembly line of Brazilian doll *Sandy*
Source: *Contigo!*, 6th May 2004 (n.1494)
(Chapter 3)



**Real-life molds for the manufacturing of Brazilian dolls *Sandy* and *Kelly Key*:
‘harder representationality’**

(Chapter 3)

Source: *Contigo!*, 6th May 2004 (n.1494)

APPENDIX 6

Contemporary Tendencies in the Toy Market



**The Polly Pocket: 500 versions of the miniature -sized doll and its plethora of accessories:
over-determinacy in toy-characterising to keep the marketing profitability**

(Chapter 3)

Source: *Veja*, 12th April 2006



The new generation of little girls and their collection of Polly Pockets

(Chapter 3)

Source: *Veja*, 12th April 2006

