

## BEYOND THE PLAYGROUND: THE REPRESENTATION OF REALITY IN FASHION DOLLS' ADVERTISEMENTS

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**Abstract:** This article analyses the meanings conveyed by the discourse of web advertisements of the Brazilian fashion doll Susi, extracted from [www.estrela.com.br](http://www.estrela.com.br). Drawing on Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Grammar for the analysis of the transitivity features and nominal groups, it focuses on the topics that Susi's ads reflect, the roles they convey and the type of relationship established among its participants. The analyses of the transitivity features of Susi's virtual advertisements have pointed to the construction of a world textually characterized by activities typical of the upper-middle class, which revolve around material and relational processes. The analysis of the nominal groups further specify the nature of such activities by relating them to affairs such as fashion, beauty, diet, sports, leisure, studies and career, altering, therefore, a traditional view on women's representation centered on the domestic sphere.

**Keywords:** discourse; gender; systemic functional grammar; advertisement; toy.

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

Historically constructed to function as 'children's playthings', toys do not only constitute "replicas of the real world" but they also reveal "what 'goes on' in society, its ideology and values" (CALDAS-COULTHARD; VAN-LEEUVEN, 2002, p. 94).

The meanings conveyed by toys are linked to social practices insofar as the social and cultural values that toys embed are largely

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transmitted to children from early age and reproduced later on. Thus, toys constrain the way the child sees the world and, by doing so, they are assigned a fundamental role as cultural assets responsible for the construction of social identities.

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 research presented here aims at contributing to such an academic gap by proposing to investigate the structures of signification that lay behind the discourse of advertisements of the Brazilian doll *Susi*, retrieved from her website: [www.estrela.com.br](http://www.estrela.com.br).

The trajectory of the discussion presented in this article will be guided by the following research questions:

- (1) What meanings are encoded by the advertisements?
- (2) What are their prevailing transitivity features?
- (3) What lexical sets predominate in the advertisements, what do they reflect and what roles do they convey?
- (4) What type of relationship is established among the participants involved in the advertisements?

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 such as consumerism, beauty, fashion, sexuality, childhood, ethnicity, social and gender roles.

## 2 THE BRAZILIAN DOLL *SUSI*

*Susi* fashion doll has been produced by Brazilian toy manufacturer *Estrela* since 1968, although its production was interrupted during the 1980's when *Estrela* got the license to produce Mattel's *Barbie* in Brazil. “*Susi* and *Barbie* are not rivals, though”, says one of *Estrela*'s employees (personal communication, 12th October 2004). “*Barbie* personifies a grown-up, successful and sexually-appealing woman whereas *Susi* stands

for any typical middle or upper-class adolescent”, she contends. Proof of this, so she says, is the fact that, in contrast to *Barbie*’s body – who 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 the member of *Estrela*’s staff.

Be that as it may, some of *Susi* and *Barbie*’s visual representations *do* bear strong similarities: they entail adult activities such as being placed in domestic contexts which evoke marital life (Figure 1), household duties like being located in a ‘super kitchen’ or in a living room, going to the florist’s or to the hairdresser’s.



Figure 1 – Images of Susi and Barbie with their counterparts Beto and Ken, respectively, placed in adult contexts (retrieved from [www.estrela.com.br](http://www.estrela.com.br) and [www.barbie.com](http://www.barbie.com)).

*Susi*’s image also displays contradictory cultural values. Despite her pseudo validation of ‘Brazianness’ (DOWNIE, 2000), *Susi*’s physical representation evokes, in fact, the prototype of a typical American girl with her large blue eyes and straight, long, blonde hair, whereas *Barbie* can be mistakenly taken as a brunette Brazilian fashion doll whenever she is visually portrayed in one of her summer outfit versions (Figure2).



Figure 2 – Paradoxical relations between the images of *Barbie* and *Susi* in their summer outfit versions: ‘Brazianness’ in Barbie and ‘Americanness’ in Susi? (retrieved from [www.barbie.com](http://www.barbie.com) and [www.estrela.com.br](http://www.estrela.com.br)).

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 (quoted in DOWNIE, 2000) 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 'genuine' Brazilian essence of the 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 is her ethnicity. Although black *Susi* was launched in 1974, it is still blonde *Susi* who rules the roost.

Prior to the analysis of the actual advertisements retrieved from *Susi*'s website, I shall now present an overview of Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Grammar, which has been used as an analytical tool for the investigation of the transitivity structures and the nominal groups identified in *Susi*'s advertisements.

### **3 SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS (SFL): TOOL FOR A LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS**

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 (1994) 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 propose at a conceptualization of texts as entities embedded in two distinct contexts, namely the context of culture – the context in which it is possible to shape meanings in order to achieve specific goals in a particular culture – and the 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 discursive parameters called Field, Tenor and Mode. These variables are realised by what

Halliday (1994) has referred to as ‘metafunctions’, namely, the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunction.

The ideational metafunction involves looking for the processes in a text – linked to the notion of verbs, in traditional grammar –, constituted by events or relationships among things. In Hallidayan 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. Within 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: material, mental and relational, considered as the major ones and described in terms of their subcategories – and behavioural, verbal and existential.

Table 1 summarises the six types of processes of the ideational metafunction.

<b>Process type</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Participants involved</b>
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		

Table 1 – Types of processes.

By recognising that ideational meanings are conveyed by transitivity structures that express the user's conception of reality (HALLIDAY, 1994) 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 (HALLIDAY, 1994). The way this is realised 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 Figure 3.

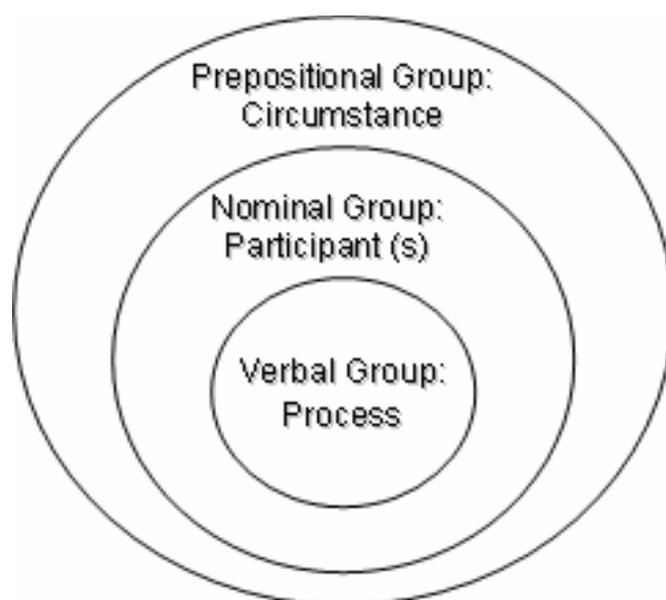


Figure 3 – Representation of reality within and below the clause level (extracted and adapted from BUTT et al, 1998, p. 42).

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*) or *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.

The interpersonal metafunction encodes interaction and treats texts as a ‘dialogue’, whose most relevant interactive distinction is between the use of language (1) to exchange information and (2) to exchange goods and services. 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 – such as an offer and or a command, all of which are realised by the system of Mood.

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. The view of clause as a message is based on 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, according to them, the clause is organised within a Theme and Rheme structure.

Having explained 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 as 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 in 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.

#### 4 LEXICOGRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS: (1) TRANSITIVITY FEATURES

Ten texts extracted from their corresponding *Susi Collection* advertisements were collected during the Christmas season of 2003, particularly because this is usually a period when most toy collections are released at the market (source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk>). Once collected, the data were analysed according to their lexicogrammatical features (see Appendix).

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 analysed advertisements – the *Actor*, the *Senser* or the *Carrier* –, 19 are material processes as opposed to 9 relational and 5 mental processes. Table 2 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>Dresses, uses, makes new friends, brings many presents, dances, puts, roots for, floats, receives, watches every detail, sunbathes, loves to go out, skates [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>Is, has, comes [está, é, tem, vem]</i>	9
<i>Mental</i>	<i>Loves, enjoys, lives the dream of [ama, curte, vive o sonho]</i>	5

Table 2 – Types of processes and number of occurrences in *Susi*'s ads.

Prototypically, material processes deal with concrete doings and happenings as they serve to construe the world in terms of physical experience (HALLIDAY, 1994). 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, wearing, sunbathing, dancing and so forth. Material processes (henceforth identified as *MAPs*) are characterised by the inherent participation of the Actor or Agent of the action, “the one doing the material deed” (p. 103). There might also be a Goal, “a participant impacted by a doing, the one done to or with” (HALLIDAY, 1994), who can take an active or a passive role, as shown in these examples taken from my data:

<b>(Ad1)</b>	In the SUMMER, [Susi]	<b>puts on</b>	her bikini bottom, the pink top, her sunglasses [...]
	No VERÃO, [Susi]	<b>põe</b>	a calcinha de biquíni, o top rosa, o óculos [...]
	<i>Actor/Agent</i>	<i>MAP</i>	<i>Goal</i>

<b>(Ad2)</b>	SUSI	<b>Travels</b>	around the world	<b>makes</b>	new friends and	<b>brings</b>	many presents to you
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	SUSI	<b>viaja</b>	pelo mundo	<b>faz</b>	novos amigos e	<b>traz</b>	muitos presentes para você!
	<i>Actor/Agent</i>	<i>MAp1</i>	<i>Goal1</i>	<i>MAp 2</i>	<i>Goal 2</i>	<i>MAp3</i>	<i>Goal 3</i>

<b>(Ad5)</b>	And at the ball	[Susi]	<b>dances</b>	the whole night long with BETO!
	E no baile	[Susi]	<b>dança</b>	a noite toda com o BETO!
		<i>Actor/Agent</i>	<i>MAp</i>	<i>Goal</i>

In the instances above, the choices of material processes (*MAps*) used in *Susi*'s advertisements help to reveal the nature of her actions by portraying rather typical upper-middle-class activities such as travelling around the world, bringing many presents, dancing, and putting on some of the items of her trendy outfit. Such grammatical choices contribute not only to create and convey a picture of *Susi*'s reality, but they also add a sense of glamour and sophistication to the representation of her universe.

Paradoxically, at the same time that such representation approximates to the child's reality through the mimetic experience by allowing him/her to assume the social roles elicited by the toy, it distances itself from their reality in that children are not yet sufficiently autonomous to partake in activities like the ones being conveyed by the doll advertisements. Since children can neither go shopping nor can they travel around the world by themselves at this specific stage of life, their contribution to the actualisation of the experience being represented in the doll advertisements becomes restricted to the imaginary, within the boundaries of their fantasy. These imaginative acts, Walton (quoted 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 (1994), relational processes (*Rps*) relate the participant to his/her identity or description by means of two different modes, the ones of attribution and identification. This can be verified in

a clause like *Susi is beautiful and superfashion* [*Susi está linda e superfashion*], in which the relational clause type is constructed on the basis of a Carrier + Attribute relation:

<b>(Ad3)</b>	Susi	<b>is</b>	beautiful and superfashion
	Susi	<b>está</b>	linda e superfashion
	<i>Carrier</i>	<i>Rp</i>	<i>Attribute</i>

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 located within the Identifying mode of relational processes, such as in:

<b>(Ad2)</b>	Susi [...]	even <b>has</b>	an overcoat	to travel to colder places!
	Susi [...]	<b>tem</b>	até um sobretudo	para viajar para os lugares mais frios!
	<i>Possessor</i>	<i>Rp</i>	<i>Possession</i>	<i>Circumstance</i>

A relational clause (either attributive or identifying) is based on the classification and categorisation of the entities involved in a process. Taking this into consideration, the importance given to the attributes *beautiful*, *ready*, *superfashion*, *fashionable*, and *always fashionable* [*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: *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 correspond 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 is a champion in all swimming types* [*Susi é campeã em todos os estilos*] (Ad 8), the idea is that such an attribute constitutes an inherent quality of *Susi*, a constant trait of her personality. Contrarily, the clause *Susi is ready to go sunbathing* [*Susi está pronta para "pegar um sol"*] (Ad 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, 1997, p. 105) as they deal with a participant who is involved with conscious processing (HALLIDAY, 1994), namely, the *Senser*. In this respect, the occurrence of mental processes such as *loves*, *enjoys*, and *lives the dream of her graduation* [*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 of the human species, takes a passionate attitude in everything she does: *Susi loves* football, *enjoys* taking a rest in a hammock and *lives* the dream of her graduation party. The following occurrences from the data show *Susi* as the *Senser* who performs the mental processes constructed by the doll ads:

<b>(Ad3)</b>	Susi	<b>loves</b>	Brazilian football [...]
	Susi	<b>ama</b>	o futebol brasileiro [...]
	<i>Senser</i>	<i>MEp</i>	<i>Phenomenon</i>

<b>(Ad5)</b>	SUSI	<b>lives</b>	the dream of her graduation
	SUSI	<b>vive</b>	o sonho de sua formatura
	<i>Senser</i>	<i>MEp</i>	<i>Phenomenon</i>

<b>(Ad9)</b>	She	<b>enjoys</b>	a nice shade on the hammock!
	Ela	<b>curte</b>	uma gostosa sombra na rede!
	<i>Senser</i>	<i>MEp</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” (HALLIDAY, 1994, 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 the juggling act that constitute hegemonic femininity: combining duties appertaining to the personal world (being a mother, a wife/girlfriend, a fashionable young woman who enjoys dating and going out) and to the public world (being (or preparing to be) a successful professional).

## 5 LEXICOGRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS: (2) NOMINAL GROUPS

Another major characteristic of the advertisements 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 the social distance between the interlocutors of a given discursive event (OLIVEIRA, 2000), and vice-versa.

In their investigation on the verbal and visual patterns of women’s magazines, Eggins and Iedema (1997) describe 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 of the pronoun *you*, whereas social distance can be marked 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 *Susi*’s advertisements 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*, *anxiously expected*, *superfun*, *cool*, *supertrendy*, *in tune*, *very sexy* [*superfashion*, *superesperada*, *superdivertidos*, *super na moda*, *supertransada*, *transados*, *antenado*, *gatíssima*], and (2) clauses such as *enjoys the sun*, *enjoys the beach*, *enjoys the shade in a hammock*, *sunbathe*, *go clubbing*, *is ready for an outing with her friends*, *skate*, etc. [*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 lexis in a text is twofold: it shows and at the same time it influences – explicitly in the case of advertisements – the way one views reality. Through specific lexical choices the values and beliefs of a discourse community are unveiled, thus portraying its ideological, political and social experiences (FAIRCLOUGH, 1989; HEBERLE, 1997).

In the case of the ten advertisements 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” (p.2). 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).

Table 3 summarises the occurrences of nominal groups and epithets related to *fashion and beauty* in *Susi*'s ads 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 9. As can be seen in this table, the high incidence of lexical items related to fashion and beauty present in the selected advertisements points to the role they establish 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 ‘*always beautiful*’ [*sempre linda*] (Ads 1, 3 and 9; 4 occurrences); ‘*very sexy*’ [*gatíssima*] (Ad 4, 1 occurrence), always endowed with all her charms

(‘with lots of charme’ [‘com muito charme’], Ad 1; ‘with all her charme’ [‘com todo charme’], Ad 2; 2 occurrences), highly elegant and with a strong sense of fashion (‘superelegant’ [‘superelegante’], Ad 2; ‘superfashion’ [‘superfashion’], Ad 3; ‘superstylish’ [‘superproduzida’], Ad 4; ‘very fashionable’ [‘super na moda’], Ad 9; ‘a very trendy look’ [‘no maior visual da moda’], Ad 7; ‘cool and different looks’ [‘visuais transados e diferentes’], Ad 1; ‘all ready’ [‘prontinha’], Ad 3; and ‘ready’ [‘pronta’], Ad 9; 1 occurrence each).

Fashion/ Beauty					
Ad 1	Ad2	Ad3	Ad 4	Ad7	Ad 9
with lots of versatility cool and different looks always beautiful the whole year long with lots of charme and good taste dress with a flowered skirt pink top clogs upper part in net with long sleeves tennis	With all the charme of a superelegant VARIG flight attendant	inspired on Milene’s uniform beautiful and superfashion all ready the gift of a hair strap	well-dressed very sexy five colored and bright hair clips two hair pieces	three different very fashionable outfits hair clips	beautiful (2 occ) very fashionable with lots of very cool accessories (2 occ) without the skirt with the bikini, sunglasses and the bag all ready

Table 3 – Epithets and nominal groups in *Susi*’s ads related to fashion and beauty.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Portuguese version: **ad 1)** 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; **ad 2)** com todo o charme de uma aeromoça VARIG – superelegante; **ad 3)** inspirada no uniforme da Milene – linda e superfashion – prontinha – faixa de cabelo de presente; **ad 4)** superproduzida – gatíssima – cinco enfeites de cabelo coloridos e brilhantes – dois apliques; **ad 7)** três conjuntos diferentes no maior visual da moda – enfeites de cabelo; **ad 9)** linda (2 occ) – super na moda com um montão de acessórios ultralegais (2 occ) – sem a saia com o biquíni, óculos e bolsa pronta.

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:

[...] the **top** is **double-faced** and the **pieces of clothing** [...] **cool and different looks!** [*o top é dupla-face e as peças de roupa [...] visuais transados e diferentes!*] (Ad1)

[...] the **dress with a flowered skirt** and over it the **pink top** [*o vestido com saia florida e sobre ele, o top rosa*] (Ad1)

[...] the **bikini bottom**, the **pink top**, the **glasses** [*a calcinha de biquíni, o top rosa, o [sic] óculos*] (Ad1)

[...] the **dress**, the **blue top** and, underneath it, the **folded-hemmed trousers** [*o vestido o top azul e por baixo, a calça com barras dobradas*] (Ad1)

[...] **blue top**, **trousers**, **coat** and **long-legged boots** [*top azul, calça comprida, casaco e botas de cano alto*] (Ad1)

**Dress with a flowered skirt and upper part in fabric with long sleeves**, **pink top** and **clogs** [*Vestido com saia florida e parte superior em tela com mangas compridas, top rosa e tamanco*] (Ad1)

**Dress with a flowered skirt and upper part in flowered fabric with long sleeves**, **blue top**, **folded-hemmed trousers** and **tennis shoes** [*Vestido com saia florida e parte superior em tela florida com mangas compridas, top azul, calça com barras dobradas e tennis*] (Ad1)

[...] a **white shirt** under a **coat** and she even has an **overcoat** [...] [[...] **camisa branca** por baixo do **blazer** e tem até um **sobretudo** [...]] (Ad2)

[...] **Five colorful and shiny hair clips** [...] [[...] **cinco enfeites de cabelo coloridos e brilhantes** [...]] (Ad4)

Without the **skirt** and with the **bikini**, **glasses** and **bag** [...] [*Sem a saia e com o biquíni, óculos e bolsa* [...]] (Ad9)

[...] with lots of very cool accessories! [[...] **com um montão de acessórios ultralegais!**] (Ad9)

By focusing on items such as her flowered skirt (*'saia florida'*, Ad 1; 3 occurrences), pink and blue tops (Ad 1; 4 occurrences), dress (*'vestido'* Ad

1; 4 occurrences), bikini bottom (Ads 1 and 9; 2 occurrences), bag (*'bolsa'*, Ads 7 and 9; 3 occurrences); colorful and bright hair clips (*'enfeites de cabelo coloridos e brilhantes'*, Ad 4); supercool accessories (*'acessórios ultralegais'*, Ad 9; 2 occurrences), *Susi's* text could be inserted in what Caldas-Coulthard and 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 *Susi's* advertisements contribute to positively evaluating *Susi* in the advertising discourse about her. 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, such as a swimmer or a roller-skater, she is placed in hot, sunny environments. Her social practice (FAIRCLOUGH, 1995a, 1995b, 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 lives (MORIN; ROSENFELD, 1998).

This is also revealed in the lexical items found in *Susi's* advertisements in which concern about 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, Table 4 includes other prevalent lexical sets found in the doll advertisements together with their number of occurrences.

The focus on lexical items related to Studies and Career, through positive Qualifiers in nominal groups such as *the dream of her graduation, a very special date, anxiously expected from everyone, one of the happiest days of your life* [*sonho de sua formatura, data muito especial, superesperada por todos, um dos dias mais felizes de sua vida*] (Ad 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 meanings 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.

<i>Diet</i>	<i>Leisure</i>	<i>Studies/Career</i>	<i>Sports</i>
<b>Ad 4</b>	<b>Ads 4 and 9</b>	<b>Ad 5</b>	<b>Ads 8 and 10</b>
thirst juice	nights out (2 occ) beach	dream of her graduation a very special date, anxiously expected by everyone photos graduation ceremony the whole class wearing graduation robes mortar board on the head ball (2 occ) one of the happiest days of your life diploma graduation robe and mortar board graduation ring invitation cards photo albums	crawl, backstroke swimming, butterfly swimming champion superfun accessories backpack swimming cap towel board buoys note pad completely safe helmet knee protectors elbow protectors skates small bag water bottle

Table 4 – Epithets and nominal groups in *Susi's* ads related to diet, leisure, studies, career and sports.<sup>2</sup>

By no means do these lexical choices suggest the elimination or the substitution of old domestic roles for new ones; rather, 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 such as going shopping, going to

<sup>2</sup> Portuguese version: **ad 4)** sede – suco; **ads 4 and 9)** baladas (2 occ) – praia; **ad 5)** 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; **ads 8 and 10)** 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.

work, playing sports (*'the charme of a flight attendant'* [*'charme de uma aeromoça'*], Ad 2; *'crawl'* [*'nado livre'*], Ad 8) and women's [2] achievement, such as following a career and being successful (*'graduation ceremony'* [*'sessão solene de entrega dos diplomas'*], *'graduation ring'* [*'anel de formatura'*], Ad 5).

Another role which contemporary women are ideally expected to accomplish is related to their role as companion to the men in their lives, and other 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, like *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: *'a casual and fashionable style'* [*'estilo fashion e descontraído'*] (a nominal group with two Qualifiers, *fashionable* and *casual*); and Qualifiers such as *'always in tune with the new trends from the fashion world'* [*'sempre "antenado" com as novidades do mundo da moda'*] (Ad 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*, *superfashion look* [*maior visual da moda*], *superstylish* [*superproduzida*], *always beautiful* [*sempre linda*] and *very sexy* [*gatíssima*], all of which are target to reinforcing the construction of an idealized discourse of contemporary womanhood through the semiotic representation of women's lives as encompassing a professional career, leisure activities and the pursuit of female beauty.

## 6 FINAL REMARKS

The discussion on the lexico-grammatical features of the advertisements of Brazilian doll *Susi* has helped to shed some light on how the image of Brazilian young women is conveyed by the discourse of two-dimensional vehicles such as fashion dolls' advertisements.

In this sense, the analysis of *Susi's* texts 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, via nominal groups which essentially focus on items such as *fashion*, *beauty* and *diet*. However, an attempt has been made to revamp this submissive image through the depiction of *Susi* as involved in professional and leisure activities, through lexical sets which emphasise items such as *sports*, *leisure*, *studies* and *career*, as well as through the nature of the material processes which construct *Susi*'s world in terms of physical experience (wearing, travelling, dancing, sunbathing, roller-skating, etc).

Be that as it may, while discussing the construction of gender in the representation of toys, Caldas-Coulthard and van Leeuwen (2001) have contended that “some toys are designed for action, others for posing” (p. 98), and dolls like *Barbie* – one of their objects of investigation – and *Susi* are included in this group of toys.

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 (CALDAS-COULTHARD; VAN LEEUWEN, 2001) certainly conveys gendered meanings related to 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 (CALDAS-COULTHARD; VAN LEEUWEN, 2001). The kinetic differences encoded by the visual representations of toys for boys and girls help to capture the essence of the social view of men's and women's roles in contemporary society.

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**APPENDIX: Susi's advertisements (extracted and adapted from [www.estrela.com.br](http://www.estrela.com.br))**

**Ad1 – Susi Quatro Estações**

Primavera, verão, outono, inverno....

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!

SUSI não pára em pé sozinha.

DETALHE Primavera!!!! Vestido com saia florida e parte superior em tela com mangas compridas, top rosa e tamanco!

DETALHE Outono!!!! Vestido com saia florida e parte superior em tela florida com mangas compridas, top azul, calça com barras dobradas e tênis!

DETALHE Você ganha um lindo porta-lápis para montar!

**Ad 2 – Susi Aeromoça**

Com todo o charme de uma aeromoça VARIG, SUSI viaja pelo mundo, faz novos amigos e traz muitos presentes para você!

SUSI não pára em pé sozinha.

DETALHE Superelegante, SUSI veste camisa branca por baixo do blazer e tem até um sobretudo para viajar para lugares mais frios!

DETALHE Sua mala tem rodinhas, abre e fecha de verdade e a altura da alça pode ser ajustada!

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!

### Ad 3 – Susi Seleção By Milene Domingues

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!

Susi não pára em pé sozinha.

DETALHE SHOW DE BOLA! Uma faixa de cabelo de presente pra você usar!

### Ad 4 – Susi Piscina e Diversão

SUSI e BETO não páram em pé sozinhos.

Deu sede? Que tal um "suco"?... HUUM!

SUSI adora sair para baladas. Superproduzida e gatíssima, ela não deixa escapar nenhum detalhe!

DETALHE Para você acompanhar SUSI nas baladas, ganha cinco enfeites de cabelo coloridos e brilhantes e mais dois apliques!

### Ad 5 – Susi Baile de Formatura

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"!

### Ad 6 – Beto Estilo

Com seu estilo fashion e descontraído, Beto está sempre "antenado" com as novidades do mundo da moda, pronto para um passeio com a galera!

Beto não pára em pé sozinho.

### Ad 7 – Cartela Susi Visual da Moda

São três conjuntos diferentes para você deixar sua SUSI no maior visual da moda. E as cartelas têm a forma de uma bolsa!

Sapatos e enfeites de cabelo não incluídos.

### Ad 8 – Susi Aula de Natação

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!  
 Marcador de raias não incluído.  
 DETALHE Tem mochila, touca, toalha!  
 DETALHE Tem prancha e bóias!  
 DETALHE E até "prancheta de anotações"!

### Ad 9 - Susi Moda Praia

SUSI está linda e super na moda para curtir uma praia. E com um montão de acessórios ultralegais!  
 QUE SOSSEGO! Ela curte uma gostosa sombra na rede!  
 DETALHE QUE DEMAIS!  
 A bolsa vira toalha!  
 DETALHE Um montão de acessórios superlegais!  
 DETALHE QUE LINDA!  
 Sem a saia e com o biquíni, óculos e bolsa, Susi está pronta para "pegar um sol"!

### Ad 10 – Susi Patinadora

SUSI adora patinar!  
 Mas com toda a segurança e sempre linda, com uma roupa supertransada, leve e confortável!  
 DETALHE Capacete, joelheiras e cotoveleiras para patinar numa boa!  
 DETALHE Os patins têm rodinhas que giram de verdade!  
 DETALHE A bolsinha e a "garrafinha de água" vão presas na cintura!

*Recebido em 12/01/08. Aprovado em 09/07/08.*

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**Título:** Para além da hora do recreio: a representação da realidade em anúncios de bonecas de moda

**Autor:** Danielle Barbosa Lins de Almeida

**Resumo:** Este artigo analisa os significados expressos pelo discurso dos anúncios virtuais da boneca brasileira Susi, extraídos do site [www.estrela.com.br](http://www.estrela.com.br). Apoiado na Gramática Sistêmico-Funcional de Halliday (1994), o artigo analisa as estruturas de transitividade e os grupos nominais, ao focar os temas que os anúncios da Susi contemplam, os papéis que eles refletem e o tipo de relacionamento que é estabelecido entre seus participantes. A análise das estruturas de transitividade dos anúncios da Susi aponta para a construção de um mundo textualmente caracterizado por atividades típicas de classe média-alta, que giram em torno de processos materiais e relacionais. As análises dos itens lexicais especificam a natureza destas atividades, ao abordarem temas

como moda, beleza, dieta, esportes, lazer, estudos e carreira, alterando, assim, uma visão tradicional da figura feminina, exclusivamente centrada no contexto doméstico.

**Palavras-chave:** discurso; anúncio publicitário; gênero social; brinquedo; gramática sistêmico-funcional.

**Titre:** Au-delà de l'horaire de la récréation: la représentation de la réalité dans des annonces publicitaires concernant des poupées de mode

**Auteur:** Danielle Barbosa Lins de Almeida

**Résumé:** Cet article fait l'analyse des sens exprimés par les discours virtuels de la poupée brésilienne Susi, extraits du site [www.estrela.com.br](http://www.estrela.com.br). Appuyé dans la Grammaire Systémique Fonctionnel de Halliday (1994), l'article analyse les structures de transitivité et les groupes nominaux, en focalisant les sujets que les annonces publicitaires de la Susi contemplant, les rôles qu'ils postulent et le type de rapport qui est établi parmi les participants. L'analyse des structures de transitivité des annonces publicitaires de la Susi indiquent la construction d'un monde textuellement caractérisé par des activités typiques de la classe moyenne/haute, qui tourne autour de procès matériels et relationnels. Les analyses des thèmes lexicaux spécifient la nature de ces activités, tout en s'adressant aux sujets comme mode, diète, sports, loisirs, études et carrière, changeant, ainsi, une vision traditionnelle de la figure féminine, exclusivement centrée dans le contexte familial.

**Mots-clés:** discours; annonce publicitaire; genre social; jouet; grammaire systémique fonctionnel.

**Título:** Para más allá de la hora del recreo: la representación de la realidad en anuncios de muñecas de moda

**Autor:** Danielle Barbosa Lins de Almeida

**Resumen:** Este artículo analiza los significados expresados por el discurso de los anuncios virtuales de la muñeca brasilera Susi, extraídos del sitio [www.estrela.com.br](http://www.estrela.com.br). Apoyado en la Gramática Sistémico-Funcional de Halliday (1994), el artículo analiza las estructuras de transitividad y los grupos nominales, al enfocar los temas que los anuncios de Susi contemplan, los papeles que ellos reflejan y el tipo de relación que es establecido entre sus participantes. El análisis de las estructuras de transitividad de los anuncios de Susi apunta para la construcción de un mundo textualmente caracterizado por actividades típicas de clase media-alta, que giran en torno de procesos materiales y relacionales. Los análisis de los ítems lexicales especifican la naturaleza de estas actividades, al abordar temas como moda, belleza, dieta, deportes, ocio, estudios y carrera, cambiando, de esta manera, una visión tradicional de la figura femenina, exclusivamente centrada en el contexto doméstico.

**Palabras-clave:** discurso; anuncio publicitario; género social; juguete; gramática sistémico-funcional.