

“Are you a Barbie girl?”

A diachronic qualitative study on how Barbie’s image changed between 2000-2019, based on the brand’s advertising.



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ABSTRACT

In this day and age, more brands tend to engage with inclusive advertising campaigns in order to stay relevant and competitive in the market. One of these brands responding to the trend towards inclusion and diversity is Barbie. The popular doll has been criticized for promoting a single type of femininity based on stereotypes regarding appearance and roles. Despite the social influence that Barbie may have on young girls' perceptions with regard to female images and roles, the brand has been extremely successful for over 5 decades. In 2012, however, Barbie's sales have started dropping significantly, a fact that paved the way for Mattel, the manufacturing company behind Barbie, to change the doll's branding strategy. As a result, since 2015, Mattel aims to break the stereotypical representation of women and 'to better reflect the world girls see today', by adding dolls with diverse skin tones, body types and hairstyles. This thesis investigates whether the changes that the doll brand has incorporated are apparent in the brand's advertising campaigns over the years. Thus, the research question 'How has femininity been constructed in Barbie's advertising campaigns between 2000-2019?' is raised. To answer this research question, thematic analysis was implemented on a total of 100 video advertisements (5 per year) for Barbie by Mattel, in order for the researcher to observe the gradual shift regarding femininity within the time period of interest. This thematic analysis resulted in six main themes, which were combined to provide an answer to the research question. In general, it was found that the construction of femininity through the adverts of the brand has undergone significant changes after 2015. Although white Caucasian features, sexiness, thinness and attentive looks were prominent features of femininity until 2015, femininity, after 2015, is constructed through diversity in ethnicity, body types and looks. The shift of the doll brand is not limited to female images; stereotypically female roles and activities related to outward appearance or to personality attributes like emotional, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationships that were predominant in the years 2000-2015, were gradually less observed after 2015. Overall, it could be said that despite the changes that were observed through the process of thematic analysis, there are still various types of women that are not represented through the dolls of the brand.

KEYWORDS: Barbie doll, gender, femininity, stereotypes, shift, advertising

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	2
1. Introduction	4
1.1. Societal and Scientific relevance.....	6
1.2. Structure of the thesis.....	10
2. Theoretical framework	12
Chapter overview.....	12
2.1 Definition of 'femininity'	12
2.2. Childhood and femininity.....	16
2.3. Barbie- an icon of popular culture	18
2.4. Barbie 2000-2019.....	22
3. Methodology	24
3.1. Chapter overview.....	24
3.2. Qualitative method of analysis	24
3.3. Sample and sampling criteria.....	25
3.4. Thematic analysis.....	27
3.5. Thematic analysis Step by step	30
3.6. Qualitative research software tool	31
4. Results/Discussion	33
Chapter overview.....	33
4.1. 'Lack of diversity in skin color and ethnicity'	34
4.2. 'Consumption-based/ branded femininity'.....	39
4.3. 'Affluent lifestyle'	42
4.4. 'Obsessed with outward appearance'	44
4.4.1 'Perfect looks'	46
4.4.2. 'Glam and hot' femininity	50
4.4.3. 'Narcissistic femininity'	53
4.5. 'The thin ideal'	54
4.6. 'Woman as nurturing'	57
4.6.1. 'Caring, helpful and nurturing' femininity	57
4.6.2.' Housekeeper'	60
4.6.3. 'Bride'	61
4.8. Chapter Conclusion	62
5. Conclusion	64
5.1. Answer to the research question.....	64
5.2. Limitations and suggestions for further research	65
5.3. Theoretical implications.....	67
References:	69
Appendix 1:	76
Appendix 2:	86

1. Introduction

Barbie Doll - Marge Piercy (1971)

This girlchild was born as usual
and presented dolls that did pee-pee
and miniature GE stoves and irons
and wee lipsticks the color of cherry candy.
Then in the magic of puberty, a classmate said:
You have a great big nose and fat legs.

She was healthy, tested intelligent,
possessed strong arms and back,
abundant sexual drive and manual dexterity.
She went to and fro apologizing.
Everyone saw a fat nose on thick legs.

She was advised to play coy,
exhorted to come on hearty,
exercise, diet, smile and wheedle.
Her good nature wore out
like a fan belt.
So she cut off her nose and her legs
and offered them up.

In the casket displayed on satin she lay
with the undertaker's cosmetics painted on,
a turned-up putty nose,
dressed in a pink and white nightie.
Doesn't she look pretty? everyone said.
Consummation at last.

To every woman a happy ending.

Written by Marge Piercy, an American writer and social activist, in 1971, when second-wave feminism was active, this free verse poem narrates the story of a girl who died in an effort to meet the unhealthy expectations that society created for women. Gender stereotypes, certain beauty standards, and sexism are critically highlighted through what the Barbie doll represented as a prominent cultural icon of this time period. Barbie expressed what the 'ideal' (American) woman should look like and how she should act by portraying unattainable beauty standards and a daily life based on stereotypical gender roles (Perrin, 1999). It is only in her funeral, when this girl is displayed having a small nose and long, slim legs and thus fitting in with the stereotypical femininity of the time, that she gets approval from people around her.

Through the 'girlchild', the author underlines the issue of how young generations are affected by the gender stereotyping and beauty ideals constructed by social discourses that are conveyed through the Barbie Doll itself (Perrin, 1999). Of course, the 'Barbie Doll' poem dates back to the 1970's; since then, wide societal changes have decisively shifted perceptions with regard to gender roles and representations, making Barbie adjust to the new social and political circumstances. It is, therefore, valuable to examine how the image of Barbie has changed over the years and what those changes reveal, focusing on the societal, as well as on the advertising aspect of this gradual shift. This chapter will introduce the topic further by putting it into a broader context. Next, the societal and scientific relevance of the research problem will be discussed. In addition, the research question will be introduced, while the selected research method used to answer this research question will be briefly mentioned. Lastly, this chapter will conclude with an outline of the structure of this thesis.

The issue of gender representations in advertising is extremely controversial and has been debated for many years, especially among academics. From Goffman's (1979) popular publication of "*Gender Advertisements*" which discusses and illustrates male-female roles and relationships to more contemporary specialists in the field, like Gill (2007, 2009, 2013), the topic of gender portrayal in advertising is thoroughly examined. It goes without saying that since the average American citizen is exposed to 3,000 adverts each

day, as Gill (2007) has argued, he/she may either consciously or unconsciously become influenced by their contents. Of course, the presence of advertising in people's daily lives is more prominent since Gill's findings in 2007, especially when the emergence of the Web 2.0 and its social influence is considered (Dehghani et al, 2016). In this day and age, traditional as well social media relentlessly reproduce advertisements for products and services, illustrating an increase in exposure to ads of 70% compared to that in 2007. It is of particular interest that in 2019 the average U.S. citizen was exposed to 5,000 advertisements daily (Holmes, 2019).

Due to the omnipresence of advertising, it is of the utmost importance to understand the way adverts convey messages and meanings to the audience. Advertising is perceived by academics to play a crucial role in shaping perceptions, roles and identities around gender, by portraying and constructing stereotypes concerning male and female representation (Conley & Ramsey, 2011). However, the process of shaping stereotypes begins from an early age, most importantly through toys that constitute the tools for children to understand the world and perform their respective roles while playing games (Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014).

The most successful and, at the same time, most criticized toy ever produced, is the Barbie doll (Wright, 2003). What has sparked controversy among customers and scholars is not the 11.5-inch plastic object; the issue being debated is the culture and the idea of femininity conveyed through it. The famous doll has been the receiver of extensive critique due to the stereotypical reproduction of the female role model through Barbie's physical appearance, roles and activities (Wright, 2003). With Mattel, the company behind the famous doll, promising gender diversity and inclusion through "a doll that looks like all of us" (Hope, 2019), an investigation of how the brand relays messages regarding femininity over the years follows naturally. To approach this topic, the research question "*How has femininity been constructed in Barbie's advertising campaigns between 2000 and 2019?*" is raised.

1.1. Societal and Scientific relevance

Mattel, the American toy manufacturing company founded in 1945 by Harold Matson and Elliot Handler, is one of the most influential toy companies globally, including among other brands, Barbie, Fisher Price and Hot Wheels (O'Connell, 2020). Barbie,

accounting for a quarter of Mattel's sales, started losing popularity in 2012, due to the competition in the toy market, especially after Disney's (DIS) "Frozen" line was released in 2013 and became a behemoth in the toy aisle (Kell, 2015). However, analysts have argued that the decline in Barbie's sales is also attributed to the brand's social influence on young girls, as it has been accused of promoting sexism and stereotypical gender images and roles (Segran, 2017). Between 2012- 2014 alone, Barbie's global sales dropped by 20%, a fact that resulted in a decisive change in the doll brand's strategy (Kell, 2015). To gain back the doll's lagging popularity and change the perception of the Barbie brand, Mattel's VP of communications stated that "one of the ways to continue to be relevant is by being a reflection of the time" (Segran, 2017).

Starting from 2015, the toy company has been making incremental progress towards a more inclusive and diverse representation of women (Salam, 2019). An important turning point for Barbie was 2016, when three new body types were launched, - 'petite', 'curvy' and 'tall' (figure 1)(Segran, 2017). The introduction of a wider array of body types aimed to break the stereotype of the 'ideal' figure with enormous breasts, a tiny waist, and long thin legs that Barbie represented in the 57-year history of the doll until 2016. More skin tones, eye colors, hairstyles and hair textures were also introduced in the doll line releases after 2015 (Segran, 2017).



Figure 1- Barbie dolls with diverse body types -Screenshot from 'Barbie Fashionistas' 2016

In addition, Mattel, "the company that dominated the doll world by dividing it into idealized Barbies and Kens" (Salam, 2019), did not limit its attempt to be relevant only by making changes in the Barbie brand. In September 2019, the toy company introduced the 'Creatable world' line, comprising of 'gender-neutral' dolls, which, as the company's

marketing reports claim, are made “for boys, girls and children in between” (Salam, 2019). Available in different skin tones, wigs of different lengths and hair types and various clothing options, these dolls were “designed specifically to have a youthful gender-neutral appearance” (Salam, 2019). Through their play, children are able to create a diversity of representations of gender expression by adjusting their own doll, in order to reflect who they are or who they would like to see or become in the future, according to Mattel (Hope, 2019). Of particular interest, however, is Mattel’s attempt to “help tomorrow’s adults feel more secure in who they are” through these dolls (Hope, 2019), especially when considering that the toy company has been widely associated with the reproduction of gender stereotypes (Wright, 2003). Examining the ‘Creatable world’ series from a critical standpoint, it becomes apparent that its creators ‘play’ with gender in order to blur the boundaries between male and female, while the concept ‘gender-neutrality’ is vague, ambiguous and hard to define.

Moreover, Mattel’s announcement of the “Fashionista” doll series in spring 2020, which aims to present “multidimensional, diverse and international beauty” according to Sullivan (2020), contributed to the selection and critical examination of the topic. A number of magazines and newspapers claim that “Barbie just got even more inclusive with its latest Fashionistas 2020 Collection” (Gardner, 2020) by including one doll with vitiligo, one with no hair, one doll with a prosthetic limb and another using a wheelchair. In fact, this doll series was to a large extent positively perceived by the online media, with the words ‘progress’, ‘human rights’ and ‘success’ standing out when the particular launch was discussed online.

The famous doll is no longer exclusively tall, blond with light eyes, ‘perfect’ measurements, fashionable and ‘feminine’ clothes; dolls in different heights, body and hair types, skin tones and stylings compose the updated “Fashionista” lines, creating the perception that ‘the most popular doll on earth’ has stopped living in a world full of identical faces and has finally adjusted to reality (Gardner, 2020). These new doll series undoubtedly make way for further analysis on the Barbie brand’s presence over the years, with the aim of looking into the messages regarding femininity the doll relays to its audience. An overview of the brand’s evolution over the years is discussed in Chapter 2.

As the burning issue of female identity and women’s portrayals in advertising has been a topic of interest for specialists for over five decades, a lot of journals, articles, books

and documentaries have been dedicated to the subject. Goffman (1979), Kilbourne (1979, 1987, 1999, 2010), Eisend (2010), Gill (2007, 2008, 2016) and Conley and Ramsey (2011) are a few of the most cited ones. Furthermore, the social influence of the famous doll brand on gender stereotyping, children's mental and physical health, potential careers and self-esteem has also been analyzed by scholars. Norton (1996), Rogers (1999), Wright (2003), Rice, Prichard, Tiggemann and Slater (2016), Sherman and Zurbriggen's (2014) are some of the academics with valuable contributions on the topic, which are discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. On the other hand, studies focusing on the way the doll brand has changed the way it portrays femininity have not yet been conducted, given that inclusion and diversity become one of the goals of the company behind Barbie in recent years. However, the popular doll brand has significantly changed throughout the years, making way for an update of the studies carried out so far. For this reason, unlike previous research this project will attempt to investigate the gradual changes in the Barbie brand advertising strategy between 2000 and 2019, which aimed to make the brand more inclusive, diverse and representative of 'ordinary' women. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the identified gap in relevant scientific literature might be challenging for the conduction of this research, due to the lack of scientific literature regarding the brand's shift.

Consequently, the research question *"How has femininity been constructed in Barbie's advertising campaigns between 2000 and 2019?"* is raised. Focusing on the 2000-2019 time period will help set the boundaries of the research and make it more feasible and systematic. In addition, the particular time period is selected, as it will enable the researcher to observe and report the gradual changes in the brand's adverts, considering that these have become apparent in the last five years. As the research question requires a deep understanding of implicit meanings of femininity (Sofaer, 1999), adopting a qualitative approach is appropriate for this study. Thus, to answer the research question, thematic analysis was selected and implemented in 100 Barbie video advertisements, with the goal of identifying, analyzing and reporting the themes that address femininity across the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The justification of the chosen research method will be further discussed in Chapter 3. In addition to thematic analysis, the voice-overs of the sample were transcribed and put into ConText, qualitative research software, in order to complement the main findings of the analysis.

1.2. Structure of the thesis

In order to answer the research question of this study, this thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the concepts of gender and femininity in detail, while the term 'femininity' is defined, as it is given a main role in the research question. Moreover, an analysis of the processes that shape the perceptions of femininity and gender during childhood is provided. The important role of toys in relation with gender is discussed, with a particular focus on 'girls play' and 'feminine' toys. This sub section reveals young girls' preference for dolls and makes way for further investigation on the issue. Barbie, 'the most successful doll over the years' (Kahn, 2019), is then critically discussed in relation to the messages of femininity she conveys through her appearance and behavior. A diachronic approach on Barbie's evolution over the years is also presented.

The Theoretical framework is followed by the Methodology chapter in which the research design is explained in detail, while providing clear argumentation for the methodological choices used to answer the research question of this study. The suitability of the research method is justified while the necessary steps of the selected method and the selection and size of the sample are thoroughly described. The materials, comprising of 100 video advertisements for Barbie between 2000-2019 (5 per year), were thematically analyzed with the use of the six steps of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). In addition, the voice overs of the 100 commercials were transcribed in order to complement the results that the data analysis yielded. The data analysis resulted in six different thematic categories regarding the construction of femininity within the commercials of the sample.

These six thematic categories are reported in detail in the Chapter 4 of this thesis. Specifically, the Results chapter presents the themes found through the implementation of thematic analysis, while providing quotes and screenshots from the analyzed commercials, in order to support the reported observations. The six thematic categories that emerged from the data analysis are the following: '*Lack of diversity in skin color and ethnicity*', '*Consumption-based femininity*', '*Affluent lifestyle*', '*Obsessed with outward appearance*', '*Thin ideal*', and '*Woman as nurturing*'. These themes were interpreted in relation to the research question, and the theoretical framework, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. In general it was found that the construction of femininity through the advertisements of the brand has undergone significant changes after 2015.

The last chapter of the thesis is the 'Conclusion'. In this chapter, the research question is answered by the combination of all the sub-conclusions from Chapter 4. In addition, limitations of the research are addressed and suggestions for future research are provided. Lastly, the theoretical implications of this thesis are mentioned.

2. Theoretical framework

Chapter overview

This chapter explores previous literature on the topic of interest and the key concepts around which the research is constructed. Specifically, the theoretical framework is divided into four sections. Firstly, the concept of gender and femininity are defined in detail, which is followed by an analysis of the processes that shape the perceptions of these during childhood. The important role of toys in relation with gender is discussed, with a particular focus on 'girls play' and 'feminine' toys. This sub section reveals young girls' preference for dolls and makes way for further investigation on the issue. Barbie is then critically analyzed, with regard to the messages of femininity she conveys through her appearance and behavior. Finally, the gradual changes that the doll brand has incorporated in recent years are discussed.

2.1 Definition of 'femininity'

As Socrates indicates, "the beginning of wisdom is the definition of terms" (Pang & Lee, 2008). Hence, before diving into the subject of femininity, defining what gender refers to is necessary. According to feminist theory, the term 'gender' has two dimensions; 'sex', referring to the anatomical characteristics of an individual and 'social gender', which is an outcome of the dynamics and interaction between an individual and his/her environment (Sarikakis & Tsaliki, 2011). Gender identity is, thus, a construction, which is defined and shaped by society, through certain processes of socialization. It is related not only to the way that the social environment raises the individual, but also with the way the person corresponds and complies with what the social environment expects from him/her, based on his/her gender (Sarikakis & Tsaliki, 2011). Hence, gender is a result of long-term processes, through which individuals obtain motivations, values, behaviors, stereotypes and roles, namely the characteristics that are perceived as appropriate, typical and desirable from the culture and society, within which they are raised.

Goffman (1979) builds upon social gender theory, indicating that concepts of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are also socially constructed and are presented to people as principles that must be obeyed, in order for them to perform their respective 'appropriate' roles and 'fit' in society. Although the terms 'femininity' and 'masculinity' are commonly

used, there is a significant lack of consensus among scholars with regard to the definitions of those. However, this study focuses on the concept of femininity, using the definition that describes it as a set of traits, attributes and roles generally associated with the female biological gender (Spence & Helmreich, 1979). However, a significant clarification that should be considered is that femininity, as well as masculinity is a product of interpersonal relations and their dynamics and can be exhibited in both males and females.

Femininity, as defined above, overlaps with womanhood, female identity and women's roles. As a product of interaction between history and society (Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2009), femininity is reinforced by social expectations, based on shared meanings and realities, especially by gender display in the mass media (Craig 1992; Goffman 1979). A significant aspect of the mass media is, undoubtedly, advertising. Thus, examining how has femininity been constructed through adverts, which are 'at the heart of our social existence' (Gill, 2007), is particularly important. Advertisements offer us a unique opportunity to study the construction of beauty in a culture because advertisers are notorious for promoting a 'beauty ideal' (Greer, 1999) or, as Cortese (1999) pointed out, presenting the ideal 'female prototype'. Today, female representations in media of Western cultures are decisively influenced by neoliberalism and consumer capitalism, which have gradually caused the emergence of 'consumption-based femininity' (Gill, 2007). This type of femininity has its roots in women's insecurities, as it focuses on the female body and women's choices as consumers. It is also known as 'branded femininity', given that a particular brand is seen as a solution for women's problem regarding their physical appearance and especially bodies. Consumption-based femininity gives rise to a set of characteristics that women should exhibit in order to be 'feminine'.

Global media have been predominantly representing only a single type of femininity (Boni, 2002), although slightly adjusted to meet each country's market and the local consumer base needs (Tan, Shaw, Cheng & Ko Kim, 2013). However, it is important to mention that the global consumption market and consumer culture determine what is to be represented in the media. Specifically, U.S. and Europe, also known as the 'West', "supply the global mass media, design the commodities and the labor process of producing them and regulate the accumulation of resources" (Connell, 1993, p. 612), meaning that these countries play a key role in creating trends that redefine the most prominent and desired characteristics for men and women on a global level (Tan, Shaw, Cheng & Ko Kim,

2013). Of course, femininity and beauty construction are closely linked to culture and ethnicity (Tan, Shaw, Cheng & Ko Kim, 2013). Nevertheless, the global media function like a socialization agent, by reproducing certain gender images and beauty standards, which are then diffused to the local markets (Tan, Shaw, Cheng & Ko Kim, 2013). Consequently female, as well as masculine images undergo changes in order to adjust to different cultures and environments. Given that they are influenced by history and society of each culture, distinct models of the desired femininity have been constructed in each of them throughout the years (Tan, Shaw, Cheng & Ko Kim, 2013).

However, despite the characteristics that femininity might entail in different societies and cultures, cross-cultural comparisons have illustrated that U.S. and European traits of femininity are the most desired ones, within and beyond these cultures (Tan, Shaw, Cheng & Ko Kim, 2013; Frith, Shaw & Cheng, 2005). Of great concern is, that even in the West, the most desired femininity in terms of appearance, does not represent the average American or European woman. Also called 'hegemonic' femininity, the most desired type of femininity within a certain a culture, and in this case, the culture of the 'West', might not be frequently encountered. However, it sets the standards, based on which, the rest of women are judged. An important clarification that needs to be addressed here is that when 'desired' or 'hegemonic' femininity are mentioned in this study, they refer to the standards of femininity, as shaped by the culture of the 'West', namely the European and American culture. Furthermore, the focus on these cultures is also due to the fact that the majority of research on female images in advertisements over the past decades (Frith, Shaw & Cheng, 2005) has been carried out in the U.S. and Europe, and consequently, a number of materials could be utilized in this thesis. It is, therefore, valuable to examine the set of traits, which construct the most desired femininity through advertising, according to the Western standards. These qualities and attributes regarded as characteristics of women are related to both beauty standards and behavior/character.

With regard to appearance, an important feature of the desirable femininity in advertising, as identified by media scholars refers to white femininity; Caucasian features constitute a predominant characteristic of Western hegemonic femininity, given that the majority of media representations of women, as well as fashion models are either white or if not, illustrate Caucasian-like features (Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2009). The ideal female image is not restricted only to Caucasian features; a 'healthy' look with bronzed skin,

strong bone structure, certain body measurements and most importantly, youth, shape this stereotype of the desired, attractive, ageless and 'perfect' woman (Conley & Ramsey, 2011). As a result, the reinforcement of certain beauty standards through advertising does not only construct the ideal female image, but also influences women's behavior and personality. Young girls and women, who reflect themselves through media representations, tend to focus exclusively on their physical appearance and, consequently, pay little attention to their abilities, feelings and capacities. This phenomenon is called 'self-objectification' and has been a prominent thematic pattern of femininity in advertising in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's as Gill (2007) indicates.

Women in advertisements of the aforementioned period were also largely depicted as 'happy housewives', or were sexually objectified and portrayed as subordinate to men (Goffman, 1979; Gill, 2007, 2008; Conley & Ramsey, 2011). Performing gestures that function as indexes of subordination, women were most often illustrated lying down, using 'bashful knee bends', or smiling 'indifferently' (Goffman, 1979). However, as Gill (2008), indicates, there has been a positive shift in advertising, with regard to female representations, starting from the 1990's. It needs to be mentioned, that despite these changes, certain thematic patterns identified in advertisements of the previous decades still accompany women's presence in advertising.

Women in contemporary advertising are more frequently illustrated as active, independent and sexually powerful, compared to the previous decades, while emphasis is placed upon female empowerment and women's choices (Gill, 2008). Specifically, women are portrayed to consciously play with their sexual power, illustrating a shift from being sexual objects to being sexual subjects, meaning that women's objectification is now self-chosen (Gill, 2008). Thus, contemporary advertising illustrates women as being sexually assertive, dominant, alluring sexual beings freed from the need to satisfy men and confident in their own body. However, sexism has become more subtle compared to the previous decades, due to the fact that it is presented in advertising as women's choice (Gill, 2008, 2016). Agency and choice are seen as driving forces for women to their alleged empowerment through the imperatives of beauty industries, which focus on women's bodies and the make-over paradigm (Gill, 2016). Of particular interest is that this preoccupation with outward appearance and self-image has been associated with self-admiration and narcissism, resulting in an obsession with perfection, rather than providing

women with agency and free choice (Gill, 2016). Nowadays, as Brooks (2015) highlights, women are valued only when being thin, young, glam and stylish in order to comply with the female images perpetuated by the media.

Stereotypical femininity in the West entails not only a feminine, glamorous outward appearance but also a certain set of proper behaviors (Rogers, 1999, p.3). Specifically, traits related to representations of women in advertising may include sensitivity, vulnerability, gentleness, humility, as well as romanticism and subordination (Goffman, 1979; Gill, 2007, Colatrella, 2011). Females are also stereotypically defined by their emotions and interest in helping others, while showing sympathy, nurture, help, understanding and comfort (Wood, 1999). In addition, women are typically considered to prefer cooperation over competition and to value social progress and the social good more than individual profit (Thompson, Glenn & Vertein, 2011). Interestingly, stereotypical masculine traits, promote the exact opposites; competitiveness, physical power, independence and authority, a fact that underlines the difference in perceptions regarding gender roles and traits (Thompson, Glenn & Vertein, 2011). It needs to be mentioned that stereotypically feminine traits, as previously mentioned, are also related to women's roles as mothers and housewives. These qualities are incorporated also in advertising, in order to emphasize gendered aspects of engaging with products and services in the marketing world.

2.2. Childhood and femininity

As gender constitutes an undoubtedly significant part of socialization in childhood, examining the roles, activities, appearance, and behavior that are commonly perceived as 'acceptable' for boys and girls is of great significance (Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014). Gender schema theory, firstly introduced in the academic literature by Bem (1981), suggests that children construct cognitive schemas for interpreting their world and learn from an early age that gender constitutes an important factor for organizing information and influencing behavior (Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014). Not only children's play is a significant contributor to the socialization process but also toys that children play with are undoubtedly a means of internal representation and self-reflection (Norton, Olds, Olive & Dank, 1996). Through the process of playing with toys, children practice particular behaviors, which are repeated and result in the development of expertise. Thus, activities

based on gender are found to play a decisive role in children's expectations and preferences regarding their future selves (Weisgram & Dinella, 2018).

As observed by social cognitive scholars, behaviors that align with their gender are prominent in children's play, even before they develop their own gender identity at the age of approximately two (Weisgram & Dinella, 2018). However, contemporary scientific literature on the matter questions the abovementioned finding, arguing that children's understanding of their own gender identity is what makes them mimic behaviors of same-gender models (Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014). Nevertheless, the biological sex and biological processes acquire an important role in the development of children's gender identity.

Different marketing strategies are used by manufacturers in order to create products that appeal separately to boys and girls. Color, according to Auster and Mansbach (2012), is a significant way of categorizing masculine and feminine toys. Typically, parents can choose a toy among a 'sea of blue and pink' (Weisgram & Dinella, 2018, p.73); the same toys can be found in two versions; one for boys with 'masculine' colors and one for girls with 'feminine' colors. Interestingly, girls by the extremely early age of 2 years old have the tendency to prefer pink over other colors (LoBue & DeLoache, 2011), a finding that indicates that they have already constructed an understanding of what 'feminine' looks like. Moreover, girls and boys of the same age show remarkable differences in toy preferences. Girls are found to prefer dolls, kitchens or other domestic toys, fashion accessories, and stuffed animals, while boys prefer toys related to transportation, construction, guns and sports (Cherney & London, 2006).

The gender differences in toys are highly apparent in play activities and interests during the preschool years. However, between the ages of 5-13 years old, boys' preference for 'masculine' toys remains the same as they grow older, while girls' preference for gender stereotyped toys is slightly decreased (Weisgram & Dinella, 2018). A study conducted by Cherney and Herr (2016) that investigated children's reasons for categorizing toys into masculine and feminine, found that 11% of children associated particular colors with feminine toys and others with masculine toys, while 24% of children mentioned a particular task related to gender (e.g. cooking) as a reason for categorizing a toy as a girl's or a boy's toy. Girls and boys are also likely to use the same objects differently; while girls are found to show nurturing, care and affection to dolls, while boys, according to research usually

engage in violent ways of playing with dolls, like pulling the dolls' hair or legs or remove her clothing (Weisgram & Dinella, 2018).

2.3. Barbie- an icon of popular culture

Barbie, 'America's fictional sweetheart', was released on the American international toy fair in 1959 (Wright, 2003). It was created by Ruth and Eliot Hundler, who were inspired by a popular German doll called Lilly, along with Hollywood stars of the time like Marilyn Monroe and Audrey Hepburn (Bates, 2016). The popular doll's full name was Barbara Millicent Roberts. However, it was a difficult name for the young girls she was marketed towards and this is why the founders settled for 'Barbie', as a shorter and easier version for their target audience. Interestingly, the whole philosophy of the founders behind Barbie, according to the official website suggests that "through the doll, the little girl could be anything she wanted to be. Barbie always represented the fact that a woman has choices". In fact, Ruth Handler was inspired by her own children to create Barbie, as she observed that in contrast to her son, who had a wide variety of choices regarding toys, like astronaut or cowboy, her daughter played with dolls which could only mimic the roles of either a nanny or an infant (Venkateswaran, 2019). However, despite Barbie's creators' intention to offer a variety of options to young girls, playing with Barbie has been extensively criticized for limiting girls' ability to imagine what they could be in the future as adults, due to the reproduction of stereotypes regarding female appearance and roles (Segran, 2017).

Mattel's Barbie, has had a continuous presence in the market for over 60 years (Norton et al, 1996), and has sold more than a billion dolls (Petter, 2019). In 2019 alone, the famous doll company generated gross sales amounting to about 1.16 billion U.S. dollars, compared to about 1.09 billion U.S. dollars the year before, according to Statista (O'Connell & Mar, 2020). Through its irrefutable success in sales, Barbie has become a 'cultural icon' in popular culture (Reid-Walsh & Mitchell, 2000), with advertising playing a crucial role in increasing the brand's profits. In fact, Barbie was one of the first toys to have a marketing strategy based extensively on television advertising, according to BBC (2015). Therefore, Barbie's looks and status as a prop in games are found to influence girls' gender beliefs, as well as their idea of 'femininity', self-identity, and self-imagining (Wright, 2003).

Barbie's image and personality is portrayed through certain attributes. Specifically,

chic, delicate, elegant fancy glamorous, lovely and sexy are only some of the most predominant characteristics that stand out in Mattel's advertisements for Barbie, until recently (Rogers, 1999). The famous doll is at large described as a “symphony of beauty and elegance” (Rogers, 1999, p.2), adored and desired by most people. Of particular interest is that these characteristics are also used to describe hegemonic forms of femininity of the West, as previously discussed; modern middle-class femininity, sexy, attractive, youthful and heterosexual femininity, as well as white femininity, excluding at the same time all other types of femininities (Wright, 2003). However, Barbie’s femininity is a product of imagination; it does not exist and does not correspond to realistic standards, as it takes female appearance to another level, by portraying ‘unsustainable extremes’ (Rogers, 1999, p.3). Interestingly, a study conducted by Norton, Olds, Olive and Dank (1996) found that the probability of a real woman achieving the ‘traditional’ doll’s body proportions is, surprisingly, less than 1 in 100.000.

Further research on Barbie’s original version suggests that the famous doll in real size would be five feet and nine inches tall, would weigh 110 pounds and have a BMI of 16.24 while having unnaturally big eyes and unrealistically flawless hair (Rogers, 1999). In addition, she has been criticized for illustrating flawless, ageless skin, without any wrinkles, sagging, scars or cellulite and is portrayed without any body or facial hair (Wright, 2003). Yet, the fact that a relatively small proportion of women, and frequently entertainers that have undergone plastic surgeries, match to a certain extent Barbie’s features, normalize her as a sexual and aesthetic object for imitation. It is, therefore, partially justified why Barbie constitutes a cultural icon of a certain, ‘desirable’ type of femininity (Conley & Ramsey, 2011).

However, it is important to mention that Barbie’s femininity is not restricted to her outward appearance; it is also diffused in her kind, helpful and sensitive way of behaving, as portrayed in the brand’s advertising (Wright, 2003). Specifically, Barbie is never depicted engaging in loud or critical actions towards her peers; she is always there for everyone to provide help and understanding in any situation (Rogers, 1999). In addition, the popular doll shows respect, care and politeness to others and she is not competitive or ambitious and she is portrayed as being restricted to, albeit satisfied with her household and shopping activities (Rogers, 1999). Interestingly, Barbie’s appearance and personality traits comply with the stereotypical feminine traits, as previously discussed in this chapter.

Barbie constitutes the means through which different, albeit powerful messages about femininity are conveyed, as she encourages children, and specifically girls to be anything that they want, as long as they meet the feminine standards that she exhibits (Roger, 1999; Wright, 2003).

Of particular interest is that Mattel's release of the first Barbie in the market in 1959 coincides with Goffman's publication of "The presentation of self in everyday life". What Goffman (1959) argued with regard to 'impression management', namely the control over others' people conscious or subtle impression of what they think of us, is in complete agreement with Barbie's messages regarding femininity (Rogers, 1999). Barbie's 'obsession' with politeness, positivity, compliments in order to be liked by everyone, as well as her perfect outfit for each special occasion, is according to Goffman (1959) elements of 'impression management'. Barbie implements her impression management skills, while implying that this is the only way for women to achieve their goals, by exhibiting a stereotypically feminine set of behavioral traits and also displaying a feminine appearance, even in traditionally male fields (e.g. firefighters, police officers, mechanics, etc.) (Rogers, 1999).

As previously mentioned, an important aspect of Barbie's success is the brand's advertising strategies. Mattel's ads, according to Rogers (1999), are inspired by the results of focus group research with young girls and sometimes with their mothers present in the discussions. Interestingly, many girls during these interviews report that they wanted to be like Barbie in their middle school years, while expressing their admiration towards their doll's physical appearance, describing it as 'nice to look at', 'beautiful' and 'so pretty' (Rogers, 1999, p.2). Moreover, terms like 'perfect' or 'dream girl' were used by girls use to describe the particular doll, highlighting the considerable effect Barbie has in shaping young girls' perception of 'ideal' femininity. Women claiming that Barbie was their favorite doll during their childhood associate their preference for Barbie with the doll's flawlessness and with the fact that she "could do anything she wanted because she was loved by everyone", a perception created to them by the brand's adverts (Rogers, 1999, p.10).

One should also consider the activities that girls perform when playing with their Barbie doll. Specifically, young girls comb Barbie's hair, prepare her outfits and accessories or make her go shopping with her doll friends. They might even pretend that Barbie is

getting married with Ken and prepare her bridal makeup and wedding dress or that she plays the role of a mother to her younger sisters and takes care of her household. Thus, through their play with Barbie and the roles they attribute to her, young girls tend to think of femininity as a synonym to consumption, motherhood, beauty and perfection (Colatrella, 2011). According to research, the same happy, glazed look on each Barbie doll, reassures each girl that her doll is extremely pleased with the activities and hobbies she performs, normalizing, the stereotypical feminine roles that girls naturally associate with Barbie play (Colatrella, 2011).

However, while women described Barbie as the 'ideal woman' during interview discussions, others claimed that Barbie is a 'horrible doll for girls' (Rogers, 1999, p.5), accusing the doll of looking 'scary' and 'threatening' due to her flawlessness. In addition, they have also indicated that Barbie's 'personality' promotes destructive behavior among women, while encouraging stereotypical roles and personality traits attributed to women like 'decorative', 'mindless' and 'ridiculous' (Rogers, 1999). The same traits are identified, as thematic patterns that accompanied women's presence in advertisements of the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's, implying that women are subordinate to men in terms of logical intelligence, seriousness and status (Goffman, 1979; Gill, 2007).

Additionally, research has shown that girls who used to play with Barbie dolls in their childhood years felt angry and insecure when playing with her due to the fact that they did not or could not look like her (Rogers, 1999). In fact, as Sherman and Zurbriggen (2014) highlight, being exposed from an early age to sexualized and stereotyped images may impact children's physical and mental health, justifying the connection of Barbie play to low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction and eating disorders.

What should also be underlined is that Barbie has changed over 200 careers throughout the decades. Nevertheless, despite being an astronaut, a firefighter, a musician or a CEO (Petter, 2019), Barbie gains little attention on her professional occupation or her career success. What is essentially valued is her appearance and specifically her long flawless hair and makeup, as well as her ideal body measurements (Rogers, 1999). Surprisingly, according to Sherman and Zurbriggen's (2014) study focusing on examining the perceptions of careers girls felt they could do in the future, Barbie play was clearly linked to girls' perception that they had fewer future career options than boys. This finding suggests that despite Barbie's professional careers, what matters the most for young girls is

Barbie's 'pink' femininity, her 'girly' clothing, accessories and pink dream house.

Interestingly, it is argued that Barbie's presence in a highly stereotyped and unrealistic context for women is not as important as advertisements that depict real women are. Models, actresses and entertainers in general, promote exaggerated and at the same time unattainable beauty standards for women, which are more dangerous and harmful for girls and women at all ages, on the grounds that they are 'real' people and not plastic dolls. Nevertheless, Barbie's social influence upon girls is highly important, despite the fact that she is not a real person. In children's imagination, this doll and the culture she represents are lively enough to shape their perception of what a female role model looks and acts like and affect their imagination with regard to their own dreams and potential fulfillment (Rogers, 1999; Wright, 2003).

2.4. Barbie 2000-2019

Despite the stereotypical reproduction of femininity, the doll brand has recently started making an effort to adapt to the socio-political and simultaneously marketing trends of inclusion and diversity (Jonsen, Point, Kelan & Griebel, 2019). As discussed in Chapter 1, the doll brand started facing a serious reduction in global sales between 2012-2014 (Kell, 2015). Consequently, there has been a decisive change in Barbie's branding strategy in order to stay relevant in the market, by providing diversified content for diversified audiences and represent a realistic present-day society (Jonsen et al, 2019). However, the brand's attempt in September 2019 to launch a 'gender-neutral' series of dolls, as well as its upcoming release of a new "even more inclusive" (Sullivan, 2020) doll line, is not the first time the brand has tried to alter the way of portraying femininity.

Starting from 2015, Barbie has started marking important steps of evolution. In 2016, the toymaker company released a line that featured three new body types for Barbie. The hashtag *#thedollevolves* was used to follow up the changes and accompany the doll's launch in social media, while the phrase 'Imagination comes in all shapes and sizes' was extensively used in Barbie's official accounts in online media (Independent, 2019). 'Curvy', 'petit' and 'tall' body types were included, as well as 22 new eye colors, 33 new hairstyles, 7 skin tones and 14 facial structures, in an attempt to make Barbie universally inclusive (Giang, 2016). The particular launch was met by a positive response by the media

and its consumer base, indicating that for the first time, “young girls are given the option to play with a doll that looks like them” (Bates, 2016). As a result, after Mattel’s decline in gross sales (Kell, 2015), the manufacturing company became profitable again, particularly after the 2016 release. Despite the positive reception of the new, diverse body types, it is argued that the new curvy, petit and tall body types are not reflective of young women in Britain and America (Bates, 2016). Although curvy Barbie has been praised by the brand’s customers as a marked improvement, when scaled up to human-size, her body type does not reflect a curvy model, but a rather ‘healthier’ version of the original Barbie (Bates, 2016). However, since then, Mattel introduced in the ‘Barbie Fashionistas’ line, among others, dolls with physical disabilities and various skin tones in order to represent even more women, according to Barbie’s official website. Mattel’s vice president stated that the brand is “now fully committed to making Barbie the most empowering and representative toy on the market” (Independent, 2019), acknowledging the importance of making every girl feel represented by one doll of the brand.

Gradually adapting to the social and political demands that promote diversity and inclusion and go beyond the stereotypes, the brand has shown a considerable evolution, especially in the last five years. For this reason, this study focuses on the construction of femininity through Barbie’s advertising between 2000-2019. Although the doll brand has been accused of promoting stereotypical traits of femininity as observed by scholars, the data analysis is expected to illustrate a shift regarding female representation. More specifically, as the analysis proceeds in examining the advertising campaigns of each year between 2000 -2019, a less stereotypical representation of femininity and perhaps more inclusive and diverse types of femininity are assumed to be presented, especially when the years from 2015 onwards are discussed.

3. Methodology

3.1. Chapter overview

The aim of this chapter is to describe and explain the design and the suitability of the applied research method to answer the research question of this study: *“How has femininity been constructed in Barbie’s advertising campaigns between 2000 and 2019?”*. This chapter consists of five sub-sections, focusing on five different aspects of the research design. Firstly, the use of qualitative method of analysis is justified, followed by a sub-section that focuses on the sample and the sampling criteria used for collecting the data of this study. To continue, thematic analysis, as a method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) is explained and possible advantages and disadvantages of the method are analyzed. In addition, a step-by-step guide describing in detail the process that is followed for the conduction of thematic analysis is provided. Finally, the use of ConText, qualitative research software, is described, as a complementary method used to support the findings of this study.

3.2. Qualitative method of analysis

Babbie (2011, p.419) defines qualitative analysis as the “examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships”. Furthermore, as Rabiee (2004, p. 657) indicates, qualitative analytic methods aim “to bring meaning to a situation rather than to search for truth” meaning that they do not seek to uncover an objective ‘reality’, but enable in- depth explorations of phenomena. As this research explores the construction of femininity in Barbie advertisements, qualitative analysis is suitable due to the rich descriptions of complex phenomena it can offer (Sofaer, 1999). Qualitative methods allow the researcher to create valuable assessments through the observation and interpretation of the selected sample. This will be achieved by looking beneath the surface of the data and focusing on the understanding of dynamic and multi-dimensional ‘wholes’ (Sofaer, 1999).

A qualitative approach not only enhances the understanding of the context of a particular research topic but also seeks to achieve depth of understanding by avoiding interpretations of only what is directly visible (Palinkas , Horwitz ,Green, Wisdom, Duan &

Hoagwood, 2013; Sofaer, 1999). Qualitative research methods take all aspects of the context into consideration in order to give meaningful explanations with regard to realities and relationships (Sofaer, 1999). Due to its explorative nature, qualitative analysis was used to approach the topic of femininity and its construction over the years through the advertisements by the Barbie brand. The respective societal changes that might have shaped these shifts in advertising were also considered during the process of analysis (Eisend, 2010). Lastly, qualitative analysis can be a useful tool in the process of identifying patterns within a dataset, as Sofaer (1999) argues, which makes it the most suitable method for approaching this topic, considering that the research question looks at the patterns in the brand's advertising from 2000 to 2019. In this case, thematic analysis was implemented in order to identify, analyze and report the themes found within the sample (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.3. Sample and sampling criteria

For the purpose of the research, thematic analysis was applied to video advertisements for Barbie by Mattel. The sampling method used for this study is purposeful in order to effectively use the given limited resources and yield results that are rich in information (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2013; Patton 2002). Although there are several approaches to the use of purposeful sampling strategies in qualitative research, they all include the identification and selection of individuals or materials that are appropriate and helpful for the investigation of the phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this research, criterion sampling was used as the most suitable type of purposive sampling strategy, as it enabled the researcher to narrow the range of variation and subsequently focus on the similarities within the sample that shaped the six unique themes, which are discussed in Chapter 4 (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2013). As a result, the materials that were used for this study were identified and selected as cases that meet certain predetermined criteria of importance, while all other cases that do not meet these criteria were eliminated (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2013).

The selection of the sample was carefully made in order to reserve the reliability of this study and was based on three inclusion criteria; language, length and year of

publication. Specifically, advertisements with English voice-overs addressing English-speaking consumers were selected in order to facilitate the researcher's understanding, given that the voice-overs of the advertisements were also analyzed. Furthermore, as the research question sets the time frame of the study, advertisements of the brand published from 2000 to 2019 were included. The advertisements that compose the sample of this study were also selected due to their average length, resulting in 100 commercials with an average length of 35 seconds each. It needs to be mentioned that during the process of the data collection, it became apparent that a number of Barbie commercials did not display Barbie or other dolls, but focused on other products of the brand like toy kitchens or beauty sets for children. These particular advertisements were eliminated from the final sample, given that the presence of dolls in the commercials is essential in order to observe the themes regarding femininity and answer the research question of this thesis.

Another important clarification that needs to be addressed is that in the selected commercials Barbie is not featured as an animation, but as an actual doll used for children's play. This decision serves a dual purpose: Firstly it was observed that commercials illustrating Barbie as a cartoon aimed at promoting the brand's movies and not the doll lines that this study examines. Secondly, it became apparent that Barbie movies revolve only around fairytale and magic and illustrate Mattel's dolls in respective roles (e.g. Princesses and fairies) and, thus, the construction of femininity through these ads would be biased. Furthermore, the sample of this study includes five video advertisements of new doll lines from each year in order for the researcher to identify the patterns/themes that derive from each year's commercials and to be able to observe the gradual shifts the brand has presented through its advertising campaigns. After selecting advertisements that meet the inclusion criteria, as previously mentioned, it was observed that more than five commercials were published each year. Thus, the videos of the final sample were randomly selected in order to avoid biased results. The selected commercials were found on YouTube due to the platform's accessibility and availability of information. Several YouTube channels were utilized in order to retrieve the commercials of the Barbie brand. Further information with regard to sample can be found in Appendix 1.

Hence, the final sample consists of 100 video advertisements, 5 per year of interest, in order to comply with the MA thesis guidelines, be representative of the total of Barbie's ads between 2000- 2019 and also reach saturation. Considering that qualitative analysis

emphasizes the importance of saturation, this study aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding by continuing to sample until no new substantive information is acquired (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Nevertheless, in this case saturation is a priori determined by the MA thesis guidelines, and, as a result, 100 videos of an average length of 35 seconds each are found to yield adequate results. Lastly, what this research takes into consideration is that changes in the brand's overall values and advertising are prominent in the recent doll lines releases, starting from 2015, and as a result, the themes that are derived from the analysis are more representative of the brand's commercials between 2000 and 2014. However, detailed analysis regarding each theme's evolution in time is provided in Chapter 4.

3.4. Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within a particular dataset. Not only does it organize and describe the data set thoroughly (Boyatzis, 1998), but it also interprets various aspects of the topic of interest, which is valuable when the representation of gender in contemporary advertising is concerned. In this thesis, thematic analysis is used as a constructionist method. Given that this thesis is focused on the construction of femininity through advertisements, it is vital to approach it with a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, and meanings are formed through a wide range of discourses that operate within society (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To achieve this goal, "searching across a data set, to find repeated patterns of meaning" is essential, as Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 86) have underlined. Hence, thematic analysis in this case is implemented in order to meticulously investigate the themes/patterns through which Barbie doll's advertisements constructed femininity between 2000 and 2019.

Moreover, thematic analysis offers an important advantage to the research, flexibility with regard to how it is applied, so that it does not become restricted and constrained in an attempt to fit elements in themes or categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Due to its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis can be used as a 'flexible tool' that can provide the study with a rich and detailed account of data, without them losing their depth and complexity (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Unlike other methods that look for certain themes

or patterns and are theoretically bounded, thematic analysis can offer a more 'accessible' form of analysis, given that it does not require detailed theoretical knowledge and does not use strict guidelines and rules. Nevertheless, its clarity on the process is essential in order to ensure transparency of the research (Jenkinson, Kruske & Kildea, 2017). Thus, explicitly describing the process of identifying, analyzing, and reporting the patterns/ themes deriving from the data step by step is essential for this research. A detailed guide discussing the process that was followed is provided in the next section.

Furthermore, one of the strongest features of thematic analysis is that it is systematic. Specifically, the 100 advertisements used for this research went through the same process and sequence of steps as detailed later in this chapter. In this way, a double goal is achieved; the research becomes more systematic and, at the same time, valid and reliable. Another advantage that thematic analysis entails is its ability to reduce the data. The segmentation of the data allows for their condensation from a large to a smaller amount, suitable for answering the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Another clarification that needs to be addressed is what counts as a theme/pattern. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents a certain level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. This does not necessarily mean that a higher number of recurrent instances within the dataset constitute the most important theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme or pattern might capture more attention in certain data items and less or no attention at all in other data items, or it might occur in relatively little of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Hence, the researcher's judgement plays a crucial role in this process, as the researcher is the one determining what constitutes a theme.

What should also be highlighted is that patterns/themes within data can be identified in an inductive (Frith and Gleeson, 2004) or in a theoretical/ deductive way (Boyatzis, 1998). An inductive approach means that the themes identified are derived from the data themselves, and thus, the themes are data-driven, while the deductive approach means that the way the data are coded is driven by the researcher's theoretical framework, making the themes concept-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This research used a combination of these approaches in order to both analyze the data without trying to fit it into a preexisting coding frame, as the inductive way suggests, and offer a more in-depth and detailed analysis of some aspects of the data in accordance with the deductive way of

analysis. Specifically, the coding categories used for the identification of themes were influenced by the theoretical framework, as discussed in Chapter 2. However, they were adjusted in order to better reflect the data. Specifically, this study explores how femininity portrayals evolved between 2000 and 2019, with the aim of identifying the types of femininity that are prominent in Barbie's advertisements. To achieve this, the background/settings in which Barbie is placed, her occupation/role in each advertisement, her physical appearance and her interaction with the other figures that accompany the doll in the advertisements were carefully observed. This method of coding visual materials that display images and portrayals of women and men was first used by Nixon (1997) and has subsequently been adopted by a large number of studies (Frith et al. 2004, 2005) in order to categorize forms of masculinity and femininity in advertising.

As Tan, Shaw, Cheng and Kim mentioned (2009), femininity, as well as masculinity, is portrayed in advertising via various elements, including physical appearance, sexuality, behaviors, occupation, and relation with figures of the opposite sex. However, previous studies have used coding categories that examined characteristics of men and women, and as a result, the use of a particular coding frame was deemed unsuitable in this thesis, due to its focus on dolls. Hence, the coding categories used for the analysis were inspired by previous media research, namely by Tan, Shaw, Cheng and Kim (2009), Goffman (1979), Conley & Ramsey (2011). However, these coding categories were adjusted in order to better fit the data and be utilized in the most efficient way. Thus, the main coding categories used to explore the construction of femininity were: 'roles and activities' including the sub-categories 'role' and 'activities', 'background/ settings' and 'outward appearance', including the sub-categories 'dolls', 'racial diversity', 'makeup- hair', 'clothing items' and 'body type'. In addition to these, the children featured in each advertisement, as well as the advertised product in each commercial were also coded. The themes of femininity that emerged from these coding categories are analyzed in detail in Chapter 4.

It is important to mention that Barbie's consumer base consists mostly of young girls. As the intended audience of these advertisements is primarily children, the content of the advertisements is expected to reflect themes and messages that are desirable for them (Tan, Shaw, Cheng & Kim, 2013). As previous research has shown, similarly to women, young girls are found to respond more positively when looking at images and portrayals of women (Tan, Shaw, Cheng & Kim, 2013). Hence, a lack of male figures was expected

throughout the dataset, and the relation of Barbie with figures of the opposite sex might not be applicable in this study. Consequently, patterns regarding the relationship between male and female models in advertising, like the 'ritualization of subordination' or the 'licensed withdrawal' as observed by Goffman (1979), could not apply in this research.

3.5. Thematic analysis Step by step

The analytic process of thematic analysis evolves from description, where the data are simply organized and summarized in order to show themes/patterns within the latent content of the advertisements, to interpretation, where there is an attempt to theorize the significance of the identified themes and their broader meanings and implications (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). These thematic patterns are linked to the theoretical framework of this research and are then used to provide an answer to the research question, as introduced in Chapter 1. The entire process that is followed includes six distinct stages, which are described here in detail.

The initial phase of this method is the familiarization of the researcher with the gathered data in order to observe and write down the initial ideas that follow naturally after the first encounter with the Barbie advertisements (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Watching each video at least four times was the ideal starting point for this process of familiarization, to the extent that the researcher became familiar with the depth and breadth of the content. Segmenting the data and reassembling them to transform the data into findings is particularly important during the analysis. (Boeije, 2010, p. 94) Secondly, the procedure of generating initial codes took place, pointing out the most interesting features of the advertisements, based on the focus points as previously discussed in this chapter. As Boeije (2010, p.94) highlights, the data at first might seem to be "a bulky, diverse collection of accounts", but the process of coding constitutes a tool for creating order among the collected data. The next phase is to search for themes and collate codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step is essential, as it helps organizing related observations of the data into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005). The fourth stage of the analysis is to review these themes by ensuring that they work in relation to the coded extracts in the first phase and the entire data set in the second phase (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The aim was to generate a thematic

'map' of the analysis, which can be found in Appendix 2.

The next step of thematic analysis is to define and name the themes. An ongoing analysis to refine the special characteristics of each pattern by creating clear definitions and names for each theme was attempted in this level of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, selecting the most relevant and representative examples and analyzing them in relation to the research question is the last stage of the analysis (Jenkinson, Kruske, & Kildea, 2017). Nevertheless, thematic analysis does not constitute a one-way process, given that it requires time commitment and alertness (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Babbie, 2011); the researcher has to constantly go back and forth to the entire dataset, watching the videos so as to understand the underlying meaning of each segment and to identify the emerging categories.

It is important to finally compare all the similar codes within a category/theme in order to reassure that they are really similar. Hence, in cases where some codes are too different, creating a new theme/category for them is essential (Boeije, 2010). The same process was followed for the comparison of the different themes/categories so as to examine if they really are different enough to be seen as different themes/categories or not. This is a necessary process for ensuring the validity and reliability of the analysis. (Boeije, 2010). The data analysis, based on the visual and textual (voice-overs) materials of the commercials, resulted in ten thematic patterns that construct femininity in the Barbie commercials: *'lack of diversity'*, *'consumption-based femininity'*, *'affluent lifestyle'*, *'perfect looks'*, *'glam and hot'*, *'narcissistic femininity'*, *'thin ideal'*, *'caring, helpful and nurturing'*, *'housekeeper'* and *'bride'*. Finally, these themes were then recoded to major and broader categories, based on the conceptual linkages among their definitions (Tan, Shaw, Cheng & Kim, 2013), resulting in six main thematic patterns.

3.6. Qualitative research software tool

Last but not least, since there was a great amount of data to be analyzed, ConText, qualitative research software, was utilized in order to facilitate the process of data analysis for the voice-overs of the advertisements (Stemler, 2001). As Babbie (2011) indicates, qualitative data analysis software enables the researcher to deal with big volumes of data, considering that it works as a note-taking tool that provides help for the concept mapping.

Specifically, after transcribing the voice-overs of the 100 Barbie commercials, the transcripts were put into ConText and a certain process was followed, aiming to point out the most frequently used terms within the transcripts of the voice-overs. Firstly, the essential step of data cleaning was followed, with the aim of having more accurate results, both by removing stop words (articles and linking words) and by following the process of stemming in order to reduce the different morphological variants to their base form (e.g. 'coming' becomes 'come'). The table 'Corpus Statistics' was then generated, revealing the terms with the highest occurrence throughout the commercials of the sample. Finally, the data visualization tool 'Tableau' was utilized to generate a bar chart that presents the numerical data of the 27 most frequently used words. This graph is reported and interpreted in relation to the research question in the next Chapter of this thesis.

4. Results/Discussion

Chapter overview

The fourth chapter of this thesis presents the results of the thematic analysis of 100 video advertisements for Barbie by Mattel. These results will be interpreted in relation to the research question, and the theoretical framework, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Specifically, the thematic analysis resulted in ten different themes which were merged into six broader categories. These thematic categories are focused either on dolls' appearance or their roles/character, as observed in the analyzed commercials. The first thematic category, related to appearance, that emerged from the analysis is labeled '*lack of diversity in skin color and ethnicity*' and, as the name indicates, discusses the lack of diversity with regard to skin color and ethnicity which was present in the data. The second main category, related to roles/character, is '*consumption-base*' or '*branded*' femininity and focuses on the consumption of goods and services as a means for women to solve insecurities through their consumer choices (Mascia-Lees & Sharpe, 2000; Zeisler, 2008). The identification of '*consumption-based*' femininity generated the third category, which is labeled '*affluent lifestyle*' and talks about the consumer purchasing power and luxury that is displayed through the commercials.

As previously mentioned, extensive consumption of goods and services is mostly driven by the obsession to meet the accepted and expected standards of beauty (Lazar, 2011). This brings up the next main thematic category, which is labeled '*obsessed with outward appearance*' and discusses the elements that compose the ideal of 'perfection' with regard to the female outward appearance. This category is comprised by the sub categories '*perfect looks*', referring to the extremely attentive appearance that Barbie portrays, '*glam and hot*' femininity, discussing the attractiveness and sexiness as essential attributes for women, and '*narcissistic*' femininity, that talks about the preoccupation and admiration of self-image. Being beautiful, according to the 'West' conventional standards also includes having the ideal body type, which is discussed in the fifth thematic category '*thin ideal*' and refers to the most prominent body type within the sample. As discussed earlier on, femininity in the West is also constructed around personality attributes like emotional, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationships. The sixth main category, named '*woman as nurturing*' focuses on Barbie's affectionate and caring behavior, her housekeeping activities and the ideal of marriage, as observed in the

analyzed adverts. *'Woman as nurturing'* includes the subcategories *'caring, helping and nurturing femininity'*, *'housekeeper'* and *'bride'*.

A number of phrases used in the voice-overs of the commercials were quoted to support the abovementioned themes, while the most frequent words that pop up in the voice overs of the advertisements were interpreted in relation to the topic of femininity. The commercials used as examples for the themes can be found in Appendix 1. Each of the thematic categories, as well as the sub-categories will be thoroughly discussed in this chapter. Moreover, linkages between these themes will be provided.

4.1. 'Lack of diversity in skin color and ethnicity'

Barbie in the commercials of Mattel only refers to the popular blonde blue eyed thin doll, while the rest of the dolls appearing in the sample are given different names or no names at all. Barbie and what she represents are portrayed as the 'norm', with one of her most predominant features being her Caucasian race. The lack of diversity in skin color and ethnicity constitutes one of the most frequently occurring themes in the sample through the process of thematic analysis. An important clarification that needs to be addressed is that 'lack of diversity' refers exclusively to female dolls, taking into account that this thesis looks for the themes that construct femininity throughout the Barbie ads. Specifically, in the 100 videos, 363 dolls were featured, of which 266 [73.28%] were white. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the general lack of non-Caucasian models in the U.S. and U.K shows certain persistence by advertisers to illustrate the full range of beauty types in terms of ethnicity and skin color, resulting in an over-representation of "whiteness" (Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2009).

Furthermore, it is important to mention that 55% (N=55) of the advertisements of the sample do not include non-Caucasian dolls. Moreover, in the 45% [N=45] of the sample that illustrates racial diversity, the majority of the dolls of other ethnicities are not mentioned by name; instead, in 38% [N=38] of the dataset, non-Caucasian dolls are only indicated as Barbie's 'friends'. In only 7% [N=7] of the videos, dolls of other races are introduced by name –either with their names written on the screen or mentioned in the voice-over of the particular advert. What stands out, is that only 1% [N=1] of the sample depicts an African American doll in the main role of the advertisement ('Barbie so in style'

commercial in 2007). Remarkably in the same video, there is not a white doll present (figure 2).



Figure 2- Screenshot from 'Barbie So In Style' Commercial in 2007

Moreover, in videos where non-Caucasian dolls are depicted, they are usually in the background looking towards Barbie performing activities, or around Barbie who is always in the middle, highlighting that she is the most important one among the other dolls, as depicted in figure 3. In addition, Caucasian blonde Barbie is the one wearing the more girly, pink and luxurious outfits, while the rest of the present dolls are dressed in a less 'fancy' way. However, this finding is gradually less observed, as non-Caucasian dolls are illustrated wearing the same outfits as Barbie, or performing the same activities and, generally, having an equal representation with the popular doll, in terms of time and activities (figure 4).



Figure 3-Screenshot from 'Barbie California Girls' Commercial 2005



Figure 4- Screenshot from 'Get ready with Holiday Barbie' Commercial 2019

Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that the theme 'lack of diversity' is quite prominent between 2000 and 2014, and is less observed in the last five years of interest (2015-2019), as depicted in figure 5. Interestingly, before 2015, a high frequency of racial

diversity is observed in 2007, when 80% [N=4] of the commercials depicted African American, Latin American and Asian dolls. Of particular interest is that the video advertisements of the years 2010 and 2013 do not include any non-Caucasian dolls, presenting the lowest frequencies of racial diversity across the entire dataset. However, this finding may be a coincidence, considering that only five Barbie commercials per year are incorporated in the sample of this thesis. In 2015, a twofold increase compared to the previous year is observed, with 80% [N=4] of the videos illustrating dolls that represent different races. It should be noted that 2015 constitutes a pivotal point for Barbie, as the brand started taking discernible steps towards diversity and inclusion. As illustrated in the bar graph (figure 5), the most impressive change in terms of racial diversity is observed in 2019, when all the advertisements of the year illustrate dolls of diverse races and skin colors.

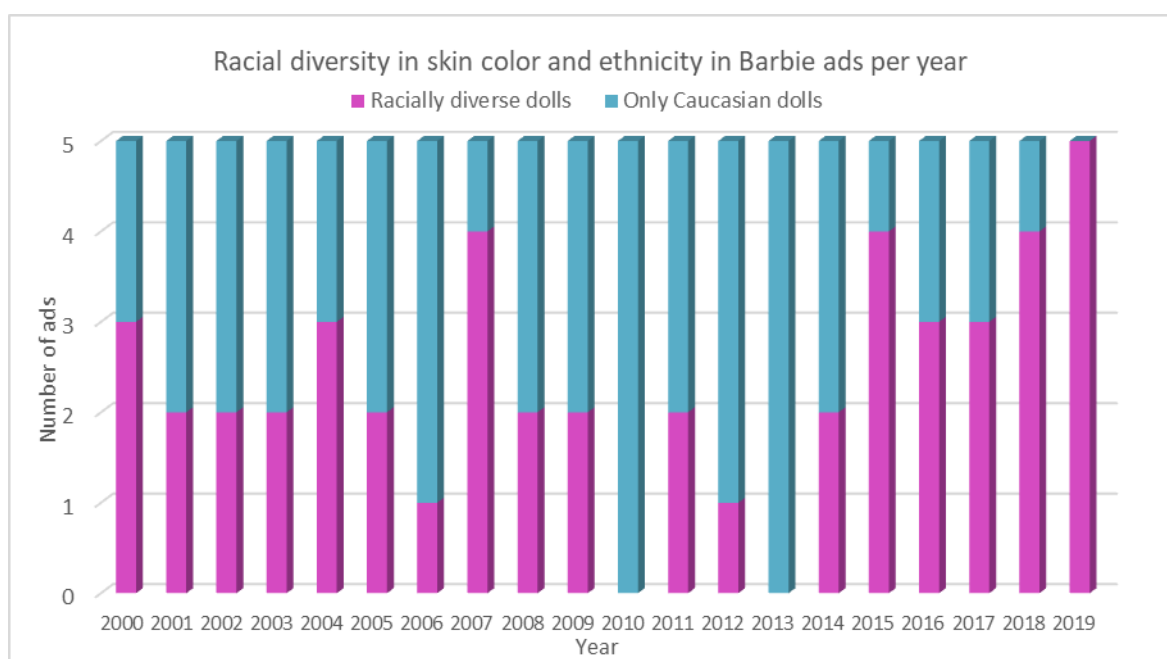


Figure 5-Bar chart illustrating racial diversity in Barbie commercials (2000-2019)

This increase in portrayed racial diversity constitutes part of the general shift of the brand in order ‘to better reflect the world girls see today, adding more diversity for endless storytelling possibilities’, as mentioned in the official website for Barbie. As previously discussed, the Barbie brand has faced a significant decrease in their gross sales

between the years 2012-2014, a fact that resulted in a different approach in the brand strategy starting from 2015. As part of this strategy, new doll lines, inspired by the values of inclusion and diversity were introduced, including dolls that represent 35 different skin tones and ethnicities (see figure 6), in order to reflect racial diversity and make the Barbie brand relevant to the present day society and market.



Figure 6- Screenshot from 'Barbie Fashionistas 2017' Commercial

Of particular interest is that the theme that refers to the lack of diversity in terms of skin color and ethnicity is also observed in the girls that participate in the adverts of the sample. Specifically, in the 100 commercials 178 young children were featured, 79% [N=141] of which were Caucasian and 59% [N=104] of them were blonde Caucasians (see figure 7). Again, this finding is less observed since 2015, as young girls of different ethnicities and skin colors take part in the Barbie adverts (figure 8).



Figure 7- Screenshot from 'Magic of Pegasus'



Figure 8- Screenshot from 'Moschino Barbie!' 2015

Moreover, it was found that the majority of non-Caucasian dolls seem to have the same facial features as the Caucasian dolls (figure 9). This finding confirms studies by Frith, Shaw and Cheng (2009) who have argued that the majority of media representations of women are either white or, if not, illustrate Caucasian-like features. Interestingly, the only existing difference between Caucasian and non-Caucasian dolls is the latter's darker or slightly darker skin colors. As a result, this leads to confusion with regard to whether a doll is supposed to be a 'tanned Caucasian' or whether she represents a mixed-race, African American or Latin American woman. This observation, however, does not occur in the years 2015-2019 of the analysis, as the facial structure of non-Caucasian dolls changes significantly from 2015. Dolls with over 14 different facial structures (Hetter, 2015) were added in the recent releases of doll lines (2015-2019), including different facial features and structures for African American, Asian, Latin American and mixed-race dolls, as well as different facial features and structures for Caucasian dolls (figure 10).



Figure 9- Screenshot from 'Top model resort dolls' 2003



Figure 10- Screenshot from 'Barbie Fashionistas' 2019

Another observation links the lack of diversity in skin color and ethnicity with the elements of magic and fairytale (Tatar, 2010). As Lester (2010) has argued, supreme reign and magic, as presented in children's narratives constitute an unquestionable privileging of whiteness (Lester, 2010). In fact, in 19% [N=19] of the adverts, where Barbie performs the role of a princess, a fairy or a mermaid, non-Caucasian dolls are not depicted having the main or any other role (figure 11). While the roles of princesses, mermaids and other fictional or magical attributes are between the most admired and desired ones among young children and particularly, girls (Coyne, Linder, Rasmussen, Nelson, & Birkbeck, 2016), the important lack of racial diversity excludes non-Caucasian dolls from the concepts of magic and fairytale. As a result, young girls that play with Barbie princesses and fairies may not be able to reflect themselves through the dolls and consequently feel excluded from

the fictional world of fairytale. However, it should be noted that this finding was limited to videos, which were published earlier on; the later commercials have shifted away from a focus on magic and fairytale.



Figure 11-Screenshot from '2004 Barbie Princess Collection Doll Commercial'

4.2. 'Consumption-based/ branded femininity'

'Consumption-based' or 'branded femininity', as the literature in Chapter 2 suggests, is one of the most significant characteristics of femininity that gives rise to the rest of the characteristics that construct hegemonic forms of femininity in the West. Specifically, the concept of 'consumption-based femininity' has been adopted in this study to refer to the consumption of goods and services by women in order to solve insecurities regarding their looks, generated to them by advertising. In fact, 31% [N=31] of the analyzed commercials depict Barbie and other dolls consuming goods and services while 14% [N=14] of the sample directly illustrates the action of purchasing clothes, shoes, accessories and jewels. Consumerism, a social and economic order actively encouraged through the adverts of the sample, is generally defined as the idea that consumption of goods and services constitutes a desirable goal, while implying that one's wellbeing depends exclusively on consumption of goods and obtainment of material assets (Bauer, Wilkie, Kim, & Bodenhausen, 2012). Moreover, consumerism is closely related to materialism, a tendency to consider material possession, as well as physical comfort as more valuable than spiritual values (Bauer, Wilkie, Kim, & Bodenhausen, 2012). Based on the majority of the advertisements of the popular doll brand, it became apparent that both consumerism and materialism are discourses that play a key role in creating a certain image for femininity.

Nevertheless, consumerism, as a socio-financial order, is not related only to femininity, as it determines a lot more with regard to gender roles and creates socially acceptable norms that are diffused to a particular society through advertising.

It needs to be mentioned that Barbie and the rest of the dolls in the adverts are placed in shopping malls (figure 12), shopping boutiques, surf shops, as well as nail and hair salons in 11% [N=11] of the sample. Moreover, the quantity of the dolls' clothing items and accessories is highlighted also by the voice overs of the videos. For example, phrases like 'doll with sixteen pairs of earrings' (2005-video 4), twenty fashion pieces that you can mix and match (2007-video 5), 'three fab looks, that's so Barbie' (2009-video 1), or 'Three different kinds of nails- metallic, matte, shinny (2009-video 3) are utilized to underline the quantity of products, while particular emphasis is placed on the options Barbie and other dolls have regarding their outfits and accessories. Phrases like 'so many choices' (2016-video 1) or 'so many nails to choose, so many designs for you' (2009-video 3), are utilized in the voice-overs of the commercials to highlight the various options that dolls have. These choices give them the opportunity to select their styling that reflects their personality, as implied by the phrase 'you design it, customize it. Make your own fashion statement or personalize it' (2011-video 2) linking the variety of clothing options with choice feminism. Choice feminism, as discussed by Mascia-Lees and Sharpe (2000) and Zeisler (2008) is interrelated to a late capitalist culture full with consumer lifestyle choices. 'Choice' functions here as an index for 'feminism', which has been appropriated to fit into consumerist imperatives, implying that female power is achieved through consumption (Mascia-Lees and Sharpe, 2000; Zeisler, 2008).



Figure 12- Screenshot from 'Barbie Fashion Rainbow 2013'

In line with the outfit options that the dolls have, the transcripts of the voice-overs reveal a tendency for promoting and idealizing consumerism. Barbie uses phrases that highlight the feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment that commodity consumption offers, according to the voice overs of the sample. This is shown through expressions like 'I love shopping' (2007-video 4), 'Get these skate shorts, girl' (2004-video 2), while phrases like 'You can't resist it' (2007-video 4), 'Shop till you drop' highlight the obsession with shopping, which is facilitated through never-ending credit, as the phrase 'You never run out of money', (2007-video 5) indicates (figure 13). Furthermore, the commercials of the Barbie brand seem to encourage consumption, as a form of entertainment, through phrases like 'Shopping is fun', 'Come shop with me' (California Girl Barbie Surf Shop Commercial, 2004-video 2).



Figure 13- Screenshot from 'Barbie shopping boutique' 2007

Moreover, the voice-overs of the adverts reveal a connection between the consumption of goods and services to the need to impress others. Specifically, a number of video advertisements illustrate girls decorating their clothes, hair and nails with the accessories that Barbie dolls come with, in order to impress their peers. For example, the phrase 'Where did you get that?' (Barbie Fashion Fever Spring 2004 Collection Commercial, 2004-video 5) is used by the friends of the girls in the videos, who seem to be admiring the girly accessories that girls who own Barbie dolls have. As a result, it is implied that material assets and luxury items like accessories and jewels are particularly important and are seen as a means for girls to attract their friends' attention.

It needs to be mentioned, however, that 'consumption-based femininity' as a theme occurred less in the videos after 2015. Specifically, as part of the brand's general

shift, it is found that 2015 constitutes the starting point for Mattel to draw the attention from consumerism and materialism to friendship, connecting with nature and traveling, as well as highlighting the importance of female empowerment. Specifically, this is shown through activities like camping, dancing, going on road trips to explore nature or doing sports, skate and yoga (figure 14). Interestingly, the value of friendship based on the need to impress others or shopping and admiring each other seems to be replaced by creating deeper connections with friends. After 2015, friendship is portrayed as an interaction based on supporting and encouraging each other, while the importance of participating in team activities is highlighted, as shown in expressions like 'Join the team, girl power, strong!' (2017- video 1).



Figure 14- Screenshot from '2015 made to move Barbie' commercial

4.3. 'Affluent lifestyle'

As previously mentioned, 50% [N=50] of the commercials that compose the sample revolve around materialism and consumerism, while focusing on the importance of quantity and choices with regard to materialistic possessions. Barbie, as well as the rest of the dolls in the dataset represents an affluent lifestyle through her purchasing power, as implied by consumer behavior, possessions and vacation. Specifically, through thematic analysis it was found that Barbie has a significant purchasing power, illustrated through her luxurious and expensive lifestyle, by displaying extremely big townhouses or summer houses, cars, vacation in resorts.

Interestingly, the commercials do not mention a source of income or a particular

professional occupation that could justify this luxurious lifestyle. In fact, in 64% [N=64] of the sample the dolls' job is not specified, while in 19% [N=19] of the adverts the dolls are illustrated in fictional roles, like fairies, mermaids or princesses, and thus are not considered as evidence for this theme. Furthermore, in 17% [N=17] of the videos, where Barbie's professional occupation is mentioned, only 9% [N=9] of them could justify a high income (in case they are successful). These occupations are related to media, entertainment and beauty, as Barbie is frequently encountered in the role of a top model, pop star, entertainer or movie star. It needs to be mentioned that in adverts where Barbie is depicted in the role of a doctor or a vet, which are generally well-paid, she is not illustrated (or implied) having an affluent lifestyle.

As previously mentioned the affluent lifestyle that Barbie represents is also implied by the 33% [N=33] of the sample, where she is depicted buying new clothes and accessories or visiting beauty salons. Of course, besides consumer-based femininity, the particular observations highlight the high financial status the dolls represented through the constant consumption of goods and services. Furthermore, Barbie's dream house is represented to be luxurious as it is extremely big, with facilities like an elevator, Jacuzzi, a big garden, and a pool (figure 15). Certain phrases like 'Huge living room and fine dining and elevator' (2000-video 4), 'First floor living room, opens up to backyard', 'Second floor is huge' (2011-video 1), 'I just moved in to my newest, biggest dream house ever' (2013-video 1), are used to highlight Barbie's unusually big house, while phrases like 'The ultimate Barbie closet, second elevator, just for fashion. Two elevators, plus a musical shower' (2013-video 1) 'Pool that never ends. So much to do. Elevator to the sky' are used to



Figure 15- Screenshot from 'Barbie Dreamhouse 2013' Commercial

underline the number of luxurious facilities that are featured in her house. Interestingly, certain phrases such as ‘It’s the cooler place to go, the Barbie beach bungalow’(2000-video 5), ‘It’s my house, where my friends want to be’ (2007-video 1) indicate that the luxury, size and facilities of Barbie’s house make it appealing and ‘cool’ to her friends, while implying Barbie’s need of impressing her friends with her affluent lifestyle.

In addition, Barbie and her friends are illustrated enjoying expensive holidays in luxurious resorts and beach bungalows. Lastly, despite the fact that this theme remains prominent through the years of interest (2000-2019), it is less observed in the last five years of analysis. Specifically, as part of the general shift of the Barbie brand, although Barbie’s dream house remains big until 2019, with luxurious facilities and many rooms, the popular doll and her friends are not illustrated enjoying expensive vacations or hobbies like shopping in the years 2015-2019. The dolls’ vacations and leisure time are related to the natural environment and physical exercise, with camping, climbing, skating and exploring nature being a few of the examples (figure 16).



Figure 16 -Screenshot from 'Barbie Dream Camper commercial' 2017

4.4. 'Obsessed with outward appearance'

Barbie’s affluent lifestyle, as previously mentioned is also portrayed in her obsession with her outward appearance, as the desired looks require significant financial resources and the subsequent consumption of goods and services. As chapter 2 has discussed, to be feminine means to be beautiful, according to the stereotypes that construct (hegemonic) femininity in the Western culture (Tan, Shaw, Cheng & Ko Kim, 2013; Frith, Shaw & Cheng, 2005). In Western societies (and beyond), femininity is

equivalent to the consumption of the advertised products that are presented to women as a resolution for particular problems with regard to their appearance. The thematic analysis confirmed some of these findings by previous research; it was found that for Barbie and other dolls, physical appearance is a high priority, encouraging at the same time an alarming preoccupation with looks to the target audience. Thus, it became apparent that the popular doll associates female power with appearance (Wright, 2003).

In addition, the transcripts of the voice overs of the videos played a decisive role in the thematic category ‘obsessed with outward appearance’, as they enabled the researcher to observe and report the most frequently used words and phrases related to looks. In fact it was found that 14 out of the 27 most frequently used words in the voice-overs are related to outward appearance, as depicted in the bar graph (figure 17). Specifically, terms such as ‘style’ [N=45], ‘fashion’ [N=37], ‘hair’ [N=32], ‘fashionista’ [N=30], ‘color’ [N=21],

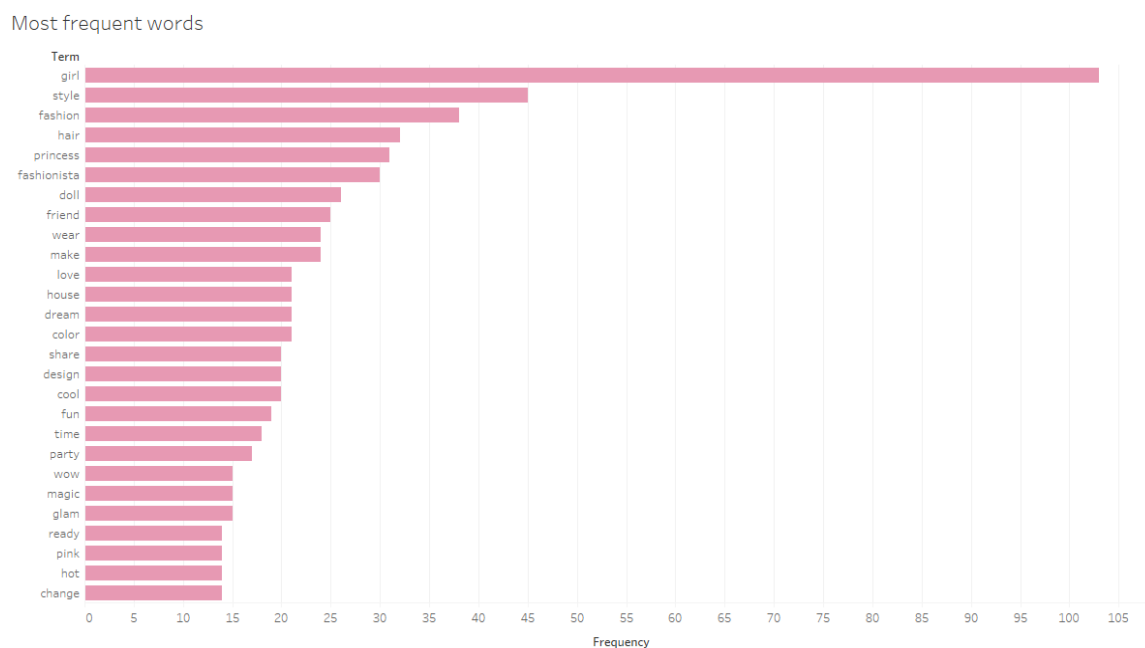


Figure 17- Bar graph illustrating the top 27 most used words in the commercials

‘glam’ [N=15], ‘wear’ [N=24], ‘pink’ [N=14], and ‘hot’[N=14], which are some of the most frequently occurred within the dataset, are expected to have a high frequency, as they highlight the focus on looks that the Barbie brand portrays through the analyzed commercials. However, the word ‘change’ [N=14], is also related to appearance, as it relates to the different styles and fashion items that Barbie changes in the commercials,

while 'design' [N=20] is utilized in the voice-overs to illustrate the option that young girls have to design their own fashion pieces. Similarly, the terms 'cool' [N=20], 'hot' [N=14] and 'wow' [N=15], may not have a direct connection with looks, but in the sample they are often used to describe the dolls' hair, accessories or clothes. Phrases like 'The hottest skirts, love her look' (Jewel Girl Barbie commercial, 2000), or 'Wow, love the shoes' (Barbie Fashionistas Collection commercial, 2014) and 'Endless hair' (Barbie™ Endless Hair Kingdom - Doll commercial, 2015) are used in the commercials' voice-overs.

Moving on, it needs to be mentioned that the 'obsessed with outward appearance' theme is a broader category, including the sub-themes: 'perfect looks', 'glam and hot', and 'narcissistic' femininity. The sub-theme 'perfect looks' refers to the attentive outward appearance that the dolls portray through the occupation with activities related to hair, makeup, nails and clothes, while 'glam and hot' discusses femininity through the elements of sexiness and attractiveness, as presented in the adverts of the sample. As far as the sub-theme 'narcissistic femininity' is concerned, the self-admiration and intense preoccupation with self-image is discussed, as an important characteristic for the construction of femininity derived from the commercials.

4.4.1 'Perfect looks'

Barbie, as well as the other dolls that appear in the advertisements of the sample, are depicted as extremely attentive regarding their appearance. Through thematic analysis, it was found that the hair, makeup and outfits of the dolls are a common theme in 51% of the videos. Specifically, 33% focus exclusively on clothing items, styling and jewels, 14% place hairstyling and hair accessories in the focal point. Furthermore, 4% of the videos have makeup and nails as their main subject. However, this observation could be attributed to the fact that the dolls' makeup and nails are already painted on during the procedure of manufacturing and as a result, there is not a wide variety of things that girls-players could do with those.

It should be highlighted that Barbie and the rest of the dolls appearing in the

sample are always portrayed with carefully styled hair. What comes as a surprise, however, is that the dolls' hair is styled even when Barbie is portrayed partaking in activities like sleeping, showering or exercising (figures 18 & 19).



Figures 18 & 19 -Screenshots from 'Barbie California Dreamhouse' Commercial- 2011

This observation could relay the message that real-life women are asked to constantly take care of their looks and look perfect in all cases. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Barbie and her friends are not real women; however, the power these dolls have in relaying subconscious messages to their audience is decisive in young girls' perceptions regarding femininity (Wright, 2003). Moreover, the commercials' voice-overs call for girls to participate in the hairstyling game of the dolls, by giving instructions or describing the process of changing hair colors, haircuts and styles. In fact, 'hair', is one of the most frequently used term (N=32) in the voice overs of the analyzed commercials, confirming the fact that hair seems to be important in the adverts. Expressions that describe the process of hairstyling as 'fun', 'cool' 'easy' and 'magical' are used in order to encourage the constant occupation with hair (e.g. 'Hairstyle is fun, Barbie makes it cool' from 'Cool clips Barbie' commercial in 2000). Lastly, hairstyling and hair transformations are also illustrated, as magical features in commercials that are not focused exclusively on hair (e.g.: Barbie™ Endless Hair Kingdom - Doll Commercial (2004), Commercial - Barbie: Mini Kingdom (2005)).

Interestingly, during the process of analysis it was found that dolls that represent different ethnicities are illustrated having the same hairstyling and/or hair colors while natural afro hair is excluded. Hence, one could draw the conclusion that the dominant pattern of Caucasian beauty is also reflected in the dolls' hair, apart from their facial

structures and skin colors. In fact, 52% [N=189] of the dolls depicted in the commercials are blonde. However, in 2015, the first African American dolls with natural afro hair are featured in the doll lines, changing significantly the stereotypical long and blonde hairstyle that the Barbie brand was associated with until then. Dolls in the adverts of the years 2015-2019 are illustrated with a wide variety of hairstyles, haircuts and hair colors, including half-shaved hairstyling, the afro hair, and the doll without hair launched in the 2019 Fashionista line (figures 20 & 21).



Figure 20- Screenshot from 'Barbie fashionistas' Commercial in 2016



Figure 21- Screenshot from 'Barbie fashionistas' Commercial in 2019

The sub theme 'perfect' looks also refers to Barbie's makeup. Specifically, Barbie and her friends wear makeup in all the adverts of the sample. They are illustrated going to the beach or even taking a nap whilst wearing a bold makeup look. For example, in 'Top model resort dolls' commercial (2008), Barbie is illustrated on the beach with flawless skin, styled long hair, heavy makeup and lots of accessories, as depicted in figure 22. Nevertheless, it needs to be mentioned that these dolls are manufactured this way and thus their bold makeup cannot be removed. However, the dolls in the sample seem to have a lighter and more natural makeup look towards the end of the analysis, with the starting point being 2014 (figure). Of course, certain exceptions were observed during the years 2014-2019, where dolls are depicted wearing bolder makeup looks in special occasions like



Figure 22- Screenshot from 'Top model resort dolls' (2008)

Christmas holidays (Holiday Barbie).

Another observation related to the dolls' physical appearance is their 'perfect' skin. Specifically, Barbie and her friends are illustrated having flawless skin without wrinkles, pimples or any scar both on their face and their bodies. This particular theme does not change at all in the recent years and, thus, does not follow the overall change of the brand towards diversity. As a result, the fact that Barbie does not age throughout the years supports the argument discussed in Chapter 2 that youth is an important aspect of hegemonic femininity in the West. Nevertheless, the constantly 'perfect' and ageless skin is not surprising and could be attributed to the fact that Barbie is a doll and does not age as in the case of a real person, although the ageless skin that Barbie portrays has sparked controversy among consumers, as the popular doll is supposed to be 61 years old (Lundegaard, 2009).

Moreover, Barbie seems to take care of her looks in the majority of the videos of the sample, an observation confirmed by the fact that she is frequently placed in hair and nail salons, where she changes styles and looks. Specifically, in 11% [N=11], dolls are placed in beauty salons, strengthening the argument that the dolls of the sample encourage a preoccupation with looks, while promoting commodity consumption, as discussed in this chapter. However, of great significance is to mention that the video advertisements of the last five years of the analysis do not illustrate dolls in hair or nail salons, conforming to the general shift of the brand towards the depiction of a less luxurious and consumption-based lifestyle.

In addition, the results that the thematic analysis yielded are also profound in the closing slogans of the Barbie commercials, which change significantly throughout the years of interest. Specifically, in 2000 and 2001, the phrase 'It's a great time to be a girl' was used at the end of each commercial, implying that the activities related to looks that Barbie dolls offer, are why being a girl is great. This phrase is replaced with 'Friends forever' and 'Barbie girl' until 2006. Interestingly, from 2006 the phrase 'Be who you want to be' is used as the closing slogan of the advertisements, functioning as an early index for the brand turn towards a more 'open' and diverse direction. However, in 2015 until the end of the analysis in 2019, the phrase 'You can be anything' is utilized at the end of each commercial, implying that each child's identity and potentials are welcome and celebrated by the doll brand, without referring only to girls. This phrase highlights the brand's turn towards

diversity and inclusion and summarizes the values that the Barbie aims for through its products and advertising. Again, here the year 2015 constitutes the turning point for Mattel's doll brand.

It can thus be summarized that as part of the brand's shift from 2015, Barbie has also decisively evolved in terms of diversity in looks. In fact, the integration of diverse looks resulted in an important growth in sales from 2015, with 23%, the biggest quarterly increase since 2009 (Patnaik, 2016). This increase in sale could be attributed to the fact that female audiences have a tendency to appreciate and prefer advertisements that display multiple models with different characteristics, as it allows them to recognize some of their own features in each of these models (Barry, 2014).

4.4.2. *'Glam and hot' femininity*

Stereotypical femininity in advertising traditionally entails a 'feminine', attractive and glamorous outward appearance, a fact that is confirmed in this thesis. As mentioned in Chapter 2, women in contemporary advertising are portrayed to consciously play with their sexual power, illustrating a shift from being sexual objects to being sexual subjects, meaning that women's objectification is now self-chosen (Gill, 2008). Barbie is portrayed as being sexually assertive by choice, by wearing revealing clothes or high heels, without being preoccupied with the need to impress men. In detail, Barbie is illustrated wearing 'hot' outfits and looking attractive, sexy and 'hot'. After thematically coding the transcripts of Barbie's advertisements, it was found that the words 'hot' and 'glam', as previously mentioned, are frequently used to describe the dolls' hair, makeup, accessories and clothing items. Lastly, the term 'glitter', which constitutes an element directly linked to 'glam' for the doll brand also has a high frequency within the dataset.

Thematic analysis yielded the results that Barbie and other dolls are illustrated wearing high heels in 87% [N=87] of the advertisements, even when performing activities like jogging or going to the beach. It is important to mention that until 2015 the dolls' feet were pointy and could not stand without wearing high heels, and thus, from 2000 to 2015 (Hetter, 2015), Barbie and her friends are illustrated in high heels in all occasions. Furthermore, the use of clothing items like short dresses, miniskirts, shorts, crop tops and bathing suits is observed in the advertisements to illustrate a sexy and hot physical

appearance, while the setting in which the dolls are placed is depicted as sunny, in order to justify the choice of clothes. Phrases like 'Hot resort wear, makeup magic', or 'Be glam like all that you can, make your own lip gloss' (2008-video 4) are utilized in the advertisements of the sample, indicating the importance of looking 'hot' and 'glam', while implying that makeup has 'magical' power that could transform women and make them look 'sexy'. In addition, attention is also drawn to the 'hot' clothing items and accessories, with phrases like 'Fashion so hot, cargo pants and hot crop tops' (2000-video 3), 'So excellent earrings, Looking hot right here' (Barbie California Girls Commercial, 2005) which underline that certain outfits and luxury items could make women look attractive and sexy. In addition, it is implied that Barbie's appearance is one of the characteristics that make her important, through phrases like 'look at her; She is so wild, this satin is so hot' (2004-video 5), 'Girl, you are so hot' (2003-video 2).

Similarly, lots of accessories, long luxurious gowns and gold or silver jewelry are utilized to point out Barbie's glamorousness and attractiveness, highlighting that to be feminine is to be glamorous and sexy. An interesting example is Barbie Beach Glam Commercial (2007) where the phrase 'Totally beach glam is who I am', is utilized by a young girl, of approximately 10-11 years old, where she is illustrated going to the beach in a 'glam' outfit and accessories, imitating Barbie's styling. Another example is in Barbie Fashionistas BFF Commercial (2010- video 3), where a young teenage girl (approximately 12-14 years) says 'I am glam. Everything I wear has a glamorous fleek', (figure 23) illustrated in the same outfit as Barbie, while highlighting the importance of being 'glam' all day long.



Figure 23- Screenshot from 'find your style 2012' commercial

It is important to mention that in certain commercials Barbie is depicted in revealing outfits that are deemed inappropriate for children. For instance, in the 'Top model Barbie' commercial in 2007, Barbie is illustrated in fishnet tights, (figure 24) a leather miniskirt, and a heavy makeup look, confirming that the brand relays improper images of sexual objectification to young girls.

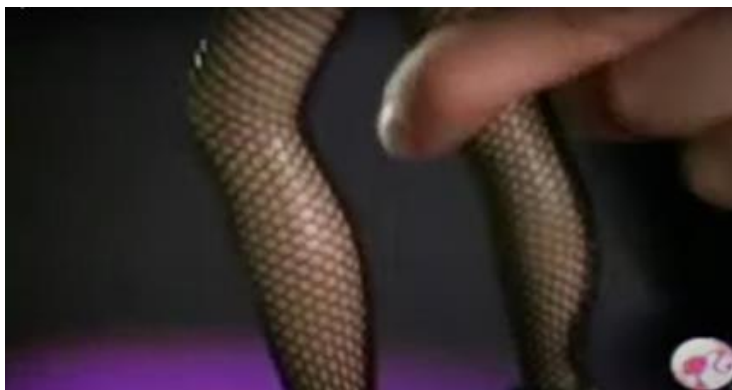


Figure 24- Screenshot from 'Top Model Barbie 2007'

It needs to be mentioned that 'glam and hot' of femininity, is mostly observed in advertisements for dolls and related products targeting children that may be young teenagers. However, the particular observation is based on the children that are featured in these adverts and the fact that they seemed a little older than usual and may not comply with the brand's marketing intentions. Nevertheless, despite that 'hot and glam' femininity captures a lot of attention in the videos of the sample, this theme is significantly less observed from 2015. Specifically, Barbie and the rest of the dolls of the sample are depicted in more casual and sporty looks and are illustrated wearing flat shoes for the first time in the brand's history in 2015 (Hetter, 2015). As part of the change in the brand's strategy, the image of Barbie and other dolls has been adjusted in terms of looks, in order to remain relevant and competitive in the doll market. The fashionable, sexy and glamorous outfits and shoes are replaced by a more casual and sporty style, with t-shirts, jeans and sneakers, which were not observed in the previous years. This shift, however, is less apparent in the 'Fashionistas' doll lines commercials, where several types of dressing styles are represented, including high heels, sneakers, flat boots and various 'fashionable' clothing options. All in all, as previously discussed, the thematic pattern 'glam and hot' femininity marks significant steps towards a more 'ordinary' and representative image of a teenager, starting from 2015.

4.4.3. 'Narcissistic femininity'

As discussed above, Barbie is depicted as having the 'ideal' body type, the 'perfect' hairstyle and makeup, and perfect and fashionable outfits and accessories for any occasion. The process of thematic analysis reveals that Barbie is aware of her 'perfect' outward appearance, an observation supported by the fact that she is illustrated looking in the mirror in 42% [N=42] of the advertisements. As suggested by scholars, the action of looking into the mirror is closely linked to narcissism (figures 25 & 26). The '*narcissistic femininity*' theme is most frequently observed in adverts where Barbie tries on new clothes or different hairstyles, in order to admire herself and her new outfits. However, this pattern is also observed in advertisements that are not directly related to Barbie's looks (e.g. 'Barbie prima ballerina' advert), a fact that points out that narcissism is a quite prominent characteristic that in the construction of femininity in Mattel's commercials for Barbie.



Figure 25- Screenshot from 'Barbie collection dolls' 2005



Figure 26- Screenshot from 'Barbie and Raquelle talking' 2013/2014

However, narcissism is less observed after 2014. Specifically, between the years 2014 and 2019, only 6 videos show dolls looking at their reflection in the mirror, while in 2019 this pattern is not observed. Nevertheless, although this may be lauded as a positive step, the development of technology and the subsequent introduction of smartphones in 2012-2013, seem to play an important role in the evolution of Barbie's narcissist attitude. Barbie is illustrated posing at the camera or taking selfies with her smartphone in order to admire her looks instead of looking in the mirror. This particular observation is, closely

linked to narcissism and the obsession of constantly looking 'perfect', by replacing the traditional action of looking in the mirror (Barry, Doucette, Loflin, Rivera-Hudson & Herrington, 2017). However, this observation is derived from only two videos between 2014 and 2016, while from 2016-2019, it is not observed. In conclusion, it could be said that although narcissistic femininity constitutes a significant pattern between 2000 and 2014 it is gradually weakened and is finally eliminated in 2019.

Moreover, the 'narcissistic' femininity sub-theme could also be supported by the coding category 'background/settings'. Specifically, as discussed in the theme 'consumer-based' femininity, the dolls of the sample are placed in hair and nail salons in 11% [N=11] of the sample. Moreover, the fact that 51% [N=51] of the commercials of the sample are exclusively focused on the dolls' appearance, strengthens the argument that the advertisements for Barbie by Mattel encourage their target audience, young girls and/or boys, to adopt a narcissistic attitude. With the majority of the videos illustrating dolls changing hairstyles, hair colors, outfits and accessories, one could argue that self-confidence is portrayed through the need of constantly trying to look perfect. To achieve the desirable physical appearance, the consumption of goods and services is extensively illustrated, a fact that underlines the linkage between narcissistic femininity and consumption-based femininity, as discussed in section 4.2.

4.5. 'The thin ideal'

Being beautiful, according to the 'West' conventional standards also entails having the ideal body type. The lack of a single definition in scientific literature regarding the term 'body type', might be problematic in the process of coding different body types in this thesis. However, in this study, 'body type' was operationalized according to the definitions provided by Mattel, with regard to the new body types, which were introduced in the Barbie doll lines after 2016. The manufacturing company has described the three diverse body types as 'curvy', 'petite', and 'tall'. The particular body type categorization was adopted, as the most appropriate for this thesis, as it was the one provided by the manufacturer of the dolls. In addition, considering that the subjects of interest in this thesis are dolls, observing their body shape is considered more suitable, rather than focusing on their weight, which could not be measured in this case. Hence, the body types of the dolls

that appear in the advertisements of the sample were coded according to Barbie's official website, with the aim of identifying which is the most prominent one in the sample. It needs to be mentioned, however, 'body diversity' in this thesis refers to the representation of more than one body type, while the 'thin' body type refers to the traditional Barbie's body, as described in Chapter 2.

The majority of the advertisements illustrate dolls with 'thin ideal' body types, displaying a tiny waist, large breasts and tall legs, namely the body type that the dolls are known for, as mentioned in previous studies (Wright, 2003; Rogers, 1999; Norton et al, 1996). In fact, it was found that 316 out of 363 dolls have the 'thin ideal' body type, reaching the remarkable percentage of 87% [N=316]. Moreover, it should be underlined that from 2000 to 2015 there is no body diversity amongst the dolls of the sample, while from 2016 the lack of body diversity changes significantly. Specifically, in 2016 three new body types, except from the thin ideal, are introduced and are described by Mattel as 'curvy', 'petite' and 'tall' (Kell,2016), (figure 27).



Figure 27- Screenshot 'Barbie Fashionistas' 2016

However, of great importance is to look at the advertisements of the last four years (2016-2019), in order to examine whether the integration of new body types in the doll lines is important. Special attention was given the video advertisements of the last four years of analysis, which yielded interesting results. Specifically, it was found that in 2016, 50% of the dolls that appeared in the advertisements of this year represent curvy, petite and tall body types. However, body diversity was found in only 20% [N=1] advertisements of 2016, while the rest of the advertisements illustrate dolls with thin ideal body types. Similarly, in 2017, 46% [N=10] of the dolls illustrate curvy, petite and tall body types while

in 60% [N=3] of the videos the thin ideal is the only body type appearing. Interestingly, in 2018 the majority of the depicted dolls illustrate body diversity, giving the impression that the brand has gradually started to reflect more real-life women. Specifically, 54% [N=26] of the dolls that are depicted in the advertisements of the year represent different body types (petite, curvy and tall), while body diversity is prominent in 60% [N=3] of the advertisements. Lastly, in 2019, dolls in wheelchair, which comes with a ramp and dolls with prosthetic limbs are introduced in the doll line, in order to 'encourage real-world storytelling and open-ended dreams' and reflect the real world that girls see around them, as Mattel's official website indicates. Although dolls with physical disabilities are not representative of body type diversity, they do, however, represent realistic situations that have not been included in the releases of the lines of previous years. It needs to be mentioned that in this thesis, the dolls that represent physical disabilities, are divided into different categories based only on their body types and not their particular physical disability. As a result, in 2019, body diversity is highly apparent in 60% [N=3] of the commercials of this year, with dolls representative of different body types reaching 58, 3%. All in all, despite the fact that -for the first time in the brand's history- more than one body types were illustrated between 2016 -2019, the thin ideal remains the dominant body type in the sample. Of course, this could be attributed to the fact that commercials from the brand's last twenty years are analyzed in this thesis, while the introduction of diverse body types has become apparent in the last four years of interest.

It can thus be summarized that despite the fact that the thin body type was the only one illustrated in the commercials of the Barbie brand before 2016, from 2016 a noteworthy evolution is noted. With approximately 50% representation of diverse body types reported in the commercials (apart from thin), including curvy, petite and tall or dolls reflecting physical disabilities sitting on a wheelchair or illustrated with a prosthetic limb, the years 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 can be seen as slight, albeit important steps of 'evolution', as the website of Mattel indicates, in the stereotypically 'perfect' body measurements of Barbie. Taking into account that women and girls tend to prefer models that have a similar appearance as themselves, (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008; Barry, 2014) the popular doll brand gave to some young girls the opportunity to feel more included –and potentially less limited- through Mattel's new dolls that reflect more realistic body measurements. Nevertheless, despite the significant positive evolution of the brand

towards a more 'ordinary' depiction of the female body, the prominent body type remains the thin ideal. Lastly, it should be mentioned that despite the additions of different body types in the recent doll line releases, the full spectrum of body types is still not represented through the Barbie brand. For example, overweight dolls or dolls combining characteristics of 'curvy' body types with 'petite' and 'tall' body types have not been introduced yet by the doll brand. It should, again be noted that the inclusion of other body types, apart from thin, was a conscious decision taken from Mattel, as it would create a more favorable brand image for the company. As previously mentioned, the addition of diverse body shapes was positively perceived from the consumer base, resulting in an increase in Barbie's sales.

4.6. 'Woman as nurturing'

As mentioned earlier on, Barbie has been accused not only for promoting unattainable beauty extremes, but also for encouraging certain behavioral patterns. Specifically, the doll brand has been criticized for promoting stereotypically feminine role models that are represented in advertising through the discourses of motherhood, family and housekeeping activities (Roggers, 1999). However, these discourses are only implied through the commercials of the brand, since Barbie herself is not married, does not have children, although she is shown conducting housekeeping activities. As a result, the 'woman as nurturing' thematic pattern is based on Barbie's relationship with her younger sisters and friends, as well as on her activities and professional occupations.

4.6.1. 'Caring, helpful and nurturing' femininity

According to England, Descartes and Collier-Meek (2011), being nurturing requires direct interaction and is often shown as mothering, while it involves prolonged touching and attention or showing care and help in a loving way to either animals or people. These characteristics are undoubtedly found in the sample. An important clarification that needs to be addressed is that Barbie herself is not illustrated in the role of a mother or a wife, except for the advertisements where she is depicted as a princess. Nevertheless, Barbie has two younger sisters between 3-5 years, Krissy and Kelly who appear in the commercials of the sample and their interaction with Barbie yields interesting results. Specifically, the

theme 'caring, helping and nurturing femininity' is observed in 9% [N=9] of the sample, where Barbie is adopting the mother role to her younger sisters, by showing care, help and nurture towards them, personality traits that are traditionally attributed to women. She is illustrated feeding her sisters, putting them to bed and singing lullabies or taking them out for walks (figure 28). Moreover, Barbie is depicted helping her three younger sisters take a shower, brush their hair or teeth and even go to the toilet.



Figure 28- Screenshot from the commercial 'Barbie Baby Bedtime Barbie & Krissy Doll (2001)

Moreover, it should be noted that Barbie is depicted performing professional occupations related to babies and children; specifically, the popular doll is depicted in the role of a baby sitter in 3% [N=3] of the sample, while she is illustrated being a pediatrician in 1% [N=1] and a dentist for children in 1% [N=1] of the sample. In these advertisements, her activities mostly focus on looking after the babies and children she is involved with, by changing their diapers or lullabying them. Interestingly, this observation applies in advertisements where Barbie is also presented as a vet, in 2% [N=2] of the sample; in these advertisements, the focus of her activities is not placed on medical treatment towards animals, but on showing care and love towards them. In detail, Barbie is illustrated brushing the pets' and animals' hair, feeding them or hugging them. The abovementioned observations point out a set of personality traits typically linked with feminine work ethic, like compassion, care, heartfelt warmth and emotional support (Razumnikova, 2005). At the same time, it is implied that women in the workplace do not behave as male professionals, based on their skills and rationality, but instead are influenced by their emotions. Moreover, studies by Halper, Cowgill and Rios (2019) indicate that women are

more likely to follow caregiving careers based on stereotypically feminine traits of warmth and sensitivity, are in alignment with these commercials, as Barbie is seen in roles that require care, help and nurturing (figure 29).



Figure 29- Screenshot from 'Barbie I can be .. (Dentist-Babysitter)' commercial, 2010

Furthermore, the transcripts of the voice-overs were utilized in the identification of the pattern 'caring and nurturing' femininity. In detail, certain phrases are utilized in the voice overs of the advertisements, which imply care and tenderness as an appropriate and essential trait of women. An important example comes from the 'Happy family commercial' (2002), where Barbie plays the role of a pediatrician, while her friend Midge has a 'happy family' and is depicted as being pregnant with a detachable magnetic stomach (figure 30) that allows easy 'delivery' of the baby (CBS News, 2002). The most interesting phrases used in the voice over of this commercial is 'Together we can be a happy family' , associating family with care and nurturing, as implied by the phrase 'Changing table and a cradle, the little ones need lots of care' . In fact, as mentioned in Mattel's Barbie.com website, the 'Happy Family' doll sets are designed to satisfy the desire for nurturing play by girls of ages between 5 to 8 years, and can be used as a prop for parents to role-play family situations with their children. It needs to be mentioned that the particular commercial of the Barbie brand sparked controversy among children's parents and was extensively accused of promoting teenage pregnancy (CBS News, 2002). As a result the 'pregnant Midge' doll was pulled from store shelves, on the grounds that it sent the wrong message to young girls

(CBS News, 2002). Considering that Barbie and her friends are supposed to be 19 years old and Midge is illustrated being a mother of young boy, while portrayed as being pregnant to a girl, it becomes apparent that the accusations towards the commercial are based on legitimate evidence. Additionally,



Figure 30- Screenshot from 'Happy family' 2002

in 'Bedtime baby Barbie and Krissy doll commercial' (2001-video 5), phrases like 'Who makes bedtime a dream? Barbie', 'Come to bed, wrap so sweet, a lullaby helps Krissy sleep', are used to highlight Barbie's tenderness and nurture.

4.6.2.' Housekeeper'

Barbie and other dolls are frequently seen performing housekeeping activities, although they are not directly given the role of a housekeeper (either in the voice-over or the advertised product). In detail, in 13% [N=13] of the analyzed advertisements the dolls appear to cook, wash and iron clothes or arrange the furniture of their dream houses. Moreover, as previously mentioned, in 64% [N=64] of the advertisements the dolls of the sample do not have a specified role or professional occupation. This observation combined with the finding that 39% [N=39] place the dolls inside their house, could constitute adequate evidence that Barbie is frequently illustrated in the role of a housekeeper (although not as a professional occupation). As media scholars, like Goffman (1979) and Gill (2009, 2011) have underlined, women in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's were rarely placed outside their household in advertising, conveying the message that women are traditionally linked with household activities.

In addition, it was found that the voice-overs of these commercials encourage and make housekeeping activities appear more exciting with the use of specific language. The terms 'cool', 'fan', 'wild' and 'easy' were used to characterize ironing or washing clothes. It needs to be mentioned, however, that in these advertisements traditional household chore is adjusted, in order to depict activities like washing and ironing clothes more 'fun'. An interesting example is found in the 'Barbie wash 'n wear' (figure 31) commercial, where the phrase 'Wash and wear is really wild' is used to describe the activity of washing clothes,

while the commercial illustrates Barbie putting her clothes in her pink washing machine to change their color and calls for girls to do the same with the phrase 'Put purple pants, pour water in, colors changing while they spin, check it out'. Similarly, the commercial 'Iron on style' underlines how fun ironing is, while depicting young girls ironing patches on their clothes (figure 32). In the voice over the phrase 'The look is hot, the iron is not. That is my iron on style. What is yours?' and 'How do I make the outfits totally me? Trend alert. Iron on style!', is used implying to the target audience that ironing is trendy and girls should do it in order to be 'Barbie girls'. As previously mentioned, these activities may relate to household chore, although they are not representative of actual household activities. Of course, the target audience's age should be considered, as actual household activities, without 'fun' adjustments like coloring or styling, may not have been as appealing in children's play.



Figure 31- Screenshot from 'Barbie wash and wear' 2001



Figure 32- Screenshot from 'Barbie iron on Style commercial 2013

4.6.3. 'Bride'

As mentioned in Chapter 3, a theme might capture might occur in relatively little of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although the particular theme, labeled 'bride' is not observed in many of the commercials, it conveys important messages regarding female roles. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, romance and marriage play a significant role in the media representations of women of the previous decades (Goffman, 1979). Specifically, Barbie appears in the role of a bride in 2% [N=2] of the sample. It is of particular interest, however, that in the 'Rapunzel wedding doll' commercial (2002-video 3), Barbie is illustrated getting married, while the advertisement depicts a teenage girl in the role of the bride, raising questions regarding the appropriateness of this content for

little girls. Furthermore, the particular doll comes with a veil for young girls and calls them to wear it and pretend they are getting married, using the phrase 'Now it's your turn to be the princess bride', while a 6-8 year old girl says 'My veil'. In 'Barbie wedding dolls' commercial (2006-video 2), it is implied that it is 'fun' and 'nice' to get married, with the expression 'So fun to share, so nice to do. Share the wedding with your friends, Barbie girl' (figure 33).



Figure 33- Screenshot from ' Barbie wedding dolls' 2006

Through these commercials, the discourse of marriage is relayed to the target audience, young girls, as an important element related to stereotypical femininity, implying that a woman needs to get married in order to feel fulfilled. However, it needs to be mentioned that in these commercials where Barbie is getting married, she is given the fictional role of a princess, while Barbie herself is actually not married. From 2007 until 2019, the ideal of marriage is not promoted through the commercials of the brand. Following the representations of women in current advertising, where romance and marriage do not constitute prominent elements of the female roles (Gill. 2016), the brand seems to have incorporated a more contemporary perspective and inspire girls 'to be anything they want', as mentioned in Barbie brand's official website (www.barbie.mattel.com). Thus, these elements have been eliminated.

4.8. Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the themes that have been derived from the thematic analysis and has put these themes into a broader context by also providing linkages to literature. However, it became apparent that the six thematic categories have changed significantly, coinciding with the brand's shift in its marketing strategy since 2015.

As a result, although in the years 2000-2014 Barbie's appearance revolved around the well-known slender and busty body type, carefully styled blonde hair, heavy makeup and an overall glam and sexy look, this is not the case from 2015. The introduction of diverse and more natural hairstyles and makeup, casual outfits as well as the addition of different body types resulted in a more inclusive and diverse representation of women. In addition to these, diversity in appearance was also achieved by a more inclusive approach in terms of ethnicity, skin color, and facial features, with the Barbie brand introducing more skin tones and facial structures that could reflect the world that young girls see around them (figure 34). Interestingly, it was observed that differences in diversity coincide with diversity in roles and activities. Specifically, in the years 2000-2014, Barbie and her friends were mostly depicted enjoying luxurious vacations, big houses and the consumption of goods and services, while encouraging an affluent lifestyle. However, consumption and wealth are no longer predominant from 2015. Activities that focus on friendship, nature and sports replaced the materialistic attitude that was prominent in the first fifteen years of analysis. However, these activities change significantly from 2015, when the Barbie brand starts to relay different messages regarding female roles.

THE EVOLUTION OF BARBIE

Barbie has continued to evolve over the years to better reflect the world girls see today, adding more diversity for endless storytelling possibilities.



Figure 34- Retrieved from the Official Barbie Website (www.barbie.com)

5. Conclusion

5.1. Answer to the research question

Femininity differs decisively from one culture to another, resulting in different norms cross-culturally (Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2009). This study aimed to examine the elements that construct femininity in the commercials of the Barbie brand based on the elements that construct femininity in Western cultures. However, even though the popular doll brand has started changing the way it portrays femininity in recent years, literature has not yet studied whether these changes are reflected in Barbie's advertising. For this reason, this thesis aimed to fill this research gap by conducting a thematic analysis on 100 Barbie advertisements in order to answer the research question: 'How has femininity been constructed in Barbie's advertising campaigns between 2000-2019?'.

A total of 100 commercials, five per year, were thematically analyzed, focusing on appearance, roles, activities and settings in order to highlight which attributes of femininity are highlighted in each commercial. The analysis resulted in six different thematic categories, which were discussed in Chapter 4. Putting these themes into a broader context by also providing linkages to literature, as discussed in Chapter 2, helped answering the research question of this study. In conclusion, the construction of femininity throughout the twenty years of interest has changed significantly. While in the years 2000-2014 femininity has been characterized by the lack of diversity in terms of skin color and ethnicity and the persistence in illustrating –to a great extent- Caucasian dolls, this was gradually less observed from 2015. Moreover, Barbie's looks underwent significant changes from 2015, shifting away from the stereotypical slender and busty body type, the long blonde hair, the heavy makeup and the sexy and glamorous outfits, accessories and attitude. These were replaced by a more diverse portrayal of femininity; different skin tones, facial structures, hairstyles and hair textures, casual outfits as well as diverse body types and more natural makeup looks were noted in the years 2015-2019. As a result, female images do not only depict white Caucasian features, sexiness, thinness and attentive looks, but it is constructed through diversity in ethnicity, body types and looks.

The conscious shift in the brand strategy made by Mattel was not only restricted to Barbie's outward appearance; in contrast to the first fifteen years of analysis that portrayed femininity through consumption, luxury and emphasis on quantity, the last five

years of interest have revealed interesting changes. In 2015-2019, the emphasis on quantity of goods is replaced by an emphasis on quality time activities, like skating, camping or doing sports with friends. Moreover, it needs to be noted that the value of friendship is no longer based on the need to 'show off' to each other or exchanging fashion pieces and fluttering compliments, as in the years 2000-2015. Unlike the previous years, after 2015, friendship seems to capture a lot of attention in the commercials of the brand, as an opportunity to share experiences related to nature, encouraging and empowering each other, while highlighting the importance of being part of a team. Furthermore, traditionally female roles and activities revolving around motherhood, marriage and housekeeping were no longer observed in the last five years of analysis. Similarly, professional occupations that were related only to physical appearance were not observed after 2015, highlighting the importance of personality attributes. As a result, stereotypically female roles and activities related to outward appearance or to personality attributes like emotional, nurturing, and concerned with people and relationships, that were prominent in the years 2000-2015, were gradually eliminated.

5.2. Limitations and suggestions for further research

This thesis is explorative in nature, as the Barbie brand's shift over the years has not yet been studied. This section discusses the limitations of this study, as well as the suggestions that could be useful for further research on the topic of femininity construction through advertising. Specifically, this study was particularly focused on advertisements by one doll brand, resulting in six main themes with regard to femininity. However, for further research a comparative study focusing also on competitive doll brands, like Bratz (a line of fashion dolls produced by MGA Entertainment), would allow for observations and comparisons of similarities and differences regarding femininity across various brands.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned this thesis examined video advertisements of the Barbie brand in English, which mostly target consumers of English-speaking countries. Hence, the results yielded by the analysis are significantly restricted and reflect more West-centered forms of femininity. However, Mattel's branding strategies are adjusted when branding its products towards different local cultures, in order to better fit in with the local markets. For future research, analyzing advertisements published in non-Western regions, like Asia and India, would enable cross-cultural comparisons regarding femininity through

Barbie's commercials.

In addition, limitations associated to the research method of this study were also identified. Specifically, the qualitative approach adopted in this thesis, have enabled the researcher to examine and interpret observations, in order to discover the underlying meanings and patterns (Babbie, 2011) of femininity construction. However, the findings of qualitative analysis cannot be generalized due to the fact that the sample of this research is relatively small and purposive. For future research, combining the qualitative analytic method with a quantitative approach is advisable, in order to also examine and understand the impact of the new, more 'diverse' dolls, which were introduced after 2015, on children. For instance, the use of a questionnaire in order to gather children's factual data and their opinions, ideas and attitudes (using their parents' help where needed) with regard to the recent doll line releases, would be of great value. Questionnaires can be easily distributed to a large sample and analyzed with the use of statistical analysis tools, like SPSS. Thus, a quantitative approach with the use of a questionnaire would test whether the introduction of diverse dolls has a significant impact on the target audience of the doll brand and yield findings that could be generalized to a whole population or a sub-population (Rahman, 2017).

Moreover, as previously mentioned, this study examined materials that target a particular demographic; children and their parents. However, it is important to understand not only the messages and meanings adverts relay to the audience, but also the way their respective audiences receive and interpret these meanings. Specifically, besides the addition of a quantitative approach, further research should also focus on the way the brand's shift towards diversity is perceived by the target audience. It needs to be mentioned that the target audience's perceptions regarding Barbie's shift –especially from the last five years- have not been yet investigated. Focusing, apart from the diachronic construction of femininity, on the consumers' beliefs, perceptions and opinions would make the research more multi-dimensional and examined from multiple angles. Hence, conducting focus groups or one-to-one interviews with children, in order to find out how they receive and understand the different messages of femininity conveyed by the doll brand, would undoubtedly cast light on the reception angle of this topic. Additionally, interviewing parents on their beliefs and interpretations regarding the messages around femininity and its 'evolution' in Barbie by looking into the advertisements of the brand

throughout the years (2000-2019), would, undoubtedly, yield valuable results.

Another limitation that this research dealt with is related to the analyzed materials. Specifically, this thesis investigated the message of femininity, as derived by the commercials of the doll brand. However, future research on the Barbie brand's construction of femininity should also look at the brand's advertising on social media. Taking into account that advertising through social media is now more current and widespread and has to a large extent replaced advertising on traditional media, analyzing Instagram or Facebook posts from Barbie's official accounts is suggested. It needs to be mentioned that Barbie's social media are extremely popular, with the brand's Instagram account reaching 1,7 million followers globally, while Barbie's Facebook page is liked by 15 million users. Focusing on the brand's advertising both on traditional and social media, would undoubtedly help the research become more current and also reveal the differences or similarities regarding the brand's strategy on social and traditional media.

Lastly, as previously mentioned, the selected sample for this study was comprised by 5 commercials per year, 100 videos in total. As a result, a number of commercials were excluded from the analysis, a fact that may have led to biased results, based on coincidences. For future research, including all commercials that were published on the years of interest would yield more reliable and valid results.

5.3. Theoretical implications

Considering the theoretical background, as discussed in Chapter 2, it became apparent that this study substantiates the value of particular theoretical discussions, while also providing new insights, considering that the topic of this thesis has not been yet researched. It needs to be mentioned that new insights gained through this study emerge from the analysis of the last five years of interest (2015-2019). Firstly, the researcher has identified that the overrepresentation of Caucasian women in advertising in general, was indeed prominent in Barbie advertisements, confirming studies by Frith, Shaw and Cheng (2009). However, it was found that despite the fact that the popular doll brand has been accused of underrepresenting dolls of other ethnicities, after 2015, racial diversity is promoted and encouraged by the doll brand's advertising. Moreover, the emphasis on consumption in advertising, as an important pattern of femininity identified by media

scholars like Gill (2007, 2008), was also prominent in the doll brand's adverts before 2015. Mattel's advertisements for Barbie were to a large extent revolved around consumption of goods and services, as well as luxury, a finding that undergoes important changes from 2015. Between the years 2015-2019, Barbie and her friends seem to value less the materialistic goods and place more emphasis on interaction with friends and nature. This finding offers new insights on the topic, indicating the difference in the brand's advertising strategy and has not been yet provided by previous studies focused on the doll brand.

The findings of this research were also in accordance with Norton, Olds, Olive and Dank' (1996), Rogers (1999) and Wright (2003), as it was evident that Barbie displays unattainable body measurements, portraying an 'ideal' body type in the majority of the sample. However, as part of the brand's adaption to the current advertising standards, the thin body type that was criticized and examined by previous studies is no longer the only one displayed in the adverts of the brand. The introduction of body diversity in the recent doll lines after 2016, has been largely covered by online and traditional media, but has not been yet studied by academics.

In addition, the personality traits that are prominent in representations of women in Western cultures were also observed in the commercials of the sample. Specifically, the caring, nurturing and affectionate characteristics, stereotypically associated with femininity portrayals in advertising, as studied by Thompson, Glenn and Verstein (2011) captured a lot of attention in the ads of the years 2000-2014. However, the interpretation of the findings revealed certain unexpected observations, which led to new insights regarding the brand's messages that construct femininity. Specifically, it was found that the portrayal of diversity that was observed after 2015 in the dolls' appearance coincides with an important change in the dolls' roles, character and activities, shifting away from the stereotypical representation of women's roles. This finding has not yet been provided by similar studies and should be further studied, as the discussions on the doll brand's shift in online media, have been restricted to the diversity and inclusion in appearance.

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Appendix 1:
Sample

Table 1

Barbie advertisements - 2000

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Cool Clips Barbie & Friends Doll Commercial With Brenda Song [2000] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9p8ybMo8zk	00:30	Throwback dolls
2	2000 Barbie & Krissy Magical Mermaids Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcvHvL41BHK	00:30	Pink Barbie
3	2000 Jewel Girl Barbie - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmjKWO2qiJU	00:31	Pink Barbie
4	Barbie Dreamhouse Commercial [2000] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkaR-iHM97g	00:29	Throwback dolls
5	Barbie Beach Bungalow - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saFaPZJbtp4	00:31	Pink Barbie

Table 2

Barbie advertisements - 2001

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	2001 Amazing Nails Barbie Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILIsNNz6AqI	00:30	olaf lopez
2	2001 Rose Princess Barbie - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ2YOGao6P0&list=PL8wnyUk-h37P-tsFMCTIbYKmOOZMx8OvY&index=34	00:32	Pink Barbie
3	Barbie Wash' N Wear - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siKV3n4I6HY&list=PL8wnyUk-h37P-tsFMCTIbYKmOOZMx8OvY&index=38	00:32	Pink Barbie
4	Barbie Jam' n Glam - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=al_3hjQTSU&list=PL8wnyUk-h37P-tsFMCTIbYKmOOZMx8OvY&index=39	00:30	Pink Barbie
5	Bedtime Baby Barbie & Krissy Doll Commercial [2001]	00:30	

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIGfuTLKatE&list=PL8wnyUk-h37P-tsFMCTlbYKmOOZMx8OvY&index=43>

Throwback dolls

Table 3

Barbie advertisements – 2002

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Pop Sensation Barbie Doll Commercial [2002] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nruYAqyOIdc	00:30	Throwback dolls
2	Happy Family Doll Commercial [2002] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnjYM4lC7Fg	00:30	Throwback dolls
3	2002 Salon Surprise Barbie Commercial With Ashley Benson https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ftPV_yQR_E	00:30	ToyAdWorld
4	Bead N' Beauty Barbie & Friends Doll Commercial [2002] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1rXgxwVsU0	00:30	Throwback dolls
5	Barbie Rapunzel's Wedding Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2ZGjGbePtQ	00:16	My Doll Cabinet

Table 4

Barbie advertisements – 2003

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Barbie Of Swan Lake Dolls 2003 Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Utj1uSJWA8	00:42	Sarah Coram
2	Barbie Cheerleader Dolls Commercial (2003 v2) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM83N_98FZA	00:30	Commercials & TV From The Past
3	Barbie & Krissy Princess Palace Giftset Commercial [2003] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_01eih0ZhE	00:30	Throwback dolls
4	Movie Star Barbie Commercial, Oct 20 2003 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlS7_nejaJg	00:14	Blendeture
5	Secret Spells Barbie & Friends Doll Commercial [2003] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkHlMxnNRO4	00:30	Throwback dolls

Table 5*Barbie advertisements - 2004*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	2004 Barbie Princess Collection - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njS36WOO-r-g	00:33	Pink Barbie
2	California Girl Barbie Surf Shop Commercial (2004) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kru0uFX3zqU	00:30	Commercials & TV From The Past
3	Barbie As The Princess and the Pauper My Size Doll Commercial (2004) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdbx2ihPi1A	00:26	Commercials & TV From The Past
4	Cali Girl Barbie Pool Commercial (2004) (Better Audio) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTnNJ2miYA0	00:30	Commercials & TV From The Past
5	Barbie Fashion Fever Spring 2004 Collection Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKqMUbgJf8c	00:30	BarbieVideoWorld

Table 6*Barbie advertisements - 2005*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Barbie Fashion Fever Doll Commercial [2005] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Izj_c3kMrAU	00:30	Throwback dolls
2	American Idol Barbie Wave 2 Dolls & Recording Studio Playset Commercial (2005) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_A2hroV7bM	00:30	Commercials & TV From The Past
3	Commercial - Barbie: Barbie and the Magic of Pegasus - Groom & Glam (2005) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXbEAzLOYiQ	00:15	Maria Júlia Santana da Silva
4	2005 Barbie California Girls Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxvXgxWfr1c	00:31	Lucky Lupipi666
5	Commercial - Barbie: Mini Kingdom (2005) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5E7pnAQJcdI	00:30	Maria Júlia Santana da Silva

Table 7*Barbie advertisements – 2006*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Barbie Girl (Brand Equity) Commercial (2006) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPiQROzJwcE	00:31	Commercials & TV From The Past
2	2006 Barbie Wedding Dolls Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcmIRgYr2ow	00:30	BarbieVideoWorld
3	Commercial - Barbie: Chat Divas [1] (2006) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30_rVR9ACGg	00:30	Maria Júlia Santana da Silva
4	2006 SugaBabes Barbie Dolls Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhVZCFNASmk	00:20	BarbieCollectors
5	2006 Barbie In The 12 Dancing Princesses Sisters Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEsOzHMOXnc	00:15	olaf lopez

Table 8*Barbie advertisements – 2007*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Top Model Barbie Commercial 2007 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQhci0VPf3E	00:35	BarbieCollectors
2	Totally Hair Barbie & Summer Doll Commercial [UK 2007] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1J-l4xA7iRQ	00:20	Throwback Dolls
3	Barbie 2 in 1 Party Plane & Ship Commercial (2007) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSwyIORZFFM	00:34	Commercials & TV From The Past
4	Barbie Beach Glam Commercial (2007) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4slaHzUKt7s	00:20	Commercials & TV From The Past
5	2007 Barbie Shopping Boutique Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7QfuJRxAGA	00:29	BarbieVideoWorld

Table 9*Barbie advertisements - 2008*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	2008 Barbie My House Furniture & Doll Assortment Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Hc7RVz9N-4	00:30	BarbieVideoWorld
2	2008 Barbie Fashion Fever Poseable Dolls Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPGzSJ7dqCE	00:23	BarbieVideoWorld
3	2008 Barbie Top Model Resort Dolls Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rh0twEAcvhc	00:35	BarbieVideoWorld
4	Barbie Candy Glam styling head commercial 2008 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIOjffK1N5s	00:30	BarbieVideoWorld
5	Barbie Prima Ballerina Doll Commercial (2008) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Os1mL1_h6ll	00:20	Commercials & TV From The Past

Table 10*Barbie advertisements - 2009*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	2009 Fab Girl Barbie Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAEm0_f-8TY	00:31	BarbieCollectors
2	2009 Holiday Barbie Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SH4BkWntzgQ	00:20	BarbieCollectors
3	2009 º Barbie Totally Nails commercial doll https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWE3PajQNiY	00:30	ToyAdWorld
4	2009 Barbie So In Style S I S Stylin Hair Dolls Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5v4g-kOOjU	00:13	KidsToyVideos
5	Barbie Fashionistas Commercial (2009 20 Sec) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4mKAv8hgTA	00:21	Commercials & TV From The Past

Table 11*Barbie advertisements - 2010*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	2010 9 Barbie i can be.. (Dentist-Babysitter) doll commercial :HQ: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBfXetHyA6Q	00:32	worldstoys
2	2010 Barbie A Fashion Fairytale Palace And Horse With Carriage Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhJotm3REDO	00:30	BarbieVideoWorld
3	Barbie Fashionistas BFF Commercial (2010) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVYGO5yNSGs	00:20	Commercials & TV From The Past
4	2010 9 Barbie ❤️ Loves Glitter Doll commercial HQ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMshhPdamBQ	00:16	ToyAdWorld
5	2010 9 Barbie I Can Be Pizza Chef Doll commercial HQ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSz3y7NKIIQ	00:19	ToyAdWorld

Table 12*Barbie advertisements - 2011*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Barbie California Dreamhouse Commercial (2011) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BhgZPvO_VKE	00:31	Commercials & TV From The Past
2	Barbie Designable Hair Extensions Commercial (2011) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SQt5Ubvw_U	00:31	Commercials & TV From The Past
3	2011 9 BARBIE™ Fashionista Swappin' Styles! Dolls commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yIbW0OBKJw	00:25	worldstoys
4	Barbie Hairtastic Color & Wash Salon Commercial (2011) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hzpVLwHTgc	00:25	Commercials & TV From The Past
5	2011 9 BARBIE™ PRINCESS CHARM SCHOOL Royal Bed & Bath Playset Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pbe6CJbNTz0	00:34	BarbieVideoWorld

Table 13*Barbie advertisements - 2012*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	2012 Photo Fashion Barbie Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyZAONbmOZo	00:30	BarbieVideoWorld
2	2012 ° BARBIE™ Flower 'N Flutter Fairy Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkv4e5dTUCw	00:21	BarbieVideoWorld
3	Barbie Fashionistas Hollywood Divas Doll Commercial [2012] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLA9VEoj2VY	00:20	Throwback Dolls
4	2012 Barbie Fashionistas Ultimate Closet Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ru0uTlwJOLY	00:16	ToyAdWorld
5	Barbie The Princess and the Popstar Dolls Commercial (2012) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b347wd6cY2c	00:34	Commercials & TV From The Past

Table 14*Barbie advertisements - 2013*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Commercial Barbie Dreamhouse 2013/2014 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMTnfh4-nl	00:30	Ken Doll
2	Commercial Barbie & Raquelle Talking 2013/2014 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QH1qEvcxWks	00:15	Ken Doll
3	Barbie Fashionistas Rainbow Wave 1 Commercial (2013) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JU93mQBpTa8	00:20	Commercials & TV From The Past
4	2013 ° BARBIE™ IN THE PINK SHOES Kristyn Transforming Ballerina Dolls Commercial 2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFHagoswA-8	00:34	BarbieVideoWorld
5	Barbie™ Iron On Style - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FD1GbjTNIIdY	00:20	Pink Barbie

Table 15*Barbie advertisements – 2014*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Commercial Barbie Style Collection 2014 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOQbeEsEc44	00:33	Ken Doll
2	Commercial Barbie Fashionistas Collection 2014 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATInt0Ys6Lw	00:20	Ken Doll
3	Commercial Dolls Movie "Barbie and the Secret Door" 2014 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3k-iovVzDuY	00:30	Ken Doll
4	Commercial Barbie Hair Tattoos 2014 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0-FI9Qp8Jo	00:20	Ken Doll
5	Barbie Style Wave 2 Doll Commercial [2014] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCiuHjj9jbs	00:30	Throwback Dolls

Table 16*Barbie advertisements – 2015*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Barbie™ 2015 Fashionistas #1 - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMuv8OloQs4	00:30	Pink Barbie
2	2015° BARBIE In Princess Power "Super Squad" dolls Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVVSJUmcwJg	00:30	worldstoys
3	2015 made to move Barbie commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRPbi35jJbo	00:20	Alan Barbie Collector
4	Moschino Barbie! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TULVRlpsNWo	00:30	Moschino
5	Barbie™ Endless Hair Kingdom - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwhiuCIB4Mk	00:31	Pink Barbie

Table 17*Barbie advertisements - 2016*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Barbie™ 2016 Fashionistas - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFU_w1OERNY	00:20	Pink Barbie
2	2016 Moschino Barbie & Ken Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ka7KAzyAuiI	00:30	Pink Barbie
3	Barbie™ Mix 'N Color - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7VvgcFePQE	00:30	Pink Barbie
4	Barbie™ Swimmin' Pup Pool + Ultimate Puppy Mobile - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFScNkb7Nq4	00:21	Pink Barbie
5	Barbie™ D.I.Y Crimp & Curl - Doll Commercial 15s https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7_GsiFI0cQ	00:15	Pink Barbie

Table 18*Barbie advertisements - 2017*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Barbie™ Video Game Hero Light-up Skates Doll and Match Game Princess™ Barbie https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XZpw5D9BmA&list=PL5BsRI9zFaeTpN0BVGWY34E4kteu_DYLG&index=1	00:39	Barbie
2	Barbie Club Chelsea™ Flip and Fun Skate Ramp Barbie https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lfhWe0x3Qs&list=PL5BsRI9zFaeTpN0BVGWY34E4kteu_DYLG&index=8	00:20	Barbie
3	Barbie® DreamCamper Barbie https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JVbuEy1vSA&list=PL5BsRI9zFaeTpN0BVGWY34E4kteu_DYLG&index=9	00:30	Barbie
4	Barbie™ 2017 Fashionistas - Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPnCMFQ-cEU	00:19	Pink Barbie
5	2017 Holiday Barbie Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FeAzSio-MI	00:18	Pink Barbie

Table 19*Barbie advertisements – 2018*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Barbie™ 2018 Fashionistas The New Crew Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PI8NE2P-6H8	00:20	Pink Barbie
2	Barbie™ 2018 Dreamhouse Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVdTJXFcvvY	00:30	Pink Barbie
3	Get Ready with Holiday Barbie™ Barbie https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEcWe6tcaS0	01:22	Barbie
4	Barbie™ Dreamtopia Royal Ball Princess & Brush' N Sparkle Unicorn Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDUDxb_2Gwl	00:20	Pink Barbie
5	Barbie™ Dreamhouse Adventures Travel Doll Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDWQxp-dZvQ	00:20	Pink Barbie

Table 20*Barbie advertisements – 2019*

Video	Title	Length (min)	YouTube Channel
1	Barbie® Fashionistas Official Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LPHEFz2RmQ	00:20	Mattel
2	2019 Barbie® Fashionistas® Commercial Mattel https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zce425hKfk	00:15	Mattel
3	Introducing Creatable World - A Customizable Doll Line https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sljfuJ2Jdkc	00:30	Creatable world
4	My Mattel Holiday Barbie 2019 Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jt1NuamUoxY	00:25	Hayden Calder
5	Barbie® Color Reveal™ Official Commercial https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9yelDNGxQ4	00:20	Mattel

Appendix 2:
Thematic map

Table 21

Thematic map

Main code	Sub-code(s)	Definition
Lack of diversity in skin color and ethnicity	Lack of diversity	The ad does not depict non-Caucasian dolls
	Diversity	The ad depicts non-Caucasian dolls
Consumption-based femininity		The ad emphasizes consumption of goods and services
Affluent lifestyle		The ad emphasizes luxury and wealth
Obsessed with outward appearance	Attentive looks	The ad emphasizes activities related to beauty, hair, makeup and outfits
	Glam and hot femininity	The ad emphasizes
	Narcissistic femininity	The ad illustrates dolls admiring themselves by looking in mirrors or taking selfies
Thin ideal		
	Thin body type	The ad illustrates only the thin body type

	Diversity in body types	The ad illustrates thin and other body types
Woman as nurturing	Caring, helpful and nurturing femininity	The ad illustrates dolls engaging in caring helpful and nurturing actions
	Housekeeper	The ad illustrates dolls performing housekeeping activities
	Bride	The ad illustrates dolls getting married
