

Volume 36  
issue 3 / 2017

Contracampo e-ISSN 2238-2577  
Niterói (RJ), 36 (3)  
dec/2017-mar/2018

Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication is a quarterly publication of the Graduate Programme in Communication Studies (PPGCOM) at Fluminense Federal University (UFF). It aims to contribute to critical reflection within the field of Media Studies, being a space for dissemination of research and scientific thought.

## “There I Can Be A Woman”: Transvestite Everyday Life And Sociability In Digital Trajectories

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TO REFERENCE THIS ARTICLE, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING CITATION:

Machado, A.; Silva, S. R. (2017). “There I Can Be A Woman”: Transvestite Everyday Life And Sociability In Digital Trajectories. *Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication*, 36(3), pp. 255-275.

Submitted on 26th May 2017 / Accepted on 5th December 2017

DOI – <http://dx.doi.org/10.22409/contracampo.v36i3.1030>

## Abstract

Supported in an ethnographic research on the internet (HINE, 2015), this article interprets some elements of transvestite sociability based on their practices of consumption and use of digital technologies. Observing the digital trajectories of the research participants, through the interactions in the social network platform Facebook, we demonstrate how the internet is incorporated into everyday life and it moves different practices of interaction, such as gossip, tricks and needle. In addition, through the site, the notions of fidelity to themselves and the interactions singled out by work in prostitution, central elements in the understanding of their sociabilities, are manifested.

## Keywords

Consumption; Digital social networks; Transvestite sociability.

## Introduction

Inspired by Certeau's (1998, p. 93) thinking, that human agencies can subvert logics from established order systems and recognizing uses<sup>1</sup> as actions "that organize without be notice the work [...] of consumption" in their "formality and their own inventiveness", the article interprets some of the interactions a group of transvestites<sup>2</sup> makes in their digital trajectories. Through an ethnographic research, we try to understand some of the uses that research participants realize in the social network platform Facebook.

We select data from the fieldwork, interviews and systematic observations made in personal profiles of nine participants for about a year, categorized in some elements that seem to be central in the articulation of the transvestite sociability universe. Through the observation of some recurrent uses, we describe how the interactions in their personal profiles articulate different aspects within their sociability.

Ethnography, as an epistemic practice that takes place beyond the field research techniques, is not the simple adequacy of a method and is not limited to the adoption of certain methodological procedures (Geertz, 2012; Peirano, 2014). Our proposal assumes the undertaking of what Geertz called a dense description, an intellectual effort to interpret the empirical data collected in the field, considering the intermediation relationship (Damatta, 2010) established between the researcher and the research subjects in the construction and sharing of meanings (Laplantine, 2012; Velho, 2013).

Social and Human Sciences field already has a proficient set of researches dedicated to understanding the transsexuality universe in various disciplines and approaches. Since the pioneering work of Silva (1993), Jayme (2001), Benedetti (2005), Bento (2006), Kulick (2008) and Pelúcio (2009) are some examples of investigations that serve as a theoretical basis for understanding about this universe, guiding our commitment to reflect on transvestite experiences, in the interface of the uses and practices in their digital trajectories.

According to Lanz (2017), transgender territory is composed of different gender-divergent identities, which transgress, deviate or otherwise violate the

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<sup>1</sup> The theoretical approach understands both the uses and the consumption of goods and artifacts as social and cultural practices, singular and contextual. Therefore, in the article, we do not use 'social' or 'cultural' as adjective in none of those expressions.

<sup>2</sup> In this article, we have chosen to translate the Portuguese term 'travesti' into 'transvestite', because it is the recurrent term in academic translations. However, transvestite is a term that does not fully address the sociocultural realities of the research participants. In general, in English language, transvestite refers to crossdresser. In Brazil, travesti designates trans woman, originally a pejorative term, but it has a political meaning of struggle for recognition.

male-female gender binary device. According to the author, transvestites are the most visible transgender group in Brazil because of their ostensive presence in cities and their participation in sex industry. In our research, we take the definition 'transvestite' by the participants' self-identification with the term. It refers not only to bodily and aesthetic transformation, but also to different positions related to gender and sexuality that formulate their social practices.

Transvestite is, as reported by Benedetti (2005), a complex and disputed identification, guided by diverse values and practices that cannot be confused with the search for the feminine of the cisgender women. It corresponds to a specific corporal and social reality established in the referential of a feminine self, located neither within nor outside the normative categories of social and sexual division, but lived in the transits and in the processuality of the body and sexuality (Campuzano, 2008). Corporality and feminine relational character indicates the possibilities of *making gender* of transvestite, defined through the coherence regimes between performances of gender and the appropriate body to develop them (Bento, 2007).

Relational character of transvestites' corporality and femininity is expressed in the dynamics of their social relations (Benedetti, 2005). Through transformation processes, they constantly move between domains and socially established gender positions. According to Pelúcio (2009), transvestites seek to (re)construct a female body, inscribing it, as well as its gender and sexuality, in practices and places of ambiguity, resignification and conflict. This (re)construction happens through *feminine symbols* that act on bodies thought by society as masculine. Social relations (that go beyond the limits of the body itself) constitute the experience of transvestites' corporality, the visible symbol of their identity project.

Observing the development and consolidation of digital communication technologies in the most diverse frameworks of social experience, we understand that social networking platforms have enhanced communication and interaction processes among people (Miller et al., 2016). Social experiences are being constituted through particular uses of these technologies, elaborating the very categories with which people define themselves and the social universe around them.

Insertion in complex communication environments, guided by different stimuli, has made possible the development of changes in sociability regimes. Diversity of interaction patterns, as a mark of our societies specificity (Castells, 2003), allows us to investigate the way in which online sociability networks have more complex and streamlined the flows of communication organized by the possibilities in network with the internet environments.

The practices observed in the fieldwork and described in the light of some theoretical relations about how consumption articulates meaning processes point to a greater autonomy and self-communication in the elaboration of their personal and identity projects (Castells, 2003, 2013). To examine these relationships, we approach our perspective to consumption studies, discussing the relationship between Internet and everyday life. Through an ethnographic approach, the article shows how the uses of digital technologies, especially social networks, articulate the meanings of practices and experiences in the transvestites' everyday life.

## Social and interactional dynamics through consumption

Reflecting on consumption, as a process of social life organization, requires to consider innumerable activities beyond the practices whose focus are the market bases on the relation between production, acquisition, and application of any good and social actors involved. According to Barbosa and Campbell (2006), consumption is a central category in the definition of contemporary societies, a process that articulates identities in the social fabric and the strategies by which actors and groups define different situations and experiences of everyday life.

In addition to a classification system, according to Rocha (2004), consumption is a code that legitimizes and translates the most different social relations. Consumption works in a recognized and shared way and collaborates in the elaboration of personal and collective identities and in the social relations established by them. Aligning with Douglas and Isherwood (2004), Rocha thinks consumption through the articulation of classification systems, crossed by the symbolic dimension that stabilize cultural categories that give meaning to each social universe.

In an anthropological definition, Douglas and Isherwood (2004, p. 103) understand consumption as a process in which different social categories are articulated and continually redefined in "the very arena in which culture is the object of struggles that shape it." In the capacity to make sense of relationships, consumption articulates and fixes the meanings of social life, to provide some stability to the categories by which cultures are lived. In this conception, consumption is a social form of containing the meanings fluctuation, functioning as ritual processes (DOUGLAS, ISHERWOOD, 2004). Through these processes, social actors and groups construct an intelligible system of reference, marking their systems of sociability. These operations chain together different sets of classifications and markings, "perspectives that are not fixed, nor are they

randomly arranged like a kaleidoscope. Ultimately, their structures are anchored in human social purposes" (Douglas, Isherwood, 2004, p 114).

As part of the cultural reproduction of social relations, consumption practices attribute meanings and project the very existence of social order in everyday life (SLATER, 2002). For Slater, in the capacity articulated by consumption, agents live both the determinations of the social order and the possibilities of making some kind of resistance to them. If in a sense consumption organizes social order and difference, it is through it individuals can find ways to manage their cultural and social resources in order to propose reinterpretations, modifications and transgressions of the imposed order.

Certeau (1998) also defends this proposition. He reflects the operations of uses defined through consumption, such as the creation of a play space for ways of using the established order of place and language, which impose the law, establishing regimes of plurality and creativity. In this perspective, uses are taken not in relation established with the system and order, but as relations of forces, defining the networks in which they are inscribed and delimiting the circumstances social actors can take advantage.

Castro (2014) demonstrates, with the rise of contemporary lifestyles, consumption has been defined by different economies of knowledge and skills that demand heterogeneous and variable forms of engagement. Different social pedagogies become articulated and socialized by consumption-oriented systematics, reorganizing the spaces and routines of individuals.

These systematics transpose the dimension of objects materiality, corresponding with symbolic production of communication and interaction processes. Castro defends an articulation of specific consumption cultures, in which to consume also means to communicate. Consumption as social and cultural practice related to the subjectivities of the actors and to the social recognition of the relations they establish. Seeking to understand how specific consumption practices articulate transvestite sociability through the uses of social network Facebook, we present a brief foray into the debate regarding an ethnographic approach to the study of Internet.

## Internet and everyday life: an ethnographic approach

In the context of consumption cultures, an ethnographic approach to the Internet (which favors the use of information and communication technologies in the social frameworks configuration) reflects on how online interactions occur and what they mean (Maximo et al., 2012). From the environments and the

configuration of interactional practices, it is important to recognize the exponential use of the Internet and its incorporations in the social actors' everyday life (Fragoso, Recuero and Amaral, 2012).

Ethnographic approach reflects practices and interactions in virtual spaces, emphasizing the empirical agencies and the ways in which interacting subjects construct cultural patterns (MAXIMO, 2010). Understanding the contextuality of practices, in its direct relation with the everyday life experienced by social actors, Miller (2013) proposes to think the internet not as a tool, limited to specific material supports, but by the "genres of uses" that people articulate through it. Consumption organizes the uses, that is, the defined types of usability genres that people make of the internet and its platforms as forms of meaning.

Miller and Horst (2015), debating the assumptions of digital anthropology, understand digital produces deepening in the proliferation of differences and particularities of social life. As with material culture, digital culture is a fundamental part of the human experience in society. In digital contexts, the dialectical nature of culture is intensified, due to the processes of convergence that affect social practices. This process triggers forms of abstraction that are put into operation in different practices, "created in the context of each place, not given by technology" (MILLER and HORST, 2015, p. 96). In addition, the authors criticize the understanding that digital technologies would eventually promote the loss of a supposedly authentic sociability. Miller and Horst understand culture as mediation, and digital as a specific mediation. In this sense, interactions and control of these interactions enabled new forms of participation and experimentation, moving different economies of meaning.

Hine (2015) reflects on an ethnographic approach to understanding people's navigation experiences. In this sense, the author proposes to think the Internet as three interconnected dimensions: embedded, embodied, and everyday Internet. Internet as embedded refers to human-human and human-machinery connections and/or interactions, associated with the capacities built on the Internet, and that transcend their boundaries. This notion articulates important reflections regarding the field research, since it allows perceiving what people are doing when they are online, understanding how these spaces are constituted and how they interact in the configurations of the social and identity orderings.

Embedded Internet in transvestite everyday life corresponds to a multitude of interaction practices. These practices are largely singled out in the use of Facebook, considering the platform convergence, which allows triggering and sharing contents of other platforms and sites, and the tools available for the more personalized production of utterances (posts, check-ins, tags, photos, videos, etc.).

In this way, an infinite number of contents circulate in the network that compose these interaction scenarios.

The notion of online spaces embedded points in “close detail at how a distinctive culture may emerge in such a space, with its own sets of norms and values” (Hine, 2015, p. 34). Research participants’ sociability, embedded in the uses of the platform, points both to the maintenance of their sociability regimes and to the articulation of their own experiences and interests. The search for demands of social recognition, visibility, conquest of rights and violence denunciations and transphobia situation configure an experience of everyday life sharing. Added to this scenario the mobile internet, which allows ways to expand the processes of sociability, understood as an “internet companion, friend that has to have”<sup>3</sup>. Social network traffic follows the day's activities in a flow that moves interactions in the social network with offline conversations and situations.

The Internet as embodied articulates not only the perception of the human body as the necessary basis for the transmission of information, but as a medium by which feelings are expressed and how they interact in the composition of the online experience. As “the Internet is potentially experienced by 'embodied' users in different ways, depending on the circumstances” (Hine, 2015, p. 43), online trials allow the articulation of different forms of presentation and performances linked to experiences and body aesthetics.

Admitting online as a way of extending of the embedded world, Hine says that virtualization does not erase bodies in interactions, but it expands ways in which bodily experience manifests itself. In transvestite sociability, the very idea of mediation that the platform accomplishes seems diluted, insofar as the profile and interactions are understood as ethical and aesthetic correspondences directly related to the body. Although the use of images still points to the centrality of transvestites' body capital in their interactions, the platform's own dynamics point perceptions of the body not only linked to the images posted.

Photographs attest to the body's most fundamental evidence in the social network, but comments (written), the ability to demonstrate feelings and involvement in other activities, and events are also perceived as a form of body inscription. In social network, corporality is not only an image, but it assumes a multisensory imagery character (Csordas, 2008), which associates, within the allowed technical dispositions, not only images but also senses and emotions that compose corporal experience.

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<sup>3</sup> We do not name the research participants in this article. Because of that, most of their speeches and expressions are in quotation marks. However, in some moments, we use the italic to demarcate phrases and expressions pinched from interviews, observations and postings. We incorporated these expressions into the authors' text.



Uses, agency and appropriations of the Internet dynamize the senses in everyday life as social experiences are embedded and embodied. According to Hine, it is in the everyday dimension that the internet takes place, taking for itself the meaning of a cultural phenomenon. While the virtual medium intertwines with all the interfaces of everyday life, the perception of the Internet as a situational and localizable media stands out. Everyday dimension is expressed in the general flow of existence and in the experiences guided by technological possibilities and in interaction with other social structures.

Ethnography for the Internet of transvestite everyday, thus, pursues questions about how the Internet is characterized in the research participants' digital trajectories, "being sensitive to the variable topicalization of the Internet [...] specific circumstances in which accounts of its significance are produced" (HINE, 2015, p. 53). Considering that embedded and embodied Internet in everyday life reflect particular uses of transvestite sociability, we present an interpretation of some social practices observed in our fieldwork.

## Internet in everyday life and in sociability transvestite

The interpretation presented in this article comes from the description of some uses the research participants make on social network platform Facebook. We aim to reflect how these consumption practices articulate the production of significance in everyday life. We present some of the recurrent uses observed in their timelines and obtained in informal conversations during fieldwork.

We keep confidential the research participants identities. They are between 19 and 36 years old. With the exception of two, most of them did not finish high school and all have income from work in prostitution. The participant observation that has been underway since June 2015, as part of the ethnographic work, takes place in a peripheral neighborhood in the city of Santa Maria, South Brazil. We also develop the fieldwork in the observation of online interactions. The adherence of transvestites to research defined the fieldwork, delimited by the migratory flows they carry out, living prostitution in the transit of different cities.

Due to the constant traffic experienced by most of them, Facebook allows to maintain and manage the friendships and the sociability beyond the shared physical presence. This implied in methodological terms regarding the observation, collection and debate about the data, in interviews and conversations on and offline, face-to-face meetings characterized by participant observation and interactions in their personal profiles on social networks.

In Facebook, name, profile and cover photo, biographical and identifiers elements and the possibilities of interaction are the central elements of personal pages composition (Recuero, 2009). For all the transvestites who participate in the research, profile is important in the constitution of established relationships and the very notion of person through which other elements of social life articulate. In the digital profile, there are actions, creative constructions and margins for maneuvers that end up articulating the capacity to produce impression (Goffman, 2013), regulating the way in which others perceive their behaviors. Profile does not represent the transposition of the person to the digital environment, nor in terms of a representation, but articulates a notion of "persona", authentic, self-nominated as true, discursive and personalized that allows actions of self-presentation and interaction (Polivanov, 2015) .

In the social network, we notice the result of what Silva (1993) already pointed out about transvestites: a work of conscious elaboration of self, lived in the dimension of their body and sexuality assumed in their contexts. On Facebook, this work is not a deceiving way of representing herself or pretending to be what she is not. Although referenced in everyday life of high subordination and violence, transvestites identities express the "character of fidelity of themselves" (Silva, 1993, p. 39), even permeating their digital experiences. By maintaining this fidelity, transvestites mock the compulsory heterosexual norm (Butler, 2013), opposing the existing cisgender and heterosexual social structures, shifting, from this, broad routes of practices by which gender and sexuality are produced.

This implies a correspondence between what they post and the way they conduct the interactions with the categories of thought that they have on themselves. Miller (2011, p. 179) discusses in his field research in Trinidad the concept of mask as a social and creative elaboration about yourself. According to the author, the idea of mask does not necessarily indicate disguise, illusion or external appearance. For one of his informants, the truth about a person can be perceived in the effort and work she does to create his public presentation on Facebook. Through person's postings, one can understand what the person thinks he/she is, as he/she presents the image he/she constructs. In the effort to show what you are, it is more interesting the work person have done in building your appearance than the content expressed.

The mask works not as a form of deception, but as an indication of what the person actually conveys about himself/herself and the work he/she performs to realize that statement. In our research, we also observe this relationship. Transvestites construct their experiences of the feminine through symbols of a feminine that are their own (Pelúcio, 2009), with narratives and images considered

*true* and *authentic*. Contents posted, especially on themselves, cannot *betray* all that work and effort by which mainly their corporeality and identity are manifested.

"There [on Facebook] I can be a woman", says one participant. She indicates the importance attributed to the Facebook profile for the realization of their identity project, the possibility of being and expressing their own desires. All the participants assure they have already had trouble, in various everyday contexts, to be recognized by their social name. Even if they present the social name document, which gives them the right to be identified by the female gender. According to Peirano (2006), the identification document legalizes the citizen and makes person visible, subject to control, making a citizen in performative and compulsory terms. Documents, mainly the identity card, present reference data that attest a person as correlate to the card. Facebook profile articulates a project of broader identity realization, favoring assemblages that express the corporeal materialization and existences social policies. Profile is not only technical support for the interactions, but also assumes a biographical rescue dimension (Winocur, 2009), whose experiences are shared according to everyday events.

Although in official contexts, transvestites show social name document or even the identity card, they see Facebook profile as one of the most authentic places of self-presentation. Because the profile allows a more individualized and personalized public elaboration. Agency of technological possibilities collaborates in the process of transvestite body individualization (Maluf, 2002), which dramatizes the mechanisms of difference construction and the dominant policies of subjectivity. Technology provides discursive and interactional support to individualization, which, about person's identification, leaves few gaps for differences and constraints that may be triggered when referring to gender identity.

Facebook profile allows a greater creative maneuver over the interdictions of identification (such as official documents), but also of other heterosexual perspectives by which their bodies, gender, and social experiences are interpreted. One of the main advantages transvestites observed is the ease of self-expression that technology allows. Autonomy in the public image elaboration is an important social capital in the maintenance of the online interactions and the sociability outside the Internet. On this question, transvestites affirm, "profile is a *montação*"<sup>4</sup>. Facebook profile reveals their "most faithful version, more worked", or "more official than all the rest".

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<sup>4</sup> We chose to keep the term in Portuguese because we did not find a correlate in English for translation. *Montação* is about experience and presentation of body and identity. One type of *montação* is when transvestites wear makeup and feminine clothing and props to go out at night. *Montação* also means building or shaping the body through aesthetic beauty procedures or surgical intervention.

Far from revealing an ontological truth of the self, this authenticity indicates the maintenance of an “expressive coherence” (Sá and Polivanov, 2012) that transvestites carry out in the social network. Expressive coherence is not only maintenance of online sociability, but also social experience to assume their bodies, desires and sexuality. This work of construction/transformation and fidelity from the affirmation of the feminine gender and corporal transformation is extended to the social network. In this sense, fidelity and work/creation are not antithetical, but correlated terms.

This authenticity does not erase from the networks the indeterminacies of gender that can arise from contact with other people, especially those not very close. It is not uncommon the biased comments made by people added in the social network, leading to fights, and online friendships undone due to non-recognition of the transvestites’ female gender. According to Miller (2011, p. 116), Facebook facilitates and expands existing social networks, enabling people to research others before deciding whether to invest in such relationships. In the “Facebook Friends” friendship genre, we include both known and unknown people – added by the contact with the participants of other people’s social networks, thus increasing the possibilities of relationships.

This friendship genre influences transvestites’ social life, both in relation to the bonds that comprise their friends and dates as the male clientele and future clientele of prostitution. Men interested in providing sexual service articulate their own dynamics according to their interests. While clients or interested men comment in transvestites’ photos expressions such as “hot”, “sexy”, “sexy body”, “princess”, their friends comment expressions like “diva”, “wonderful”, “beautiful”. These differences point out an articulation of interactions genres, organized into frames of meanings between friendship/beauty and sexual interest/beauty. Male repertoires of sexual interest nourish the conversation in terms of praise and desire manifestation, which even if they do not materialize in sexual/love relationships, impact reputations and desires. Excluding a few rare and explicit posts, these comments are the only elements in public interactions that correspond directly to the prostitution universe and the offer of sexual relationship.

At least in public interactions, prostitution is little or never commented<sup>5</sup>. Comments of male audience interested in sexual companionship (comments expressed mainly through compliments, in some cases, only with the “Whats<sup>6</sup> number”) reveal the way in which the platform focuses on the work of prostitution,

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<sup>5</sup> As literature indicates, research participants also have in their lives common denominators such as violence, history of problems with family acceptance, and difficulties during the Elementary or High School phase. These elements lead most of them to run away from home and work in prostitution.

<sup>6</sup> WhatsApp, conversation app.

making it possible to meet new contacts (future clients), research their lives and maintain existing contacts.

Although it is not an openly publishable subject, they talk a lot in the conversations outside the public internet about *bofes*<sup>7</sup>, *mariconas*<sup>8</sup>, *viado*<sup>9</sup> and other characters of this social frame, as well as about erotic games and negotiation of pleasure. When triggered within the sociability practices in the social network, the status of the involved man, even if it is not actually revealed, is usually shared outside the network. Thus, the platform is also used to determine who enters or not in the sexual market, establishing a type of clientele screening, denouncing and sharing among friends the profiles of aggressors, abusers, fakes, or even inopportune partners, or closeted queers who pretend to be straight and playing hideous games about sexuality.

Prostitution is not erased in the context of using this social network. On the contrary, it often provides the dynamics of interactions. If we take as an example some of the photos usually posted (*selfies* alone or photos where the evidence falls on the femininity and sensuality of the transvestites' body), they also operate within the frames of signification organized by prostitution. After all, "nobody speaks, but clients are on the net, it's for everyone to see". A photo that shows the beauty of the body (when they are naked, usually with nipples covered by emojis or other graphic effects), or even wearing clothes that they consider sexy, can receive different markings: #goodnight, #athome, #goodgirl, #sexy, #sextou<sup>10</sup>, #alwaysGod. These hashtags collaborate in the interpretation of the photograph leaving open the sign of the body in offer, because, as one of the research participants said, "Sex is in the head, everyone sees in the photo what they want to see".

They use other hashtags on pictures, whether they are alone or in groups of friends or workmates. #go, #gotonight, #hot, #work, #lets go are widely used expressions in the context of friendship/prostitution. Rarest are the posts marked by direct referential denominators alluding to prostitution. Even if they take a picture and post directly from the block<sup>11</sup>, by the Wi-Fi from somewhere or by the mobile data. The apparent neutrality of these hashtags designate some kind of elaboration that not aims to deceive information about their work. It indicates prostitution is not only associated with violence as a legitimate code of night

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<sup>7</sup> Hot man.

<sup>8</sup> Old gay man.

<sup>9</sup> Queer.

<sup>10</sup> In Brazil, *sextou* is an adjective and commemorative expression that indicates it is Friday (Sexta, in Brazilian Portuguese), beginning of the weekend. Besides that, transvestites use the term in both senses: it is Friday and "to feel sexy" (Sex).

<sup>11</sup> Place where they work in prostitution: corners of avenues, gas stations or highways.

conduct (BENEDETTI, 2005), but also contexts of friendship, sociability and trust, work that is publicly assumed in social networks, including even moments of leisure that are possible at night and in the company of friends.

Another element present in sociability of transvestites is the way they sexualize various contexts and the jocular way of sexuality. In jest, any subject or theme can be sexualized. The following images illustrate this form of joking sociability, whether in postings on timelines, memes, videos, or the content of conversations during interactions.



Figures 1, 2, 3: Theme images: Easter, New Year and Christmas.

Source: Images shared in social network and received by the author.

Transvestites share many images of sexualized fitness masculine bodies, associated with contexts of amusement and sociability. At Easter, one of them shared an image of a model wearing bunny ears, he anoint the bare torso with chocolate, accompanied by the phrase "I want to smear chocolate today". On another occasion, she shared an image of a go-go boy wearing just swimsuit: "Today I'm going to funk. Today I want to be possessed, kkk [laughs]". Animated interactions arise from such postings, comprising a particular use of sociability marked primarily by sexuality, irreverence, and humor.

Jocularity of sexuality is not only expressed in the contents posted on the social network, but it constitutes the way many relationships are constructed. Another example of how contexts are sexualized by joking - as well as the technology itself can be sexualized - is when, in the field, in a party, the presenter expected that the DJ put a pen drive in the device, so that another transvestite made her show. Due to waiting for technical problems, presenter played with the audience: "Someone wants to penetrate? We need someone to come in ... the pen drive, girls! Oh, Lord!"

In addition to the sexualization of different contexts of everyday life, another element that appears in online interactions concerns honesty as one of the main social capitals transvestites mobilize. Guided by an honest work ethic, including

prostitution, many of transvestites stories refer to the struggles, difficulties, and labors they face in the most different situations of everyday life.

Most often, they report their poor and humble origin and context of difficulties and violence faced. They seek to build an image of themselves and maintain their reputations as dignified, honest and hardworking. Reputation is an important element in the constitution of their social relations, as these stories circulate by effecting other ties of interaction. They relate cases of violence with *alibās* (police officers), fights, beatings and disputes, as well as help in difficult situations and problems faced. They tag profiles of those who participated in the events on posts. In addition to recalling facts, these posts function as "networks of complicity" (Fonseca, 2000), which do not erase the differences, but establish the level of relationship and intimacy between them and with whom they interact – networks of friends and known people closest and present in offline situations generally.

In one of the posts, one of the participants wrote about a fight with another transvestite for having stolen money from her. "Beware of that lying person (tagging the profile of the person). She stole me. I helped her when she needed it most. No one wanted to help her and look what happen". In the interactions, there are both messages of support and repudiation with the one involved. Comments with more likes are those that tell other episodes considered controversial about the same person. This demonstrates reputations are built or ruined mainly by what is said in the social network. Directly exposing the person, tagging her profile to the post, is not gossip, but a mark of being a woman, brave and frank enough to "face the enemy". It establishes a direct relationship between the enunciation in the network and "do not take things lying down". In this sense, we can think Facebook as street analogy, public place where conflicts are resolved or exposed, or even "to say something to somebody's face", thinking the interactions as the very person involved in the situation.

Comments, whether or not posting the person involved, or even leaving an atmosphere of incognito or charade, also involve the articulation of prestige in reputations or demoralization. Combined with the idea of building and maintaining reputations online, gossip is a key element in many of the interactions of research participants. Involving reports of real or imaginary facts, gossip is a force exerted on other individuals (Fonseca, 2000).

Although they publish few gossips, there is a threat of gossip. When in fact a gossip becomes public, it is because the subject is serious and involves a series of responses, comments and interactions. What transvestites post on Facebook is either the possibility of gossip, which does not actually come to fruition, or

comments on the gossip that has come from other sources. The following comment illustrates this:

It looks like someone was offended that I posted some sexy photos on Facebook! I didn't show anything that on a beach during an afternoon of sunshine everyone usually sees naturally. I'm in a bikini, my dear. besides, I do not need to be knee-deep to believe in God. He is always with me getting rid of badly loved people made some feigned who do not accept the happiness of others. (Facebook Post, April 2016)

Despite not declaring the name of the involved woman, people ask who she are on comments, expressing repudiation for her action. In another situation, one of the participants wrote a post and tag the profile of the gossip girl involved, defending herself from an accusation about her honesty. In the post comments, there is criticism about the person involved as a person of low reputation, since the gossip would have occurred while the gossip girl was going to visit her husband in prison, which served even more to delegitimize her action.

In addition to gossip, two other elements are embedded in the same horizon of interactions: needle and trick<sup>12</sup>. Needle is about divergences between transvestites, but it is not really gossip. Despite this, they do not miss an opportunity to needle someone, whether during everyday conversations or online interactions. The most beautiful dress made by the couturier for such an occasion, the hairstyle in a particular beauty parlour, a compliment, a complicated love relationship, jealous situations, all these elements are reasons to needles. If gossip even breaks relationships and instigates enmity, needle often fuels disputes and encourages conversations and interactions.

You needle someone already expecting an answer or some kind of friendlier interaction. Mockery is part of this interaction in the possibility of "one overturning the other" because "you only plays with someone you know well". They use memes and ludic and jocular tone images in this type of interaction. Playful posts, tag the naughty friend or the quarrelsome friend also fuel the interactions between friendships and partnerships that are more intimate.

Trick, in turn, is a creative category of transvestites, to designate a situation of deception, disguise or misguided excuse. The origin of this term refers the make-up used by transvestites in the constitution of their femininity and corporeality. In that case, trick, with irony, is to look feminine. In the context of the interactions,

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<sup>12</sup> Trick is the closest term we found to translate the word 'truque', an expression very particular of Brazilian LGBT community, especially transvestites.



generally in a tone of animosity and joke, the trick is lying about the real situation of the fact.

When one of the transvestites who was single posted that she had reattached with her ex-husband because he could not stand the cold of winter alone, other transvestites commented: "Look that trick, girl!", "You're a tricker!!!". Another, when posting a photo with a friend, unknown and considered beautiful by the others, claiming to be dating, was soon revealing herself: "It's a trick, girls". Different from needle, more amusing than gossip, but that seek to reach a specific person, establishing a situation of conflict, the trick is understood more as a funny and humorous situation to face everyday situations, making more reference to themselves.

Another observed use, related to self-fidelity and maintenance of interactions, is the threat of revealing the names of the male audience (or possible clientele) considered inconvenient. When they feel very annoyed by men, usually with sexual interest, they post disgusting comments on this relationship, even stating their "power to destroy homes"<sup>13</sup>.

One of the participants, tired of this relationship, wrote a post in which she shared two prints of her cell phone screen: the conversation she had on WhatsApp with a boy and the posting of a declaration of love he made to his girlfriend (followed by a photo of couple). In the conversation, transvestite asks if he is married, and he responds to be "married and not castrated" (implying his sexual interest)<sup>14</sup>. She comments that she feels disgusted with him and pities his girlfriend and that she will print the chat. She wrote on her post: "I hate infidelity, it's for everyone to see he is a trash without character and a son of a bitch. He still swears love that poor woman." Many people commented her post, supporting her position and offending the man, whose name was in the images.

Exposing the profile of the involved person in this type of situation, or even the threat of this action, operates within the management framework of the social network contacts. Even if it functions as a "Facebook cleaning" (Polivanov, 2014), excluding the person from her on and offline relationships, it also is a force, a power that can be activated. More than a type of digital revenge, it points to the character of self-fidelity and to her convictions, central element with transvestites conduct the interactions.

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<sup>13</sup> There is a many men married to cisgender women who are looking for the sexual services of transvestites.

<sup>14</sup> In Portuguese, "married not castrated" is a popular (and sexist) expression that means that even married man can (and even must) betray.

## Final Considerations

The article proposed an interpretation of the recurrent uses of social networking platform Facebook, through the observation of the Internet inscription in the everyday life of transvestites. These experiences are based primarily on self-fidelity (continually performed on the site, but correspond directly to what they believe to be), the different forms of sociability and management of online interactions, the sexualization of various social contexts in the form of joke and by prostitution as an element, which crosses the imaginary of established practices and relationships.

It is worth mentioning that the uses presented are only part of the diversity of practices that constitute these experiences, motivated by the inscription of them in personal profiles in the platform of social network, moving interactions and conversations. The interpretative approach presented some examples of the uses most directed to everyday sociability. A reflection on the use of the social network platform in the search for visibility and citizenship is still open in the horizons of the research, which characterizes other uses of these technologies and mobilizes other references.

Interactions described depend on the singular contexts of situations, scenarios and social actors involved. In social networks, transvestites seek to construct a representation of themselves, in terms of a greater possible fidelity of the characteristics and elements that comprise their experiences, corporality, sexuality and identities. We believe that these practices reveal an exercise in production of impression (Goffman, 2013) through laborious work that establishes contexts of digital interaction with other contexts of the participants' lives.

Incorporation of the internet in transvestites' everyday life define the mainly uses observed in the article. Gossip, tricks, needle and sexualization of contexts and contents of interaction develop in the flows between different ambiances that constitute the singularities of these digital experiences. These dynamics move the environments of interaction, manifesting the bonds of friendship, intimacy and disagreements, fundamental elements of social relations in everyday life.

In the highlighted interactions, we noticed that transvestites say few words in the public internet about prostitution, although it permeates many of the relations established between the research participants. Prostitution singles out interactions and transvestites manipulate it with caution and mastery. Interactions described articulate games of desire, interest, power, and disputes for prestige and social recognition, which are not just restricted to financial returns. In this way, the social imagery and the practices of transvestite experiences are reformulated in the

scope of interactions, which focuses directly on the contexts of particular uses and how the internet is experienced.

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