

## Photojournalism and the World of Celebrities: Analyzing some Discursive Strategies in *Caras* Magazine

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**Abstract:** *The aim of this paper is to analyze the discursive strategies present in the verbal and visual texts from the article named "Sonhos e Planos da Bela Livia Rossy" by Caras magazine - Edition 832, year 16, n° 42- 16/10/2009 - ,based on the theories about discourse from works by Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress & Theo Van Leeuwen. The corpus consists of a written interview with photos of the Brazilian actress Livia Rossy, which took place at Castelo de Caras, in New York. We intend to identify how these discursive strategies chosen lead readers to a specific interpretation of the world of celebrities portrayed in the texts and how they reveal the social values disseminated by this magazine considered a source of entertainment.*

**Keywords:** *Discourse analysis, photojournalism, celebrities' world.*

### Introduction

According to Norman Fairclough (1992:75), texts are highly ambivalent and usually open to multiple interpretations. However, Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (1999:379) state that “producers, if they want to see their work disseminated, must work within more or less rigidly defined conventions, and adhere to the more or less rigidly defined values and beliefs of the social institution within which their work is produced and circulated”. As for magazine *Caras*, it claims that it aims primarily at entertaining its audience (see appendix 2) and for this reason, “it makes choices about the design and structure of their clauses which amount to choices about how to signify (and construct) social identities, social relationships, and knowledge and belief” (Fairclough, 1992: 76). This article by *Caras*<sup>1</sup> is not about any political significance, yet it presents a very strong ideology as this magazine states that its readers enjoy being with their families and have the most sophisticated tastes in contrast to most part of the Brazilian population (see appendix 3). So, we will also analyze the extent to which this ideology shapes the Brazilian society also constructing social identities, since discourse is, according to

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<sup>1</sup> The article analyzed is in Appendix 1.

Fairclough, language as social practice.

## Analyzing the verbal text

We begin the analysis of the verbal elements in this *corpus* with an important observation about them. In an article of five pages, the main verbal text is presented in only two of them: it occupies a quarter of all the space of the third page, and half of this proportion in the fifth page. The verbal elements which are not included in these spaces mentioned above are the title and subtitle and four rectangles with sentences in bold letters, highlighted, which, in their turns, contain information already mentioned in the main text. This initial observation is important when we think about the relevance of the verbal element in an article like that, and this fact will be taken into account in our conclusions of this analysis.

Beginning with the title and subtitle, we have the following verbal elements, which can be crucial to the orientation of the reading of the whole article (see appendix 1): “*Sonhos e planos da bela Livia Rossy – No Castelo de Caras a atriz fala do desejo de casar e ter filhos*”. Reading these two sentences we can apprehend some ideas which direct us to a specific portrayal of Livia Rossy.

At first, the subject of this magazine article will be the exposition of Livia Rossy's private life. She will talk about her desires and plans – “*sonhos e planos (...) a atriz fala do desejo de casar e ter filhos*”. Nothing is mentioned about her professional life in the title. We have, therefore, a public person who will expose to the readers what they cannot see in the soap operas in which the actress acts; she will 'reveal' to the public a kind of information that people normally do not have access. She is sharing with the reader her intimacy. The title invites the reader to establish an intimate relation with the interviewee.

Moreover, the adjective “*bela*”, used to qualify Livia Rossy, reveals the way the producer of this discourse chose to characterize the woman. Her physical attributes, and her physical beauty specifically, is relevant to the representation of Livia Rossy in this interview.

In addition, we can also identify a reference to the glamorous situation in which the interview took place: “*No Castelo de Caras a atriz fala..*”. The mention of such a glamorous place refers to the idea, so disseminated in our society, of glamour associated with the life of

celebrities, since only very rich and famous people have access to a place like that, in New York.

All these elements chosen by the producer to constitute the title - the topic which connotes intimacy, the characterization of the woman based on her physical attributes, and the mention that the interview happened in a glamorous place - reveal much about the discursive practice in this occasion. Since in a magazine there is no interaction between the producer and the consumers - the production and the consumption do not happen simultaneously - the producer of the text had to presuppose the profile of *Caras'* readers, making a construction of them, and he had to bet that they would have interest and curiosity in the private life of famous people, as well as in glamorous places and physical beauty. This strategy of production is mentioned in Kress, G. & Leeuwen, T. (1999:378) in relation to images, but we can extend the same idea to written texts: "...producers(...) can never really know their vast and absent audience, and must, instead, create a mental image of 'the' viewers and 'the' way viewers make sense of their pictures." A few lines ahead, in the same page, he reinforces the idea quoting Eco (1979:7): "the text selects a 'model reader' through its 'choice of a specific linguistic code, a certain literary style' and by presupposing 'a specific encyclopedic competence' on the part of the reader" (Eco apud Kress, G. & Leeuwen, T.1999:378)

But it is important to remember that this kind of presupposition can have also the opposite direction, that is, the media discourse can provoke the internalization of values, opinions and preferences exposed in *Caras* by their readers, affecting the way they see the world. This shows that the process is dialectical between social events and language practice in the discursive practice, as explains Fairclough (1992: 66): at the same time that what is disseminated in a magazine reflects the reader's preferences and interests, the contents published are also able to insert ideas, values and beliefs in people who read them.

Keeping these topics in mind, we continue the analysis of other verbal elements in this article, and we perceive that the ideas presented in the title are reinforced by the way the text is constructed and by the lexical choices made by its producer.

We can divide the main text in two parts. The first part is a kind of summary of Livia's trajectory to become an actress. As the writer enumerates some facts related to her acting activities in the first part, some Livia Rossy's direct speeches are included in the text: " 'sou baixinha para as passarelas', brinca a bela morena de 1, 73m..."; "Por mais que as pessoas

*torçam pelo nosso sucesso, existe a preocupação da instabilidade da profissão' diz a atriz..."; "Naquele momento consegui convencer minha família de que o que eu queria mesmo era ser atriz', conta ela".* The insertion of these direct speeches produces the impression that the speaker Livia Rossy is much closer to the reader than if her words were inserted as reported speech. This impression of proximity given by the transcriptions of her real words reinforces the effect of "presence" of the woman, already caused by her photographs.

Still talking about intimacy, another notorious strategy present in the text which contributes to give the impression that the article is revealing a secret of celebrities' life, is that the magazine always puts in brackets the age of everybody who is mentioned: "*Desde pequena, Livia Rossy (26)...*"; "*...namora o publicitário Rodolfo Medina (32)...*". Since in our society somebody's age is considered something rather intimate to reveal to the public, the importance that *Caras* gives to inform it can be related to the attempt of constructing the impression of intimacy between interviewee and reader.

In relation to the second part of the text, which is constituted by an interview of five questions, we can also find elements which corroborate the direction that the title of the article gives. All the five questions lead to answers of private matters: "*Quais foram suas maiores dificuldades no início da carreira?*"; "*Que tipo de preconceito?*"; "*Como seu namorado lida com a sua profissão?*"; "*Quais são seus sonhos?*" and "*Que tal New York?*". One of her answers reinforces the question of her beauty: "*...era só chegar arrumada que percebia olhares e comentários do tipo: 'acha que só porque é bonitinha pode ser atriz'*". Furthermore, in other moments, both in the main text and in the sentences in bold letters spread over the images, the references to Livia are also related to her physical attributes: "*Em Tarrytown, New York, a morena festeja...*"; "*...brinca a bela morena de 1,73 m...*"; "*Linda e simpática, a atriz da Record...*"; "*Vaidosa, a morena não descuida da beleza.*"

Considering the glamour, we perceive that, at the same way that *Caras* mentions the age of everybody, it also informs everybody's profession in the discourse. That is why, many times, Livia Rossy is referred by her profession, "*a atriz*", and her boyfriend as "*o publicitário*", both of them professions which have much prestige in Brazilian society.

An important appointment that cannot be omitted is the distribution of highlighted sentences and direct speeches all over the images and the main text. What happens is that, most

of the times, they are not related to the photographs, but they are, on the other hand, a kind of summary of the main text. The information in bold letters is already presented in the main text and contains the main ideas showed in the interview. This strategy would facilitate the reading of those who are more interested in images and want to know just the essential ideas of the interview rapidly. The only information which is new and related to images, like a legend, is the following: “*Livia lê Caras em sua suíte* (see appendix 1 - image 6). *Vaidosa, a morena não descuida da beleza. Ela, que se rendeu à ginástica há seis meses, lava o rosto com Lux Líquido Surpreenda-me* (see appendix 1 - images 7 and 8)”. These three images, followed by their respective legends, is strong evidence that the merchandising and the incentive to consume goods in our society is present in a discursive practice like that. Even in an interview, which at first sight has nothing to do with advertising, a product is explicitly announced in order to sell it. With this legend and these three images, it is possible to conclude that the magazine has a commitment to advertising. Livia Rossy's vanity is being used as a pretext to present to the readers the product “Lux Líquido Surpreenda-me”.

A last consideration about the verbal text is about the actuation of reader's interdiscursivity, that is, how the reader's previous knowledge influences his interpretation of a discourse like that.

Since we are born, we are provided with ideological messages brought to us by means of written, oral or visual texts which were already present in the world before our existence. Fairclough (1992:80) states that processes of production and interpretation are socially constrained. They are constrained by available member's resources, which are effectively internalized social structures, norms and conventions and by the specific nature of the social practice of which they are parts. We all are provided with some world knowledge that is externalized whenever we come upon a discursive practice, which is going to influence the way we interpret it. By it, we can make connections with similar situations, forming a complex interdiscursive process. In the case of Livia Rossy's interview, although this actress seems to show us a certain confidence about her career, if the reader is aware of her status in celebrities' world, he will know that she is not a national icon yet, and it becomes clear to us through the sentence “*Na carreira, sinto falta de uma boa oportunidade na TV para mostrar meu trabalho.*”. She also dedicates herself to interpretation courses, which makes us think she has a lot to

accomplish for her career to really take off. Besides, according to her own statements, we can notice the existence of a certain interdiscursivity in the text as the reader is also provided with a previous knowledge and a certain idea of her social position and status, confirming Fairclough (1992:80): "how context affects the interpretation of texts varies from one discourse type to another. And differences between discourse types in this respect are socially interesting because they point to implicit assumptions".

## Analyzing the Visual text

Considering visual expression as an important aspect to be developed in critical discourse analysis, and taking into account that *Caras* gives much relevance to images, it is indispensable to analyze how meaningful the photos are in this magazine and how they contribute to its pretensions of entertainment.

The way in which the pictures of Livia Rossy are presented in the article is a strong example of the triviality often related to the celebrities' world. The pictures, then, indicate subjectivism and self-exposing, which is directly linked to the question of her glamour, good shape and beauty. This fact is also reinforced in the written discourse of the magazine when referring to Livia Rossy, such as "*linda*", "*simpatica*" and "*vaidosa*", always related to the image of her beautiful body.

In the first picture (image 1)<sup>2</sup>, there is a sentence that symbolizes the idea of glamour and happiness that people are lead to pursue. It starts like "*Em Tarrytown, New York, a morena festeja ótima fase no namoro. Abaixo, pose na Brooklyn Bridge, na linda Manhattan*". Her picture shows her whole body and she looks and smiles at the camera, which gives us the impression that she is looking straight at us. It somehow helps to construct a specific way of representing the world and makes the audience interact with the participant in a positive way. It is as if the interviewee wants the audience to accept her as a friendly person, and this corroborates the Fairclough's statement (1992:76) that discourse helps to construct social relationships between people and contributes to the construction of systems of knowledge and belief.

On the other hand, the images presented may also lead to the sensation of something

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<sup>2</sup> The images are located in Appendix 1.



unreal. The photos seem to indicate a moment of illusion to the reader, because everything is previously planned, organized and artificial. The photos are representations and intend to illustrate the particular type of ideal woman, who does not imitate anything in the real world.

The visual aesthetic is fundamental in *Caras* magazine, whose main objective is to make a photographic journalism (see appendix 2). Such idea is related to the predominant number of pictures in the article, in opposition to a small written text, as already said. The consumer who acquires *Caras* magazine is probably much more interested in photographic information than in written information. Therefore, *Caras* seems a magazine for the consumer to see, and not to read. This statement is reinforced by the small written figures which provide the main idea of Livia's personal and professional life, such as: "*Rodolfo tem ciúmes das cenas românticas. Estamos muito felizes, em clima de paixão*".

Considering what was stated above, the photographs create an illusion, given by the relation between real and fantasy. *Caras* creates a perfect world to the reader, a world full of beauty, money and glamour; a world without problems, where the beauty is eternal, where exist only smiling faces and where happiness is constant. The image dictates only the good side of life in a high idealized representation of ostentation. Although the photos are not natural or spontaneous images, they create affinity with the reader, convincing the public that the pictures represent the life of actress authentically.

In image 4, Livia is portrayed purely in her appearance; the natural setting presupposes spontaneity. However, it is clear the construction and the planning of the image. Reading *Caras* is a illusion produced by make-up artists, photographers, stylists and fashion editors. It is permeated by virtual images, in artificial created scenarios selected by the magazine producers. It is almost if the reader substituted his/her real life for an unattainable one, consuming the images passively and idealizing the photos in its beauty without questioning, and mainly without the possibility to achieve the same condition of the famous woman. The elements which prove the mentioned assertion are the very sophisticated objects usually present only in high society environment, the clean and organized atmosphere, the great variety of clothes, the make-up and so on.

The images of the article provide an effect of intimacy between the reader and the actress. The represented participant Livia is smiling at the camera indicating an approximation. This effect of approximation is related to the eye-to-eye level of the photos, which provides equality

between the viewer and Livia Rossy, always portrayed as a sexy delicate modern woman.

In each photo, such as in photo 2, the woman presents herself well-dressed in places that are previously chosen in order to transmit illusory activities and habits of the celebrity in a travel to New York. In photo 5, the image of the breakfast time, although this scene may not correspond to a breakfast which really happened in Livia's life, the choice of a moment extremely private like that and the decision to share it with the public intensify the effect of intimacy between the readers and the woman portrayed. Besides, the comment above the picture is not related to it, indicating that the photo is a mere vehicle in order to expose and promote the actress image. The self- promotion is very useful for her to achieve fame, and also to show her pretension of becoming a very well-known person.

In the most of photos, the actress is directly looking at the camera, showing her good appearance and vanity. Kress and Leeuwen (1999:391) affirm that "When represented participants look at the viewer, vectors, formed by participants' eyeliner, connect the participants with the viewer. Contact is established, even if it is only in an imaginary level", as it was already stated. Curiously, there are two photos in which Livia Rossy is not looking at the viewer, but reading *Caras* magazine (photo 6) and using a famous lotion in Brazilian market (photo 7). It is clear the marketing in these photos in order to promote the magazine and the *Lux* lotion. In this way, due to the participant's gaze, the reader's attention is focused more on the products and less on the celebrity. In relation to this fact, Kress and Leeuwen (1999:381) also state: "[the visual configuration] constitutes an image act. The producer uses the image to do something to the viewer", demanding something from him, which is, in this case, the consumption of the products. Finally, the following quotation summarizes the discussion: "A depicted person may address the viewers directly, by looking at the camera. This conveys a sense of interaction between the depicted person and the viewer. But depicted persons may also be turned away from the viewer, and this conveys the absence of a sense of interaction." (Kress and Leeuwen, 1996:41).

The sign-maker's intention is closely related to the question of readership together with the way in which the editors addresses to the readers. The audience of *Caras* is characterized mainly by the feminine public (see appendix 4) seeking for a kind of entertainment offered by the magazine: news and gossips about famous people, how they are dressed, their hair and style, their habits and how they behave.



The feminine consumer feature is linked with the beauty feature presented in the photos of Livia Rossy in an imaginary relationship representation of those who are “apparently perfect”. According to Kress and Leeuwen (1999:381), “[represented participants] may smile, in which case the viewer is asked to enter into a relation of social affinity with them”. In this case, the viewer occupies a position of identification and affinity with the representation of the woman. There is a strong ideology behind the pictures, which are made by the photographer. The images are not natural and do not represent the reality, as it was already stated. They are objective, constructed, formed and seen as a self-promotion, rather than something spontaneous.

The interesting is that *Caras* is not only consumed by the mass represented by people who go to doctor’s offices or to hairdressers and read the magazine to know about celebrities’ news. It is also consumed by the so called high society (see appendix 4), due to the fact that *Caras* is a vehicle for the aspirated condition of people, meaning that reading the magazine would provide a moment in which the reader would feel so intimate of the celebrities that they could suppose to be so elevated as the famous people they are reading about. In other words, for the high society, reading *Caras* would approximate who reads it to the social condition and glamour of these famous individuals.

On the other hand, for those who have a critical view on the issue, reading *Caras* does not contribute to the intellectual because it is only an artificial source which produces alienation. Kress and Leeuwen illustrates this issue very clearly: “In our view, the meanings expressed by speakers, writers, printmakers, photographers, painters and sculptors are first and foremost social meanings even though we acknowledge the effect and importance of individual differences. They are meanings which arise out of society in which individuals live and work. Given that societies are not homogeneous, but composed of groups with varying, and often contradictory, interests, the messages produced by individuals will reflect the differences, incongruities and clashes which characterize social life” (1999:18). In this sense, the visual media causes different views concerning the magazine approach. In one side, it is seen as an important aesthetic means of communication; on the other, it provokes reflection on social dimensions of triviality.

## Conclusion

The way the article was produced gets the portrayed woman and the readers next to one

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another, establishing an atmosphere of intimacy. Both the written text and the visual one contribute to this effect of approximation, being the former a support for the pictures instead of the main content. The present analysis showed evidences that the images perform the main role in the article. The magazine is more interested in broadcasting ideas and values through what is photographed rather than through what is written.

These visual elements enable the reader to apprehend the information in a higher speed than if they had to read the same content put in words. Moreover, the written text, besides the fact of having a smaller proportion in relation to the images, also contains plain and simple information, that is, everything that is written is easy to understand, without deepness; Neither much effort nor much time are necessary. This factor, added to the kind of subject published by the magazine, could lead us to the “model reader”, using the Eco’s term (1979:7), presupposed by the producers of the text: the reader would be someone who is interested in reading about perfect people and perfect lives; they are seeking for a moment of entertaining, and they do not want to read about problems and troubles of the real life. They are not seeking for making efforts to understand complex meanings. They are simply searching for a time for fun and for feeding their illusions. And the way the article was constructed, the images and the structure of the sentences, contributes to and reinforce the idea of a glamorous happy life, as a result of choices about how to signify (and construct) social identities, social relationships, and knowledge and belief (Fairclough, 1992:76). As a conclusion, it is relevant to quote, again, Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (1999:379) which summarizes one of the main ideas of this analysis: “producers, if they want to see their work disseminated, must work within more or less rigidly defined conventions, and adhere to the more or less rigidly defined values and beliefs of the social institution within which their work is produced and circulated”.

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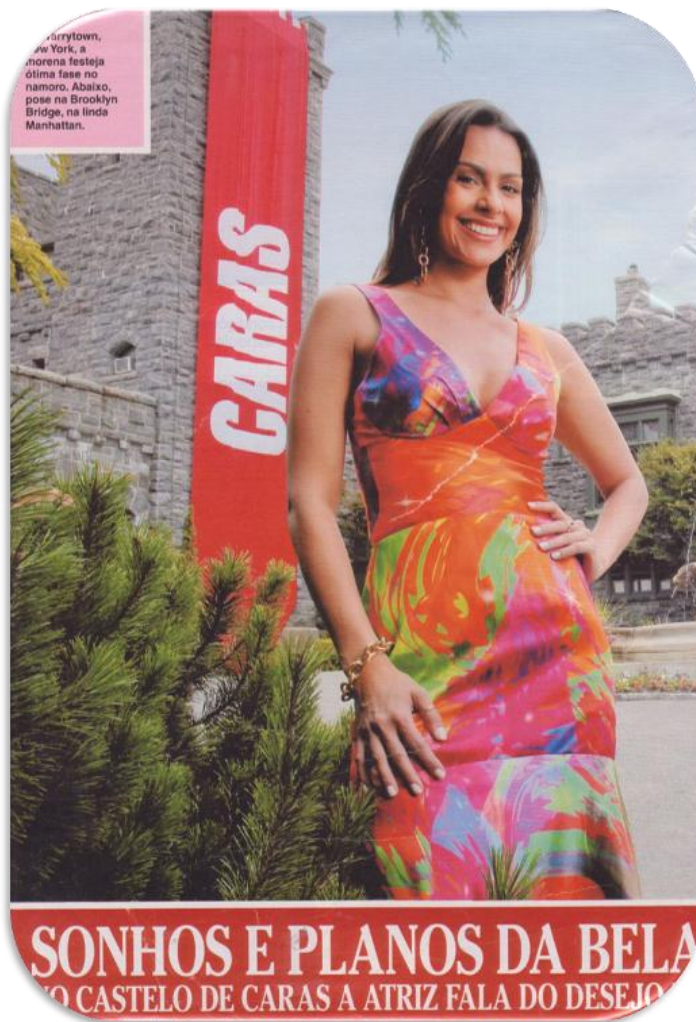
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\_\_\_\_\_. "The semiotic landscape: language and visual communication." In: *Reading images - the grammar of visual design*. London: Routledge, 1996, p.15-42.

## Appendix 1

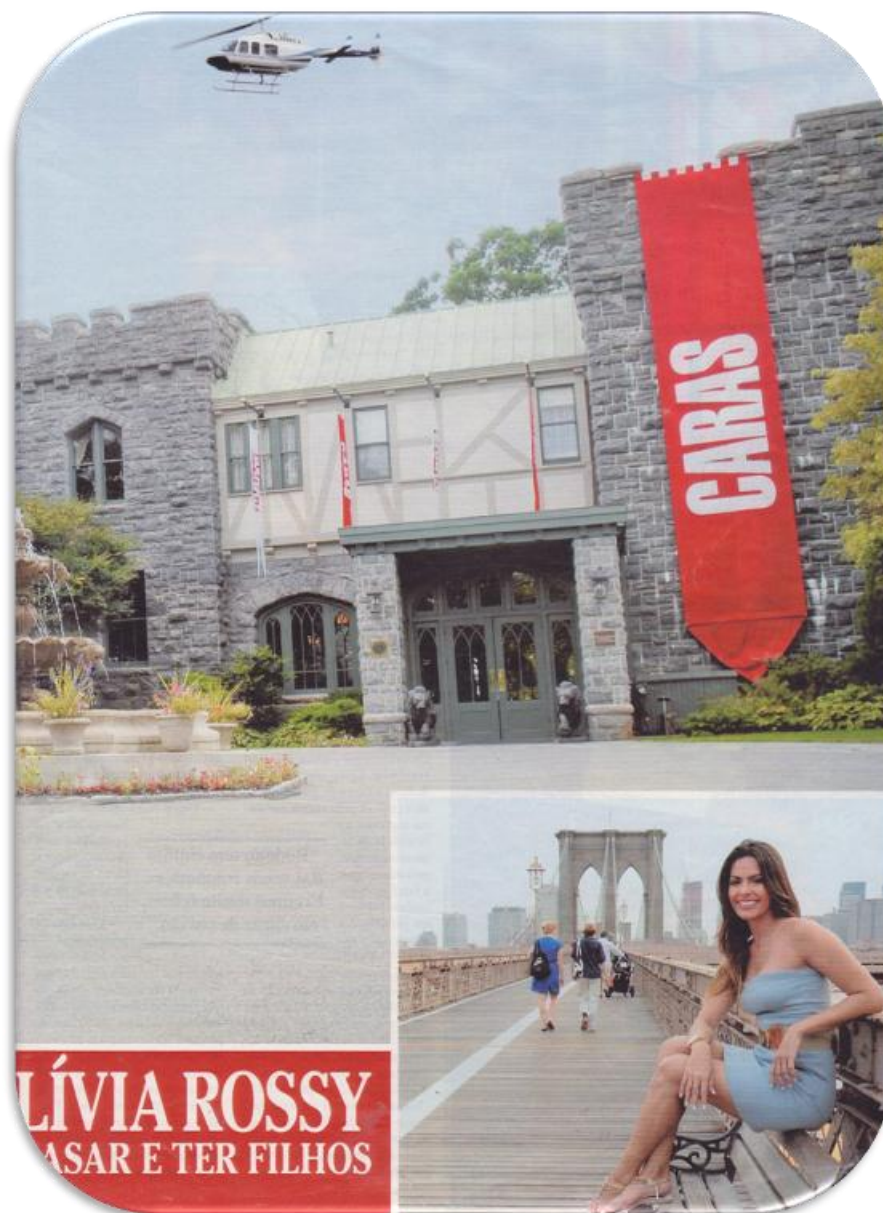


Image

1 – Livia in front of the castle

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**Image 2** – Livia over the Brooklyn Bridge





**Image 3** – Livia in a white dress / **Image 4** – Livia in a green dress



**Image 5** – Lívia having her breakfast





**Image 6** – Livia reading Caras/ **Image 7**– Livia pouring Lux over her hands/  
**Image 8** – Livia washing her face with Lux

## Appendix 2

(Taken from <http://www.caras.com.br/anuncie/revista/missao.html> in 21/06/2010)

### Nossa Missão

Nossa missão é ser a maior e melhor revista de entretenimento do País, oferecendo um jornalismo fotográfico e uma qualidade gráfica incomparáveis.

Há 16 anos, **CARAS** leva semanalmente aos seus leitores entretenimento, diversão e lazer através da cobertura dos principais acontecimentos nacionais e internacionais, com muito glamour e sofisticação.

Os 4.679.330\* leitores de **CARAS** são qualificados, bem- informados e potenciais. Buscam na revista um referencial de consumo para o seu dia-a-dia. Multiplicadores de opinião, com alto poder de consumo, valorizam serviços e produtos de qualidade. Procuram na revista um estilo de vida positivo e os últimos acontecimentos de um mundo real e de sonhos, habitado por celebridades do Brasil e do mundo.

\* Fonte: Marplan Consolidado 2008/ Média IVC 2008 – Projeção Brasil FÓRMULA Marplan 2009– Filtro; Ambos 10+ anos

## Appendix 3

(Taken from <http://www.caras.com.br/anuncie/revista/pesquisa.html> in 21/06/2010)

“Os leitores de CARAS gostam de estar com a família, apreciam bons programas e têm gostos e valores mais sofisticados que a maioria da população”

## Appendix 4

(Taken from [http:// www.caras.com.br/anuncie/revista/perfil.html](http://www.caras.com.br/anuncie/revista/perfil.html) in 21/06/2010)

### **Perfil dos leitores de *Caras***

*Total de Leitores:* 4.679.330

Faixa Etária*:	Estado Civil:	Classe Social**:	Sexo***:
19%: 50 +	50%: Solteiros	20%: Classe A	76% : Mulheres
16%: 40 a 49	38%: Casados	42%: Classe B	24%: Homens
21%: 30 a 39	12%: Outros	32% : Classe C	
28%: 20 a 29		6% : Classe D	
16%: 10 a 19		1% : Classe E	

\*65% dos leitores de CARAS têm de 20 a 49 anos, principal faixa de consumo do país

\*\*62% dos leitores de CARAS pertencem à classe AB

\*\*\*Desses: 76% = 3.556.290 leitoras e 24% = 1.123.039 leitores