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# Trousseau: economic and design aspects from the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century in Brazil

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**Abstract.** The trousseau is notorious since antiquity and has been influenced by a series of modifications, reflected in the type of fabric, confection, design, fashion and market share. This study aimed to present economic and design aspects of the bedding, table and bath linen sector (also known as bed, bath and beyond) occurred from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to recently in Brazil. A bibliographic research was carried out from the scientific literature and magazines of the area, notably the “Revista Vogue Casa Brasil” (“Vogue House Brazil Magazine”). It is concluded that the classic patterns predominate: white color and cotton in bed, table and bath products, being embroidery the most outstanding style ornament. The maintenance of these standards by the Brazilian manufacturers is interesting to maintain sales in the domestic market, but a limitation for export products destined to publics with different values and aesthetic tastes and with greater supply of items with variety of surface designs.

## 1. Introduction

The trousseau is known from antiquity to the present day, undergoing several modifications. These changes are reflected in the type of fabric, the manufacture and market. The traditional bride trousseau was composed of bedding, table and bath textiles and household utensils that were necessary for her married life [1]. The tradition of these products is associated with marriage, but there have been changes when women entered in the labor market. This process was more evident in the period of World Wars I and II, in Europe and the USA, when women took over the family business and the position of men in the labor market [2]. In Brazil, its characteristics have evolved over time through textiles, manufacturing processes and fashion, with an increasing economic importance. It is estimated that until 1995 one-third of the production of articles related to these segments in Brazil were focused on exports [3]. In general terms, Brazil is one of the world's largest consumers of textile products today, but in terms of international exports its contribution is small, reaching 26<sup>th</sup> position. However, the home line presented the highest growth (14%) from 2010 to 2014 [4]. Therefore, the innovation models corroborate the indicator of the systematization of the procedure of the design evolution and home fashion industry, being the main goal the increasing of participation in market economy.

## 2. Method

A bibliographic study was carried out from scientific journals, books and articles correlated to bedding, table and bath linen and particularly analyzing 40 years of publication of “Revista Vogue Casa Brasil” (“Vogue House Brazil Magazine”) from the launch in 1976 to 2016 (monthly).

Vogue House Brazil Magazine is derived from Vogue Magazine, which had the first Brazilian edition published in May 1975, being the first edition in Latin America. Vogue is the most important,



respected and influential fashion magazine in the world published since 1892 by Condé Nast Publications in 21 countries. Monthly publishes works of home fashion universe. In Brazil, both magazines are mostly read by the wealthy classes of society, being important influencers and diffusers of fashion in the country.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. *The importance of trousseau*

The trousseau in antiquity, traditional for a bride, consisted of textile articles such as bedding, table, bath linen and household utensils. The making of the trousseau began on the spinning wheel or on the distaff made by the women themselves. After the ready thread, they made the fabrics in hand looms, and from there they began to embroider. According Harris [5], embroidery has been an in-house craft, a professional activity and it is in the most part of cultures. It was carried out mainly by women, although some men were part of this occupation. Although some contemporary embroideries work without a pattern, embroidery is traditionally carefully planned before work begins.

According to Pinto et al. [6], this process began to occur before the industrial era of the textile chain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The trousseau was influenced by the region and the different family economic levels. All the women were called to the service, including the maids and the girls who were encouraged in the making of the trousseau. With industrialization, the fabrics were bought ready and the embroideries made at home by the women of the family or in specialized manufactures that charged for the service. Industrial textile yarns have made embroidery stitches richer and the process less time consuming.

Sa [7] noted the layette inserted in the context of the construction of a family environment that cultivated the identity of the bride and softened the needs of places and people, personalizing the home environments, showing a particular attachment to the artifacts consecrated to everyday devotions. According to Pinto et al. [1], it occurs the transformation of the old trousseau into the modern concept of Homewear or Fashion Home. The course of the development of all civilizations concerning fashion not only abandons to assimilate an inscribed principle, but is based on a constant history constituted in universal anthropological roots. Fashion is a phenomenon consubstantial with human-social life [8].

The story of appearances in the trousseau shows that this serves to show the power and the achievement of marriage, being an exhibitionist demonstration of the human being. The history of fashion and appearances is also a way of rescuing the past and understanding the present. Fashion can be used in multiple contexts in aspects of social life [9].

#### 3.2. *Economic aspects of trousseau*

With the great world wars, there has been a drastic reduction of the population of men in the countries that have been in conflict, which have become combatants. In addition to being called upon to fill the job in functions previously considered masculine during the war, it was then that women felt obliged to leave their homes and children to carry out the projects and the work that was done by their husbands [2].

The years after the World War II brought an increase in consumption patterns. Women were not willing to sacrifice fashion, despite the focus of conservation and resource saving during the wars, including that the available textile products were used in the production of war goods. Meanwhile supporting the cause of war was a dominant theme in consumer education during this period, women found creative solutions to fashion alternatives. In this way, industrial development and wars in the first half of the twentieth century favored women and their achievements, both economic and social [10].

The Second World War in Europe provided favorable economic implications for Brazil. The countries involved in the hostilities soon reduced the use of raw materials and the factories produced to military production, resulting in a fifteen-fold increase in Brazilian textile exports compared to the previous period of war, reaching the second place among the producers worldwide. In addition, this

period marked an evolution of the textile sector in Brazil. While other countries were disadvantaged by great economic losses, Brazil took advantage of the situation for its industrial and economic development [11].

In the first half of the 1960s, the spinning and weaving industry showed clear signs of weakening. In the same period, while the manufacturing industry as a whole showed an increase of 118%, textile production did not exceed 66%, closing 130 weavings in three years. The 1960s can thus be considered a moment of transition of customs of values arising from the events of the World Wars. At that time, Brazil went through a complicated decade in the textile industry, which also directly reflected in the bedding, table and bath linen articles industry [11].

In the early 1970s, the technological advancement of the textile and clothing industries, made it more affordable to acquire industrialized bedding, table and bath linen articles. In the 1980's, the Brazilian spinning and weaving industry had a high billing. At the time, the country had 4.5 million spindles and 150,000 looms installed in approximately 9,000 companies, ranking 6<sup>th</sup> as a world textile producer [1].

With the technological advance, it became more accessible the purchase of products of the bedding, table and bath linen industrialized and increased the Brazilian export. The country made public and private investments, promoting the maintenance of the industrial sector. The textile industry in the 1980s is going through a complicated decade, but maintaining its level of revenue. A new vision for the future arises, which contemplates the need to expand the study of textile technology, so it is at this time that there is an increase in the implantation of schools for the teaching of textile and fashion technology [11].

In the 1990s Brazilian economy, as a whole, and especially the industry, faced a crisis due to the international trade liberalization program. According to Ferreira [12], the textile industry comprises spinning, weaving, knitting and confections. In Brazil, this industry has about 30 thousand companies, and the number of large companies has been reduced. The clothing sector comprises the apparel segment and the bedding, table and bath linen segment of this industry. This sector is characterized by a high degree of differentiation in the use of raw materials, in production processes, competition standards and business strategies. The apparel segment is the most representative in the garment sector, with around 80% of the number of companies and also with the same percentage in the number of labor employed. The bedding, table and bath linen segment represents, therefore, about 20% of the number of companies and the labor of the sector. The products usually classified in this segment are: duvets, bedding covers, blanket bedspreads, pillowcases and sheets; tablecloths, washcloth, napkins and set of placemats; carpets, bath towels, face towels and bathrobes, respectively.

The industry has invested in innovations and in the production process. One-third of its production was oriented to exportation, and these products were of high quality and not threatened by external competition. They were the main companies in the textile sector, being that around 80% of the total exports in this sector were bedding, table and bath linen [3].

The ancient trousseau transformed into the modern concept of Homewear, follows trends developed by professionals of the area. In the period from 2000 to 2014, productive units in activities in the Brazilian textile sector increased by 23% [4]. With the appreciation of the Brazilian currency in relation to the American dollar, adopted as an instrument to contain inflation, especially since 2008, there were serious losses in relation to the competitiveness of Brazilian industries in relation to imported articles.

The textile exports decreased due to the appreciation of the exchange rate, redirecting the products to the domestic market, with the exception of the bedding, table and bath linen sector, which reached 50% of production for exportation, indicating that the sector was still in growth. However, in 2010 with the weakening of domestic consumption and acceleration of imports, negative effects were noticed with consequent decrease in the profit margin of Brazilian companies. However, the home line presented the highest growth (14%) from 2010 to 2014 [4]. Therefore, the innovation models corroborate the indicator of the procedure systematization of the design evolution and home fashion industry, being the main goal the increasing of participation in market economy.

### 3.3. *Textile design in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*

The first textile fibers of antiquity were flax, cotton, wool and silk, known as natural raw materials. Natural fibers are still very common in Home Fashion, since each fabric stands out in a product and social status in the bedding, table and bath linen segment. Cotton stands out in the production of bath towels, due to its excellent absorption, comfort and fabric softness. Very common also in bedding linen (bedspread, sheets, pillow cases etc.). Egyptian cotton, which is considered one of the best in the world, it is used to make bedding and bath products, due to its unique properties of softness, touch and comfort in the contact of the human skin with the fabric. In the segment of Fashion Home wool is used in rugs and blankets, but often replaced by its substitute, acrylic fiber. The silk, in rugs, upholstery, bedding and blankets, being products of great value in the market due to its nobility [13].

The Industrial Revolution crossed borders, opening the industrial textile market, encouraging new creations, initiating the production of artificial fibers (such as viscose, nylon, polyester, acrylic fiber, etc.), stamping and processing. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the textile design had the breaking of the traditional floral prints making room for abstract forms and other [14]

The textile process starts with the basics of colors and with natural raw materials and in the elaboration of the house's robes, manual embroidery was added. With the Industrial Revolution, the technological advance of the textile had a new proportion in the production and confection of the fabrics. Thus, the textile designers needed enrichment in the creativity and daring in the creation of collection of prints, models and technological fabrics. The set of innovation was due to the need of social changes and their demand. In the 1920s, Art Deco in Paris, marked by geometric rigor and predominance of vertical lines, influenced the architecture and also reflected in new ideals in textile design [15].

In the 1930s, with the Great Depression in Europe and America, designers had to innovate in decoration and textiles. After the World War II, in the 1950s, in the textile sector occurred the development of new synthetic fabrics, dyes and chemical finishes. In the 1960s and 1970s, the idea of Pop Art influenced the patterns of fabric designs, expressed in bright colors and psychedelic designs [15].

In the 1980s and 1990s, Japan influenced with its innovations, technological development, textile-technical construction and standardization. The Design included geometric models in the shape of the prints (in the process of translation, rotation and reflection) with strong colors. The prints have attributes of humor, extravagance, infusion of colors, modern design and objects molded in plastic and iron [16].

### 3.4. *Design aspects of trousseau in Brazil*

According to Das [17] the client seeks harmony and balance visual impact in the home in all environments. One should look at sets of sheets, duvets, rugs, cushions, curtains, wallpaper that match well with the color of the environment, furniture, floor, etc. The designers have to understand the aesthetic sensibility and need of the target customers and creating innovations and concepts in fashion and ideas to satisfy them. All the coordination of texture, colors and prints have that is in harmony with the trends and ambiance of the house. Manufacturers have to meet the market demand to achieve their sales by satisfying customers.

The articles of composition of the trousseau, basic articles such as towels and sheets continued to be part of the wedding lists, varying in technical attributes such as the finish. Many companies in the bedding, table and bath linen segment have begun to invest in design as a distinguishing factor of the pieces, transforming the old trousseau into the modern concept of Homewear or Home Fashion, following fashion trends by improving shapes, colors, textures and patterns [6]. This process transformed the trousseau into a fashion article.

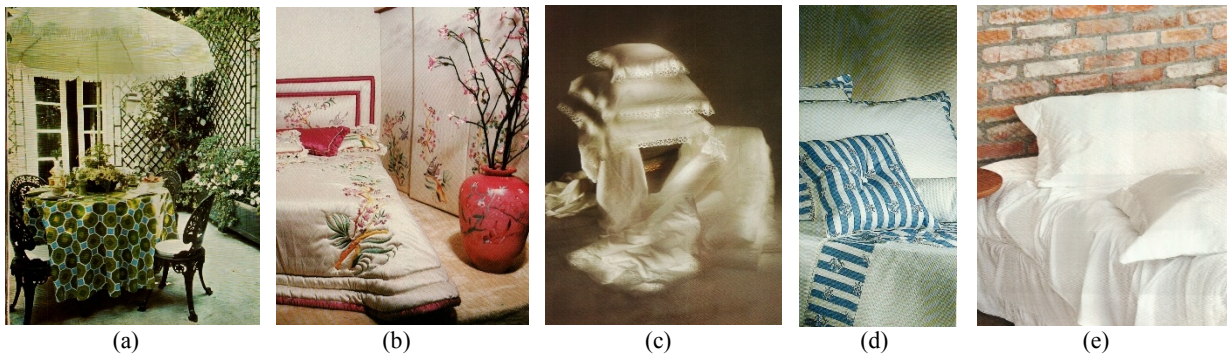
Natural fibers are still very present. Previously using linen fiber and currently employing cotton in the production of bath towels, bedding and other articles. Egyptian cotton is used for bedding up to 1000 threads per inch of warp, giving unique properties of softness, touch and comfort. Wool is employed on rugs and blankets, but often replaced by acrylic fiber. However, various products are



found with artificial and synthetic fibers (such as viscose, nylon, polyester, acrylic fiber, etc.) with various processings and finishes [5].

In 20<sup>th</sup> century, textile design left the traditional floral prints providing abstract forms and others. After the World War II, in the 1950s, models and designs reflect new technologies and the abstraction of art following the development of new synthetic fabrics, dyes and chemical finishes. In the 1960s and 1970s, the idea of Pop Art influenced the fabric patterns, expressed in bright colors and psychedelic designs. In the 1980s and 1990s the influence of Japan was expressed by innovations, technological development and its patterns. The design included geometric models in the format of the prints (in the process of translation, rotation and reflection) with strong colors [6]. Furthermore, it is necessary to notice the influence of personages and scripts of cinema and TV expressed in the stamping.

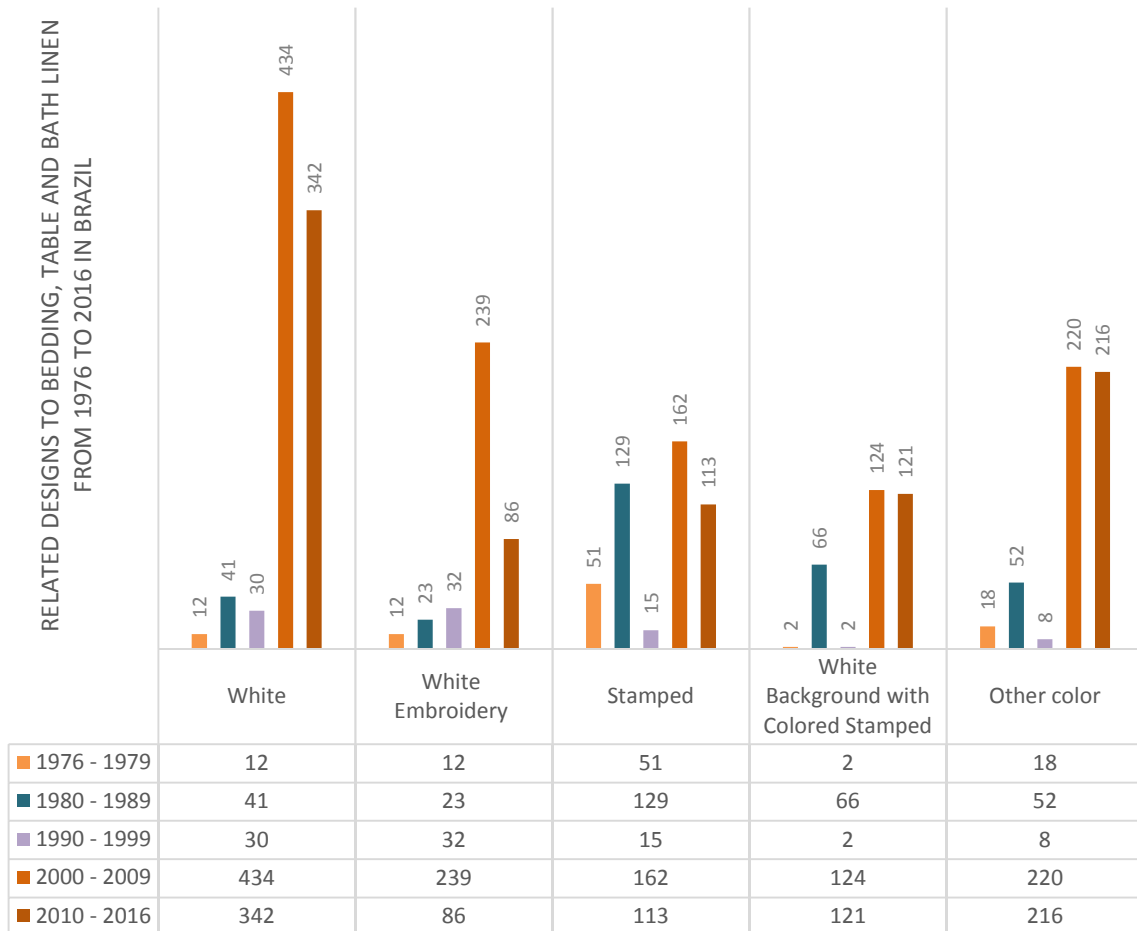
According to analysis performed in the present study on Vogue House Brazil Magazine, it is clear the preference of products stamped in 1970's and 1980's (**Figure 1**), and white color in 1990's, 2000's and 2010's (**Figure 2**).



**Figure 1.** Examples of: (a) stamped (1976); (b) white background with colored embroidery (1985); (c) white background with white embroidery (1995); (d) white background with colored stamped (2002) ; (e) totally white (2016). Source: Compiled from Revista Casa Vogue Brasil (“Vogue House Brazil Magazine”) (São Paulo: Globo and Condé Nast) [18]: **(a)** 1976, v.01, N. 20, p.051 [19]; **(b)** 1985, v.03/04, N2, p.156 [20]; **(c)** 1995, v.01/02, N1, p. 083 [21], **(d)** 2002, v.10, ed.207, p. 158 [22], **(e)** 2016, v.08, ed.372, p. 011 [23]

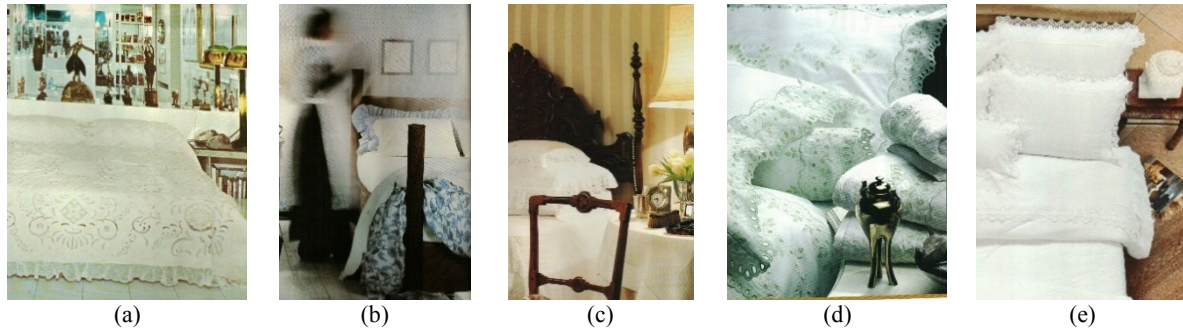
In **Figure 2** is presented the number of articles related to different design patterns in fabrics for bedding, table and bath linen sectors from 1976 to 2016 in Brazil, according the research performed in all issues of “Revista Casa Vogue Brasil” (“Vogue House Brazil Magazine”) enrolling all this time period.

REVISTA CASA VOGUE BRASIL ("VOGUE HOUSE BRAZIL MAGAZINE")



**Figure 2.** Number of articles related to different design patterns in fabrics for related to bedding, table and bath linen from 1976 to 2016 in Brazil, according the research performed in all issues of Revista Casa Vogue Brasil (“Vogue House Brazil Magazine”). Source: Compiled from Revista Casa Vogue Brasil (“Vogue House Brazil Magazine”) [18]

Despite something few exceptions, in Brazil it is observed that the domestic market continues to prefer classic patterns, with predominance of a single color (notably white), embroidery (or similar) or floral prints for adult items (**Figure 3**); colors white and/or pink or white and/or blue for items of girls and boys respectively, with characters and children's themes; of culinary elements or of the household world or colored background in the white colors in kitchen items and in bath towels of colors white predominance sometimes with embroidery or other colors.



**Figure 3.** Design in bed trousseau from 1976 to 2016. Source: Compiled from Revista Casa Vogue Brasil (“Vogue House Brazil Magazine”) (São Paulo: Globo and Condé Nast) [18]: **(a)** 1976, v.01, N. 20, p.062 [24]; **(b)** 1986, v.01/02, N1, p.003 [25]; **(c)** 1996, v.07/08, N4, p. 171 [26], **(d)** 2006, v.01, ed.245, p. 035 [27], **(e)** 2016, v.11, ed.375, p. 053 [28]

#### 4. Conclusion

“Vogue Casa Brasil” magazine presents the most relevant styles in bedding, table and bath linen market, despite being an elite magazine in the Brazilian market context. The classics are pronounced in the preference of style presentation featuring white color and cotton fabric in bedding, table and bath linen products and the embroidery being the outstanding ornament of the style of these home fashion products. Thus, it is noteworthy that, unlike what happens in other countries in the world, in Brazil, the trousseau is associated with traditional values of marriage, emulating aesthetic patterns originated in the past epochs, when the bride embroidered her own trousseau as a part of the marriage dowry. The maintenance of these standards by Brazilian manufacturers is interesting to maintain sales in the domestic market, but a limitation for export products destined to publics with different values and aesthetic tastes and with greater supply of items with variety of surface designs.

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