

Evolution of fashion accessories: bags design and the use of woven fabrics

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ABSTRACT

The development of fashion accessories is widely historically contextualized, as well as its relation to social changes and movements, in such a way that it is possible to identify and justify the emergence or development of a particular accessory according to the social and fashion context of a given period. The case of the bags is no exception and the relationship between clothing and bags have changed over time. Currently the majority of apparel brands develop parallel collections of bags that not only complement the clothing as well as increase brand value to the consumer. Starting from this association between clothing and accessories and the immense variety of materials that can be used in its creation, in this work the fabric as

raw material for accessories, more specifically fabrics used in garment manufacture will be the main object of this study. This is an area barely documented in terms of fashion accessories design, however the constant need to create innovative and creative products, exceeding the conventional barrier is a fact, and the relationship between materials to apparel and accessories little exploited.

It was used a literature review methodology within the area of historical evolution of bags and of the materials used and analysis of the usage percentage of textiles in accessories in some recognized brands in the Iberian market. It was also proposed the use of woollen fabrics in the production of this type of accessories. Finally was proposed the use of fabrics with yarns made of natural fibres and used mainly in apparel manufacture, whether in their natural state, either incorporating treatments and physical changes, can emerge as a way forward in the creation of differentiated products, increasing the offer available to the consumer, but also in terms of monetization of the same raw material by the company, but which assure performance requirements as other materials.

KEYWORDS

Fashion accessories, design, woven fabrics, wool

Introduction

Fashion is an established concept that is part of the construction of the identity of groups and encompasses an important social role. Fashion has mainly to do with change and is defined by the succession of short duration or short-lived trends, these changes that have always been associated with the social, economic and political changes, but whose main interest is in its impetus in the development of new products. (Sanches, 2006). These trends are of utmost importance, since understanding society and consumers are essential for the design (Neves e Branco 2000). Furthermore the design of fashion products in general must always consider aesthetics and functionality in product development. There is usually a need and thus a problem to solve, a solution to find, having the design this purpose. Although the concept of design being recent, these aesthetic and functional concerns have always been present in wallets development throughout the history. The bags since their existence have been associated with either the basic transport functions, either meanings of status and aesthetic.

This is an accessory that despite constant evolutions of fashion over the centuries, styles and even cultural differences retained its primacy.

As well as in clothing, in accessories the aesthetic and functional characteristics are determined and influenced by the choice of materials to use. In the development of bags it is possible to find the most varied materials such as fabrics, furs, polymers, rubber, wood and metals. In the case of use of fabrics, the appropriateness or not of a particular piece will depend on its construction, mass per square meter ("weight"), texture, colour, performance characteristics during wear, including tensile, abrasion, tearing strength, and functional finishes, such as waterproof or self-cleaning.

One of the least explored materials in the development of accessories is the wool fabric. This is already used in different kinds of applications however the applications on fashion accessories are quite scarce. This article is held under an applied research project in collaboration with industry, this industry is established in the area of Beira Interior where wool tradition is quite large, so the interest and the justification of using wool fabrics and thus enhancing their applications. Considering this research project was done a historical framing of the use of fabrics in bags, a brand analysis of fabric uses, potential use of wool to apparel and accessories manufacture, and a presentation of some products already developed with 100% wool fabrics in collaboration with wool industry.

Application of fabrics in bags: theoretical outline along history

Bags have a fairly recent history as fashion accessories however their existence as transport accessory of the most diverse utensils and products already dates back to the dawn of humanity. Used by both men and women, took on different names throughout their evolutionary period: purse, *reticule*, pocket, bag, wallet, among others. The development of this type of accessories has always been associated with the type of products to carry and to wear occasions, determining this way shapes and materials used in its construction. In this historical analysis the materials used throughout history are primarily focused and its relationship with the type of accessories for each occasion (bags, purses, wallets). Although being evidence in ancient petroglyphs and Egyptian paintings of the use of some kind of bags to carry utensils, the historical evolution of this type of accessories made by most authors (e.g. Wilcox, 1999; Pedersen, 2006) begins in the Middle Age perhaps by records and preservation of paintings and genuine accessories. Consequently this outline also begins in the Middle Age but with more emphasis on the twentieth century and today.

In the Middle Age both men and women wore a small pouch attached by a drawstring at the waist, with transport and symbolic functions, these were usually made of leather or fabric, silk or linen, or with pieces of ecclesiastical robes and wall hangings. Already by the middle of the sixteenth century, with the change in style of clothing, the kind of bags used previously was not suitable for the entire volume around the hips created by clothing, thus being brought inside especially of the skirts, which was the first approach to what we now know as pockets. Men continued to wear at the waist leather, wool, silk and metal handbags. At this time also the bags had different functions, such as store perfumes, jewellery and being as a support, where often the bag itself was a valuable gift, made in satin or velvet and embroidered with threads of silver and gold. During the seventeenth-century embroidered handbags were implemented fashions, being the embroiderer of great importance in society at the time. At the end of this century also began to be common lace bags. During the eighteenth century it was still common to use bags inside the skirts, normally made of linen or cotton, but with the importance of sewing and embroidery on the lives of women, working bags were developed to be carried in hand; this type of hand bag follow-up the *reticules*. This kind of bags had the most diverse shapes, round or hexagonal, some quite decorated by paintings and embroidering, and made from different materials like metal knits, but having a tendency to be of the same material of clothing, such as silk and velvet fabrics. At the end of this century the bag was already considered essential in the following of changes to clothing tight to the body and source of business between countries. In the early 19th century with more rigid forms *reticules* appeared with wooden or *papier-mâché* bases and lined with silk, wool twill or leather red morocco. During this century with advancements in science and in industry, appeared a lot of different fabrics and styles, allowing new forms of coordination with the clothing. With the 20th century and the industrial revolution, the use of the train as a means of transportation has created the need for wallets and bags suitable for transport of luggage, lined with leather and canvas. Many of the best-known brands today began at this time with suitcases, such as Hermès and Louis Vuitton.

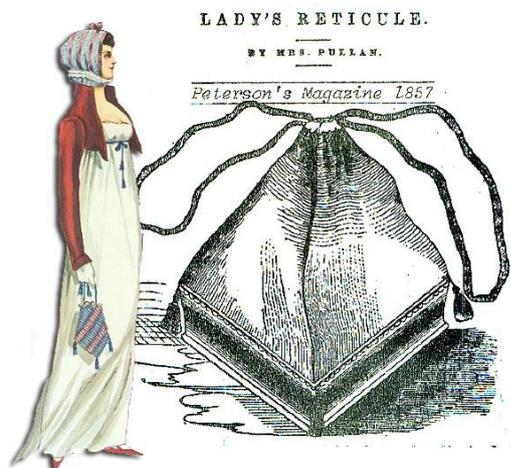


Figure 1. Peterson's magazine – Reticule (<http://janeastensworld.wordpress.com>)

Figure 2. Advertising Louis Vuitton (<http://pocketcultures.com>)

In fact the twentieth century came with the affirmation of the wallet as a key fashion accessory for women, their emancipation and integration in a more active life leading to wallets suitable for all occasions and made from different materials, such as metal knit bags similar to those existing in the eighteenth century, but with a more industrialised production process by using steel, bronze, silver, and even gold. With the arrival of the first world war, the explosion of diversity of previous years calmed down as the climate of fear was installed, velvet and black silk wallets with simple white lace applications have become commonplace. After the war emerged another trend, the use of fur to match coats furs and skins of reptiles. Around 1925 began to appear the purses, wallets envelope with small handles or just to hand carry, often with glass beads and sequins, but became especially popular the use of plastics for its ability to be shaped. In the early 30, maintained a small size without much ornamentation, but towards the end of the decade, gradually were got wider and more sophisticated, and manufactured with various skin types as the snake, crocodile, and sea lion, among others. During the Second World War many materials have begun to be scarcer, the leather bags have become rare, and most began to be made of fabric, mostly 100% wool from often surpluses of men overcoats, also the craft became a capital gain using the raffia from different colours. Also the use of zip/closures were restricted and options of wood fasteners began to appear and later also wallets in wood from the most diverse forms and finishes. In

the 50's the order has returned to settle with a more serene style where the coordination of accessories and colour with the clothing were essential, and where the bags were classic and structured. It was at this time that the bag Chanel 2.55 (figure 3) and the suitcase Kelly of Hermès (figure 4) arose and Louis Vuitton patented his monogram in canvas (Figure 5).



Figure 3. Coco Chanel with 2.55 bag (<http://ilovewelove.wordpress.com/>)

Figure 4. Grace Kelly with Kelly bag from Hermès (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/>)



Figure 5. Louis Vuitton monogram in canvas

In the years 60 the hippie movement influenced the fashion with handcrafted techniques, crochet, macramé, and patchwork. On the other hand also at this time arose a Futurist movement inspired by science fiction, which appeared in PVC and vinyl wallets with metal plates and silver finishes. The 70's started with bags in leather and suede patchwork, but over the decade envelope wallets and clutches padded in pastel colours and floral prints, as well as large shoulder bags in leather and canvas already without the main ethnic look of previous years, become a trend. In the 80's the diversity and contrasts were vast, where there was room for all kind of accessories according to the different urban tribes that began to show, punks,

new waves, rappers, skinheads, gothic and heavy metal. A tendency to recover patterns and ideas from the past started to emerge. For example Karl Lagerfeld in Chanel reinvented the 2.55 model in jersey, denim, rubber and terry cloth. Also at this time started to appear the knapsacks for everyday use. Miuccia Prada launched a black nylon model (figure 6) considered to be one of the first models of bags completely unisex, inspiring other designers like Vuitton, Chanel, Fendi and Gucci. In the Decade of 90 was trend the minimalism allied to technology, with the use of lightweight polyethylene coupled with the most varied materials, jersey knits, tweed and leather, and a variety of finishes. The bags have been given more functional compartments for cell phones, business cards, pens and key holders. Also in this decade, the final recognition of bags as complement in a collection of clothing, with most brands developing collections of accessories as they develop clothing collections. In the twenty-first century, with the continuous technical innovation have been developed new fibers and new materials, such as fabrics with soybean and bamboo fibers. But one of the big trends is the use of sustainable fabrics with organic cotton and wool, and with a growing concern for recycling and biodegradability (Brand & Teunissen, 2007, Nyamache & Nyambura, 2012, Pedersen, 2006, Wilcox, 1999).



Figure 6. Prada backpack

Analysis of accessories collections of Iberian market brands

In this study it was made a brief analysis of accessories developed by some recognized brands in the Iberian market, Zara, Lanidor, Mango, Salsa, Pull and Bear. The choice was made based on the presence in the Portuguese and Spanish market and also by the presence with online stores (figures 7, 8, 9,10, 11). The analysis was made at the last collection of autumn/winter 2012/2013 based on deliverables online which in most cases are the same as presented in physical stores, while Zara introduce some products sold exclusively online. Although this is not an intensive analysis, in general, it is possible to realize the use that is

made of various materials in the manufacture of bags. In table 1 is present the total number of bags available, the percentage of bags in which fabrics are used, being these of cotton, polyester and wool, and the percentage that are used other materials such as leather and polyurethane. It is visible that the number of bags where fabrics are used having natural and synthetic fibres (13,4%) is quite inferior to the use of other materials (86,6%). From the fabrics used, the canvas is one of which has been and continues to be mostly used in the manufacture of bags, is cheaper than the leather, can be waterproofed and be treated with finishes which make them suitable for a diversity of styles; the denim and cotton twill are also used frequently in bags, like the canvas is also fairly resistant. The fabrics with synthetic fibres such as polyester, have become popular and are applied in more accessible bags, in addition, aesthetic diversity obtained with these materials is huge as they may be modified extensively. Typically the low-price, lightness and ease of cleaning are quite attractive both for companies and for consumers. The wool fabrics are also used but on a much smaller scale and sometimes in conjunction with polyester and metallised yarns (table 2).

Another point to consider was the relationship between the fabrics used in apparel and accessories collections, and it was verified that most of the bags are made from different materials from those of clothing. However this relationship was found in two men products of Zara with fabric of polyester and cotton, and in the case of Salsa brand this relationship is more evident since the clothing developed uses mainly denim and the percentage of fabric bags also uses denim with several washes similar to existing jeans and jackets/blazers.

Table 1. Analysis of bags collection (Appendix 1)

Brands	Fabrics: Cotton, Polyester, Wool		Other Materials: Leather, polyurethane		Number of available articles	
	Number of items	Percentage	Number of items	Percentage	Number of items	Percentage
Zara	10	6.9%	134	93.1%	144	100%
Lanidor	7	18.4%	31	81.6%	38	100%
Mango	9	6.7%	126	93.3%	135	100%
Salsa	10	28.6%	25	71.4%	35	100%
Pull and Bear	18	35.3%	33	64.7%	51	100%
Total	54	13,4%	349	86,6%	403	100%

Table 2. Analysis of fibers used

Composition of fabrics used	Bags with simple or mixed composition	Percentage of fibers used
Cotton (cotton; cotton and polyester)	30	49.2%
Wool (wool; polyester and wool)	4	6.6%
Polyester (polyester; cotton and polyester; polyester and wool)	26	42.6%
Nylon	1	1.6%
Total	61	100%



Figure 7. Zara online store

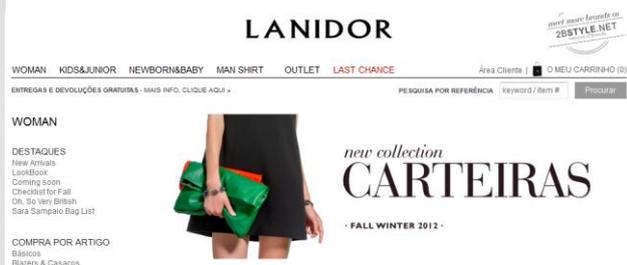


Figure 8. Lanidor online store

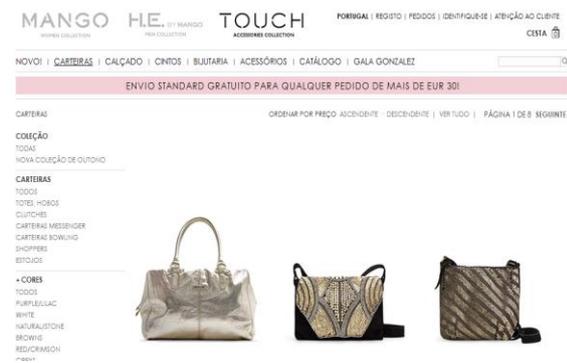


Figure 9. Mango online store

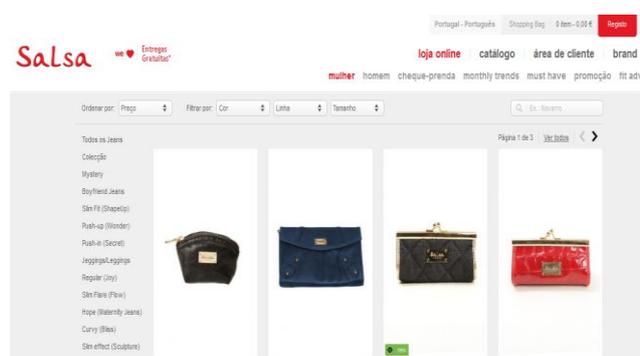


Figure 10. Salsa online store

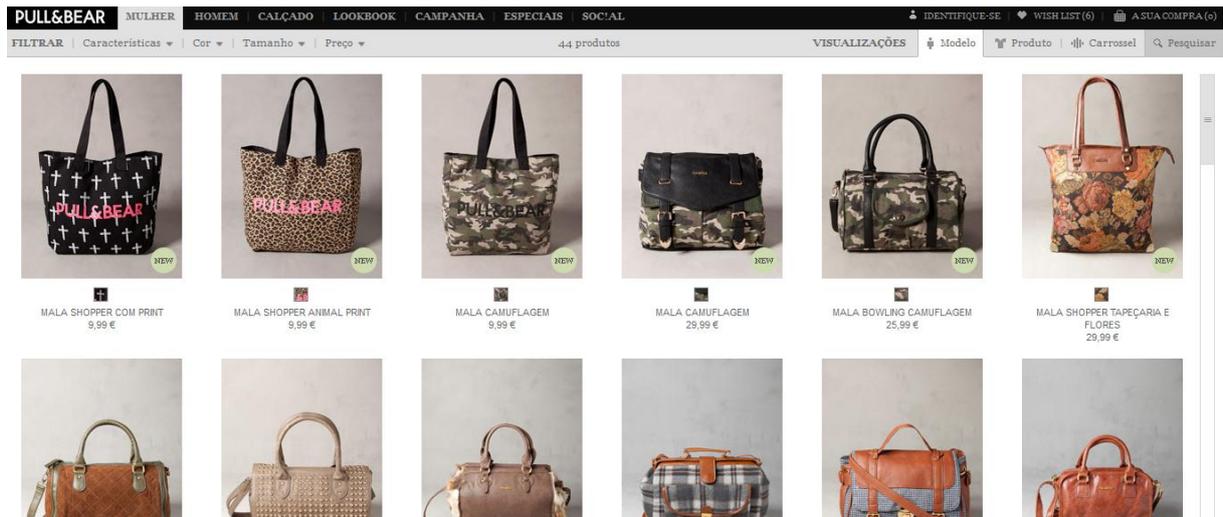


Figure 11. Pull and Bear online store

Wool as essential raw material in fashion industry

As it was possible to notice by the analysis made earlier, the wool fabrics are of the least used in the bags of the brands, however its importance in apparel and accessories industry is indisputable. Especially in 90's there was a decline in production and demand for wool, resulting in the development and rapid expansion of the production of synthetic fibres and new textile products. But the importance of wool textile market has been growing in the sequence of the growing importance of aesthetic and comfort characteristics sought by consumers, and the passage of a focus from quantity to quality. This continues to be one of the products with the most impact on the textile industry and investments in innovation and new product development of wool have allowed a reborn in the last years (Pierlot, 2010). Lighter, softer fabrics, mixed with other natural or synthetic fibres and with functional finishes, have managed to increase the performance and demand of wool fabrics (Simpson & Crawshaw, 2002). As it can be seen in Figure 12 the use of wool covers the most diverse fields.

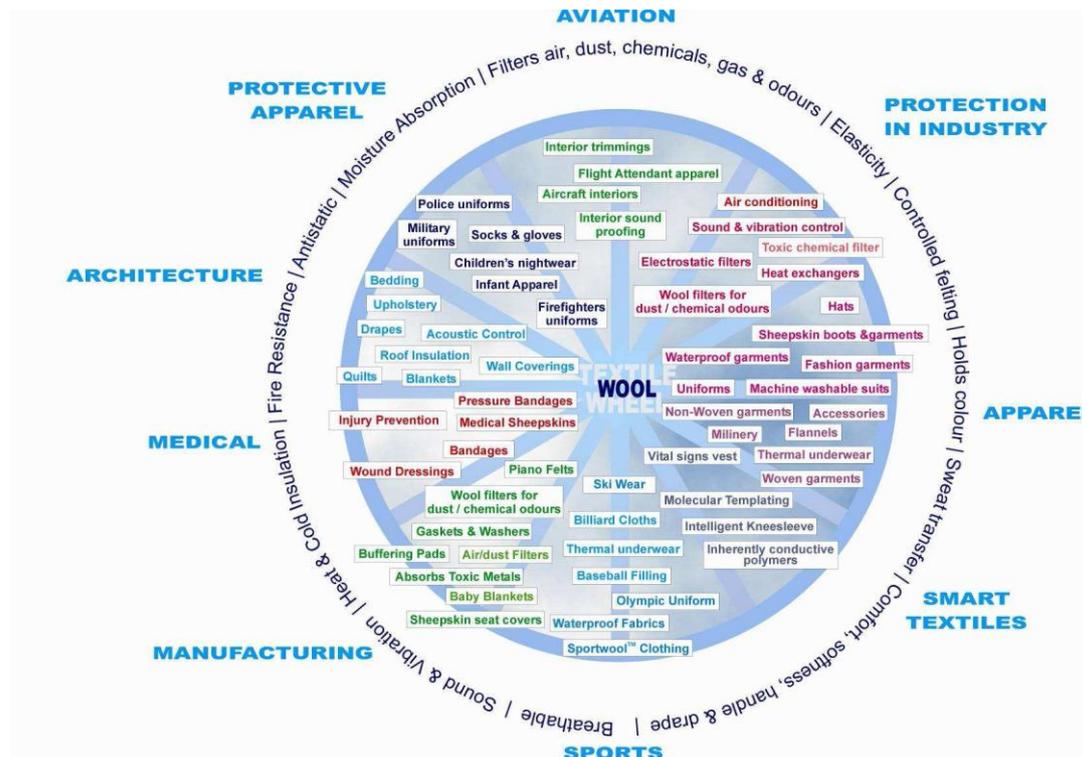


Figure 12. Wool's Natural Advantages (Pierlot, 2010)

According to I.W.T.O. (International Wool Textile Organization) ¹ two thirds of the world's wool is used in the production of apparel products, from sweaters, suits and dresses and even "active sportswear". It is mainly the wool characteristics and properties that make it attractive to this usage. Some of its most important features are the ability of absorption and release of sweat that makes wool apparel comfortable and warm; the characteristics of temperature are also the most outstanding, keeping the user warm in cold conditions and cool when it is hot; the wool fibre also has repellent properties, that make it naturally waterproof; the wool has hypoallergenic properties, because it retains moisture, preventing bacteria and mites to develop and install, making it suitable for sportswear and for people suffering from allergies; fire resistance, namely its fireproofing properties are one of the most gains of wool, making it suitable for fire-fighter uniforms and home textiles; and also its strength, the wool fabrics are also quite resistant, compared to cotton that breaks after 3000 times folded and 2000 for silk, as compared to 20000 for wool. Clothing made with these fabrics lasts longer and retains its appearance longer (Holcombe, Li and Plante .1995; Simpson & Crawshaw, 2002).

Possibility of using wool fabrics in addition to apparel manufacture: bags

Historically, the use of the same fabrics in the manufacture of clothing and accessories had

¹ <http://www.iwto.org>

even been an obligatory trend, in which the fabric of bags should be the same as the dress. However the emergence of new materials with characteristics that made it more suitable for use in bags and an eclectic trend in creating a look, meant that many of the fabrics that were used in that combination, silk, velvet and wool were used only for specific uses, such as silk satin handbags on formal occasions. But this usage in conjunction as was done in the past and that some brands do occasionally, is just one of the points in the relationship between clothing and bags, and that obviously depends on the actual use and combination that consumers want. As previously stated the wool fabrics, for its characteristics and also technical developments and performance, have been used in many different ways. It can be affirmed that the wool fabrics can produce products with added value for the consumer; however it is necessary to understand the characteristics of the fabrics that consumers value most in items like bags (Pierlot, 2010). For example in wool clothing, characteristics such as comfort, protection against heat and cold are the most important, but in bags are not so relevant. But characteristics such as waterproof and resistance may already be more relevant in choosing bags of this material. Considering the features already highlighted of wool fabrics, these may be extended by subsequent treatments such as polyurethane coatings and micro-encapsulation of various compounds. Other reason for the extension of use of these fabrics in bags manufacture is fashion trends in runways that indicate a future grow of this use (figure 13, 14, 15, 16).



Figure 13. Yves Saint Laurent autumn/winter 2011/12 (WGSN.com)

Figure 14. Dolce and Gabbana autumn /winter 2012/13 (WGSN.com)



Figure 15. Damir Doma autumn/winter 2012/13 (WGSN.com)

Figure 16. Jasper Coran autumn/winter 2012/13 (WGSN.com)

Design project: the use of wool fabrics

In the sequence of ongoing research carried out with the wool industry there were developed some prototypes of bags in which the raw materials were 100% wool fabrics in its natural state or with polyurethane coatings and leather details (figure 17, 18, 19).



Figure 17. Handbag 100% wool: front panel yellow with coating and option with grey embroidered



Figure 18. Weekend bag 100% wool: details in brown leather

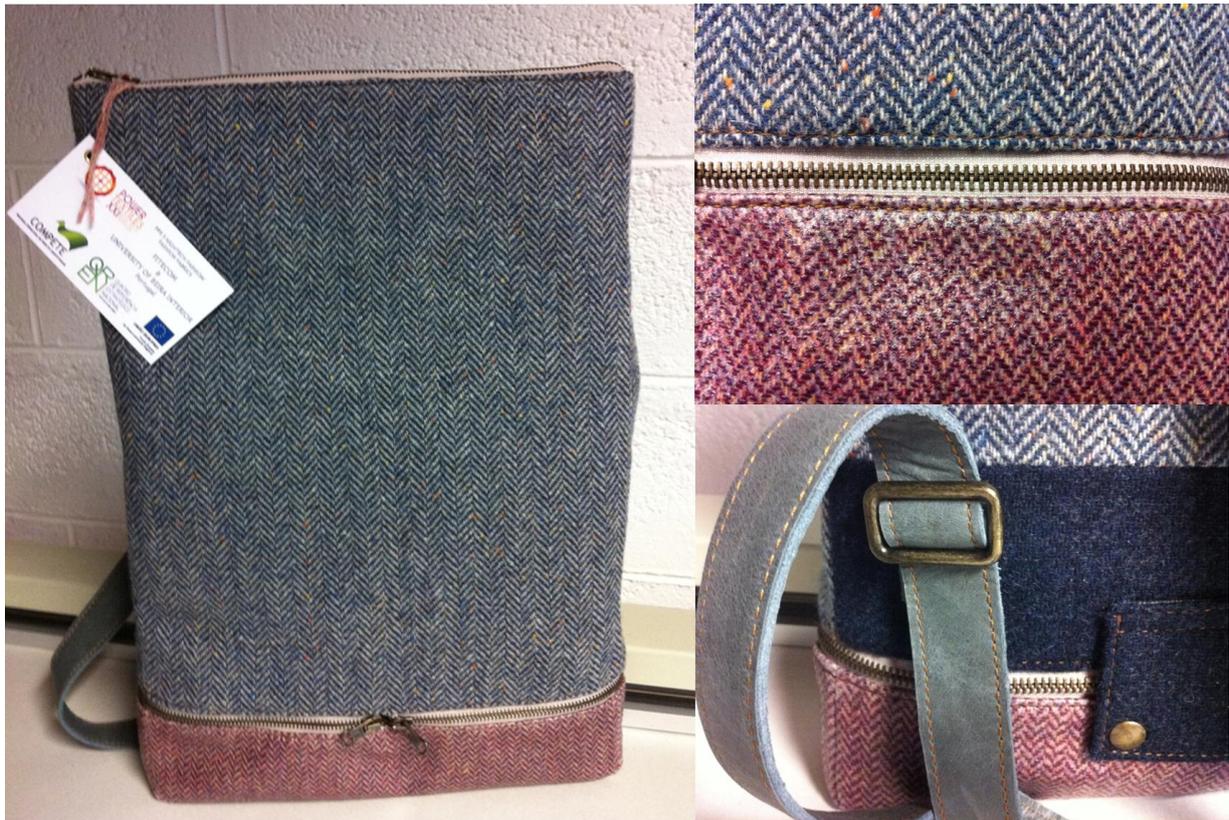


Figure 19. Backpack 100% wool: replaced base with coated fabric

Conclusion

In this study is clear the need to extend the knowledge in the field of development of accessories, namely bags in natural fibre fabrics. Historical use of fabrics in bags and recent trends indicate a successful approach in this field. In addition to the capabilities described in this study, it is proposed that in future investigations, be carried out an evaluation of aesthetic and functional consumer preference that can sustain the success on the market of such pieces, mainly the market segment. Other points to be developed in the future will be the technical aspects, with further tests using prototypes performed to evaluate performance requirements of wool fabrics used.

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<http://www.pullandbear.com/>

<http://www.zara.com/>

<http://www.lanidor.com/>

<http://www.mango.com/>

<http://handbag-fabric.com/>

<http://www.wgsn.com>

Appendix 1

Mango : <http://shop.mango.com/PT/mango/carteiras>



Composição :Poliéster



Composição: lã com fio metalizado

Composição: Poliéster com acabamento metalizado

Composição: Algodão

Salsa <http://www.salsa.pt/pt/index.php?id=350>



Composição : Algodão



Composição: Algodão

Composição: Algodão e revestimento a vinyl

Lanidor <http://eshop.lanidor.com/ColecaoPag.aspx?idTipoCategoria=14&idColecao=70>



Composição: poliéster



Composição: poliéster

Composição: lã e poliéster

Zara <http://www.zara.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/category/pt/pt/zara-W2012/269200/Bolsas>
<http://www.zara.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/category/pt/pt/zara-W2012/269247/Bolsas>



Composição: algodão

Composição : poliéster



Composição : algodão



Composição : algodão

Pull and Bear

<http://www.pullandbear.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/category/pullandbearpt/pt/pullandbear/29536/SACOS%2BE%2BCARTEIRAS#>

<http://www.pullandbear.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/category/pullandbearpt/pt/pullandbear/29027/MALAS%2BE%2BMOCHILAS>



Composição: poliéster

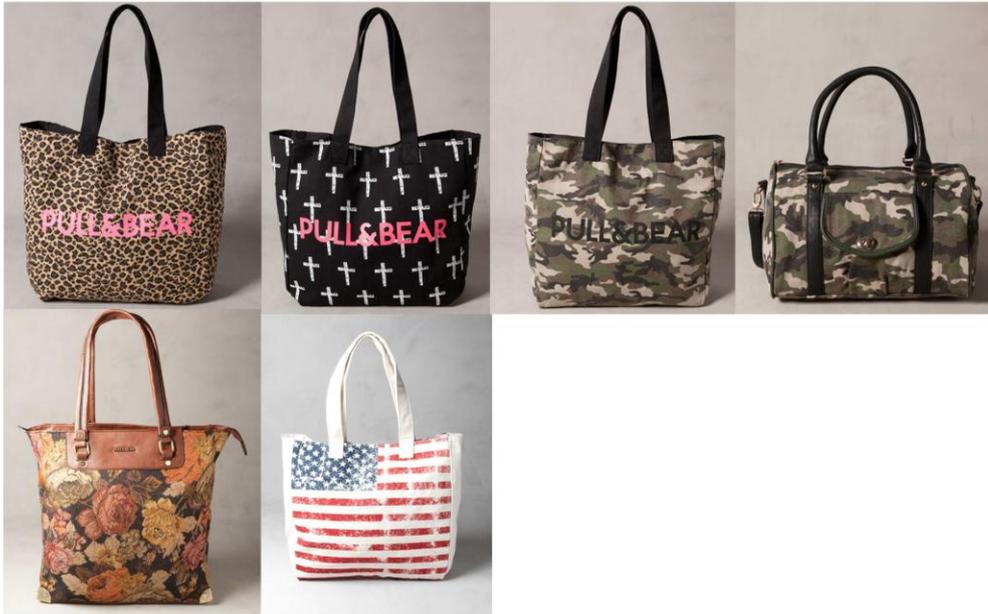


Composição: poliéster e lã



Composição: nylon

Pull and Bear



Composição : algodão e poliéster



Composição: algodão

ISBN: 978-989-20-5336-3