

For One Week Brazilian City Becomes Lingerie Capital of the World

Contributed by Débora Rubin
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Around 20,000 people are expected at the 14th edition of the Brazilian Underwear Fashion Fair (Fevest), which takes place between the 8th and 11th of August in Nova Friburgo, city in the mountain region of the state of Rio de Janeiro, in Southeast Brazil. This is the first time the exhibit is opened to exhibitors from out of town.

When it was created, the aim of the fair was indeed to promote the hub's production, which now corresponds to 25% of the articles traded in the country. Once the mission was accomplished, the organizers at the fair saw that it was time to win the country and even the world. This year the trade show will be 35% bigger than last year and plans on generating a turnover of nearly US\$ 11.5 million.

"We want to become an international reference. We want to parallel the Fair of Lyon, the main one in the sector," says Amin Mazloum, president of Sindvest, a union that gathers the 1,500 companies of the sector in the region and is responsible for Fevest in partnership with the Federation of Industries of Rio de Janeiro (Firjan) and with the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae).

This year, the fair counts also on an institutional partnership with the Brazilian Textile and Apparel Industry Association (Abit).

The 200 exhibitors at the fair vary from the giants in the sector to the small companies, which have no more than 10 employees. As well as the stands, the fair will count on a series of parallel events. One of them is the tendencies salon, organized by the National Service of Industrial Education (Senai), with the aim of showing what's in fashion regarding lingerie.

The visitors will also learn about the novelties in the fashion shows that will take place. In all, there will be 12 shows, three a day. In the end, there will be an exhibit telling the history of underwear from the 1600s to nowadays.

All the segments in the lingerie industry will be represented at Fevest: articles for the day (panties, briefs), for the night (nightgowns, sleeping lingerie), beachwear (bikinis and bathing suits), fitness, erotic lingerie and also the technology, textile and services companies.

According to Mazloum, some 2,000 buyers are expected. Most of them Brazilians, but also from the United States, Holland, Argentina and some Arab countries. Mazloum, son of Lebanese, is also the owner of the factory Yasmin, which exports to Dubai.

According to the businessman, the Arab buyers have preferences for sensual lingerie, colorful articles like red and yellow and also for garments with shine, above all with Swarovski crystals.

History

The Nova Friburgo lingerie hub is young, less than 20 years. And it only developed thanks to a mass downsizing at Triumph - multinational that was installed in the city in 1968. According to Mazloum, it employed more than 3,000 people and, amidst a strong crisis, had to let go more than half.

"As many seamstresses already had experience in the area, they got together, purchased machines and, little by little, started setting up their companies," tells the president of Sindvest.

However, it was only eight years ago that the production started getting professional. The entrepreneurs started worrying about design and realized that lingerie wasn't only an accessory, but part of fashion. And only four years ago they started exporting. Currently, the hub employs 22,000 people and is responsible for half of the city's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

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