

## Brazil Is Starting an International Revolution in Men's Wear

Contributed by Isaura Daniel  
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Brazilian men's fashion is starting to find its space in stores around the world. In boutiques in Paris, Santiago, in Chile, and California, it is already also possible to see, beside the famous bikinis made in Brazil, shirts, trousers and pullovers produced by Brazilians.

This entry of men's national fashion into markets abroad is following the changes in the industry itself, which stopped making only dark suits to produce more colourful articles, with daring cuts and creative prints.

Those who are already out there say what is the key to enter the retail stores in Europe, America, Africa or Asia: innovation. Men's fashion that sells well abroad, say the entrepreneurs, is one that has, for example, a different pocket, a bold combination of colors.

"We export products with a differentiated trend, with a hand made touch, to be able to escape competition with China," says Rogério Meirelles, owner of Arte Fios Tricot, men's clothes factory from the Southeastern Brazilian state of Minas Gerais.

The participation of men's clothes from Brazil abroad is still small, according to the specialists in the sector. They believe, however, that there are great chances of growing due to the innovative posture the industry is taking.

"The great virtue of men's fashion from Brazil is creativity," stated the fashion consultant at the National Service of Commercial Education (Senac) in São Paulo, Maurício Lobo. The brand Dudalina, one of the most traditional in clothes for men in Brazil, is betting exactly on that: increasing exports.

According to the exports director at Dudalina, Rui Leopold Hess de Souza, the company is adjusting their collections so they have more of the Brazilian side.

"A little more of the Brazilian joyfulness. This is an extraordinary competitive differential for Brazil since the foreign consumer loves this Brazilianism," stated Souza.

The image of Brazil is already being related to fashion abroad, according to the entrepreneurs, and this could open doors to those making men's clothes. "The name Brazil is linked to fashion," says Meirelles.

The Brazilian industry is making an effort to show men's fashion more and more like Brazil: diversified, daring. Sparking up this movement in the factories, according to the businessmen and specialists, was the consumer himself, who started asking for new products.

"Men are thirsty for fashion, they are learning to compose their look, to wear accessories. Windows of men's clothes now have color, bracelets. In the last five years there was great evolution. Before men's fashion was very concentrated in suits, collared shirts," adds Lobo.

The male consumer, according to Meirelles, is now bolder, he wears different colors and has started buying more clothes. "Some time ago, the consumer of men's clothes was the woman. She was the one doing the shopping. Today men themselves buy their clothes," recalls the owner of Arte Fios Tricot. This new attitude and the consumer's new demands modernized the industry, according to Meirelles.

From Minas

Arte Fios Tricot is one of the Brazilian companies that believe in the modern man to win the market abroad. The factory makes T-shirts and shirts with the brands Arte Fios Tricot, of entirely knitted products or with knitted details, and Trama Três, for pullover. The knit products, for example, are 100% cotton, washed and softened. "The masculine public really appreciates comfort," explains Rogério Meirelles.

The company from Minas Gerais started exporting in 1999, after business roundtables with importers promoted by the Brazilian Export and Investment Promotion Agency (Apex), a governmental organization, and today it sells to nine countries: Chile, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Mexico, Spain, Italy, France, Holland and Denmark. Arte Fios Tricot produces about 150,000 pieces per month and exports about 20% to 25% of production.

Dudalina

Dudalina, a reference in shirts in Brazil, has a daring export plan for the next few years. The company plans to have 80% of its foreign sales under its own brands by 2010. Nowadays approximately 90% of clothes exports are for customers who outsource production, for international brands like Pierre Cardin and Zara.

Foreign sales of company brands, in reality, began five years ago, according to Souza. The organization produces brands Dudalina, Base and Individual.

Dudalina is a sophisticated brand, made out of Italian fabrics. Individual, also turned to the upper classes, is aimed at contemporary, modern men, and Base is a brand of irreverent appeal, with handmade details, despite also being sophisticated.

Apart from shirts, the company trades other articles of men's wear, like trousers, ties, pullovers and jackets. Dudalina shirt production is 2.3 million units a year.

The industry, whose headquarters are in the state of Santa Catarina, was established in the 1950s, and has exported practically since its early days. According to Souza, the foreign market became a company strategy in 1996.

Dudalina sells to 32 countries and has among its main international clients Spain, Argentina and Chile. The company has four industrial units, being one in each one of the cities of Blumenau, Presidente Getúlio and Luís Alves, in the state of Santa Catarina, and another in Terra Boa, in Paraná, both states in southern Brazil.

Anba