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(54) **LAUNDRY WASHING OR WASHING/DRYING MACHINE WITH REJECTOR DEVICE**

WASCH- ODER WASCHTROCKNERMASCHINE MIT WÄSCHEABWEISER

LAVE-LINGE OU LAVE/SECHE-LINGE COMPORTANT UN DISPOSITIF DE REJET

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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a laundry washing or washing/drying machine, in particular of the front-loading or substantially front-loading type, according to the preamble of claim 1.

[0002] When the drum of a laundry washing or washing/drying machine is rotated, the soft goods being present therein tend to be pushed toward the area adjacent to the circular hole of the tub, i.e. near the rear wall of the door. Thus the soft goods, as they rotate about the drum axis, come in contact with the gasket used for sealing the wash liquid within the area comprised between the tub and the front opening of the laundry washing or washing/drying machine, thereby causing a friction action between the gasket and the textile fibers of the soft goods. Especially during the spin phase, this causes wear and tear to the soft goods and damage to the gasket, whose service life is considerably reduced.

[0003] In order to overcome said drawbacks, it has been thought of providing laundry washing or washing/drying machines with a rejector device for soft goods, commonly called "diverter". Traditionally, said rejector device consists of a lip made of an elastic and/or soft material (typically rubber) extending from the top of the front opening of the household appliance toward the drum axis in a substantially radial direction.

[0004] At present, the field of laundry washing or washing/drying machines, in particular of the front-loading type, is evolving toward machines having higher load capacities and larger front openings, capable of treating larger quantities of laundry and to allow the user to load and unload the soft goods as quickly and comfortably as possible. In these machines, the thrust undergone by the soft goods in the drum axial direction is significantly higher, so that said soft goods have a greater tendency to remain in contact with the gasket, even when the spin phase is started. A rejector device simply consisting of elastic and/or soft material is not effective in preventing the soft goods from remaining in contact with the gasket during the spin phase, because it becomes much deformed even when hit by a small quantity of laundry.

[0005] Patent application WO02/12612A1 has foreseen the possibility of manufacturing a rejector device comprising a rigid portion obtained by appropriately shaping the locking ring which secures the gasket to the tub. The rejector device described in patent application WO02/12612A1 however suffers the drawbacks of not having adequate rigidity and of requiring an additional processing step for shaping the locking ring.

[0006] Patent application EP1389642A1 has then described a rejector device for a laundry washing machine consisting of an external insert manufactured by moulding an elastic and/or soft material over a rigid plastic material, secured to the flange of the tub of the laundry washing or washing/drying machine by means of screws, and placed into a suitable housing in the gasket. The use of a rejector device according to patent application

EP1389642A1 however involves additional processing steps (moulding the rigid portion of the rejector device, moulding the elastic portion of the rejector device over the rigid portion, securing the rejector device to the tub), which require longer times and higher costs for producing the household appliance. Furthermore, since the rejector device is an external insert secured to the tub, e.g. by means of screws, the hitting action it undergoes during the operation of the household appliance may impair its connection, which therefore is not very reliable.

[0007] The general object of the present invention is to overcome the above drawbacks of the rejector devices described in patent applications WO02/12612A1 and EP1389642A1. A laundry washing machine according to the preamble of claim 1 is for example disclosed in DE 103 59 011 B3. A more specific object of the present invention is to provide a laundry washing or washing/drying machine, in particular of the front-loading or substantially front-loading type, comprising a rejector device which does not require any costly additional processing steps during the production process of the household appliance and which is very effective even in the presence of heavy loads.

[0008] Said objects are substantially achieved through the laundry washing or washing/drying machine, in particular of the front-loading or substantially front-loading type, incorporating the features set out in the annexed claims, which form an integral part of the present description.

[0009] The general idea at the basis of the present invention is to provide a laundry washing or washing/drying machine, in particular of the front-loading or substantially front-loading type, comprising a rejector device which comprises a first element, forming one piece with the tub of the laundry washing or washing/drying machine, and a second element, forming one piece with the gasket of the laundry washing or washing/drying machine.

[0010] A rejector device is therefore provided which is different from and better than those according to the prior art.

[0011] If the tub is made of a rigid plastic material, the first element of the rejector device is manufactured during the moulding of the tub; if the gasket is made of an elastic and/or soft material, the second element of the rejector device is preferably manufactured during the moulding of the gasket.

[0012] The laundry washing or washing/drying machine, in particular of the front-loading or substantially front-loading type, according to the present invention will become apparent, together with its further advantages, from the following detailed description and from Fig.1, which has been annexed to the present description by way of nonlimiting example.

[0013] Fig.1 schematically shows a sectional view of a detail of a laundry washing or washing/drying machine according to the present invention, the section plane being a plane passing through the drum axis and intersect-

ing the rejector device.

[0014] The laundry washing or washing/drying machine, in particular of the front-loading or substantially front-loading type, of Fig.1 comprises a cabinet (not shown in the drawing), whose front, i.e. its front wall, comprises a front opening suitable for loading and unloading soft goods into/from the household appliance. The laundry washing or washing/drying machine also comprises a tub 3, made of a rigid material (in particular a rigid plastic material or a metal material) adapted to contain water and/or wash liquid, in turn comprising a substantially circular hole matching the front opening of the household appliance. Within the tub there is a drum (not shown in the drawing), being substantially a hollow cylinder in shape, adapted to contain soft goods and to be rotated about its axis through a motor device. During the operation of the household appliance, the front opening, being generally circular in shape, is kept closed by means of a door. In order to prevent water and/or wash liquid, which flow out during the wash through the substantially circular hole of the tub 3, from flowing into the cabinet of the household appliance, between the tub 3 and the front of the appliance a sleeve-shaped gasket 2 is interposed whose inner cylindrical surface 12 ensures a functional coupling between the front opening of the front and the substantially circular hole of the tub 3. The gasket 2 has an annular portion 14 which covers the tub 3 around the substantially circular hole. The gasket 2 is made of an elastic and/or soft material, and can be secured to the tub 3 because, for example, the tub 3 has a flange 4 around the substantially circular hole and the gasket 2 has a dedicated profile adapted to act as a stable housing for the flange 4. Tightness between the tub 3 and the gasket 2 may be ensured through a first ledge 7, i.e. a portion of the gasket 2 pressing against the outer surface of the tub 3, possibly by interposing a first locking ring in a first housing 8 located near the first ledge 7. Tightness between the door and the gasket 2 may be ensured, on the other hand, through a second ledge 5, i.e. a portion of the gasket 2 pressing against the inner surface of the door, possibly by interposing a second locking ring in a second housing 6 located near the second ledge 5, said second locking ring being adapted to secure the gasket 2 to the front of the laundry washing or washing/drying machine.

[0015] The laundry washing or washing/drying machine according to the present invention is capable of performing one or more treatments on soft goods (in particular the spin treatment, for removing part of the water absorbed by the laundry during a previous wash or rinse treatment), wherein the drum is rotated about its axis. Said rotation tends to push the soft goods contained in the drum into the area being internal to the gasket 2 and possibly to cause (mostly during the spin treatment) a relevant friction action between the soft goods rotating about the drum axis and the cylindrical inner surface 12 of the gasket 2. Said friction action between the gasket 2 and the laundry causes wear and tear to the soft goods

and considerable damage to the gasket 2, thus drastically reducing its service life.

[0016] In order to avoid or at least to reduce the contact between the soft goods and the gasket 2, e.g. during the spin treatment, the laundry washing or washing/drying machine, in particular of the front-loading or substantially front-loading type, according to the present invention comprises a rejector device 1. The rejector device 1 is adapted to exert a counter action on the laundry in order to push those soft goods located near the gasket 2 toward the inside of the drum; in particular, the soft goods located on the gasket 2 hit the rejector device 1 and thus tend to undergo a thrust which allows them to return inside the drum.

[0017] For the purpose of effectively countering the inertia of the soft goods in the direction of the door even in the presence of a heavy load, the rejector device 1 comprises a first element 9 made of a rigid material and a second element 10 made of an elastic and/or soft material. The second element 10 is adapted to come in contact with the laundry and must have appropriate surface characteristics to prevent the laundry from suffering any serious damage. Said second element 10 is however affected by a certain flexibility, which increases as the load being present inside the drum of the laundry washing or washing/drying machine increases. The first element 9 eliminates or attenuates this flexibility significantly, giving the rejector device 1 the rigidity needed to adequately counter the movement of the soft goods toward the door.

[0018] The rejector device 1 extends from the tub 3 in the area of the substantially circular hole in a substantially radial direction. In particular, the rejector device 1 is located in the upper half of the substantially circular hole of the tub 3 and, more in particular, the straight line joining the center of the substantially circular hole of the tub 3 to the rejector device 1 typically forms an angle of about $10^{\circ} \div 15^{\circ}$ relative to the vertical direction. The rejector device 1 is so shaped that the first element 9 cannot come directly in contact with the laundry. The first element 9 is therefore covered, at least in those areas where it may be hit by soft goods rotating about the axis of the drum, with the second element 10 which, being made of an elastic and/or soft material, also provides damping of vibration propagating in the rejector device 1 due to the hitting action of the laundry. Thus the service life of the rejector device 1 becomes longer, preferably exceeding the service life of the laundry washing or washing/drying machine comprising the rejector device 1.

[0019] According to the present invention, the first element 9 of the rejector device 1 forms one piece with the tub 3 of the laundry washing or washing/drying machine, and the second element 10 forms one piece with the gasket 2 of the laundry washing or washing/drying machine. It is possible to obtain the rejector device 1 without having to carry out any costly additional processing steps, resulting in time and/or cost savings during the production process of the laundry washing or washing/drying machine. In the particular case wherein the tub 3 is manu-

factured by moulding a plastic material, the present invention allows to obtain the first element 9 of the rejector device 1 during the same moulding operation used for producing the tub 3 or a part of the tub 3. If the tub 3 is made of a metal material instead of a rigid plastic material (in particular if the tub 3 is made of stainless steel), the first element 9 of the rejector device 1 is obtained during the same moulding operation used for producing the tub 3 or a part of the tub 3. Likewise, in the particular case wherein the gasket 2 is manufactured by moulding, the present invention allows to obtain the second element 10 of the rejector device 1 during the same moulding operation used for producing the gasket 2.

[0020] Mounting the rejector device 1 is advantageously much simpler than mounting the rejector devices described in patent applications WO02/12612A1 and EP1389642A1, because it only requires that the first element 9 be covered with the second element 10, and may be even made easier by providing an aperture 15 for the second element 10 in the area of the portion of the second element 10 which does not come directly in contact with the laundry during the operation of the laundry washing or washing/drying machine.

[0021] According to a particularly advantageous embodiment of the present invention (shown in Fig.1), the second element 10 of the rejector device 1 comprises auxiliary means 11 extending from the inward surface of the second element 10 or from a portion of said surface in a substantially axial direction. Advantageously, the extension depth of the auxiliary means 11 in the axial direction is such that at least a portion of the auxiliary means 11 is located inside the drum. In particular, the auxiliary means 11 are made of the same material as the second element 10, and preferably form one piece with the second element 10 and with the gasket 2 of the laundry washing or washing/drying machine. The auxiliary means 11 are also adapted to exert a thrust action on the soft goods toward the inside of the drum when the soft goods, during the their rotation about the drum axis, hit the upper surface 13 of the auxiliary means 11. According to a possible configuration of the auxiliary means 11, they are provided with a top surface 13 having a curvature being similar to that of the drum and/or a variable depth in order to improve said thrust action exerted on the soft goods toward the inside of the drum.

[0022] It is apparent from the present description that the laundry washing or washing/drying machine, in particular of the front-loading or substantially front-loading type, according to the present invention overcomes the inherent drawbacks of patent applications WO02/12612A1 and EP1389642A1, the rejector device 1 being characterized by processing and/or mounting steps being much simpler, quicker and cheaper than the rejector devices described in patent applications WO02/12612A1 and EP1389642A1. Furthermore, since the first element 9 is irremovably connected to the tub 3, it follows that the rejector device 1 according to the present invention is characterized by a more stable and

secure connection to the tub 3 compared to the rejector device described in EP1389642A1.

[0023] The present invention has been described with reference to a particular embodiment example, but it is clear that many changes may be made to the laundry washing or washing/drying machine, in particular of the front-loading or substantially front-loading type, comprising a rejector device by those skilled in the art without departing from the scope defined by the annexed claims.

Claims

1. Laundry washing or washing/drying machine, in particular of the front-loading or substantially front-loading type, comprising a tub (3) and a gasket (2), said tub (3) being adapted to contain water and/or wash liquid and having a hole being preferably substantially circular in shape for loading and/or unloading soft goods, said gasket (2) being secured to said tub (3), said tub (3) being made of a rigid material and said gasket (2) being made of an elastic and/or soft material, said laundry washing or washing/drying machine also comprising a rejector device (1) for soft goods, said rejector device (1) comprising a first element (9) and a second element (10), said first element (9) being made of a rigid material and said second element (10) being made of an elastic and/or soft material, wherein said first element (9) forms one piece with said tub (3) and said second element (10) forms one piece with said gasket (2), **characterized in that** at least a part of the tub (3) and said first element (9) are manufactured through the same moulding operation, as one piece.
2. Laundry washing or washing/drying machine according to claim 1, **characterized by** also comprising a drum, preferably being substantially a hollow cylinder in shape, adapted to contain the soft goods to be treated, **characterized in that** said drum is adapted to rotate about its axis and said rejector device (1) is adapted to counter or prevent contact between said soft goods and said gasket (2).
3. Laundry washing or washing/drying machine according to claim 1 or 2, **characterized in that** said tub (3) is made of a rigid plastic material and said first element (9) of said rejector device (1) is made of a rigid plastic material.
4. Laundry washing or washing/drying machine according to claim 1 or 2, **characterized in that** said tub (3) is made of a metal material, preferably stainless steel, and said first element (9) of said rejector device (1) is made of a metal material, preferably stainless steel.
5. Laundry washing or washing/drying machine ac-

cording to claim 1 or 2 or 3 or 4, **characterized in that** said second element (10) of said rejector device (1) and said gasket (2) are manufactured through the same moulding operation.

6. Laundry washing or washing/drying machine according to claim 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5, **characterized in that** said rejector device (1) extends from said tub (3) in the area of said hole in a substantially radial direction.
7. Laundry washing or washing/drying machine according to claim 6, **characterized in that** said second element (10) comprises auxiliary means (11) extending in a substantially axial direction, said auxiliary means (11) being in particular adapted to exert a thrust action on said soft goods toward the inside of said drum.
8. Laundry washing or washing/drying machine according to claim 7, **characterized in that** said second element (10) has a surface facing said drum, and that said auxiliary means (11) extend from all of said surface or from a portion thereof.
9. Laundry washing or washing drying machine according to claim 7 or 8, **characterized in that** said second element (10) fitted with said auxiliary means (11) is entirely made of the same material, preferably as one piece.

Patentansprüche

1. Wäschewaschmaschine oder Wasch-/Trocknungsmaschine, insbesondere von dem Frontlade- oder im Wesentlichen Frontlade-Typ, umfassend eine Wanne (3) und eine Dichtung (2), wobei die Wanne (3) zum Beinhalt von Wasser und/oder Waschflüssigkeit angepasst ist und eine Öffnung aufweist, die vorzugsweise im Wesentlichen kreisförmig ausgestaltet ist zum Beladen und/oder Entladen von Textilien, wobei die Dichtung (2) an der Wanne (3) befestigt ist, wobei die Wanne (3) aus einem steifen Material hergestellt ist und die Dichtung (2) aus einem elastischen und/oder weichen Material hergestellt ist, wobei die Wäschewaschmaschine oder Wasch-/Trocknungsmaschine auch eine Auswurfvorrichtung (1) für Textilien umfasst, wobei die Auswurfvorrichtung (1) ein erstes Element (9) und ein zweites Element (10) umfasst, wobei das erste Element (9) aus einem steifen Material hergestellt ist und das zweite Element (10) aus einem elastischen und/oder weichen Material hergestellt ist, wobei das erste Element (9) mit der Wanne (3) eine Einheit bildet und das zweite Element (10) mit der Dichtung (2) eine Einheit bildet, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** zumindest ein Teil der Wanne (3) und das erste

Element (9) durch dasselbe Gießverfahren als eine Einheit hergestellt worden sind.

2. Wäschewaschmaschine oder Wasch-/Trocknungsmaschine nach Anspruch 1, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** zusätzlich eine Trommel, die vorzugsweise im Wesentlichen als Hohlzylinder ausgestaltet ist zum Beinhalt von der zu behandelnden Textilien angepasst ist, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** die Trommel zum Rotieren um ihre Achse angepasst ist und die Auswurfvorrichtung (1) zum Entgegenwirken oder Verhindern von Kontakt zwischen den Textilien und der Dichtung (2) angepasst ist.
3. Wäschewaschmaschine oder Wasch-/Trocknungsmaschine nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** die Wanne (3) aus einem steifen Kunststoffmaterial hergestellt ist und das erste Element (9) der Auswurfvorrichtung (1) aus einem steifen Kunststoffmaterial hergestellt ist.
4. Wäschewaschmaschine oder Wasch-/Trocknungsmaschine nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** die Wanne (3) aus einem metallischen Material, vorzugsweise Edelstahl, besteht und das erste Element (9) der Auswurfvorrichtung (1) aus einem metallischen Material, vorzugsweise Edelstahl, hergestellt ist.
5. Wäschewaschmaschine oder Wasch-/Trocknungsmaschine nach Anspruch 1 oder 2 oder 3 oder 4, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das zweite Element (10) der Auswurfvorrichtung (1) und die Dichtung (2) durch dasselbe Gießverfahren hergestellt worden sind.
6. Wäschewaschmaschine oder Wasch-/Trocknungsmaschine nach Anspruch 1 oder 2 oder 3 oder 4 oder 5, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** die Auswurfvorrichtung (1) sich von der Wanne (3) in den Bereich der Öffnung im Wesentlichen in Radialrichtung erstreckt.
7. Wäschewaschmaschine oder Wasch-/Trocknungsmaschine nach Anspruch 6, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das zweite Element (10) Hilfsmittel (11) umfasst, die sich im Wesentlichen in Axialrichtung erstrecken, wobei die Hilfsmittel (11) insbesondere angepasst sind, um eine Stoßbewegung auf die Textilien durch die Innenseite der Trommel auszuüben.
8. Wäschewaschmaschine oder Wasch-/Trocknungsmaschine nach Anspruch 7, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das zweite Element (10) eine der Trommel zugewandten Oberfläche aufweist und die Hilfsmittel (11) sich von der gesamten Oberfläche oder von einem Abschnitt davon erstrecken.

9. Wäschewaschmaschine oder Wasch-/Trocknungs-
maschine nach Anspruch 7 oder 8, **dadurch ge-
kennzeichnet, dass** das zweite Element (10) mit
Hilfsmitteln (11) ausgestattet ist, die vollständig aus
demselben Material, vorzugsweise als eine Einheit
hergestellt ist.

Revendications

1. Machine à laver ou machine à laver/sécher le linge,
en particulier machine du type à chargement frontal
ou du type à chargement essentiellement frontal,
comportant une cuve (3) et un joint d'étanchéité (2),
ladite cuve (3) étant adaptée pour contenir de l'eau
et/ou du liquide de lavage et comportant un trou qui
est, de préférence, de configuration essentiellement
circulaire permettant de charger et/ou de décharger
des matières textiles, ledit joint d'étanchéité (2) étant
fixé à ladite cuve (3), ladite cuve (3) étant constituée
d'un matériau rigide et ledit joint d'étanchéité (2)
étant constitué d'un matériau élastique et/ou souple,
ladite machine à laver ou à laver/sécher le linge com-
portant également un dispositif de rejet (1) destiné
à des matériaux textiles, ledit dispositif de rejet (1)
comprenant un premier élément (9) et un second
élément (10), ledit premier élément (9) étant consti-
tué d'un matériau rigide et ledit second élément (10)
étant constitué d'un matériau élastique et/ou souple,
dans laquelle ledit premier élément (9) forme une
seule pièce avec ladite cuve (3) et ledit second élé-
ment (10) forme une seule pièce avec ledit joint
d'étanchéité (2), **caractérisée en ce que** au moins
une partie de la cuve (3) et ledit premier élément (9)
sont fabriqués au cours de la même opération de
moulage, en une seule pièce.
2. Machine à laver ou machine à laver/sécher le linge
selon la revendication 1, **caractérisée par** le fait de
comporter également un tambour, qui présente, de
préférence, essentiellement une configuration de cy-
lindre creux, adapté pour contenir les matières tex-
tiles à traiter, **caractérisée en ce que** ledit tambour
est adapté pour tourner autour de son axe et **en ce
que** ledit dispositif de rejet (1) est adapté pour aller
à l'encontre d'un, ou empêcher un, contact entre les-
dites matières textiles et ledit joint d'étanchéité (2).
3. Machine à laver ou à laver/sécher le linge selon la
revendication 1 ou 2, **caractérisée en ce que** ladite
cuve (3) est constituée d'un matériau de plastique
rigide et **en ce que** ledit premier élément (9) dudit
dispositif de rejet (1) est constitué d'un matériau de
plastique rigide.
4. Machine à laver ou à laver/sécher le linge selon la
revendication 1 ou 2, **caractérisée en ce que** ladite
cuve (3) est constituée d'un matériau métallique, de

préférence, d'un acier inoxydable, et **en ce que** ledit
premier élément (9) dudit dispositif de rejet (1) est
constitué d'un matériau métallique, de préférence,
d'acier inoxydable.

5. Machine à laver ou à laver/sécher le linge selon la
revendication 1 ou 2 ou 3 ou 4, **caractérisée en ce
que** ledit second élément (10) dudit dispositif de rejet
(1) et ledit joint d'étanchéité (2) sont fabriqués au
cours de la même opération de moulage.
6. Machine à laver ou à laver/sécher le linge selon la
revendication 1 ou 2, ou 3 ou 4 ou 5, **caractérisée
en ce que** ledit dispositif de rejet (1) s'étend à partir
de ladite cuve (3) dans la zone dudit trou dans la
direction essentiellement radiale.
7. Machine à laver ou à laver/sécher le linge selon la
revendication 6, **caractérisée en ce que** ledit se-
cond élément (10) comporte des moyens auxiliaires
(11) s'étendant dans une direction essentiellement
axiale, lesdits moyens auxiliaires (11) étant adaptés,
en particulier, pour exercer une action de poussée
sur lesdites matières textiles vers l'intérieur dudit
tambour.
8. Machine à laver ou à laver/sécher le linge selon la
revendication 7, **caractérisée en ce que** ledit se-
cond élément (10) présente une surface faisant face
au dit tambour, et **en ce que** lesdits moyens auxi-
liaires (11) s'étendent à partir de la totalité de ladite
surface ou d'une partie de celle-ci.
9. Machine à laver ou à laver/sécher le linge selon la
revendication 7 ou 8, **caractérisée en ce que** ledit
second élément (10) ajusté sur lesdits moyens auxi-
liaires (11) est entièrement constitué du même ma-
tériel, de préférence, sous la forme d'une seule piè-
ce.

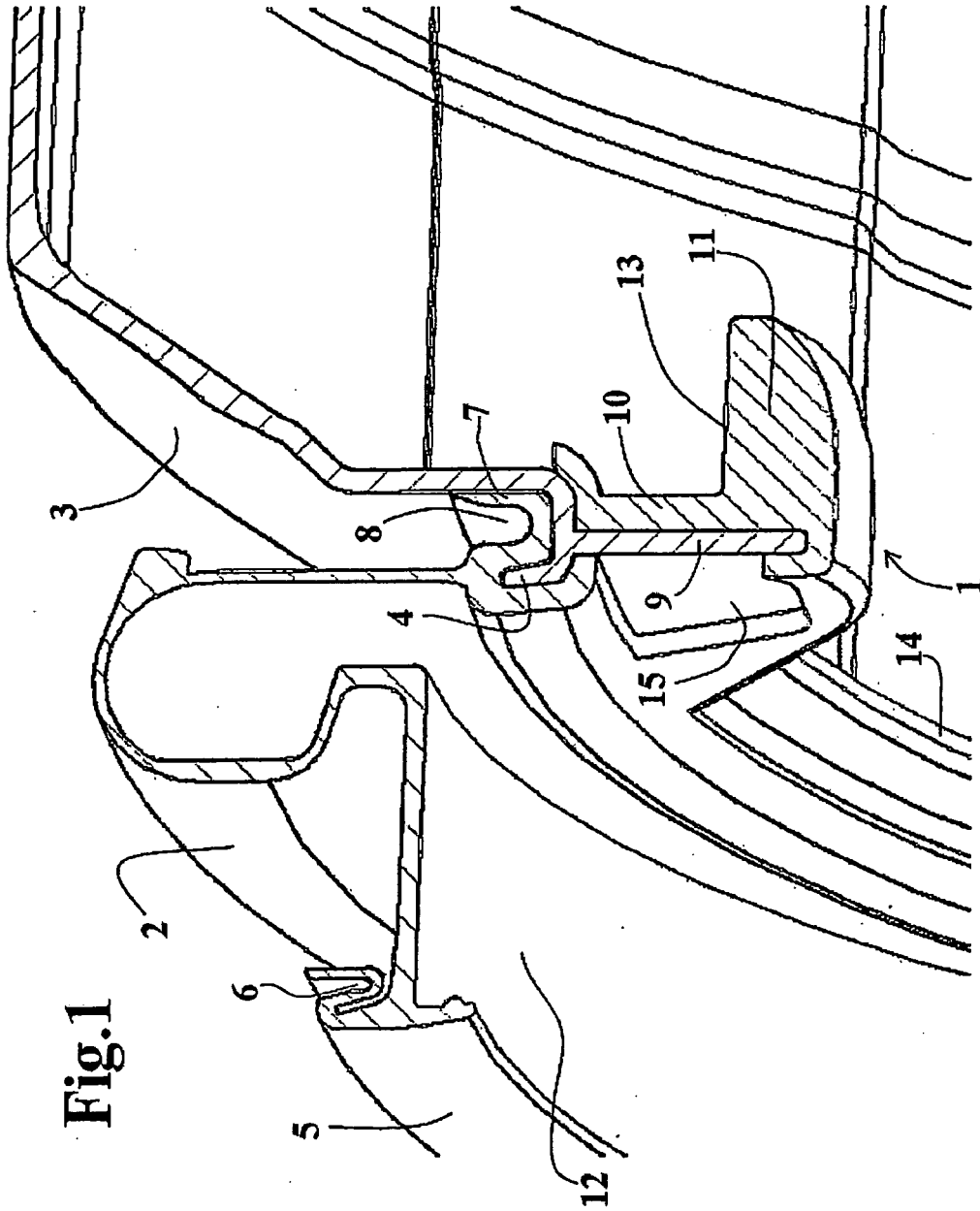


Fig. 1

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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