A handbag system allowing for the rapid exchange of handbag styles and sizes utilizing a detachable inner sleeve and an exterior shell, the inner sleeve being expandable to fit a variety of exterior shells, including exterior shells varying in width and length.
HANDBAG SYSTEM WITH INTERCHANGEABLE AND EXPANDABLE INNER SLEEVE

RELATED APPLICATIONS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a ladies handbag or purse system. The time and effort required to transfer the contents from one handbag to another limits a woman's ability to match the design characteristics of her handbag with each day's attire. In addition, a handbag with the desired design characteristics often lacks desired functional characteristics such as size or range of pocket assemblies. A handbag system featuring an interchangeable inner sleeve with the desired pocket assemblies that is expandable to fit handbags within a range of sizes would allow a woman to select both the desired functional and design characteristics of her handbag while minimizing the time required to transfer her effects from one bag to another.

The related prior art has limitations which prevent it from being applicable to a handbag system that can accommodate changes in the size of the handbag. Owens, U.S. Pat. No. 6,003,573 and Pace, U.S. Pat. No. 7,028,730 disclosed a handbag system that relies on a zipper for attaching the interior pouch to the outer handbag. This method of attachment necessarily limits the size of the exterior shell to which the interior pouch can be attached to one exactly corresponding to the length of the zipper. Similarly, U.S. Pat. No. 3,414,033 issued to Tucker provided for attachment of the interior insert to the handbag by means of a strip of nylon tape fastener having the "Velcro" trademark. An early patent issued to Kase, U.S. Pat. No. 2,723,696, disclosed a rigid inner shell over which an interchangeable cover was snapped. Holdin, in U.S. Pat. No. 5,894,975, disclosed a system that allowed the length of the inner sleeve to be varied, but not the width.

Other patents have issued for handbag organizers which are not attached to an exterior shell. U.S. Pat. No. 4,263,951 issued to Siegel disclosed an organizer system that allowed for the interchange of some but not all of the handbag contents, and was not attached to the exterior shell. Hogan, in U.S. Pat. No. 2,624,385 and Wilson, in U.S. Pat. No. 2,893,457 disclosed removable inserts for a handbag that are not attached to the exterior shell of a handbag.

Some handbag systems feature variable inserts with a single frame, which does not provide the advantages of the present invention in allowing the user to keep her effects in a single inner sleeve while interchanging the exterior shell. In U.S. Pat. No. 6,971,424, Angelvine disclosed a handbag system in which a variable insert is inserted into a single frame.

Other disclosed handbag systems employ handbags without inner sleeves, and utilize interchangeable cover members that limit the variation in the functional characteristics of the handbag such as size. The patent issued to Bossero, U.S. Pat. No. 6,029,723 disclosed a single purse housing detachable lid or cover members which can be interchanged, but which lacking an inner sleeve that is interchangeable with a variety of handbag designs and sizes.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a front view of the sliding bar assembly of the inner sleeve.
FIG. 2 is a top cutaway view of the sliding bar assembly of the inner sleeve.
FIG. 3 is a top cutaway view of another embodiment of the sliding bar assembly.
FIG. 4 is a front view of the mating attachment bar of the exterior shell.
FIG. 5 is a front perspective view of the inner sleeve.
FIG. 6 is a front perspective view of the exterior shell.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

In the following discussion, "top" refers to the edge of the handbag that is closest to the user's head when the bag is held by the user as in normal use. In the following discussion, "bottom" refers to the edge of the handbag that is closest to the user's feet when the bag is held by the user as in normal use. In the following discussion, "front" refers to the side of the handbag that is furthest from the user's body when the bag is held by the user as in normal use. In the following discussion, "back" refers to the side of the handbag that is closest to the user's body when the bag is held by the user as in normal use. In the following discussion, "inner" refers to the surface of the inner sleeve that is closest to or adjacent to the exterior shell when joined to the exterior shell. In the following discussion, "outside" refers to the surface of the exterior shell that is furthest from the inner sleeve when joined to the inner sleeve and which is visible during normal wear. In the following discussion, "inside" refers to the surface of the exterior shell that is closest to or adjacent to the inner sleeve when joined to the inner sleeve. In
the following discussion, “lateral side” refers to the surfaces or seams connecting the front side to the back side. In the following discussion, “width” refers to that dimension that extends from one lateral side of the front side or back side to the other lateral side. In the following discussion, “length” refers to that dimension extending from the top of the handbag to the bottom of the handbag.

[0015] FIG. 1 shows one embodiment of the inner sleeve sliding bar assembly 101, comprised of a central bar 102 and two side bars 103. The central bar 102 has at least one snap or fastener 104 on the outer surface. The side bars each have at least one snap or fastener 105 on the outer surface.

[0016] Now referring to FIG. 2, the width of the sliding bar assembly 101 can be adjusted by pulling the side bars 103 outwards or pushing the side bars 103 inwards into an inner void 201 extending from one distal end of the central bar 102 to the other distal end.

[0017] Now referring to FIG. 3, in another embodiment of the invention, the inner sleeve sliding bar assembly 301 can be configured so that the central bar 302 has two offset slots 306 into which the side bars 303 are disposed so that the side bars 303 slide past one another during compression of the sliding bar assembly 301. This embodiment allows a large variation in the widths of the sliding bar assembly 301.

[0018] Now referring to FIG. 4, a mating attachment bar 401 has at least one central snap or fastener 404 and at least two side snaps or fasteners 405 corresponding to and mating with the inner sleeve snaps or fasteners 104 and 105. Other embodiments feature mating attachments 404, 405 fastened or inserted directly into the inside surface of the handbag body.

[0019] Now referring to FIG. 5, the sliding bar assemblies 101 are inserted into the top of the front side and the back side of the pouch 502, the pouch 502 and sliding bar assemblies 101 together forming the inner sleeve 501, with the pouch 502 being adjusted by inserting holes in the pouch fabric or making other adjustments so that the snaps or fasteners 104, 105 function as designed. The pouch 502 is of a sufficient width to accommodate the sliding bar assembly 101 at its fully-extended position. If the desired handbag is of a lesser width than the width represented by the fully-extended sliding bar assembly 101, then the pouch fabric 502 will be compressed, as necessary in the width adjustment area 503 between the central bar snaps or fasteners 104 and the side bar snaps or fasteners 105. Elastic strips 505 secured to the pouch fabric 502 over the width adjustment area 503 may aid in gathering the pouch fabric 502 when the inner sleeve 501 is in the contracted position.

[0020] The height of the inner sleeve 501 can be adjusted by means of elastic strips 504 inserted into the pouch fabric 502 along the lateral sides. In one embodiment, fasteners 506 located at or near the bottom of the pouch 502 and on the inside of the handbag body secure the bottom of the inner sleeve to the bottom of the exterior shell. Alternatively, cords running along the laterals sides of the pouch 502 can be pulled to gather the pouch fabric 502 along the laterals sides to gather the pouch fabric and shorten the inner sleeve 501 for use with shorter handbag bodies.

[0021] Referring to FIG. 6, the mating bar assemblies 401 are inserted into the top edges of the front side and back side of the handbag body 602, with the mating fasteners 404, 405 exposed on the inside surface. The handbag body 602 and mating attachment bars 401 or fasteners together form the exterior shell 601, which is joined with the inner sleeve 501 to form the completed handbag system.

[0022] The fastening means by which the inner sleeve 501 and exterior shell 601 are joined can include snaps, buttons, magnets, discrete segments of hook and loop fastener material such as is sold under the trademark “Velcro,” toggle switches in which the fastening is accomplished by rotating a member after inserting it into a void in the mating surface to secure two surfaces, a hook and eye assembly where the inner sleeve is attached by inserting hooks into receptacles located on the inside surface of the exterior shell, a knob or raised button disposed on the outer surface of the central bars and side bars and corresponding slots in the mating attachment bars into which the knob or button slides, or any other means by which a discrete point on the outer surface of the inner sleeve can be joined or attached to a discrete point on the inside surface of the exterior shell.

[0023] Although the description above contains many specificities, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the embodiment but as merely providing illustrations of one or more of the presently preferred embodiments. Thus the scope of the embodiment should be determined by the claims and their legal equivalents, rather than by the examples given.

1 claim:
1. A handbag system comprising:
(a) an inner sleeve comprising:
(i) a pouch having an inner surface, an outer surface, a top having at least one opening, an enclosed bottom, a front side and a back side; and
(ii) a first sliding bar assembly and a second sliding bar assembly, each sliding bar assembly comprising a central bar having an inner side, an outer side a first distal end and a second distal end, said central bar having an inner void extending from the first distal end to the second distal end, and two side bars, each having an inner side and an outer side, and being of a size and shape to fit within the inner void of the central bar, said side bars being inserted into the first and second distal ends of the central bar and being capable of moving laterally within the inner void of the central bar so that the total width of the sliding bar assemblies varies from a minimum in which the side bars are pushed to the fullest possible extent into the inner void of the central bar to a maximum in which the side bars are extended laterally to the fullest extent possible, said central bar having at least one fastening means on the outer side and each of the two side bars having at least one fastening means on the outer side; said first sliding bar assembly being attached to or encased in the front side of the pouch at or near the top of the pouch and said second sliding bar assembly being attached to or encased in the back side of the pouch at or near the top of the pouch, with the material comprising the front side of the pouch capable of extending to a width substantially corresponding to the maximum width of the first sliding bar assembly and of being compressed to a width substantially corresponding to the minimum width of the first sliding bar assembly and arranged so that the fastening means protrude through the pouch as necessary to perform the fastening function and the material comprising the back side of the pouch capable of extending to a width substantially corresponding to the maximum width of
the second sliding bar assembly and of being compressed to a width substantially corresponding to the minimum width of the second sliding bar assembly and arranged so that the fastening means protrude through the pouch as necessary to perform the fastening function; and

(b) an exterior shell comprising:

(i) a handbag body having an inside surface, an outside surface, a top having at least one opening, an enclosed bottom, a front side and a back side; and

(ii) a first mating attachment bar and a second mating attachment bar, each with an inner side and an outer side and having fastening means on the inner side that mate with the fastening means on the outer side of the inner sleeve, said first mating attachment bar being attached to or inserted in the inside surface of the handbag body at or near the top of the front side and said second mating attachment bar being attached to or inserted in the inside surface of the handbag body at or near the top of the back side; and

(c) a means for attaching the inner sleeve to the exterior shell, such fastening means allowing for the compression or expansion of the pouch material across the sliding bar assembly of the inner sleeve as required for adjusting the width of the pouch to correspond to the width of the exterior shell.

2. The handbag system of claim 1 where the first and second sliding bar assemblies are comprised of a central bar where the central void comprises a first slot and a second slot, the first slot extending from the first distal end to a position greater than half way to the second distal end, and the second slot being offset towards the inner side of the central bar and extending from the second distal end to a position greater than half way to the first distal end, and a first side bar and a second side bar, the first side bar being inserted into the first slot and the second side bar being inserted into the second slot.

3. The handbag system of claim 1 where the compression and extension of the pouch during movement of the side bars is accommodated by means of elastic strips attached to the pouch fabric in the width adjustment area.

4. The handbag system of claim 1 where the top of the pouch has more than one opening, forming compartments separated by dividers.

5. The handbag system of claim 1 where the pouch can be decreased in height by a means for gathering the fabric of the pouch along the lateral sides to fit handbag bodies of varying heights.

6. The handbag system of claim 1 where the inner sleeve is attached to the exterior shell by fastening means consisting of knobs, each knob comprising a head and a neck with the head having a greater circumference than the neck, said knobs protruding from the outer surface of the central bars and the side bars, said knobs being inserted into slots in the mating attachment bars, said slots having an opening sufficiently large to accommodate the head of the knob, and narrowing to a distance sufficient to accommodate the neck of the knob.

7. A handbag system comprising:

(a) an inner sleeve comprising:

(i) a pouch having an inner surface, an outer surface, a top having at least one opening, an enclosed bottom, a front side and a back side; and

(ii) a first sliding bar assembly and a second sliding bar assembly, each sliding bar assembly comprising a central bar having an inner side, an outer side, a first distal end and a second distal end, said central bar having an inner void extending from the first distal end to the second distal end, and two side bars, each having an inner side and an outer side, and being of a size and shape to fit within the inner void of the central bar, said side bars being inserted into the first and second distal ends of the central bar and being capable of moving laterally within the inner void of the central bar so that the total width of the sliding bar assemblies varies from a minimum in which the side bars are pushed to the fullest possible extent into the inner void of the central bar to a maximum in which the side bars are extended laterally to the fullest extent possible, said central bar having at least one fastening means on the outer side and each of the two side bars having at least one fastening means on the outer side; said first sliding bar assembly being attached to or encased in the front side of the pouch at or near the top of the pouch and said second sliding bar assembly being attached to or encased in the back side of the pouch at or near the top of the pouch, with the material comprising the front side of the pouch capable of extending to a width substantially corresponding to the maximum width of the first sliding bar assembly and of being compressed to a width substantially corresponding to the minimum width of the first sliding bar assembly and arranged so that the fastening means protrude through the pouch as necessary to perform the fastening function; and

(b) an exterior shell comprising:

(i) a handbag body having an inside surface, an outside surface, a top having at least one opening, an enclosed bottom, a front side and a back side; and

(ii) mating attachment means located on the inside surface of the handbag body at or near the top of the handbag body; and

(c) a means for attaching the inner sleeve to the exterior shell, such fastening means allowing for the compression or expansion of the pouch material across the sliding bar assembly of the inner sleeve as required for adjusting the width of the pouch to correspond to the width of the exterior shell.

8. A handbag system comprising:

(a) an inner sleeve comprising:

(i) a pouch having an inner surface, an outer surface, a top having at least one opening, an enclosed bottom, a front side and a back side; and

(ii) a first sliding bar assembly and a second sliding bar assembly, each sliding bar assembly comprising an outer bar and an inner bar, the outer bar having an inner side and an outer side and the inner bar having an inner side and an outer side, said outer bar having one open end leading to a central void and said inner bar being inserted into the open end and central void of the outer bar and capable of moving laterally within the central void of the outer bar, said outer bar having
at least one fastening means on the outer side and said inner bar having at least one fastening means on the outer side; said first sliding bar assembly being attached to or encased in the front side of the pouch at or near the top of the pouch and said second sliding bar assembly being attached to or encased in the back side of the pouch at or near the top of the pouch, with the material comprising the front side of the pouch capable of extending to a width substantially corresponding to the maximum width of the first sliding bar assembly and of being compressed to a width substantially corresponding to the minimum width of the first sliding bar assembly and arranged so that the fastening means protrude through the pouch as necessary to perform the fastening function and the material comprising the back side of the pouch capable of extending to a width substantially corresponding to the maximum width of the second sliding bar assembly and of being compressed to a width substantially corresponding to the minimum width of the second sliding bar assembly and arranged so that the fastening means protrude through the pouch as necessary to perform the fastening function; and

(b) an exterior shell comprising:

(i) a handbag body having an inside surface, an outside surface, a top having at least one opening, an enclosed bottom, a front side and a back side; and

(ii) a first mating attachment bar and a second mating attachment bar, each with an inner side and an outer side and having fastening means on the inner side that mate with the fastening means on the outer side of the inner sleeve, said first mating attachment bar being attached to or inserted in the inside surface of the handbag body at or near the top of the front side and said second mating attachment bar being attached to or inserted in the inside surface of the handbag body at or near the top of the back side; and

(c) a means for attaching the inner sleeve to the exterior shell, such fastening means allowing for the compression or expansion of the pouch material across the sliding bar assembly of the inner sleeve as required for adjusting the width of the pouch to correspond to the width of the exterior shell.

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