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(54) Title: DETECTION SYSTEM OF WASHING MACHINES REMOVABLE BASKET AND METHOD FOR DETECTION OF WASHING MACHINES REMOVABLE BASKET

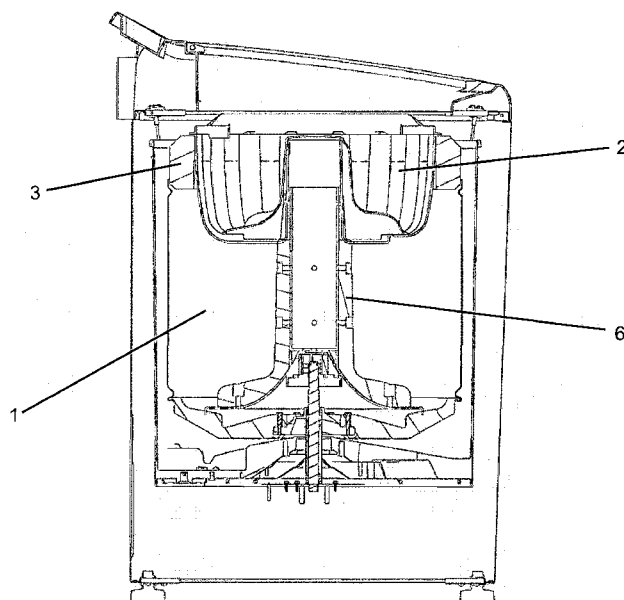


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to a system for detecting washing machines removable basket, which comprises at least one washing basket (1) attached to the washing machine, at least one washing basket (2) removable from the washing machine and at least one structural component (3) attached to the washing machine. The system itself consists of at least one sensor (4) and at least one component (5) able to cause excitation in the sensor (4), wherein the sensor (4) can be physically associated to the structural component (3) attached to the washing machine and the component (5) can be physically associated with the washing basket (2) removable from the washing machine. Alternatively, the sensor (4) can be physically associated to the washing basket (2) removable from the washing machine and the component (5) may be physically associated to the structural component (3) attached to the washing machine. The subject method provides for at least one driving step of the motive source (6) and at least one checking step of the output signal of the sensor (4), the detection of the removable washing basket (2) being performed by checking the change of the output signal of the sensor (4).

“DETECTION SYSTEM OF WASHING MACHINES REMOVABLE BASKET AND METHOD FOR DETECTION OF WASHING MACHINES REMOVABLE BASKET”

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a detection system of washing basket and more particularly to washing machines consisting of attached washing basket and a modular and removable washing basket. The subject invention further relates to a method for detecting washing machines removable basket, which is particularly suitable for the detection system of washing machines removable basket now disclosed.

Together, the system and method disclosed herein allow an automatic, complementary or independent verification from the verification by the user, which allows determining if a removable basket is or not coupled to the stirrer of a washing machine capable of this type of coupling.

Background of the Invention

As is known to those skilled technicians in the art, washing machines and in particular clothes washing machines comprise machines for washing articles in general in an aqueous medium. Thus, it is evident to note that clothes washing machines comprise, among other functional components and elements, at least one washing basket.

Conventionally, a washing basket of a clothes washing machine defines a environment able to pack an aqueous medium (water and cleaning supplies) and an specific load of articles to be washed.

Also conventionally, a washing basket of a clothes washing machine provides means for mechanical association to a motive source (usually an electric motor) existing in the washing machine. Such means of mechanical association are responsible for transmitting the rotary motion of the motor to said washing basket. Different stages of the washing process require this movement of the washing basket.

Conventionally, a clothes washing machine comprises only one washing basket, that is, only an environment able to receive an aqueous medium and a load of articles to be washed.

In these cases, it is necessary to perform a kind of screening of the articles that will compose a washing load, that is, it is necessary for example to separate the white clothes from the colored ones so that they do not smear each other during the washing process.

5 This type of screening implies the need of conducting at least two complete washing processes. In the present example, at least one washing process for the white clothes and at least one washing process for colored ones.

The current state of the art provides the possibility of using removable baskets together with attached baskets in clothes washing machines.

10 An example of this kind of concept can be found in document US3.014.358, where it is described a clothes washing machine which provides, in addition to the main washing basket, a removable washing basket liable of attachment in the stirrer of the washing machine, which is arranged inside the main washing basket. In this example, both washing baskets have fluid communication with each other, that is, the
15 same aqueous medium used in the main washing basket is used in the removable washing basket.

 Another example of the same concept is disclosed in document US7.401.479, wherein the use of a removable washing basket liable of attachment to the bottom of a main washing basket is described. In this example, the two washing
20 baskets also have fluid communication with each other, with the same aqueous medium being used for both baskets.

 In both examples above, as well as other embodiments based on this same concept, there is, for practical purposes, no difference between using or not using the removable washing basket, after all, it is understood that the
25 washing machine is liable of conventional operating with or without said removable washing basket.

 This occurs mainly by the fact that both the main washing basket and the removable washing basket operate in a same aqueous medium. Therefore, systems for filling and draining the washing machine operate in a standard and independent
30 manner from the use or not of the removable washing basket.

Moreover, the current state of the art also includes a second concept substantially different from the concept illustrated in documents US3.014.358 and US7.401.479.

In this second concept, a clothes washing machine also provides for the existence of two washing baskets, one main and attached and one modular and removable. However, in this second concept, the washing baskets do not present fluid communication with each other (at least not during the washing process) and depending on this, each washing baskets operate as own aqueous media and distinct from one another.

An example of this second concept can be found in document US3.575.020, wherein it is described a washing machine consisting of a storage tank of water and, within this, a attached washing basket and a removable washing basket.

In general, the removable washing basket is able to be attached to the upper end of the stirrer which is disposed inside the attached washing basket. It is also worth noting that the aforementioned removable washing basket still has water drainage holes facing the inside of the attached washing basket.

Anyway, during the washing process, the attached washing basket receives a first aqueous medium and a first washing load, while the removable washing basket receives a second aqueous medium and a second washing load. Obviously, said removable washing basket cannot be used and, in this context, the clothes washing machine receives only one aqueous medium and only one washing load.

Considering this second concept, it is within the knowledge of the versed technician that the user must insert or remove the removable washing basket and hence the user must "inform" the clothes washing machine if said removable washing basket is in conditions of use or not.

Unlike the first concept (where the washing baskets present fluid communication), the use or not of the removable washing basket alters all the functional dynamics of the washing machine, after all, two distinct filling steps and two distinct draining steps are required, in addition to other intermediate steps which guarantee the independent operation of both baskets.

Thus, it is extremely important to identify, preferably before the start of the washing process, if the removable washing basket is in conditions of use or not, and it is based on this premise that the present invention arises.

Objectives of the Invention

Thus, it is an objective of this invention to provide a detection system of removable basket of washing machine able to verify, independently, if a removable washing basket is in conditions of use or not. From this verification, the clothes washing machine, according to the subject invention, may take appropriate pre program mediation.

It is also an objective of the subject invention that said detection system of washing machines removable basket presents a simplistic and simultaneously robust constructiveness. In this context, the simplicity aims to avoid increasing the manufacturing costs of the washing machine, and the robustness aims to avoid failures and misuse of the washing machine.

It is another objective of the present invention to propose a method for detecting washing machines removable basket, which is especially suited to the detection system of washing machines removable basket now disclosed and its main objective is to verify the existence or not of the removable washing basket before the beginning of the washing process.

Summary of the Invention

These and other objectives of the invention disclosed herein are fully achieved by the detection system of washing machines removable basket disclosed in the present invention.

In accordance with the subject invention, the washing machine comprises at least one washing basket attached to the washing machine, at least one washing basket removable from the washing machine and at least one structural member attached to the washing machine.

Still according to the present invention, the detection system comprises at least one sensor and at least one component able to cause excitation in the sensor.

In a preferred embodiment, the sensor is physically associated to the structural

component attached to the washing machine and the component is physically associated to the washing basket removable from the washing machine. In an optional embodiment, the sensor is physically associated to the washing basket removable from the washing machine and the component is physically associated to the structural component attached to the washing machine.

Preferably, the sensor comprises an inductive sensor. Optionally, said sensor comprises a magnetic sensor or an electromagnetic sensor or even an optical sensor.

Also preferably, the component comprises a magnet. Optionally, said component comprises an electromagnet or a generating source of light, or even, a refracting source of light.

The objectives of the subject invention are also achieved due to the method for detection of washing machines removable basket proposed herein.

In accordance with the subject invention, the method is particularly applicable in a washing machine provided with at least one washing basket attached to the washing machine, at least one washing basket removable from the washing machine, at least one structural member attached to the washing machine, at least one sensor and at least one component able to cause excitation in the sensor (the sensor being physically associated to the structural component attached to the washing machine and the component being physically associated to the washing basket removable from the washing machine, or even, the sensor being physically associated to the washing basket removable from the washing machine and the component being physically associated to the structural component attached to the washer) and at least a motive source able to be operatively connected to the washing basket removable from the washing machine.

The method for detecting washing machines removable basket itself comprises at least one activating step of the motive source and at least one checking step of the output signal of the sensor, being the detection of the removable washing basket performed by checking the change of the output signal of the sensor.

In accordance with the subject invention, the activating step of the motive source comprises a rotary activating of at least one complete mechanical turn.

This step, which is performed before the initial step of the washing process, may be interrupted at the instant when a change in the sensor output is detected.

5 Preferably, the detection of the removable washing basket is carried out by comparing the change of the output signal of the sensor and a previously known analog parameter, however, this same detection can be performed by checking at least one peak of the output signal of the sensor.

10 Anyway, the non-detection of the removable washing basket is verified by checking the maintenance of the output signal of the sensor along at least one activating step of the motive source.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The present invention will be detailed based on the figures listed below, which:

15 Figure 1 illustrates in schematic section a washing machine fundamentally based on the second concept (two washing tanks, one attached and the other removable, free of fluid communication with each other) previously detailed;

Figure 2 illustrates in schematic prospective the detection system of washing machines removable basket according to the present invention; and

20 Figure 3 illustrates in schematic top view the detection system of washing machines removable basket according to the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Invention

As previously mentioned, it is within the knowledge of the technicians skilled in the art that washing machines can take an embodiment as illustrated in Figure 1.

25 In Figure 1, it is illustrated in schematic section a washing machine mainly composed of an structural set defined by an outer case and a movable lid which provides access to the interior of said outer case.

30 Inside the outer case, it is provided one washing basket 1 that, attached to the washing machine, is susceptible to rotational movement inherent to the steps of the washing process. The washing basket 1, in its different possibilities of

configuration and / or embodiment, is notorious to the technicians versed in the subject matter.

Inside said washing basket 1, it is arranged a stirrer, which is essentially composed by a base and a column. The current state of the art provides for a wide
5 range of configurations and / or embodiments of stirrers, and thus the stirrer is also evident to the technicians skilled in the art.

In general, both the washing basket 1 and the stirrer are functionally connected to a rotating mechanism (not shown) capable of transmitting rotation to these two components. This aspect is also within the knowledge of the technicians
10 skilled in the subject matter.

Inside the washing basket 1, it is provided for the existence of a washing basket 2 that, removable from the washing machine, is capable of rotational movement (inherent to the steps of the washing process) through a motive source 6.

According to the mentioned figure 1, the motive source 6 of the washing basket
15 2 is the column of the stirrer existing inside the washing basket 1. However the motive source 6 of the washing basket 2 may comprise any set capable to transmit the rotational movement of the rotational mechanism (not shown) to said washing basket 2.

The existence of a washing basket 2 removable from the washing machine and arranged within the washing basket 1 attached to the washing machine is also
20 already described in documents belonging to the current state of the art. More particularly, the aforementioned document US3.575.020 already describes the use of a removable washing basket liable of coupling to the upper end of the column of the washing machine stirrer.

Still according to figure 1, it is also noted that the washing machine
25 comprises at least one structural component 3 attached to the washing machine. Such a structural component can comprise from one collector ring of washing inputs up to a connection element of between two or more internal components that make up the washing machine.

Thus, it is important to note that, according to the subject invention, the
30 attached structural component 3 can comprise any component / part / element that,

being located inside the washing machine, does not present any kind of movement (except eventual vibrating movements inherent to the conventional operation of the washing machine).

According to the present invention, said structural component 3 is an attached
5 annular structure arranged (and free of physical contact) on the washing basket 1.

All the features and descriptions explained above comprise the current state of the art.

The major inventive aspect of the subject invention mainly consists of allocating a sensor 4 in said structural component 3 and, in addition, allocating a
10 component 5 (able to cause excitation in sensor 4) in the washing basket.

Optionally, the scheme of "allocation" could be otherwise. The sensor (4) could be allocated in the washing basket 2 and the component 5 (able to cause excitation in sensor 4) could be allocated in the structural component 3.

With the addition of these two components, the main objective of the subject
15 invention - provide a simplified system capable of detecting the presence of the washing basket 2 inside the washing basket 1 - is fully achieved.

According to the preferred embodiment of the subject invention, as illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, the sensor 4 is, in fact, arranged in an attached manner along the structural component 3, while the component 5 (able to cause excitation in the
20 sensor 4) is, in fact, disposed on the top edge of the washing basket 2.

Preferably, the sensor 4 and the component 5 (able to cause excitation in the sensor 4) are horizontally aligned.

In this preferred embodiment, the sensor 4 comprises an inductive sensor able to generate an output signal relatively variable to the accuracy of
25 electromagnetic fields.

However, the sensor 4 may also comprise a magnetic or electromagnetic sensor.

Still in this preferred embodiment, the component 5 (able to cause excitation in the sensor 4) comprises a magnet of fixed magnetic field, which can even be
30 injected together with the thermosetting material of the washing basket 2.

However, the component 5 (able to cause excitation in the sensor 4) could comprise an electromagnet (although this embodiment is difficult to achieve, after all, the electromagnet feeding would have to be able to work together with the movement of the washing basket 2).

5 Anyway, the main idea is that the component 5 (able to cause excitation in the sensor 4), when approaching the sensor 4, change the output signal of the latter, and that this change of the output signal of the sensor 4 is used (by a mechanical, electromechanical or electronic system) to detect the presence of the washing basket 2. Obviously, the non-changing of the output signal of the sensor 4 comprises, however,
10 an indication that the washing basket 2 is not coupled the upper end of the stirrer.

 Considering this fundamental concept of the detection system of washing machines removable basket disclosed herein, it can be considered feasible the possible use of a sensor set 4 + component 5 based on optical interaction (as opposed to magnetic interaction).

15 This means that the present system is functional if the sensor 4 comprises optical sensor 4 and the component 5 comprises a generating or refracting source of light.

 The present invention further provides a method for detecting washing machines removable basket, which is particularly suitable to the detection system of washing machines removable basket detailed above.

20 In general, the subject method has the premise of forcing the approaching of the component 5 to the sensor 4, if the washing basket 2 is coupled to the upper end of the stirrer. With this, it is intended to eliminate a possible "false negative" diagnosis that might occur if said washing basket 2 is properly attached to the washing machine, but with the component 5 away from the sensor 4.

25 Accordingly, the subject method is to activate the motive source 6 (that in the preferred embodiment of the system is the stirrer itself, which is rotated from an electric motor) of the washing basket 2 by at least one mechanical turn, so that the entire circumference of the washing basket 2 is approximated to the sensor 4.

 Thus, it is guaranteed that, if the washing basket 2 is in conditions of use, the
30 component 5 will approach to the sensor 4 in order to change its output signal.

Thus, it is guaranteed that the change of the output signal of the sensor 4, along a mechanical turn of the motive source 6, indicates that the washing basket 2 is not coupled to the washing machine.

On the other hand, the non-changing of the output signal of the sensor 4, along a mechanical turn of the motive source 6, indicates that the washing basket 2 is not coupled to the washing machine.

The above change of the output signal of the sensor 4 can be verified by microprocessor forms and systems already known, and the detection confirmation of the washing basket 2 may be triggered by a single peak of the output signal of the sensor 4 (if this sensor generates an output signal related to an electrical quantity easily measurable), or even, and the detection confirmation of the washing basket 2 may be triggered by comparing the change of the output signal of the sensor 4 and an analog parameter previously known (if this sensor generates an output signal related to an electrical quantity not easily measurable).

Also noteworthy is that the activating of the motive source 6 must preferably be performed before the initial step of the washing process (with a rotation lower than the conventional rotation) and can be stopped at the instant in that a variation in the output of the sensor is detected 4.

The mechanical and / or electromechanical and / or electronic means able to activate or deactivate the motive source 6 from various stimuli (for example, the previous detection of the washing basket 2) are widely known by those skilled in the art and does not comprise, somehow, the inventive core of the subject invention.

The same occurs with the electronic (microprocessor and / or micro controlled) means able to verify, estimate and compare the change of the output signal of the sensor 4, that is, such media are widely known by those technicians skilled on the subject and do not comprise, anyway, the inventive core of the subject invention.

Examples of the concepts of the present invention having been described and illustrated, it is to be understood that the scope thereof encompasses other possible variations, which are solely limited by the wording of the claims, including therein the possible equivalent means.

CLAIMS

1. Detection system of washing machines removable basket, the washing machine comprising:

at least one washing basket (1) attached to the washing machine;

5 at least one washing basket (2) removable from the washing machine;

at least one structural component (3) attached to the washing machine;

the detection system being characterized in that it comprises:

at least one sensor (4) and at least one component (5) able to cause excitation in the sensor (4);

10 the sensor (4) being physically associated to the structural component (3) attached to the washing machine; and

the component (5) being physically associated to the washing basket (2) removable from the washing machine.

2. System, according to claim 1, characterized in that the sensor (4) comprises an inductive sensor.

3. System, according to claim 1, characterized in that the sensor (4) comprises a magnetic sensor.

4. System, according to claim 1, characterized in that the sensor (4) comprises an electromagnetic sensor.

20 5. System, according to claim 1, characterized in that the sensor (4) comprises an optical sensor.

6. System, according to claim 1, characterized in that the component (5) comprises a magnet.

25 7. System, according to claim 1, characterized in that the component (5) comprises an electromagnet.

8. System, according to claim 1, characterized in that the component (5) comprises a generating source of light.

9. System, according to claim 1, characterized in that the component (5) comprises a refracting source of light.

30 10. Detection system of washing machines removable basket, the washing

machine comprising:

at least one washing basket (1) attached to the washing machine;

at least one washing basket (2) removable from the washing machine;

at least one structural component (3) attached to the washing machine;

5 the detection system being characterized in that it comprises:

at least one sensor (4) and at least one component (5) able to cause excitation in the sensor (4);

the sensor (4) being physically associated to the washing basket (2) removable from the washing machine; and

10 the component (5) being physically associated to the structural component (3) attached to the washing machine.

11. System, according to claim 10, characterized in that the sensor (4) comprises an inductive sensor.

12. System, according to claim 10, characterized in that the sensor (4)
15 comprises a magnetic sensor.

13. System, according to claim 10, characterized in that the sensor (4) comprises an electromagnetic sensor.

14. System, according to claim 10, characterized in that the sensor (4) comprises an optical sensor.

20 15. System, according to claim 10, characterized in that the component (5) comprises a magnet.

16. System, according to claim 10, characterized in that the component (5) comprises an electromagnet.

17. System, according to claim 10, characterized in that the component (5)
25 comprises a generating source of light.

18. System, according to claim 10, characterized in that the component (5) comprises a refracting source of light.

19. Method for detecting washing machines removable basket, the washing machine comprising:

30 at least one washing basket (1) attached to the washing machine;

at least one washing basket (2) removable from the washing machine;
at least one structural component (3) attached to the washing machine;
at least one sensor (4) and at least one component (5) able to cause
excitation in the sensor (4);

5 at least one motive source (6) able to be operatively connected to the
washing basket (2) removable from the washing machine;

the sensor (4) being physically associated to the structural component
(3) attached to the washing machine; and

10 the component (5) being physically associated to the washing basket (2)
removable from the washing machine;

the method for detecting washing machines removable basket being
characterized in that it comprises:

at least one activating step of the motive source (6);

at least one checking step of the output signal of the sensor (4);

15 the detection of the removable washing basket (2) being performed by
checking the change of the output signal of the sensor (4).

20. Method, according to claim 19, characterized in that the activating step of
the motive source (6) comprises a rotary driving of at least one complete mechanical
turn.

21. Method, according to claim 19, characterized in that the activating step of
the motive source (6) is interrupted at the instant wherein a change in the output of
the sensor (4) is detected.

22. Method, according to claim 19, characterized in that the activating step of
the motive source (6) is performed before the initial step of the washing process.

25 23. Method, according to claim 19, characterized in that the detection of the
removable washing basket (2) is performed by comparing the change of the output
signal of the sensor (4) and a analog parameter previously known.

24. Method, according to claim 19, characterized in that the detection of the
removable washing basket (2) is performed by checking at least one peak of the
30 output signal of the sensor (4).

25. Method, according to claim 19, characterized in that the non-detection of the removable washing basket (2) is detected by checking the maintenance of the output signal of the sensor (4) along at least one activating step of the motive source (6).

5 26. Method for detecting washing machines removable basket, the washing machine comprising:

 at least one washing basket (1) attached to the washing machine;

 at least one washing basket (2) removable from the washing machine;

 at least one structural component (3) attached to the washing machine;

10 at least one sensor (4) and at least one component (5) able to cause excitation in the sensor (4);

 at least one motive source (6) able to be operatively connected to the washing basket (2) removable from the washing machine;

 the sensor (4) being physically associated to the washing basket (2) removable from washing machine; and

15 the component (5) being physically associated to the structural component (3) attached to the washing machine;

 the method for detecting washing machines removable basket being characterized in that it comprises:

20 at least one activating step of the motive source (6);

 at least one checking step of the output signal of the sensor (4);

 the detection of the removable washing basket (2) being performed by checking the change of the output signal of the sensor (4).

25 27. Method, according to claim 26, characterized in that the activating step of the motive source (6) comprises a rotary driving of at least one complete mechanical turn.

 28. Method, according to claim 26, characterized in that the activating step of the motive source (6) is interrupted at the instant wherein a change in the output of the sensor (4) is detected.

30 29. Method, according to claim 26, characterized in that the activating step of

the motive source (6) is performed before the initial step of the washing process.

30. Method, according to claim 26, characterized in that the detection of the removable washing basket (2) is performed by comparing the change of the output signal of the sensor (4) and an analog parameter previously known.

5 31. Method, according to claim 26, characterized in that the detection of the removable washing basket (2) is performed by checking at least one peak of the output signal of the sensor (4).

 32. Method, according to claim 26, characterized in that the non-detection of the removable washing basket (2) is detected by checking the maintenance of the
10 output signal of the sensor (4) along at least one driving step of the motive source (6).

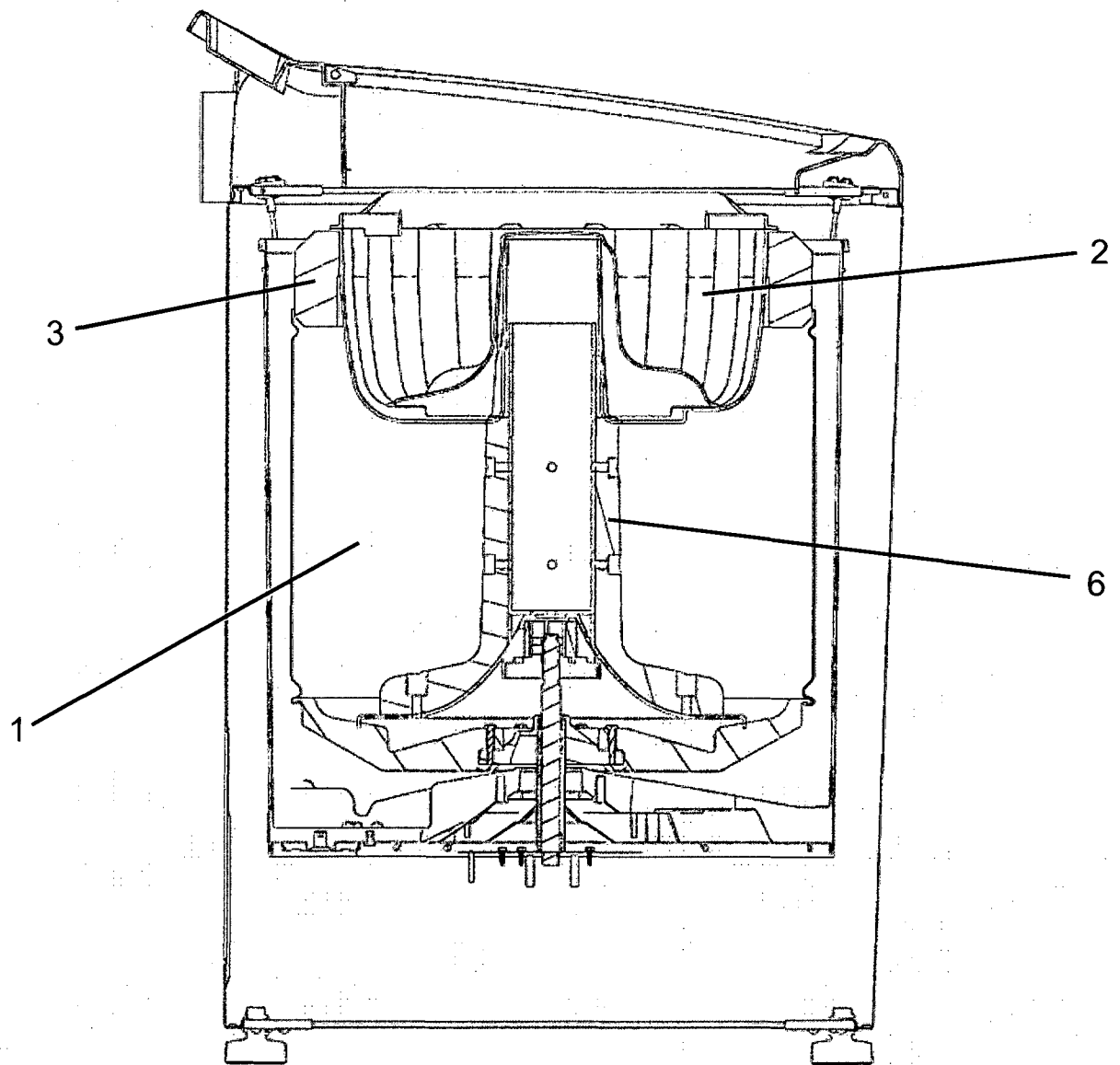


FIG. 1

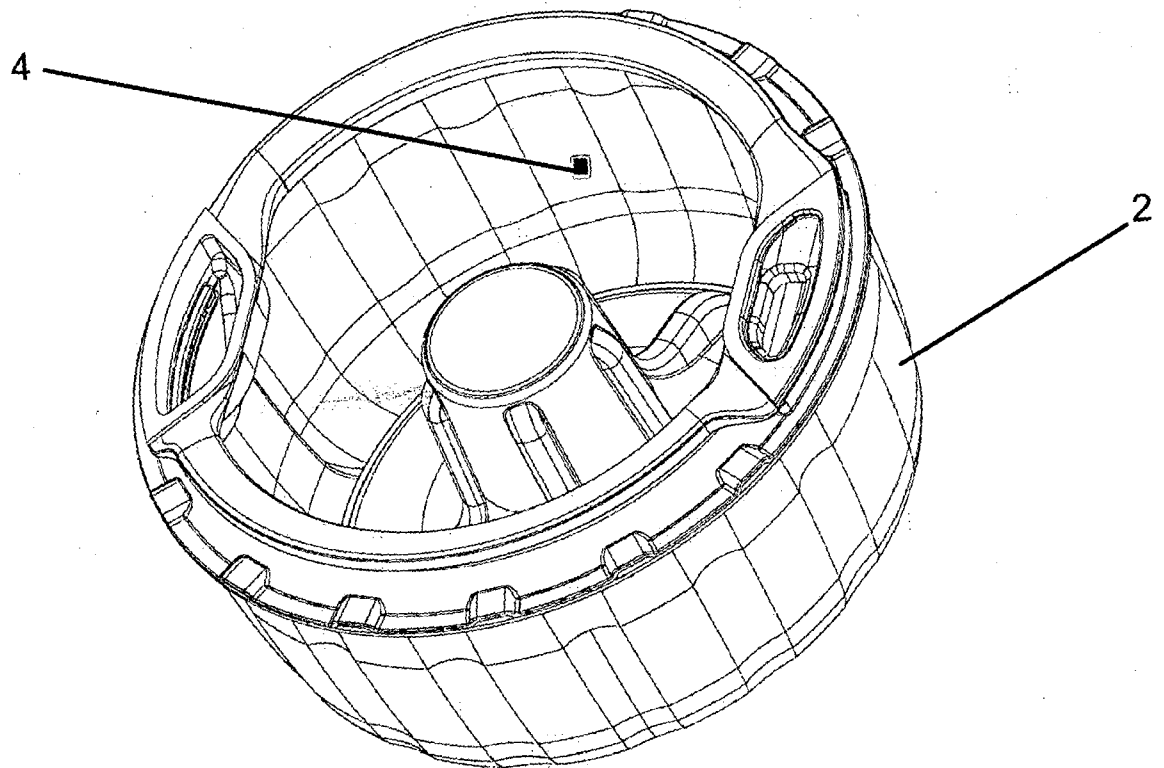


FIG. 2

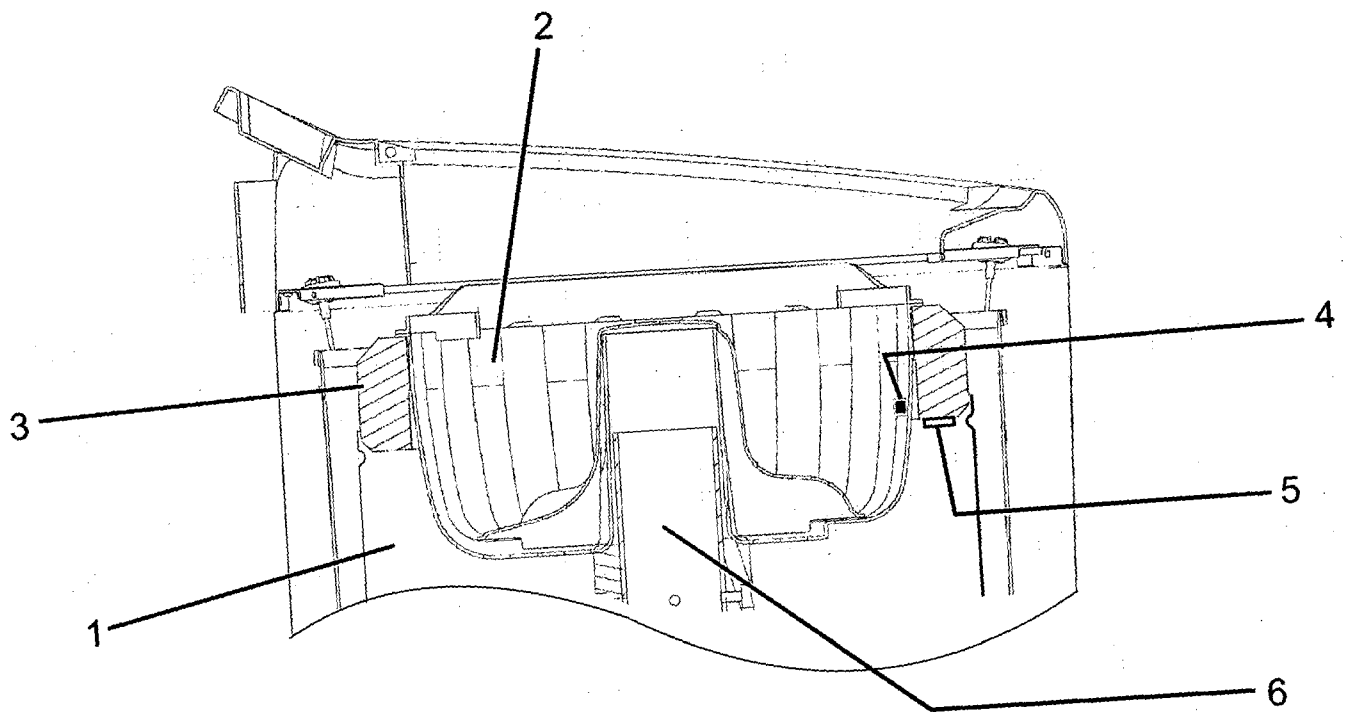


FIG. 3

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

PCT/BR2014/000324

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

INV. D06F39/00 D06F31/00 D06F37/12 D06F37/00
ADD.

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

D06F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 3 575 020 A (HUBBARD JAMES R) 13 April 1971 (1971-04-13) cited in the application column 1, line 24 - line 32 column 2, line 30 - column 3, line 50; figure 1 -----	1,10, 19-32
A	US 3 509 741 A (MOREY EVERETT D) 5 May 1970 (1970-05-05) column 3, line 9 - column 4, line 13; figure 1 column 7, line 3 - line 22 -----	1-10, 19-32
A	US 5 497 638 A (BERKCAN ERTUGRUL [US] ET AL) 12 March 1996 (1996-03-12) column 2, line 50 - column 3, line 35; figures 1, 2 column 4, line 56 - column 5, line 61; figure 6a -----	1-18



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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Date of mailing of the international search report

30/10/2014

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

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