

This thesis is a presentation of the bra in a culturological perspective. It gives an overview of the historical, technological and current socio-cultural context of the garment and suggests an empirical study that would help to answer the question why women wear bras.

The bra is a cultural element that is perceived by most people living in current western society as an integral part of everyday life. For many women it is an essential component of their wardrobe. However, it plays more roles than that of a practical „gadget“. The brassiere is, in its own way, a social phenomenon; a multidimensional entity that can be viewed from many different angles and in different contexts. The thesis compiles basic information on the origins, evolution and functions of the bra.

The first part presents the most important milestones in the history and development of clothing of the shaping of the female bust before invention of the bra.

The second part of the paper presents the evolution of the bra as an element of the material part of current western culture.

Section three considers the changes in attitude toward the brassiere and its symbolism during the 100 or so years of its existence; namely in the framework of the women's emancipation movement and the feminist/gender discourse. It focuses on three periods: the end of the 19th and the first two decades of the 20th century accompanied by the efforts to reform female clothing, the 1960s and 1970s (the „bra-burning“ era), and the turn of the millenium.