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(54) MERCHANDISE DISPLAY AND SELECTION SYSTEM

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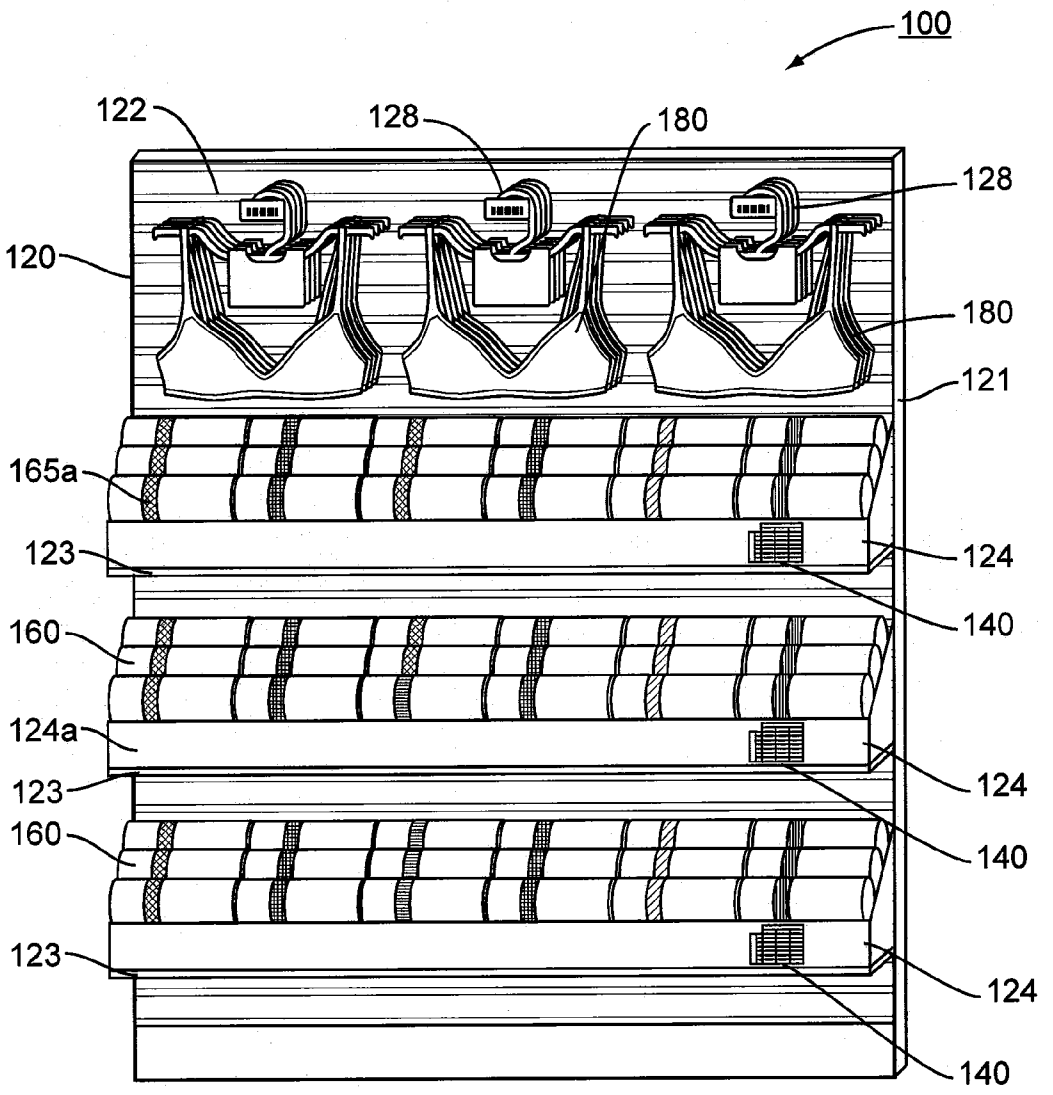
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A merchandise display and selection system for apparel is provided, comprising a merchandise display space holding color-coded transparent apparel display packages, and a sizing and selection grid positioned proximate the display space displaying combinations of sizes for the articles of apparel. A color-code is associated with each combination of sizes, and corresponds to the color-coding on the color-coded transparent apparel display packages. A consumer of apparel selects a color-code from the sizing and selection grid corresponding to one of the combinations of sizes and thereafter selects one of the transparent apparel display packages corresponding to the color-code and the desired color of the article of apparel.



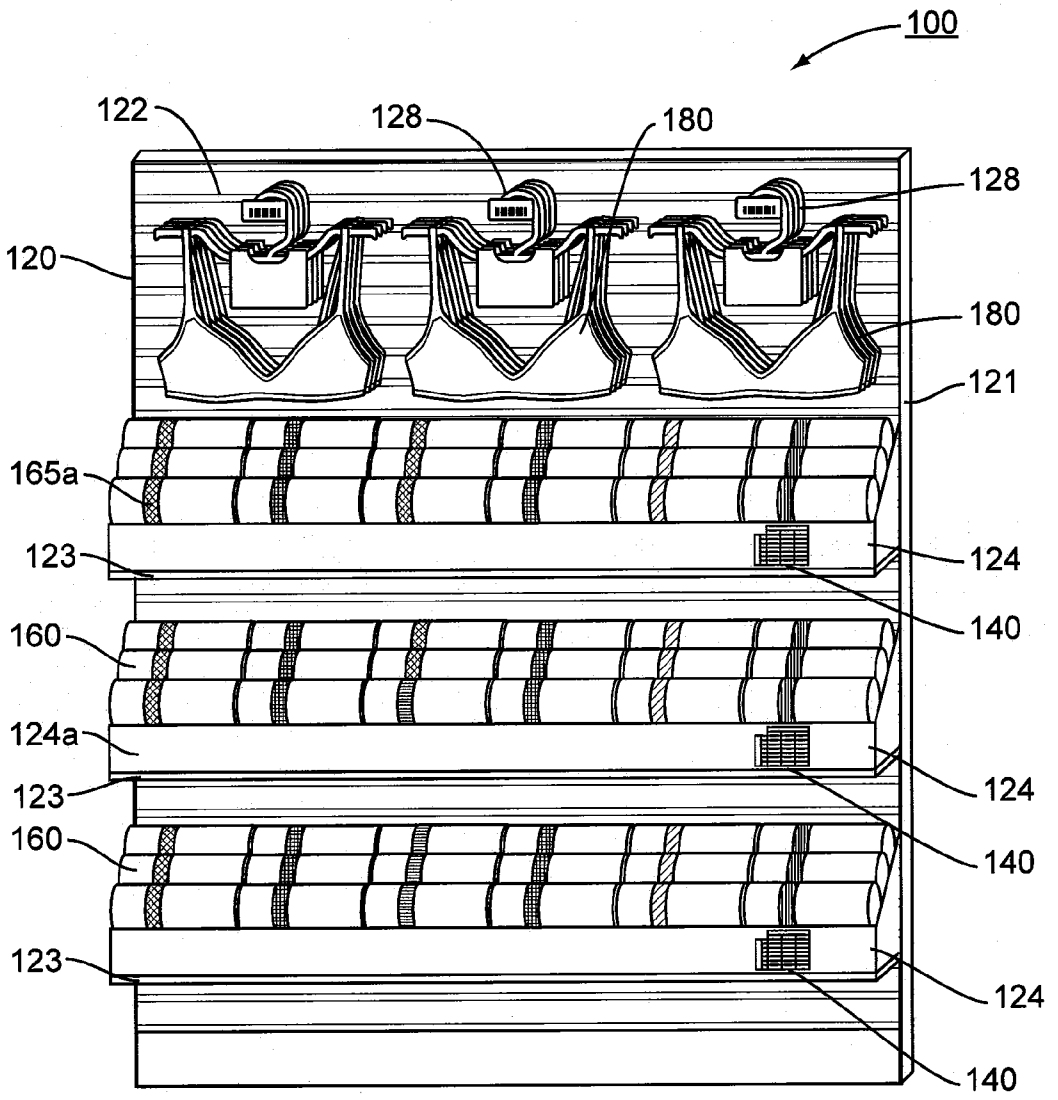

100
122
128
180
128
120
180
121
165a
123
124
140
160
124a
123
124
160
140
123
124
140

FIG. 1

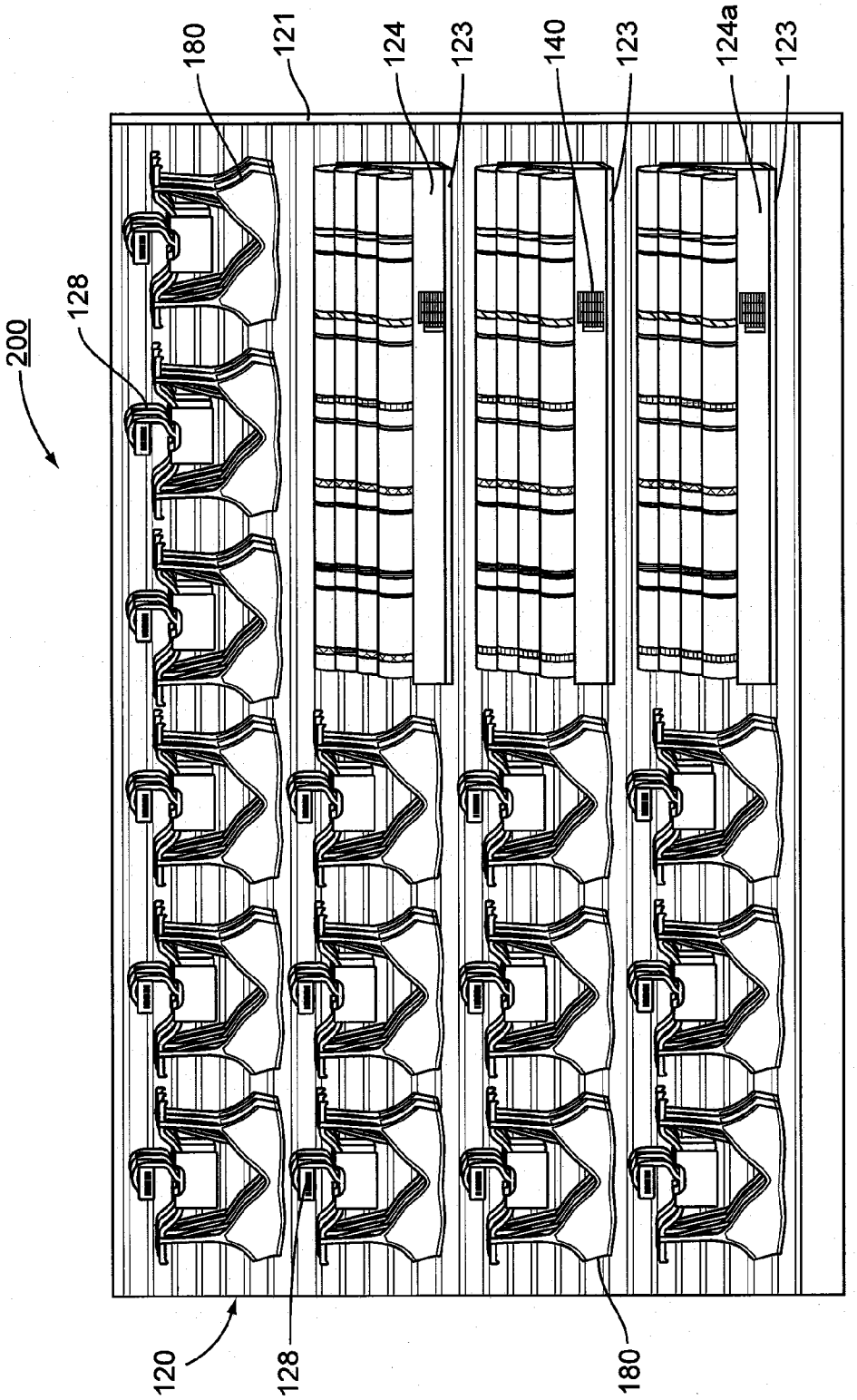


FIG. 2

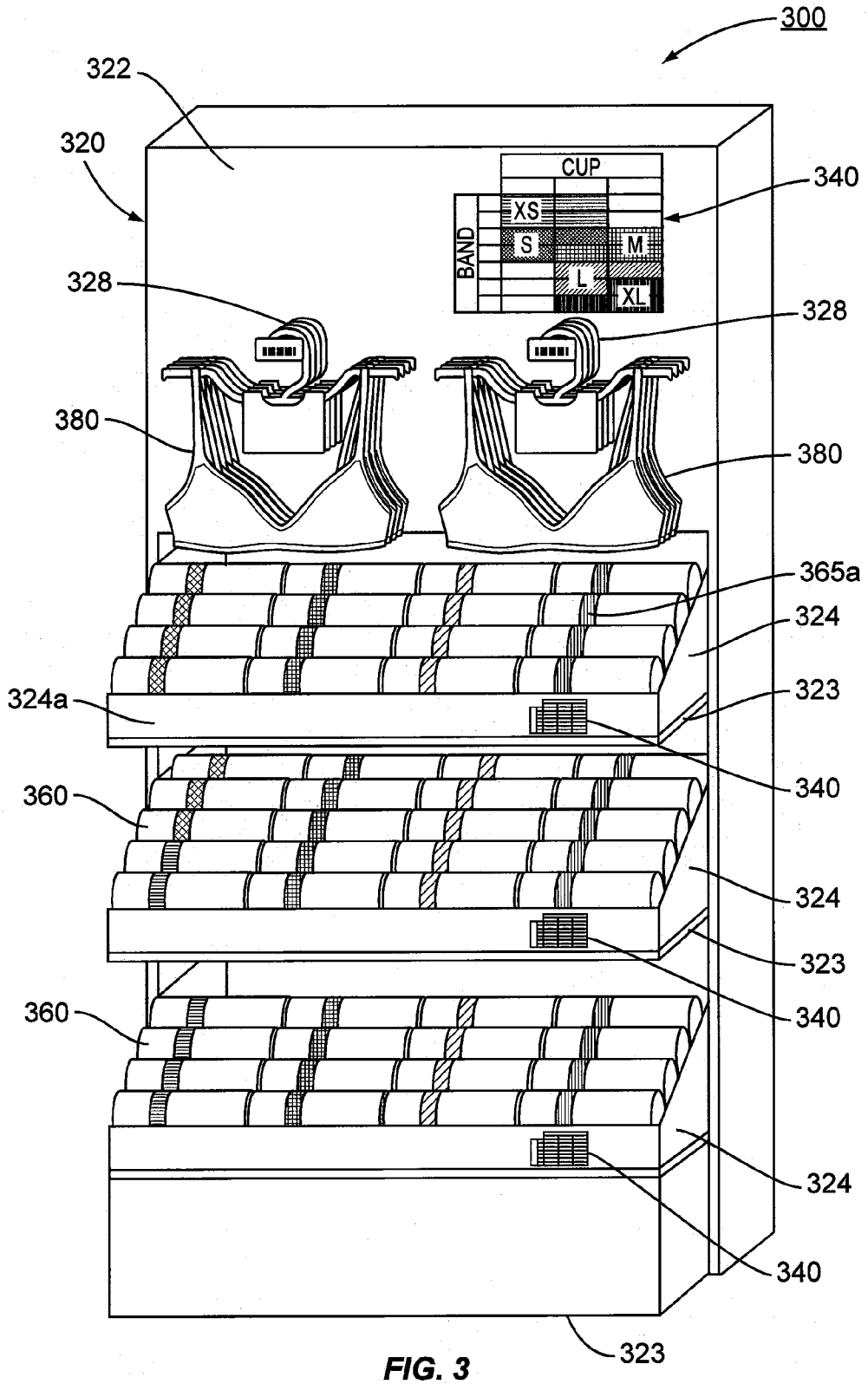

300
322
320
CUP
340
XS
S
M
L
XL
BAND
328
328
380
380
365a
324
324a
323
340
360
324
323
340
360
324
340
323

FIG. 3

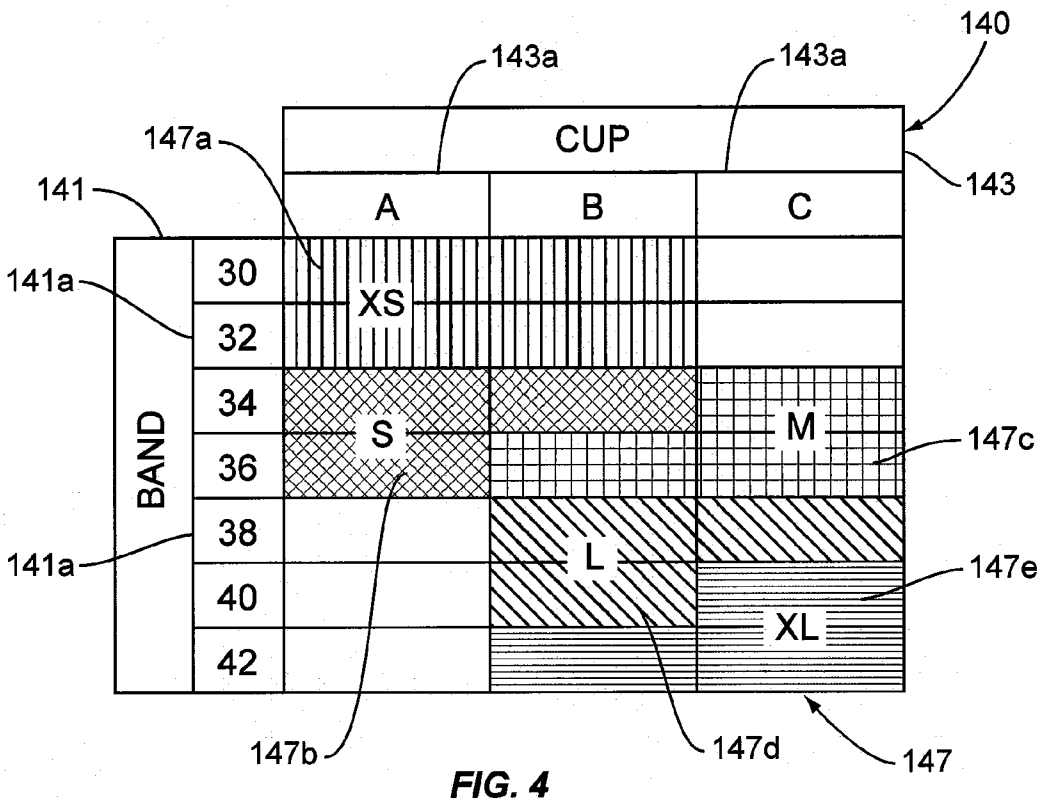

140
143a
143a
147a
CUP
143
141
A
B
C
141a
30
XS
32
34
S
M
147c
BAND
36
38
L
141a
147e
40
XL
42
147b
147d
147

FIG. 4

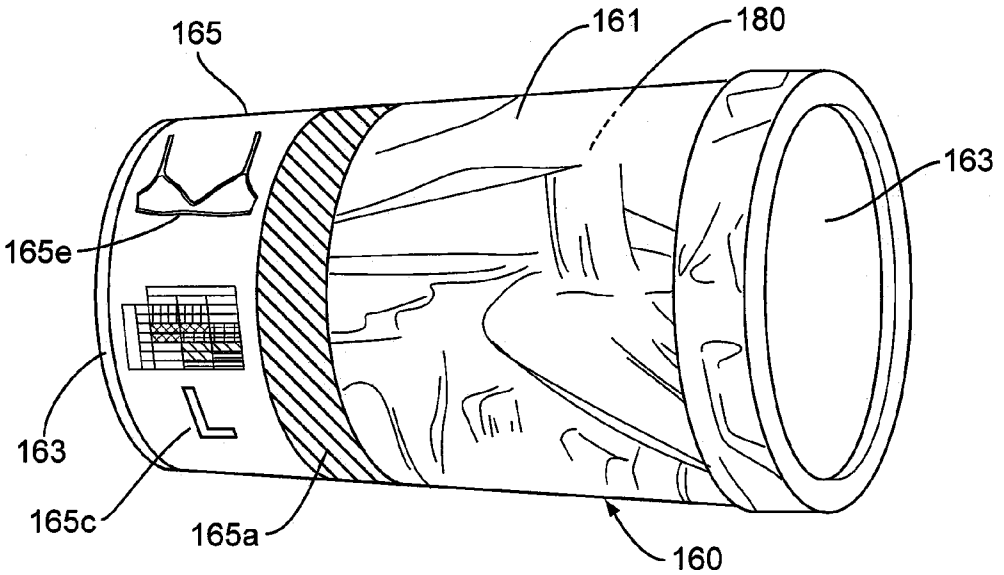

165
161
180
163
165e
163
165c
165a
160

FIG. 5

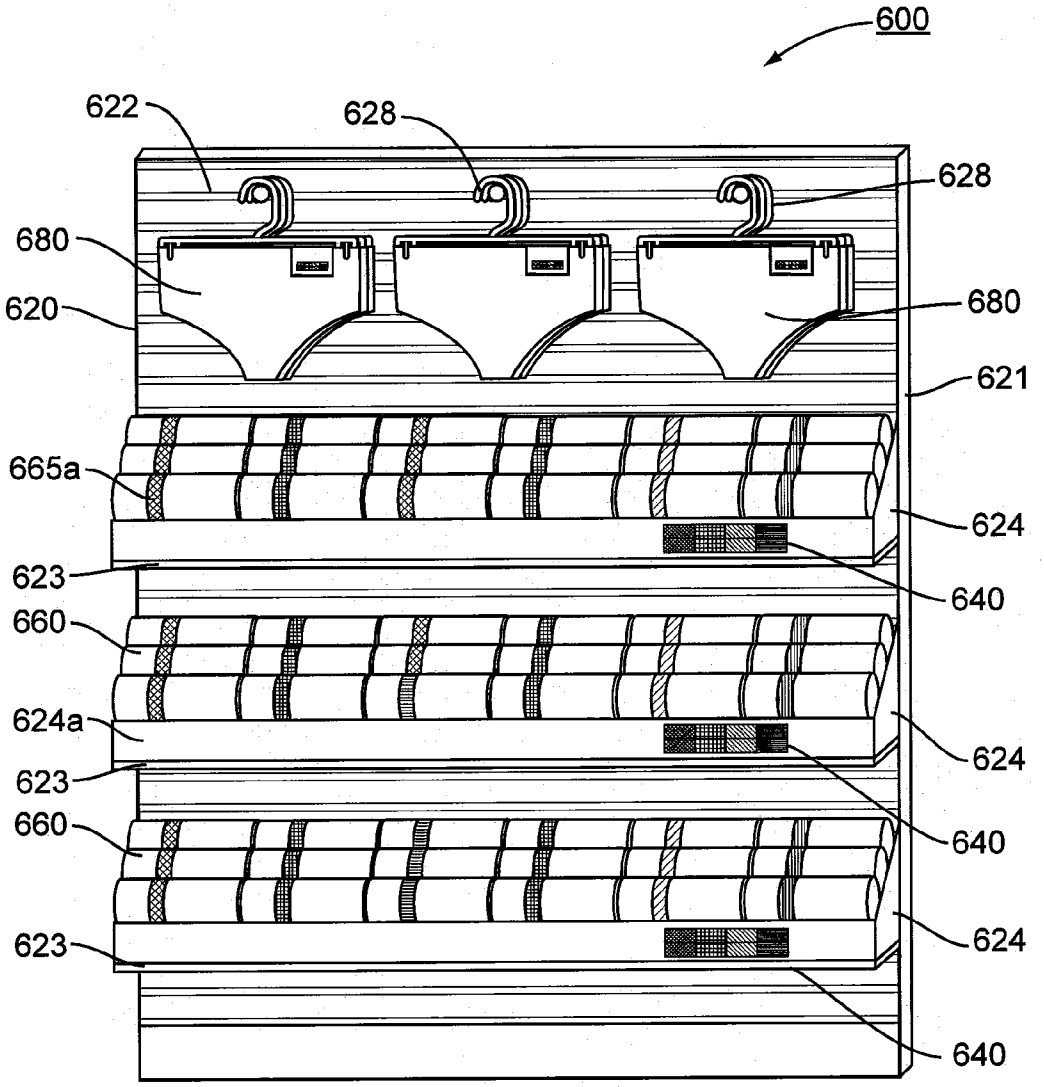

600
622
628
628
680
620
680
621
665a
624
623
640
660
624a
624
623
640
660
623
624
640

FIG. 6

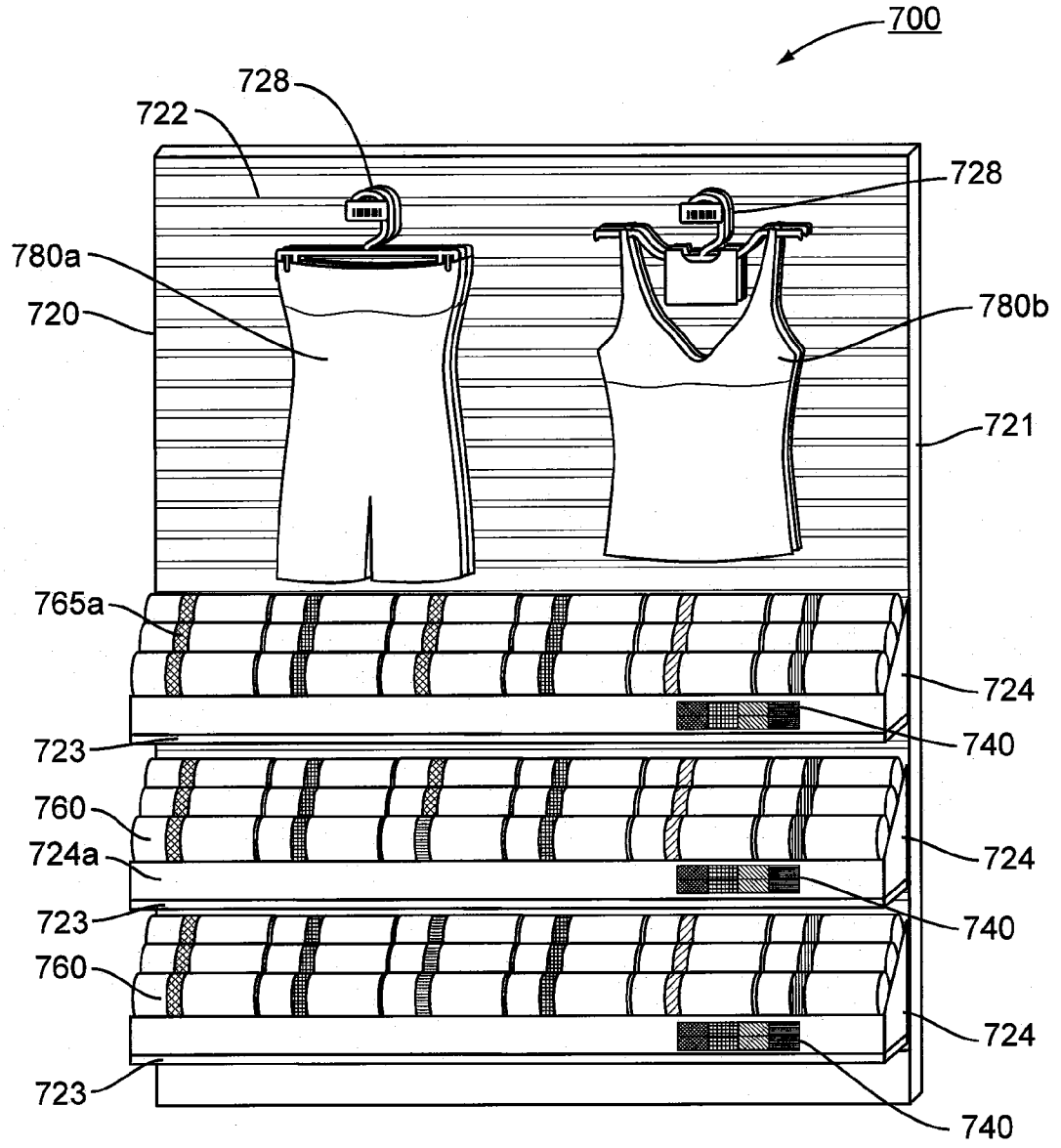

700
728
722
728
780a
720
780b
721
765a
724
740
723
760
724a
724
723
740
760
724
723
740

FIG. 7

MERCHANDISE DISPLAY AND SELECTION SYSTEM

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to the field of retail merchandising of apparel, and, in particular, to a merchandise display and selection system for women's intimate apparel.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Rapid expansion of the world economy and international markets over the last few decades has resulted in an exponential growth in the number and availability of consumer goods, from automobiles, to household goods, to personal items including clothing and accessories. As a result, competition for retail floor, shelf, and rack space has been fierce, while at the same time pressuring retailers to maintain large inventories to accommodate the wide selection of products now available to consumers.

[0003] At the same time, the wide selection of products has led to confusion and bewilderment of the consuming public. For instance, the many women's intimate apparel styles, sizes, and colors on display in large retail stores, in combination with a multitude of different packaging types for each style and/or color, is frustrating to consumers who simply desire to quickly and easily select and purchase a particular style, in a particular color, and in an appropriate size.

[0004] Additionally, many consumers, who are not familiar with a particular brand or style of apparel may wish to inspect and touch/feel the item before purchasing it to determine if the article has the desired features and feel. This is often not possible unless the seal on the package is impermissibly broken.

[0005] What is needed is an apparel system where a consumer can quickly inspect an article, and then ascertain the correct size, color, and location of an article of apparel at the point-of-purchase in a display.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The present invention is directed to a merchandise display and selection system for apparel, including a retail display, and a sizing and selection grid located on the display. The display includes an apparel display space with multiple transparent apparel display packages being displayed therein. Each transparent apparel display package is dimensioned for containing at least one article of apparel of at least one selected color, and is color-coded to identify the size of the article(s) of apparel contained therein.

[0007] The sizing and selection grid includes multiple combinations of sizes for the articles of apparel, and a color-code associated with each combination of sizes, the color-code corresponding to the color-coding on a display package.

[0008] A consumer of apparel selects a color-code from the sizing and selection grid corresponding to one of the combinations of sizes, and thereafter selects one of the transparent apparel display packages corresponding to the color-code from the sizing and selection grid in the desired color.

[0009] Various features and aspects of the invention will become apparent upon review of the detailed description set forth below when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, which are briefly described as follows.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIG. **1** is a front perspective view of one exemplary embodiment of the merchandise display and selection system according to the present invention.

[0011] FIG. **2** is a front perspective view of an alternative exemplary embodiment of the merchandise display and selection system according to the present invention.

[0012] FIG. **3** is a front perspective view of another alternative exemplary embodiment of the merchandise display and selection system according to the present invention, representing a stand-alone display.

[0013] FIG. **4** is a front view of an exemplary sizing and selection grid according to the present invention, for brassieres.

[0014] FIG. **5** is a perspective view of an exemplary transparent color-coded apparel display package.

[0015] FIG. **6** is a front perspective view of the merchandise display and selection system of FIG. **1**, illustrating the display and merchandising of panties.

[0016] FIG. **7** is a front perspective view of the merchandise display and selection system of FIG. **1**, illustrating the display and merchandising of women's shapewear.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0017] Certain exemplary embodiments of the present invention are described below and illustrated in the accompanying figures. The embodiments described are only for purposes of illustrating the present invention and should not be interpreted as limiting the scope of the invention, which, of course, is limited only by the claims below. Other embodiments of the invention, and certain modifications and improvements of the described embodiments, will occur to those skilled in the art, and all such alternate embodiments, modifications, and improvements are within the scope of the present invention.

[0018] Referring to the Figures in general, and to FIG. **1**, in particular, the present invention is directed to an apparel merchandise display and selection system, shown generally as **100**. In one embodiment, the merchandise display and selection system comprises a display space **120**, and a plurality of tubular apparel display packages **160** for brassieres. As used herein, the term "display space" refers to racks, shelves, mounting surfaces, grid walls, tables, bins, aisle endcaps, etc., or combinations thereof, including stand-alone and supported display configurations.

[0019] In the system shown in FIG. **1**, the display space **120** comprises a vertical grid-wall **121** of the type that are conventionally used in retail stores for the mounting and display of hanging apparel. A plurality of horizontal shelves **123** are mounted on the grid wall **121** for supporting a plurality of product bins **124**, and in the embodiment shown, one or more garment hanging fixtures **128**. In the exemplary embodiment shown in FIG. **1**, the bins **124** are gravity-fed for the dispensing of the tubular apparel packages; however, the system **100** is not limited thereto. By "gravity-fed," it is meant that the bins **124** slope downwardly from the rear to the front so that the packages **160** in the bins **124** will move downwardly toward the front of the display space **120** when a package **160** is removed from the front of the bin **124**. As discussed in

greater detail below, a point-of-purchase sizing and selection grid **140** is affixed on at least one of the product bins **124**.

[0020] While the system **100** is exemplary of the display and selection of intimate apparel, in this case brassieres, the present invention is not limited thereto. Rather, other items of apparel, where the size is dependent upon two or more measurements/variables, are properly within the scope of the present system **100**.

[0021] The embodiment of FIG. **1** further comprises hanging unpackaged samples **180**, e.g., brassieres, on garment hanging fixtures **128** that are affixed to the upper portion **122** of the display space **120**, above the gravity-fed bins **124**. This permits potential consumers to visually inspect and touch/feel the same brassieres that are packaged in the transparent apparel display packages **160** before deciding on whether and what to purchase.

[0022] An alternative embodiment of the system **100** of FIG. **1** is shown in FIG. **2**, in which the apparel merchandise display and selection system **100** is incorporated into a larger conventional display system **200**. As shown, brassieres **180** on one portion of the grid wall **121** are displayed in conventional fashion on hanging fixtures **128**, with hanging unpackaged samples **180** on the opposite portion of the grid wall **121** displayed above their associated gravity-fed bins **124**. Alternatively, the system **200** of FIG. **2** could comprise two or more side-by-side arrays (not shown) of product bins **124**, in lieu of the plurality of hanging fixtures **128** that are not necessarily associated with the display and selection system **100** of the present invention.

[0023] Turning now to FIG. **3**, a stand-alone embodiment of the present invention, shown generally as **300**, is directed to an apparel merchandise display and selection system comprising a display stand **320**, a point-of-purchase sizing and selection grid **340**, and a plurality of tubular apparel display packages **360**.

[0024] The display stand **320** comprises a header **322**, a base **323**, a plurality of shelves, or bins **324**, and in the embodiment shown, one or more garment hanging fixtures **328** upon which unpackaged brassieres **380** are displayed. In the exemplary embodiment shown in FIG. **3**, the bins **324** also are gravity-fed for the dispensing of the tubular apparel packages. A variety of store, brand, pricing, etc. indicia (not shown) also may be displayed on the empty spaces of the header **322**.

[0025] To assist in the selection of the correct size, point-of-purchase sizing and selection grids **140**, **340** are provided. In the embodiments of FIGS. **1** and **2**, the point-of-purchase grid **140** are affixed to the front, or lip **124***a* of the product bins **124**. In the embodiment shown in FIG. **3**, the sizing and selection grid **340** is affixed to, or printed on, the header **322** of the display stand **320** and/or the front **324***a* of one or more product bins **324**.

[0026] The sizing and selection grid **140**, **340** serves multiple purposes. First, in the case of brassieres, it reduces a large number of torso band length and cup sizes into a smaller number of overlapping, but suitable sizes. Further, it provides a color-coded system to assist a consumer in quickly and easily locating the proper size product.

[0027] By way of example, and as best shown in FIG. **4**, a sizing and selection grid **140** for brassieres illustrates how sixteen band length and cup size combinations may be reduced to five exemplary color-coded sizes. For example:

[0028] Bands 30 and 32, Cups A and B=Extra Small (XS)

[0029] Band 34, Cups A and B, and Band 36, Cup A=Small (S)

[0030] Band 34, Cup C, and Band 36, Cups B and C=Medium (M)

[0031] Band 38, Cups B and C, and Band 40, Cup B=Large (L)

[0032] Band 40, Cup C, and Band 42, Cups B and C=Extra Large

The brassieres included in this exemplary sizing and selection grid **140** are wireless, i.e., they do not include underwires for additional support. Wireless brassieres will fulfill up to what is referred to "full" cup; i.e., C cup, sizing needs. Market research shows that sizes up to a C cup represent about half of the consumer population for brassieres. As will be appreciated, for larger cup sizes with underwires, the point-of-purchase sizing and selection grid **140** would involve a larger number of combinations.

[0033] As illustrated schematically in FIG. **4** by graphic markings, a different color is associated with each size; e.g., Red for Extra Small, Orange for Small, Yellow for Medium, Green for Large, and Blue for Extra Large; however, any combination of colors could be selected so long as the ordinary consumer would be able to visually distinguish between the different colors to easily make a selection.

[0034] Further to providing a simplified sizing and selection system, by combining a large number of band length and cup sizes into a much smaller number of color-coded sizes in accordance with the present invention, a retailer is now required to maintain a much smaller inventory to support a relatively large range of sizes of brassieres. Here, for example, the retailer has to maintain an inventory in only five sizes versus sixteen. Accordingly, a smaller amount of retail floor, shelf, or rack space is required, and restocking of the display space **120**, **320** is substantially less labor intensive.

[0035] Turning now to FIG. **5**, one exemplary embodiment of the apparel display package **160** of the present invention is shown. As shown, the apparel display package **160** comprises a transparent tube **161** having end caps **163** for packaging and/or removal of the article of apparel therein. In this embodiment, the apparel comprises a wireless brassiere **180**, which is visible through the transparent tube **161**. A package label **165** is enclosed within the transparent tube **161** and includes a colored band **165***a*, which corresponds to one of the color codes, and thus a size, on the sizing and selection grid **140**, **340**. In the embodiment shown, the colored band **165***a* corresponds to the color for a Large size brassiere on the sizing and selection grid **140**, **340**. Supplemental indicia **165***c* illustrating 'L' for the Large size brassiere, and a pictorial representation **165***e* of the style of brassiere contained within the transparent tube **161**, as well as any other desired indicia, may be included on the label **165**.

[0036] Referring again to FIGS. **1** through **3**, one exemplary display arrangement is illustrated. While the colors of the brassieres are not illustrated, each bin **124**, **324** may contain transparent apparel display packages **160**, **360** of the same color brassieres, but of different sizes, as indicated by the colored bands **165***a*, **365***a*. Alternatively, each bin **124**, **324** may hold packages **160**, **360** with brassieres of different colors and of the same size, or brassieres of different colors in different sizes. In alternative embodiments, a transparent apparel display package may contain more than one similar item of apparel, such as two or more brassieres of more than one color, all of the same size. As used herein, the term

"similar" refers to the same type of item of apparel; e.g., brassieres, panties, shapewear, etc.

[0037] As shown in FIGS. **6** and **7**, the merchandise display and selection system **100**, **300** is not limited to brassieres. As shown, other types of women's intimate apparel also may be displayed and selected in a similar fashion. For example, and as shown in FIG. **6**, a display and selection system **600** is shown for women's panties **680**, incorporating the same display space **620** and plurality of transparent tubular apparel display packages **660** that are used for brassieres. Similarly, a display and selection system **700** may be provided for articles of women's shapewear **780***a*, **780***b*, as shown in FIG. **7**. The exemplary embodiments shown and described herein are in no way limiting in the types and styles of women's intimate apparel that may be merchandised in accordance with the present invention. As those skilled in the apparel arts will appreciate, the point-of-purchase sizing and selection grids **640**, **740** are tailored for the specific type of apparel, where two or more variables are combined into a grid to help the consumer easily determine the proper size for the chosen article. For panties, for example, those variables may include, normal pant size, e.g., 4, 6, 8, 10 . . . 16; normal panty size, e.g., Small, Medium, Large, Extra Large; degree of fit/support, e.g., Light, Moderate, Firm; degree of stretchability, etc., among others. With respect to shapewear, the combination of variables may comprise variables from both brassieres and panties, depending upon the specific article (upper or lower torso) of shapewear being merchandised.

[0038] In use, a potential consumer would approach the display **120**, **320**, **620**, **720** to inspect and/or touch/feel the hanging unpackaged samples **180**, **380**, **680**, **780** if available. Otherwise, the consumer would inspect the article of apparel by viewing it through the transparent apparel display packages **160**, **360**, **660**, **760**. If the consumer desires to purchase one of the brassieres, the consumer will refer to the sizing and selection grid **140**, **340**, **640**, **740** to ascertain which of the color-coded sizes satisfies the fit requirements. Having identified the appropriate color code, the consumer will then select a transparent apparel display package **160**, **360**, **660**, **760** corresponding to the size from the bin **124**, **324**, **624**, **724** of the desired color.

[0039] Although the present invention has been described with an exemplary embodiment, it is to be understood that modifications and variations may be utilized without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, as those skilled in the art will readily understand. Such modifications and variations are considered to be within the purview and scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.

We claim:

1. A merchandise display and selection system for apparel, comprising:

(a) a merchandise display, comprising:

an apparel display space;

a plurality of transparent apparel display packages in the apparel display space;

each of the plurality of transparent apparel display packages dimensioned for containing at least one article of apparel of at least one selected color;

each of the plurality of transparent apparel display packages being color-coded to identify the size of the at least one article of apparel to be contained therein;

(b) a visual point-of purchase sizing and selection grid positioned proximate the display space and comprising:

a plurality of combinations of size variables for the articles of apparel;

a plurality of color-codes associated with the combinations of size variables, each one of the plurality of color-codes corresponding to the color-coding on at least some of the plurality of transparent apparel display packages; and

a consumer of apparel selects a color-code from the visual sizing and selection grid corresponding to one of the combinations of size variables and thereafter selects one of the transparent apparel display packages corresponding to the color-code from the visual sizing and selection grid, and the desired color of the article of apparel contained in the transparent apparel display package.

2. The merchandise display and selection system of claim **1**, wherein the display space is selected from the group consisting of racks, shelves, tables, bins, walls, encaps, and combinations thereof.

3. The merchandise display and selection system of claim **1**, wherein the merchandise display further comprises a base and a header, with the display space therebetween.

4. The merchandise display and selection system of claim **1**, wherein the transparent apparel display packages contain similar items of apparel.

5. The merchandise system and selection of claim **4**, wherein the color-coded transparent packages are tubular.

6. The merchandise display and selection system of claim **5**, wherein the display space comprises a plurality of gravity-fed trays.

7. The merchandise display and selection system of claim **6**, wherein each of the plurality of gravity-fed trays holds transparent apparel display packages containing apparel of the same color, each transparent apparel display package containing a different size.

8. The merchandise display and selection system of claim **6** wherein the visual sizing and selection grid is affixed on at least one gravity-fed tray.

9. The merchandise display and selection system of claim **2**, wherein the items of apparel are selected from the group consisting of brassieres, panties, and shapewear.

10. The merchandise display and selection system of claim **9**, wherein the items of apparel are brassieres and the plurality of combinations of sizes comprise torso band lengths and cup sizes.

11. The merchandise display and selection system of claim **1**, further comprising a plurality of hanging unpackaged samples for inspection by customers, the plurality of hanging unpackaged samples being of similar colors and styles of articles of apparel contained in at least some of the plurality of color-coded transparent apparel display packages.

* * * * *