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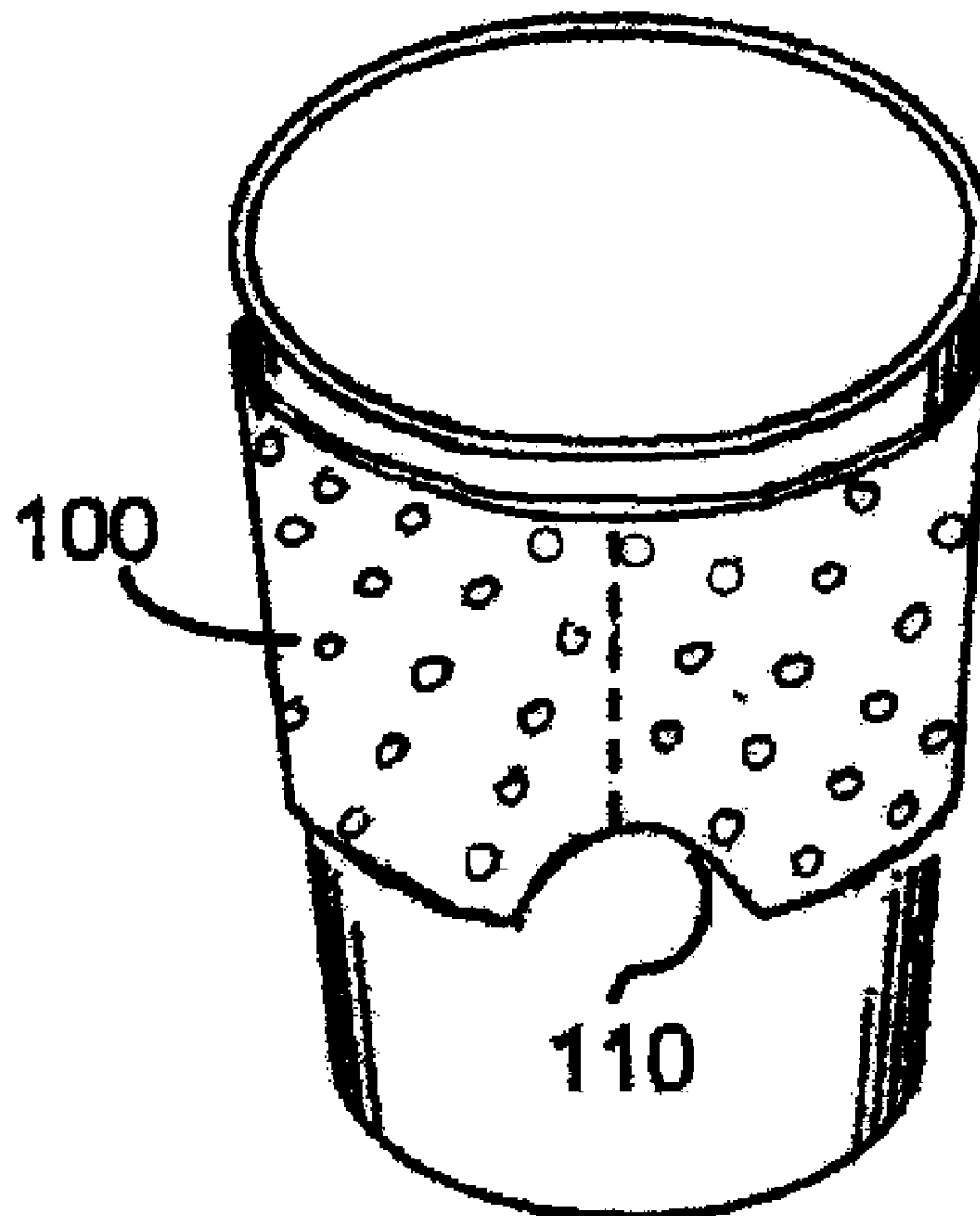
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(54) Title: CUP HOLDER SLEEVE



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A cup holder sleeve comprises an elongated strip including a top edge having a top length, a bottom edge having a bottom length, a first distal edge and a second distal edge. The cup holder sleeve is assembled by attaching the first distal edge to the second

(57) **Abrégé(suite)/Abstract(continued):**

distal edge and further includes a fold line extending from the top edge to the bottom edge, wherein the elongated strip is folded along the fold line for storage. In an exemplary embodiment, a cut-out notch is located on the bottom edge of the elongated strip and at the fold line, such that when a beverage container is placed within the assembled cup holder sleeve, an extrusion at the fold line and at the bottom edge of the elongated strip is substantially eliminated by the cut-out notch.

ABSTRACT

A cup holder sleeve comprises an elongated strip including a top edge having a top length, a bottom edge having a bottom length, a first distal edge and a second distal edge. The cup holder sleeve is assembled by attaching the first distal edge to the second distal edge and further includes a fold line extending from the top edge to the bottom edge, wherein the elongated strip is folded along the fold line for storage. In an exemplary embodiment, a cut-out notch is located on the bottom edge of the elongated strip and at the fold line, such that when a beverage container is placed within the assembled cup holder sleeve, an extrusion at the fold line and at the bottom edge of the elongated strip is substantially eliminated by the cut-out notch.

TITLE OF INVENTION

CUP HOLDER SLEEVE

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to cup holder sleeves.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Cup holder sleeves are used to protect a user's hands when the user is holding a cup that contains a hot beverage. Typically, the hot cup is placed into the cup holder sleeve, which encircles the outer surface of the cup and provides a cooler surface on which the user can place her hand.

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Typically, an unassembled cup holder sleeve is an elongated strip cut out from a flat sheet of paperboard and folded along at least one fold line so that the two distal ends can be attached to one another to form the sleeve. When the sleeve is assembled and placed around the cup, the cup holder sleeve fits snugly around the side walls of the cup. For a conical shaped cup where the side walls typically slope inward, e.g., because the bottom circumference of the cup is smaller than top circumference, the cup holder sleeve tends to "billow-out" at the bottom edge of the sleeve at the fold lines.

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This "billowing-out" or extrusion is particularly pronounced when the cup is relatively small, e.g., a 12 ounce cup; because the inward slope is more pronounced in smaller cups, and most cup holder sleeves are designed for medium or large sized cups.

- 5 While this extrusion does not adversely affect the protective function of the sleeve when the user is holding the cup, it does become a problem when the user tries to place the cup in a cup holder, such as that in a vehicle. Most modern cars include receptacles that are designed to hold beverage containers, e.g., cans, bottles, cups, so that a driver can safely operate the car with two hands without discarding the beverage. In order to
- 10 reduce or eliminate spillage, the receptacles are designed to hold the beverage containers snugly. For a cup with a sleeve, it is very difficult if not impossible to place the cup/sleeve assembly in a receptacle because of the extrusion at the bottom edge of the sleeve. In most cases, the sleeve must be removed from the cup so that the cup can properly fit into the receptacle. Nevertheless, if the driver/drinker removes the
- 15 sleeve so that the cup can be placed in the receptacle, the driver cannot drink the beverage because the cup surface is too hot to hold. If the driver decides to hold the cup/sleeve assembly, instead of placing the cup in the receptacle, then the driver must drive with one hand, which can be a safety hazard.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

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Accordingly, a cup holder sleeve is described that comprises an elongated strip including a top edge having a top length, a bottom edge having a bottom length, a first distal edge and a second distal edge. The cup holder sleeve is assembled by attaching

the first distal edge to the second distal edge and further includes a fold line extending from the top edge to the bottom edge, wherein the elongated strip is folded along the fold line for storage. In an exemplary embodiment, a cut-out notch is located on the bottom edge of the elongated strip and at the fold line, such that when a beverage
5 container is placed within the assembled cup holder sleeve, an extrusion at the fold line and at the bottom edge of the elongated strip is substantially eliminated by the cut-out notch.

According to another exemplary embodiment, a sleeve for use with a conical shaped
10 container comprises an elongated strip having a top edge with a top length, a bottom edge with a bottom length, a first distal edge and a second distal edge, where the top length is greater than the bottom length. The sleeve also includes at least one fold line extending from the top edge to the bottom edge, so that the elongated strip can be folded along the at least one fold lines for storage. Additionally, the sleeve includes a
15 cut-out notch located on the bottom edge of the elongated strip and at one or more of the at least one fold lines.

In another embodiment, a cup holder sleeve for a conical shaped cup comprises an elongated strip including a top edge having a top length, a bottom edge having a bottom
20 length, a first distal edge and a second distal edge and a plurality of dimples disposed on an outer surface of the elongated strip that contacts a user's hand. The dimples comprise concave indentations and/or convex indentations.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings provide visual representations which will be used to more fully describe the representative embodiments disclosed here and can be used by those skilled in the art to better understand the representative embodiments and their inherent advantages. In these drawings, like reference numerals identify corresponding elements, and:

FIG. 1 is a plan view of an elongated strip according to an exemplary embodiment;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the cup holder sleeve of FIG. 1 around a conical shaped cup according to an exemplary embodiment;

FIG. 3 is a plan view of an elongated strip according to another exemplary embodiment;

and

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the cup holder sleeve of FIG. 3 around a conical shaped cup according to an exemplary embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present invention is related to a cup holder sleeve, which when assembled and placed around a conical shaped cup, is substantially without extrusions at the bottom edge at a fold line. The following description is presented to enable one of ordinary skill

in the art to make and use the invention and is provided in the context of a patent application and its requirements. Various modifications to the preferred embodiment and the generic principles and features described herein will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art. For instance, while the preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated being utilized for a cup, those skilled in the art would readily recognize that the present invention could also be used for any type of container, such as a canister. Thus, the present invention is not intended to be limited to the embodiment shown but is to be accorded the widest scope consistent with the principles and features described herein.

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According to one embodiment, a cup holder sleeve comprises an elongated strip that has a top edge, a bottom edge and two distal edges, which when attached, form the sleeve. In an exemplary embodiment, a cut-out notch is provided at the bottom edge of the elongated strip and at a fold line that extends from the top edge to the bottom edge.

15 When the sleeve is assembled and placed around a conical shaped container, e.g., a cup, the extrusion at the fold line is substantially eliminated by the cut-out notch. In another embodiment, when the sleeve has more than one fold line, a cut-out notch is provided at the bottom edge and at each of the fold lines. By substantially eliminating the extrusions in the cup holder sleeve, the cup and the sleeve can be placed in a cup
20 holder in a car.

FIG. 1 illustrates the elongated strip according to one embodiment. The strip 100 includes a top edge 102, a bottom edge 104, and two distal edges 106a, 106b. In one

embodiment, the strip 100 is slightly curved so that the top edge 102 is convex and the bottom edge 104 is concave. A length of the top edge 102 can be greater than a length of the bottom edge 104. The cup holder sleeve is assembled by attaching the two distal edges 106a, 106b to one another using any suitable coupling technique. In one
5 embodiment, a tacky material, such as glue, is applied to a first distal edge 106a and the other distal edge 106b is attached to the first distal edge 106a via the glue. In another embodiment, the two distal edges 106a, 106b are attached to one another with a fastener, such as a staple.

10 In an exemplary embodiment, the strip 100 includes at least one fold line 108 that runs from the top edge 102 to the bottom edge 104 along the width of the strip 100. When the strip 100 is folded along the fold lines 108, the sleeve can be easily stored and shipped to a retailer. In another embodiment, the fold lines 108 are disposed in specific
15 locations along the strip 100 so that when the strip 100 is folded along the fold lines 108, the two distal edges 106a, 106b overlap each other and allow the sleeve to be easily assembled. The width, w , of the strip 100 is sufficient that a drinker can easily grip the sleeve and protect his hand from the temperature of the beverage. In one embodiment, the width, w , can be between 2 inches and 4 inches. In another embodiment, the width, w , can be 3 inches.

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In an exemplary embodiment, the cup holder sleeve includes at least one notch 110 located at the bottom edge 104 of the strip 100 and at one or more of the fold lines 108. In one embodiment, the notch 110 can be semi-circular, as shown. In another

embodiment, the notch 110 can be a triangle, or any other suitable shape, such as a rectangle or trapezoid. The notch 110 allows the bottom edge 104 of the strip 100 to remain in contact with a cup when the cup holder sleeve is used with a conical shaped cup, as shown in FIG. 2.

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In another embodiment, in addition to the notches 110 at the bottom edge 104 of the strip 100, a second notch 112 can be provided at the top edge 102 of the strip 100 and at one or more of the fold lines 108, as is shown in FIG. 3 and FIG. 4. In this embodiment, any extrusions along the top edge 102 can also be substantially

10 eliminated.

Referring now to FIG. 1 and FIG. 3, in one embodiment, the strip 100 includes an embossed pattern 120 on at least a portion of the cup holder sleeve 100 surface that allows the user to have a better grip of the cup. The embossed pattern 120 can

15 comprise concave or convex dimples or a plurality of openings. In one embodiment, the embossed pattern can be created using a conventional press technique and result in a variety of textured designs or patterns, such as a square pattern. The embossed pattern 120 enhances the user's comfort in gripping the sleeve, as well as the appearance of the sleeve.

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The strip 100 can be made from any suitable material, such as paperboard, recyclable paper, or plastic. In one embodiment, the strip 100 comprises at least two laminated layers, where an outermost layer that contacts the user's fingers is suitable for printing

indicia and an innermost layer that contacts the cup surface is an insulating material. For example, in an exemplary embodiment, the outermost layer can comprise a high density polyethylene material and the innermost layer can comprise a low density polyethylene material, as is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 6,814,253, entitled,
5 "INSULATING SLEEVE FOR GRASPING CONTAINER AND MANUFACTURING METHOD," filed on October 15, 2002, and assigned to the assignee of the present invention. In another example, the outermost layer can comprise a high density polyethylene material and the innermost layer can comprise a low density polyethylene material, as is disclosed in co-pending patent application serial number 10/349,468,
10 entitled, "LAMINATED SLEEVE FOR A CONTAINER," filed on January 21, 2003, and assigned to the assignee of the present application.

As stated above, in one embodiment, the cup holder sleeve is assembled by folding it along the fold lines 108 and attaching the distal ends 106a, 106b to one another to form
15 a flat and smooth seam. When the user holds the assembled cup holder sleeve anywhere along the fold lines 108 and squeezes the sleeve inwardly, the sleeve opens and the cup can be placed into the sleeve.

By providing the notch 110 at the bottom edge 104 (and optionally at the top edge 102),
20 and at the fold line 108, extrusions are significantly eliminated when the cup is placed into the sleeve. Accordingly, the cup with the sleeve can fit into a cup receptacle in a car, and the driver can enjoy his hot beverage while driving safely.

It will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that the concepts and techniques described here can be embodied in various specific forms without departing from the essential characteristics thereof. The presently disclosed embodiments are considered in all respects to be illustrative and not restrictive. The scope of the
5 invention is indicated by the appended claims, rather than the foregoing description, and all changes that come within the meaning and range of equivalence thereof are intended to be embraced.

CLAIMS**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A cup holder sleeve comprising:
 - an elongated strip including a top edge having a top length, a bottom edge
 - 5 having a bottom length, a first distal edge and a second distal edge, wherein the cup holder sleeve is assembled by attaching the first distal edge to the second distal edge;
 - a fold line extending from the top edge to the bottom edge, wherein the elongated strip is folded along the fold line for storage; and
 - a cut-out notch located on the bottom edge of the elongated strip and at the fold
 - 10 line, wherein when a beverage container is placed within the assembled cup holder sleeve, an extrusion at the fold line and at the bottom edge of the elongated strip is substantially eliminated by the cut-out notch.
2. The sleeve of claim 1 wherein the top length is greater than the bottom length.
- 15 3. The sleeve of claim 1 wherein the cut-out notch is one of a semi-circular notch, a triangular notch, an oval notch, a rectangular notch, and a trapezoidal notch.
4. The sleeve of claim 1 comprising a plurality of fold lines, wherein a cut-out notch is located on the bottom edge and at each of the plurality of fold lines.
5. The sleeve of claim 4 comprising a second set of cut-out notches located
- 20 on the top edge of the elongated strip and at each of the plurality of fold lines.

6. The sleeve of claim 1 comprising a second cut-out notch located on the top edge of the elongated strip and at the fold line.

7. The sleeve of claim 1 wherein the elongated strip comprises one of a paperboard material, a laminate of a paperboard layer and a low density polyethylene
5 layer, and a laminate of a high density polyethylene layer and a low density polyethylene layer.

8. The sleeve of claim 1 wherein the elongated strip comprises a plurality of dimples for enabling a user to grip the cup holder sleeve.

9. The sleeve of claim 8 wherein the plurality of dimples comprise at least
10 one of concave indentations and convex indentations.

10. A sleeve for use with a conical shaped container comprising:
an elongated strip including a top edge having a top length, a bottom edge having a bottom length, a first distal edge and a second distal edge, wherein the top length is greater than the bottom length and the sleeve is assembled by attaching the
15 first distal edge to the second distal edge;

at least one fold line extending from the top edge to the bottom edge, wherein the elongated strip is folded along the at least one fold lines for storage; and

a cut-out notch located on the bottom edge of the elongated strip and at one or more of the at least one fold lines, wherein when a beverage container is placed within
20 the assembled cup holder sleeve, an extrusion at the one or more fold lines and at the bottom edge of the elongated strip is substantially eliminated by the cut-out notch.

11. A cup holder sleeve for a conical shaped cup comprising:

an elongated strip including a top edge having a top length, a bottom edge having a bottom length, a first distal edge and a second distal edge, wherein the top length is greater than the bottom length and the sleeve is assembled by attaching the
5 first distal edge to the second distal edge;

a plurality of dimples disposed on an outer surface of the elongated strip that contacts a user's hand, wherein the plurality of dimples comprise at least one of concave indentations and convex indentations;

a fold line extending from the top edge to the bottom edge, wherein the
10 elongated strip is folded along the fold line for storage; and

a cut-out notch located on the bottom edge of the elongated strip and at the fold line, wherein when a beverage container is placed within the assembled cup holder sleeve, an extrusion at the fold line and at the bottom edge of the elongated strip is substantially eliminated by the cut-out notch.

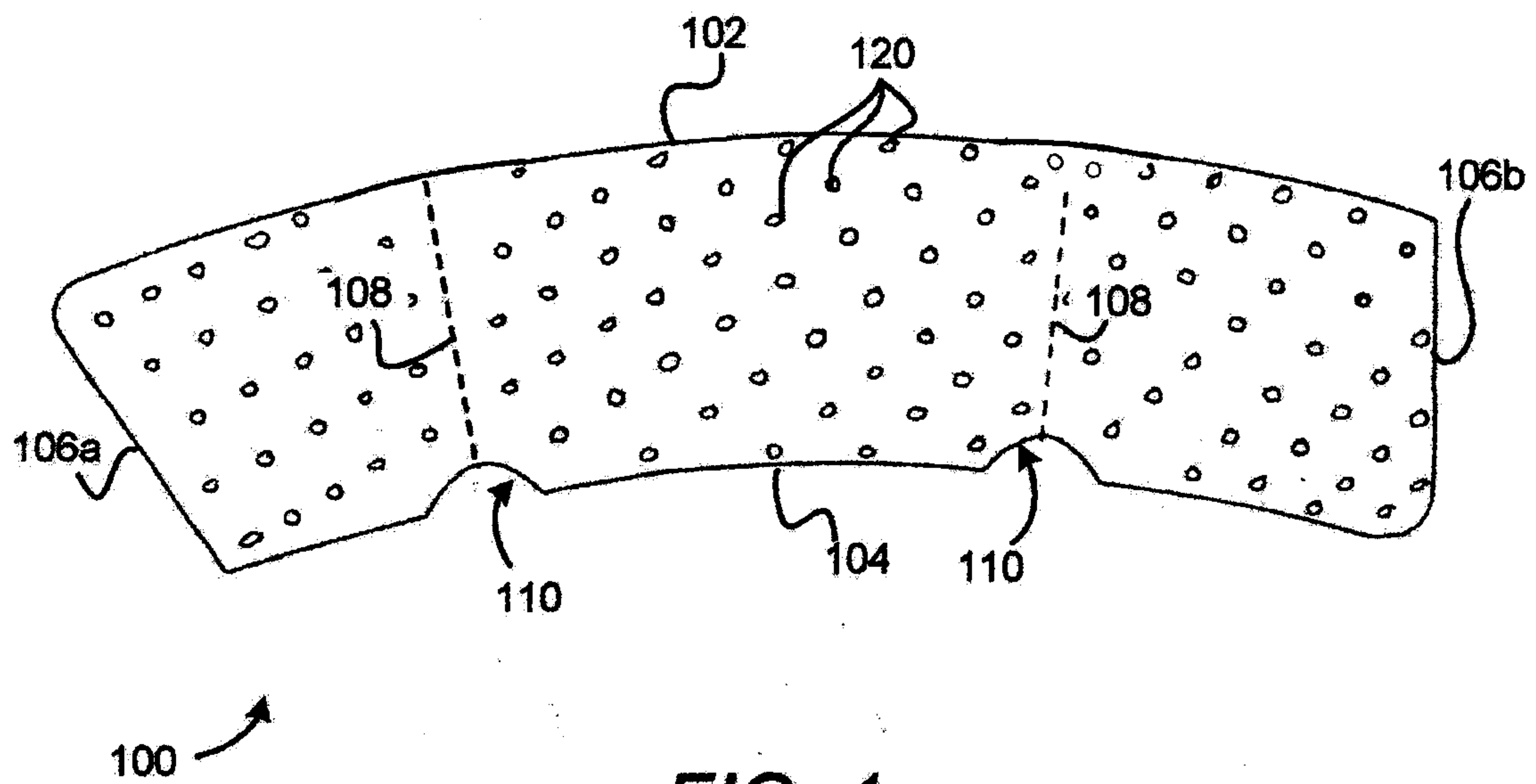


FIG. 1

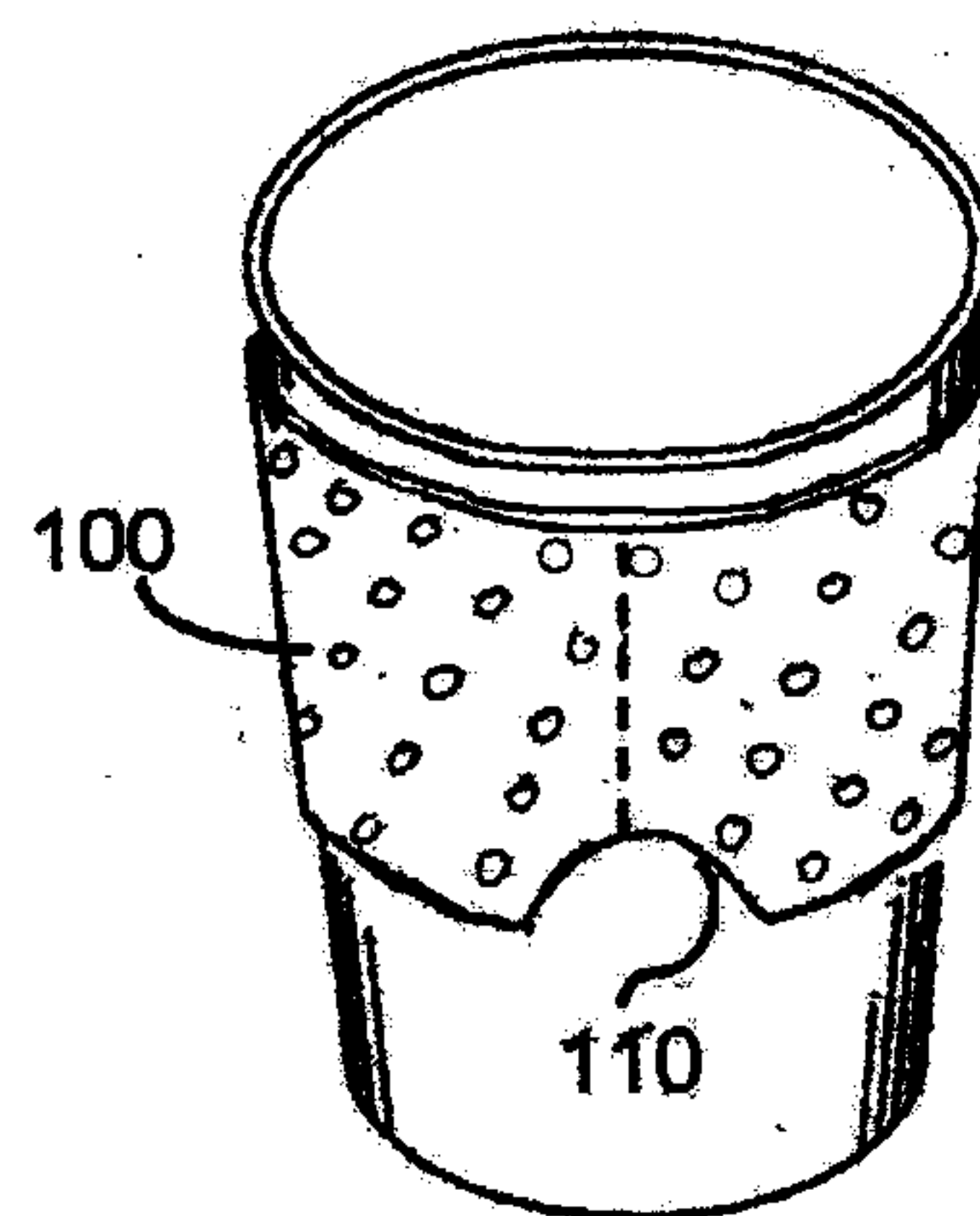


FIG. 2

