An article of a blanket and bag combination. The article may include a piece of flexible material of substantially circular in shape having a top surface and a bottom surface when the article is spread as a blanket; a first drawstring laced through a first set of holders attached near the periphery of the bottom surface; a second drawstring laced through a second set of holders attached at approximately half to two-thirds of a distance from the center point to the periphery of the bottom surface; and a mesh insert at the center of the flexible material with a reclosable flap opening towards the bottom surface. The first and second drawstrings may be used to convert the article from a blanket into a carrier such as a bag or a tote-bag.
BLANKET AND BAG COMBINATION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to an article that may be used as a ground covering blanket for example on which to sit or lie, and which may be convertible to a bag such as a tote bag for carrying items.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] It is often desirable, for example, in a beach environment to have a towel fabric or blanket like article to cover the ground to sit or recline while enjoying picnicking or sunbathing. Conventional rectangular blankets may need to be repositioned in order for the user to receive ideal exposure to the sun as it moves across the sky. At the end of a day or the end of a beach activity, it is usually required that items, such as sunglasses, lotion, etc. commonly found at a beach or picnic environment, be removed from the conventional blanket so that the blanket may be spread open and shaken to get rid of sand or dirt accumulated on the blanket. It is often then desirable to have a separate carrier such as a bag or a tote bag to carry the above items home; the carrier itself may accumulate sand or dirt.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Some embodiments of the present invention may provide an article that may be a combination of a blanket with a carrier such as a bag or a tote-bag. The article may include a piece of flexible material, having a top and a bottom surface, substantially circular in shape when being spread as a blanket.

[0004] The article may include a first drawstring laced through a first set of rings or holders attached for example close to the periphery of the bottom surface; and a second drawstring laced through a second set of rings or holders attached at a position for example approximately half to two-thirds of the distance from the center point to the periphery of the bottom surface. A mesh or screen insert may be included for example at the center of the flexible material with a reclosable flap opening towards the bottom surface.

[0005] According to one embodiment, the first drawstring may be a gathering strap to pull the piece of flexible material, when the article is spread as a blanket, into a smaller size until the second drawstring becomes exposed from the bottom surface.

[0006] According to another embodiment, the second drawstring may be a bag closure strap which may form a center portion of the flexible material into a tote-bag containing an outer portion of the flexible material, wherein the center portion is the portion within a periphery defined by the second drawstring and the outer portion is the portion outside the periphery defined by the second drawstring.

[0007] According to one embodiment, the reclosable flap may open to let small particles such as, for example, sand and dust filter through the holes of the mesh or screen, and the reclosable flap may close to reinforce a support for holding items inside the tote-bag and to prevent items from getting lost. A closed flap may also prevent, for example, sand and dirt from coming up through the mesh onto the blanket when the blanket is open and spread out on the ground.

[0008] According to another embodiment, at least a section of periphery of the reclosable flap may be attached to the periphery of the mesh insert, and the attachment may be through sewing the flap onto the periphery of the mesh insert. According to one embodiment, one or more sections of periphery of the reclosable flap may be removably attached to the periphery of the mesh insert through a mechanism such as hooks and loops closure that will prevent jamming caused by sand or other dust.

[0009] Embodiments of the invention may provide one or more retaining holders, guides or rings, attached close to the center of the flexible material but not attached to the mesh insert and through which the second drawstring is laced, wherein the second drawstring string is a continuous loop, the two retaining holders or rings holding the second drawstring to define two carrying loops for the carrier such as a bag or a tote-bag.

[0010] In one embodiment, the invention may provide one or more retaining holders, guides or rings, attached close to the center of the flexible material but off the mesh insert, wherein the second drawstring is attached to for example two spring-loaded hooks at two positions, the hooks to connect to the retaining holders or rings to form two carrying loops.

[0011] According to one embodiment, the first set of holders or rings is attached substantially uniformly along the periphery of the bottom surface.

[0012] According to another embodiment, the piece of flexible material may include two or more layers of different materials that are sewn together at one or more locations to form a single piece. The top surface may include a layer of terry cloth type of fabric material and the bottom surface may include a layer of sturdy material that is wear-resistant such as vinyl or nylon.

[0013] According to one embodiment, the color of the mesh insert may be transparent, and a side of the reclosable flap facing the same direction as the top surface is made of the same material as the top surface so that the mesh insert and the reclosable flap, when closed, appear substantially invisible.

[0014] According to another embodiment, the top surface may be decorated with printing or other visible designs, and the decoration may be integrated woven into or printed onto the fabric. The decoration may be favorable patterns and characters.

[0015] Embodiments of the present invention may provide a method of converting a blanket into a carrier such as a bag or a tote-bag. The method may include operations such as pulling a first drawstring, laced through a first set of holders, guides or rings attached close to the periphery of a bottom surface of the article, to fold the blanket into a smaller size to expose a second drawstring from the bottom surface; and pulling the second drawstring from the two sides of the blanket while lifting the blanket from the ground to convert the blanket into a carrier such as a bag or a tote-bag.

[0016] Embodiments of the present invention may provide a method of converting a center portion of the bottom surface, defined by the periphery of the second drawstring, into the covet of the carrier to contain the portion of the article outside a periphery defined by the second drawstring.
inside the carrier. According to one embodiment, the second drawstring may be converted to form carrying loops of the carrier.

[0017] Embodiments of the invention may further provide a method to open a flap attached to the bottoms of the tote-bag to expose a mesh section; to gently shake the tote-bag to let out sand and dust inside the tote-bag; and to re-close the flap to the outside of the mesh to provide additional carrying support for items inside the tote-bag.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] The subject matter regarded as the invention is particularly pointed out and distinctly claimed in the concluding portion of the specification. The invention, however, both as to organization and method of operation, together with objects, features and advantages thereof, may best be understood by reference to the following detailed description when read with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0019] FIG. 1 is a top plan view of an article of blanket and carrier combination in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0020] FIG. 2 is a bottom plan view of an article of blanket and carrier combination in accordance with another embodiment of the invention;

[0021] FIG. 3 is a perspective illustration of a part of a blanket and carrier combination in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0022] FIG. 4 is a perspective illustration of a part of a blanket and carrier combination in accordance with another embodiment of the invention;

[0023] FIG. 5 is a perspective illustration of an article being converted from a blanket into a carrier in accordance with one embodiment of the invention;

[0024] FIG. 6 is a perspective illustration of an article being converted from a blanket into a carrier in accordance with another embodiment of the invention; and

[0025] FIG. 7 is a perspective illustration of an article in a carrier configuration in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

[0026] It will be appreciated that for simplicity and clarity of illustration, elements shown in the drawings have not necessarily been drawn accurately or to scale. For example, the dimensions of some of the elements may be exaggerated relative to other elements for clarity and/or several physical components may be included in one functional block or element. Further, where considered appropriate, reference numerals may be repeated among the drawings to indicate corresponding or analogous elements.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0027] In the following detailed description, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. However, it will be understood by those of ordinary skill in the art that the present invention may be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, well-known methods, procedures, components may not have been described in detail so as not to obscure the present invention.

[0028] FIG. 1 is a top plan view of an article such as blanket and carrier or carrier combination in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. For example, the article may be a blanket 1, or may be used as a blanket, a towel, or the like, when it is spread or in a first configuration as shown in FIG. 1. Blanket 1 may be converted into a carrier such as a bag or carrier (e.g., carrier 20 in FIG. 7) or arranged into a second configuration for example by following procedures as described below with reference to FIGS. 5-7. Other conversion methods may be used.

[0029] When being spread and/or laid open over a relatively flat surface, for example, a beach ground or a camping site, blanket 1 may have a substantially circular shape. However, the present invention is not limited in this respect and blanket 1 may have other shapes such as, for example, an oval shape or a star shape as may be favored by consumers and/or users. In one embodiment, the size of the blanket may be from three (3) to six (6) feet in diameter but the invention is not limited in this respect. Other smaller or bigger sizes may be used.

[0030] Blanket 1 may be made of one layer of flexible material, or two or more layers which may be same or different materials. For example, the top layer may be made of terry cloth type of cotton fabric, wool, or any other materials that a consumer or user may prefer. The bottom layer may be made of vinyl, nylon, or other water-repellant and wear-resistant materials. However, the invention is not limited in this respect. For example, the bottom layer may also be made of terry cloth type of cotton fabric. If more than one layer is used, the two or more layers may be sewn, stitched, or attached together at one or more positions in such a fashion that blanket 1 may look, feel, and function substantially as a single piece of sheet of material. In other embodiments, only one layer may be used. In some embodiments, one layer having different properties (e.g., soft on top, durable on the bottom) may be used.

[0031] According to one embodiment of the invention, blanket 1 may have a top surface 2, which is a surface on which a consumer or user may sit or lay down. Top surface 2 may be made of some fabric materials such as, for example, a layer of cotton fabric of terry cloth type covered with moisture-absorbing loops. However other types of fabrics may be used, particularly those types of fabrics that are favored by consumers or users in a beach or picnic setting. According to one embodiment, top surface 2 may be decorated with for example colorful printings 5 and according to another embodiment the decorations may be printed on or integrally weaved into the fabric.

[0032] At the center of blanket 1, there may be a web, net, mesh or screen insert 3. The size of holes 4 of insert 3 may be big enough to let particulate matter or other small particles, such as sand and dust, fall through without being trapped. For example, the size of holes 4 may be in the range from 2 to 10 mm in diameter, however other sizes may be used. The size of holes 4 may be small enough to hold items such as bottles of suntan lotion, balls, or books that may be found in a beach or picnic environment. Other items may include, for example, sunglasses, keys, coins, and jewelry that may have been left on the blanket surface during conversion to the tote bag.

[0033] Mesh insert 3 may be made of fabric, plastic, vinyl, and/or any other suitable materials that may provide support
to hold items of for example those described above, when the article is configured as a carrier 20 (FIG. 7), and to carry the items around in the absence of support provided by a re closable flap 9 attached to the back of the mesh as is described below with reference to FIG. 2. Alternatively, if being made of fabric, mesh insert 3 may have a matching color as that of top surface 2 so that mesh insert 3 may appear invisible to a consumer and/or user. Otherwise, mesh insert 3 may be made of transparent vinyl or plastic so that only color of flap 9 underneath mesh insert 3 may be visible. Color of flap 9 may be made to match that of top surface 2 as well.

[0034] FIG. 2 is a bottom plan view of an article of blanket and carrier combination in accordance with another embodiment of the invention. Bottom surface 6 of blanket 1 may include a first rope or drawstring 10, which may be a gathering strap, laced or otherwise threaded through a first set of holders 11, which may be for example rings, “D” rings", or guide loops; a second rope or drawstring 12, which may be a bag closure strap, laced through a second set of holders 13, which may be for example rings or guide loops; and the re closable flap 9 positioned substantially near the center of blanket 1.

[0035] Holders 11 and/or 13 may be made of for example plastic, metal or wood that may hold their respective shapes to let drawstrings, for example, drawstrings 10 and 12, move relatively freely there-through. Other materials, such as string, rope or fabric may be used. Holders 11 and 13 may allow for drawstrings 10 and 12 to move more easily than with other types of holders, such as fabric channels or other channels, but in some embodiments holders 11 and 13 may include fabric or other channels or loops. However, the invention is not limited in this respect and the holders may be made of other materials, for example, fabric, nylon, etc. According to one embodiment, the first set of holders 11 may be attached near the edge or periphery of bottom surface 6 of blanket 1. Holders 11 and 13 may be uniformly, or substantially uniformly, distributed respectively around a periphery 7 defined by the first drawstring 10 and a periphery 8 defined by the second drawstring 12. For example, any two adjacent holders 11, or rings or guide loops, may be separated between four (4) to eight (8) inches. Holders other than rings or loops may be used, such as for example looped straps. Uniform distribution need not be used.

[0036] As is illustrated in FIG. 3, which is a perspective illustration of a part of a blanket and carrier combination according to one embodiment, holders 11 and/or 13, or rings or guide loops, may have shapes such as, for example, the shape of “O”. However, the invention is not limited in this respect and other shapes such as the shape of “D” or other shapes may be used. Holders 11 and/or 13 may be attached to bottom surface 6 of blanket 1 through a hook 15 sewn thereon, and may be rotated or flipped flexibly. In other words, holders 11 and 13 may be loosely fixed to bottom surface 6 so that they may lie down without sticking out toward top surface 2 when being put on ground such as, for example, a beach environment. As illustrated in FIG. 3, drawstring 10 and/or 12 weaves through holders 11 and/or 13.

[0037] Holders 13 may be attached around periphery 8 which is approximately half to two-thirds of a distance from the center point to the edge or periphery 7 of bottom surface 6. Other distances from the center point may be used so as to form different sizes of carrier such as a tote-bag as may be favored by consumers or users. According to one embodiment, one or more retaining holders or rings 14 may be attached near the center of blanket 1 close to re closable flap 9. The second drawstring 12 may be a continuous loop which may weave through the set of holders or rings or loops 13 and the two retaining holders or rings 14. The two retaining holders or rings 14 may be laced through in between adjacent holders 13A and 13B, and in between adjacent holders 13C and 13D. Holders 13A and 13B, and holders 13C and 13D may be positioned at approximately half the number of holders 13 such that when blanket 1 is configured into a carrier 20 (FIG. 7), the second drawstring 12 may be formed as two carry loops as shown in FIG. 7.

[0038] As is illustrated in FIG. 4, which is a perspective illustration of a part of a blanket and bag combination according to another embodiment of the invention, the second drawstring 12 may not be a continuous loop and instead may be an open loop or string. The second drawstring 12 may not weave through retaining holders or rings 14 and may be attached to retaining holders or rings 14. The attachment may be through a mechanism such as for example spring-loaded hooks as illustrated in FIG. 4. The two spring-loaded hooks may be attached to rings 14 at between holders 13A and 13B, and holders 13C and 13D.

[0039] Also shown in FIG. 2 is re closable flap 9 at a position where mesh 3 is inserted. Flap 9 may be attached along its periphery to mesh insert 3 through a mechanism that may not be jammed by small particles such as sand or dust. The mechanism may be, for example, a hook and loop type closure, and may be the Velcro® type of resealable hook and loop closure. Other forms of attachment means or mechanism may be used. The attachment may be at one or more positions around the periphery of flap 9. At least one section of the periphery, flap 9 may be fixed or attached to bottom surface 6, for example, through sewing to the periphery of mesh insert 3 so that flap 9 may not be completely detached from bottom surface 6. However, the invention is not limited in this respect and according some embodiments flap 9 may be detachable from bottom surface 6. On the side facing the bottom surface, flap 9 may be made of same or similar material as that of bottom surface however the invention is not limited in this respect.

[0040] FIG. 5 is a perspective illustration of an article being converted from a blanket into a carrier in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

[0041] Blanket 1 may be initially in a spread position covering a flat surface such as, for example, a beach ground. Blanket 1 may be converted, as illustrated additionally in FIGS. 6 and 7, into a carrier such as a tote-bag as described herein after. From the bottom side of spread blanket 1, the first drawstring 10, which is a gathering strap, may be pulled in a slightly upward direction as illustrated by the arrow in FIG. 5. By the motion of action of pulling gathering strap 10, the edge portion or outer portion of blanket 1 around periphery 7 may be collected, together with items that may be scattered on top of blanket 1. The collected edge portion of blanket 1 may be arranged to rest close to the center of blanket 1.

[0042] FIG. 6 is a perspective illustration of an article being converted from a blanket into a carrier in accordance with another embodiment of the invention.
As is shown in FIG. 6 and described above, the first drawstring or gathering strap 10 may pull blanket 1 into a position such that most of the edge portion of blanket 1 are gathered together around the center of blanket 1. Gathering strap 10 may be further pulled such that blanket 1 continues to fold to become smaller in diameter until such that at least part of the second drawstring 12, which is a bag closure strap, situated at the bottom surface of blanket 1 becomes exposed. At this point, by holding at two positions of one between holder 13A and 13B and the other between holder 13C and 13D, bag closure strap 12 may be pulled, along the direction as indicated by the arrows illustrated in FIG. 6. For example, bag closure strap 12 may be pulled outwards and at the same upward such that weight of the center portion of blanket 1 may start to pull the center of blanket 1 down to form a carrier such as a bag or a tote-bag, as is illustrated below in FIG. 7. The center portion of bottom surface 6, that is, the portion that is within periphery 8 as defined by the second drawstring 12, may become the outside cover of the carrier. The outer portion of the bottom surface, being the portion outside periphery 8, may be folded and contained inside carrier 20 (FIG. 7).

FIG. 7 is a perspective illustration of an article in a carrier configuration in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. As illustrated in FIG. 7, the center portion of bottom surface 6 (FIG. 2) may form the outside cover of carrier 20 and bag closure strap 12 may form for example two carrying loops on the left and right side as of carrier 20, for example, carrying loops 16A and 16B as illustrated in FIG. 7. Carrier 20 may be a bag or a tote-bag. The carrying loops 16A and 16B may be retained, on the top of the bag, to holders or rings 13 and, on the bottom of the bag, to retaining holders or rings 14. Carrying loops 16A and 16B may be woven through, or otherwise connected to holders or rings 14 through a mechanism such as for example spring-loaded hooks as described above with reference to FIG. 4.

According to one embodiment of the invention, reclosable flap 9 may be opened to expose mesh insert 3 to drain particulate matter such as sand or dust that may be trapped inside carrier 20, and may be closed through one or more sets of hook and loop pairs such as the Velcro™ type of reusable hook and loop closure. The hooks may be attached to mesh insert 3 and the loops attached to flap 9, around their respective peripheries. However, the invention is not limited in this respect and the hooks may be attached to flap 9 and the loops attached to mesh insert 3, or they may be attached to both mesh insert 3 and flap 9 in a mixed fashion. Flap 9 may be applied to cover mesh insert 3, through the Velcro™ type of hook and loop closure or fastener, for additional support to the bottom of bag 20 for carrying weight. In one embodiment, the blanket does not need to be spread open and shaken to get rid of sand or dust accumulated on the blanket; rather such matter may be drained via the mesh insert 3. In addition, flap 9 may prevent such matter from coming to the top side of the blanket 1 when flap 9 is closed.

While certain features of the invention have been illustrated and described herein, many modifications, substitutions, changes, and equivalents may occur to those of ordinary skill in the art. It is, therefore, to be understood that the appended claims are intended to cover all such modifications and changes as fall within the true spirit of the invention.

What is claimed is:
1. An article comprising:
a piece of flexible material of substantially circular in shape when the article is spread having a top surface and a bottom surface;
a first drawstring laced through a first set of holders attached substantially near the periphery of the bottom surface; and
a second drawstring laced through a second set of holders attached at approximately half to two-thirds of the distance from the center point of the flexible material to the periphery of the bottom surface.
2. The article of claim 1, wherein the first drawstring forms a gathering strap to pull the piece of flexible material, when the article is spread as a blanket, into a smaller size to expose the second drawstring.
3. The article of claim 1, wherein the second drawstring forms a bag closure strap to convert a center portion of the flexible material into a carrier containing an outer, portion of the flexible material, the center portion being within a periphery defined by the second drawstring and the outer portion being outside the periphery defined by the second drawstring.
4. The article of claim 1, further comprising a mesh insert at the center of the flexible material and a reclosable flap opening towards the bottom surface.
5. The article of claim 4, wherein at least one section of the periphery of the reclosable flap is fixed to the article near the periphery of the mesh insert.
6. The article of claim 4, wherein the flap comprises one or more sets of loops and the mesh insert comprises one or more sets of hooks, one or more of the sets of loops to be engaged with one or more of the sets of hooks to keep the flap in a closed position to the mesh insert, and to be disengaged to let the flap in an open position.
7. The article of claim 4, wherein the second drawstring is a continuous loop, the article further comprising one or more retaining holders or rings, attached substantially close to the center of the flexible material but not attached to the mesh insert and through which the second drawstring is laced, the one or more retaining holders or rings holding the second drawstring to define two carrying loops.
8. The article of claim 4, further comprising one or more retaining holders or rings, attached close to the center of the flexible material but not attached to the mesh insert, wherein the second drawstring is attached to at least two hooks at two locations and the hooks connect to the one or more retaining holders or rings to form two carrying loops.
9. The article of claim 1, wherein the first set of holders is attached substantially uniformly along the periphery of the bottom surface.
10. The article of claim 1, wherein the piece of flexible material comprises two or more layers of different materials that are sewn together at one or more positions to form a single piece.
11. The article of claim 10, wherein the top surface comprises a layer of loop-woven fabric material.
12. The article of claim 10, wherein the bottom surface comprises a layer of sturdy material that is wear-resistant.
13. The article of claim 1, wherein the mesh insert is transparent, and a side of the reclosable flap facing the same direction as the top surface is made of the same material as the top surface so that the mesh insert and the reclosable flap, when closed, appear substantially invisible.

14. The article of claim 1, wherein the top surface is decoratively printed or weaved integrally with favorable patterns and characters.

15. A method of converting an article from a blanket into a tote-bag comprising:

- pulling a first drawstring, laced through a first set of holders attached substantially close to the periphery of a bottom surface of the article, to fold the blanket into a smaller size to expose a second drawstring; and
- pulling the second drawstring from the two sides of the blanket while lifting the blanket from the ground to convert the center portion of the blanket into a carrier.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising converting a center portion of the bottom surface, within a periphery defined by the second drawstring, into a cover of the carrier containing an outer portion of the article outside the periphery defined by the second drawstring.

17. The method of claim 15, further comprising converting the second drawstring into two carrying loops of the carrier.

18. A blanket and bag combination, comprising:

- a first drawstring weaved through a first set of holders positioned near the edge of a bottom surface of a sheet of flexible material; and
- a second drawstring weaved through a second set of holders positioned away from the edge, at the bottom surface, the second drawstring defining a center portion of the bottom surface of the sheet of flexible material that is to form an outside cover of a bag.

19. The blanket and bag combination of claim 18, wherein the first drawstring is to pull the edge portion of the blanket and bag combination outside the periphery defined by the second drawstring to be within the periphery; and the second drawstring is to hold the center portion of the bottom surface to form the bag.

20. The blanket and bag combination of claim 18, further comprising an insert positioned substantially close to the center of the flexible material, the insert having holes to drain particulate materials and a reclosable flap to cover the insert.

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