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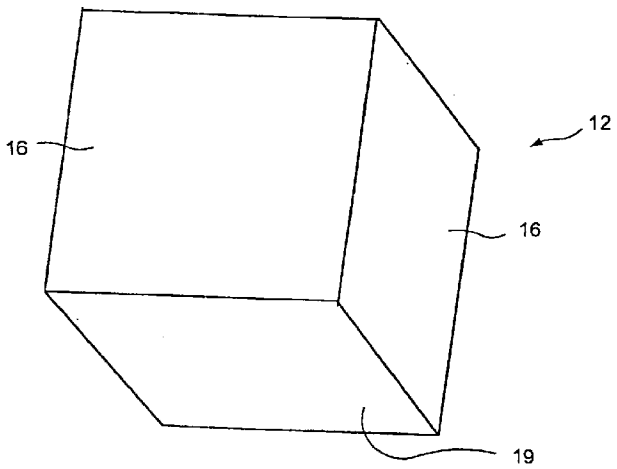
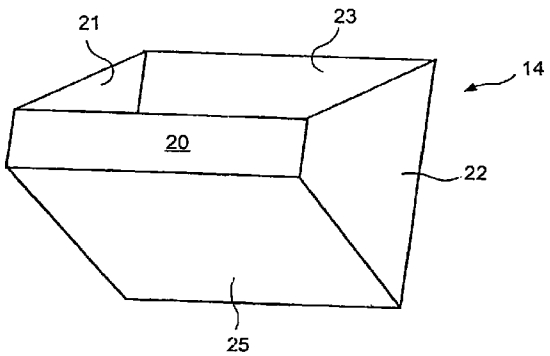
(54) Title: PACKING METHOD FOR SOFT PACKAGES





(57) Abstract: The present disclosure relates to using a wholesale package to ship a large number of densely packed retail packages. The wholesale package includes an a top portion which receives a tray portion. At the retail site, the top portion is removed and discarded whereby the tray portion forms a retail display which holds the retail packages in the densely packed configuration. The retail packages are preferably soft packages, such as those using polymeric film to form the walls and being manufactured by form fill seal methods.

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PACKING METHOD FOR SOFT PACKAGES

This application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) of provisional application serial no. 60/833,837, filed on July 27, 2006.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The present invention pertains to the packing of soft packages within a cardboard or similar container which serves as both a shipping container and a retail merchandise display.

Description of the Prior Art

Today's retail environment is fiercely competitive in its allocation of shelf space, particularly in grocery stores, "big box" retailers, wholesale clubs and similar establishments. Manufacturers and distributors frequently must make financial arrangements with the retailer in order to place products on the shelves, and these financial arrangements can be calculated on the basis of the linear feet of shelf space allocated to the product. Moreover, inventory management programs typically keep track of the sales of specific products from specific retail shelf space and changes in retail shelf stocking can be made in view of the results of these programs.

Additionally, typical prior art packaging of multiple retail units within a single package requires store personnel to remove the retail units from the package and discard the package.

OBJECTS AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is therefore an object of this invention to provide a method of packing a plurality of retail units within a single package in a way which efficiently uses retail shelf space, reduces labor for shelf stocking and reduces the material required for packaging.

It is therefore a further object of this invention to provide a method of packing a plurality of retail units within a single package in a way which tends to reduce merchandising costs, packaging costs and freight costs.

These and other objects are attained by providing a single wholesale package with a large number of soft retail packages included therein. The wholesale package includes a removable top or outer portion which fits over a retail display tray portion. The top or outer portion of the package can removed at the retail location thereby leaving a retail display tray for the soft retail packages, thereby minimizing the labor required for shelf stocking while maintaining a tightly packed configuration which increases the number of retail packages in a given length of retail shelf space.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Further objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following description and from the accompanying drawings and claims:

Figure 1 is a perspective drawing of the wholesale package of the present invention, with the tray portion contained inside and obscured from view.

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the tray portion for holding the retail packages in a retail environment after the top portion has been removed.

Figure 3 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the tray portion, shown with a higher wall segment or lip in the back, and shown with the inserts in an exploded position.

Figure 4 is a lower perspective, partially exploded view, showing the alternative embodiment of the tray portion, along with a top portion removed therefrom.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring now to the drawings in detail wherein like numerals refer to like elements throughout the several views, one sees that Figure 1 is an perspective view of the exterior of the wholesale package 10 of the present invention. A plurality of wholesale packages 10 may be packed into even larger shipping packages.

Wholesale package 10 includes top or outer portion 12 (Fig. 1) which receives tray portion 14 (Fig. 2) such that tray portion 14 is contained within top portion 12. That is, top portion 12 is outwardly concentrically adjacent to tray portion 14. As shown in Figure 1, top portion 12 includes lateral walls 16 and top surface 18 thereby leaving a bottom surface 19 open for receiving the tray portion 14 shown in Figure 2. Tray portion 14 includes front lateral wall segment 20, side lateral wall segments 21, 22 and rear lateral wall segment 23 extending around the periphery of lower surface 25 thereby forming a lip. Lateral walls 16, top surface 18 and lateral wall segments 20, 21, 22, 23 preferably include attractive high-quality graphics. During shipping, tray portion 14 is received within top portion 12. However, at the retail site, top portion 12 is removed and discarded after tray portion 14 has been placed onto the retail shelf.

As shown in Figure 2, after top portion 12 is removed, tray portion 14 is exposed along with retail packages 50.

Figure 2 illustrates the lateral wall segments 20, 21, 22, 23 as having equal heights. However, Figures 3 and 4 illustrate an alternative embodiment wherein tray portion 14 has a rear lateral wall segment 23 that is approximately the same height as the length of the retail package 50, a front lateral wall segment 20 that is approximately 20% of the length of the retail package 50 and diagonal side lateral wall segments 21, 22 that extend between the top edges of front and rear lateral wall segments 21, 22.

As shown in Figure 3, within the tray portion 50 and located at its bottom are corrugated inserts 52 that cause the retail packages 50 to lean toward the back of the tray as well as separate the bottoms of groups of retail packages (2-4 packages) to eliminate the potential of the packages to slide forward so they remain in a near vertical position. A corrugated separator 52, smaller in height than the front of the tray, is also used to separate rows of retail packages preventing them from falling sideways. Figure 2 is illustrated with twenty-four retail packages 50, but other numbers may be used. However, it is envisioned that the number of retail packages 50 within a single wholesale package 10 will be large enough to result in efficient use of retail shelf space. Additionally, retail packages 50 are typically soft packages, with walls formed of polymeric material or similar material such as is used to make reclosable packages or "plastic bags". Retail packages 50 may be formed by form fill seal methods, such as is known in the prior art. Retail packages 50 may hold many different consumer products. Typical products are garbage bags or reclosable packages likewise made from polymeric film.

The resulting retail configuration maintains the retail package density of the shipping configuration thereby increasing the number of retail packages 50 for a given amount of shelf space while requiring minimal labor from the retail personnel.

Thus the several aforementioned objects and advantages are most effectively attained. Although preferred embodiments of the invention have been disclosed and described in detail herein, it should be understood that this invention is in no sense limited thereby and its scope is to be determined by that of the appended claims.

CLAIMS

What is Claimed is:

1. A shipping package including:

a tray portion including a lower surface for supporting retail packages;

a top portion comprising lateral walls which form a lower mouth for receiving the tray portion therewithin.

2. The shipping package of Claim 1 wherein the top portion further includes a top surface joining the top edges of the lateral walls.

3. The shipping package of Claim 2 wherein the tray portion receives a plurality of retail packages.

4. The shipping package of Claim 3 wherein the tray includes a lip formed around the periphery thereof.

5. The shipping package of Claim 4 wherein the lip is formed from lateral wall segments.

6. The shipping package of Claim 5 wherein the lateral wall segments are of equal height throughout the periphery of the tray.

7. The shipping container of Claim 4 wherein a rear lateral wall segment is approximately the height of a retail package, the front lateral wall segment is approximately 20 percent of the height of a retail package and the side lateral wall segments are diagonally oriented to extend between a top edge of the front lateral wall segment and a top edge of the rear lateral wall segment.

8. The shipping package of Claim 5 wherein the lateral walls segments are received within the top portion.

9. The shipping package of Claim 5 wherein the tray portion is a tray for displaying the plurality of retail packages in a retail environment.

10. The shipping package of Claim 8 wherein the tray portion includes inserts to maintain the retail packages in near-upright orientation.

11. A shipping package including:

a tray portion including a lower surface;

a plurality of retail packages supported on the lower surface; and

a top portion comprising lateral walls which form a lower mouth for receiving the tray portion therewithin.

12. The shipping package of Claim 11 wherein the retail packages are formed of polymeric material.

13. The shipping package of Claim 12 wherein the top portion further includes a top surface joining the top edges of the lateral walls.

14. The shipping package of Claim 13 wherein the tray includes a lip formed around the periphery thereof.

15. The shipping package of Claim 14 wherein the lip is formed from lateral wall segments.

16. The shipping package of Claim 15 wherein the lateral wall segments are of equal height throughout the periphery of the tray.

17. The shipping container of Claim 14 wherein a rear lateral wall segment is approximately the height of a retail package, the front lateral wall segment is approximately 20 percent of the height of a retail package and the side lateral wall segments are diagonally oriented to extend between a top edge of the front lateral wall segment and a top edge of the rear lateral wall segment.

18. The shipping package of Claim 15 wherein the lateral walls segments are received within the top portion.

19. The shipping package of Claim 15 wherein the tray portion is a tray for displaying the plurality of retail packages in a retail environment.

20. The shipping package of Claim 18 wherein the tray portion includes inserts to maintain the retail packages in near-upright orientation.

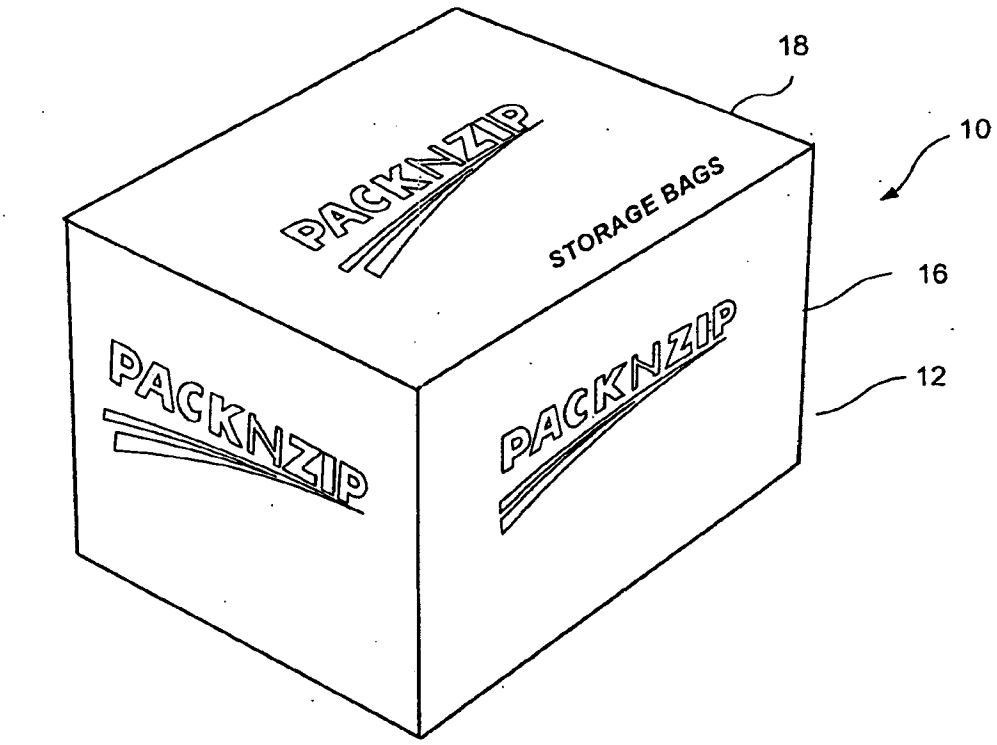

FIG. 1

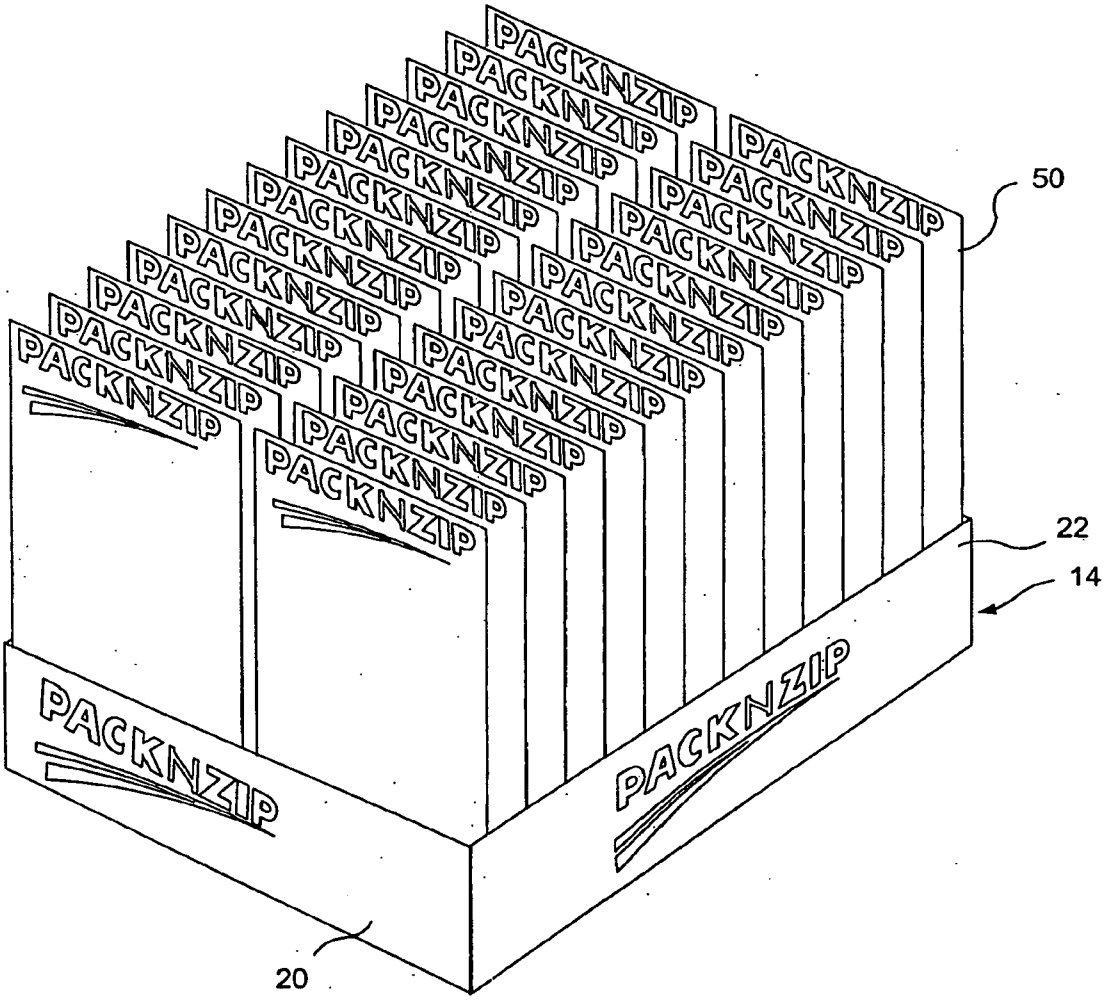

FIG. 2

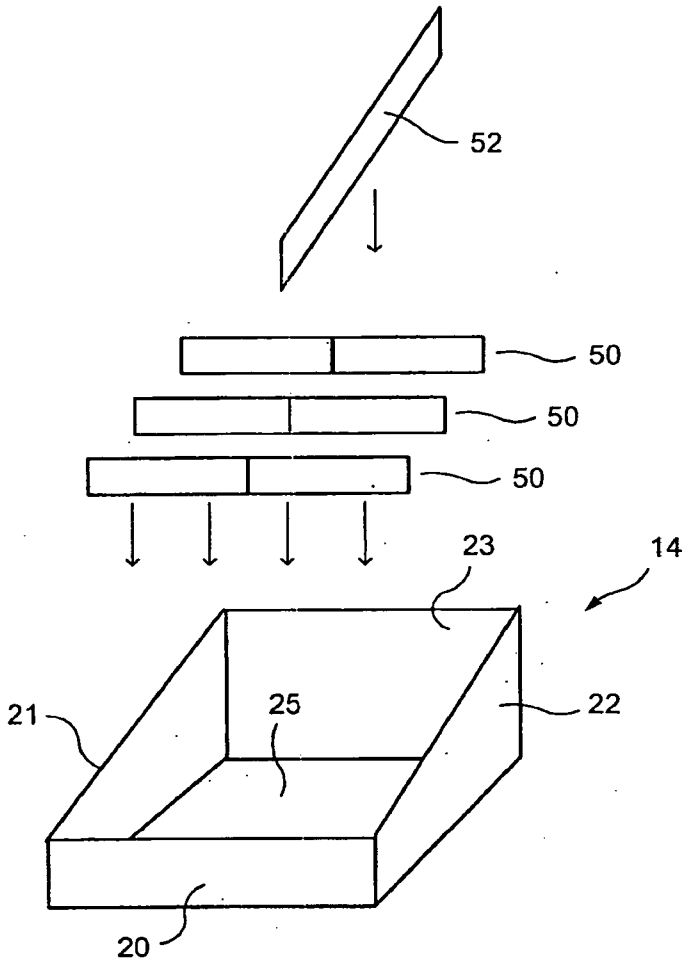

FIG. 3

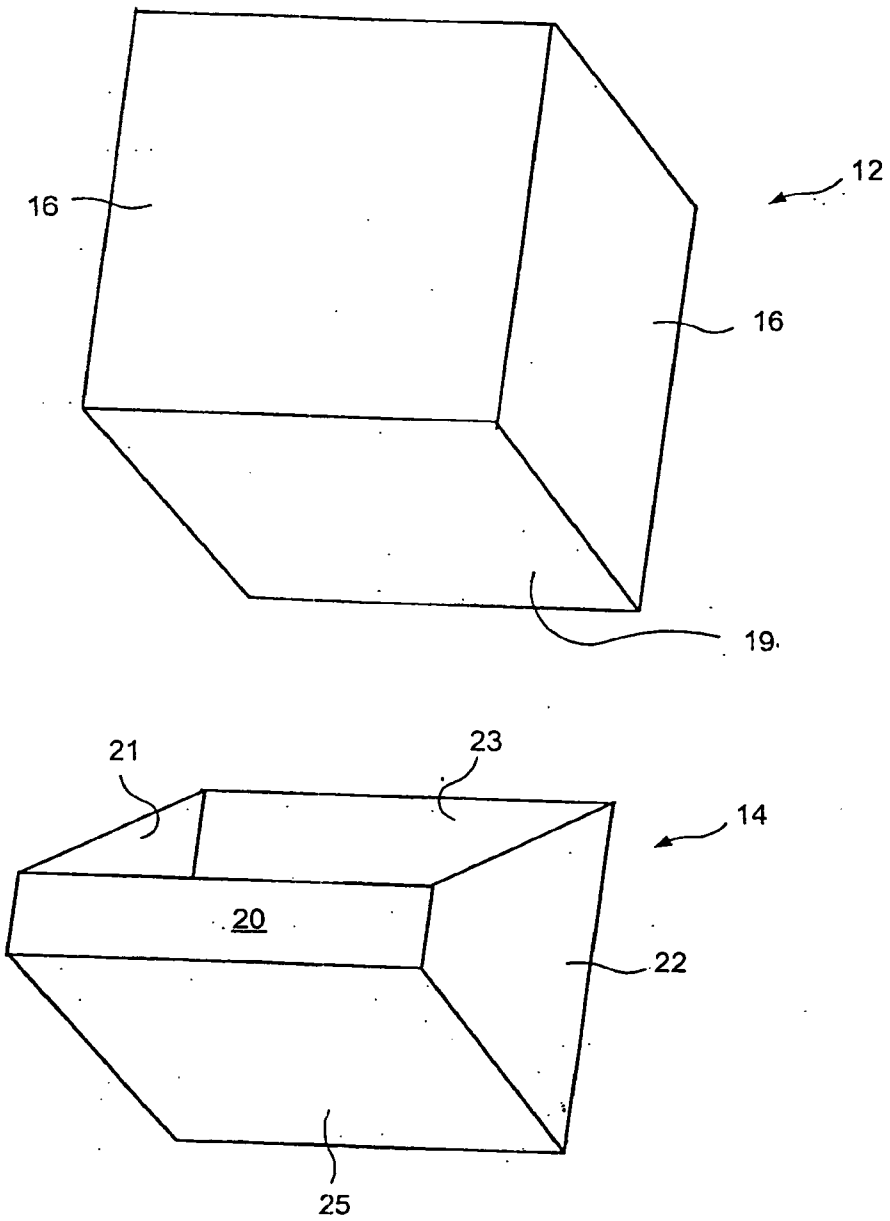

FIG. 4