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(54) **METHOD OF DISTRIBUTING AND  
RETAILING LIQUID WASHING/CLEANING  
PRODUCTS**

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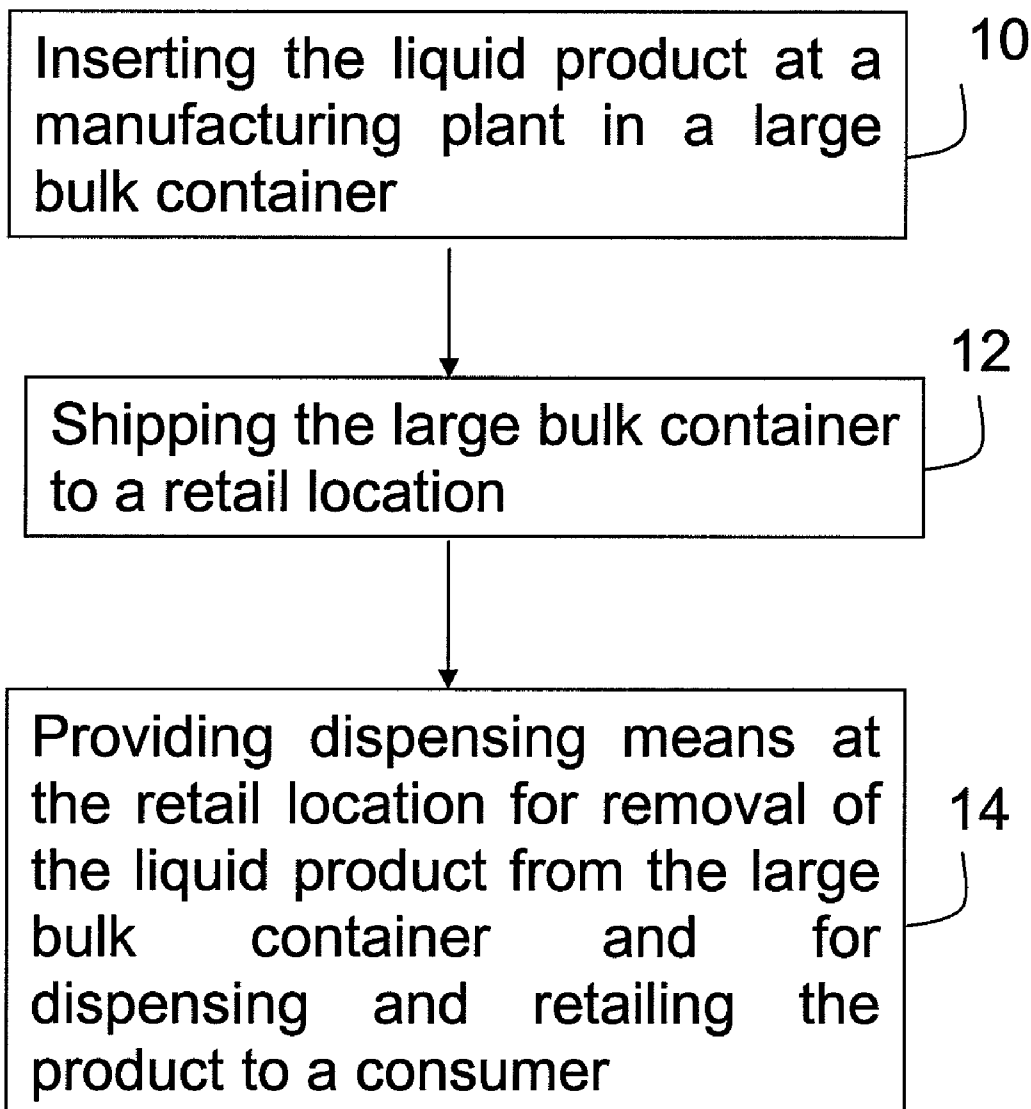
(57) **ABSTRACT**

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A method of distributing and retailing a liquid washing/cleaning product includes the steps of inserting the liquid washing/cleaning product at a manufacturing plant in a large bulk container, shipping the large bulk container to a retail location, and providing dispensers at the retail location for removal of the liquid washing/cleaning product from the large bulk container and for dispensing and retailing the product to a consumer.

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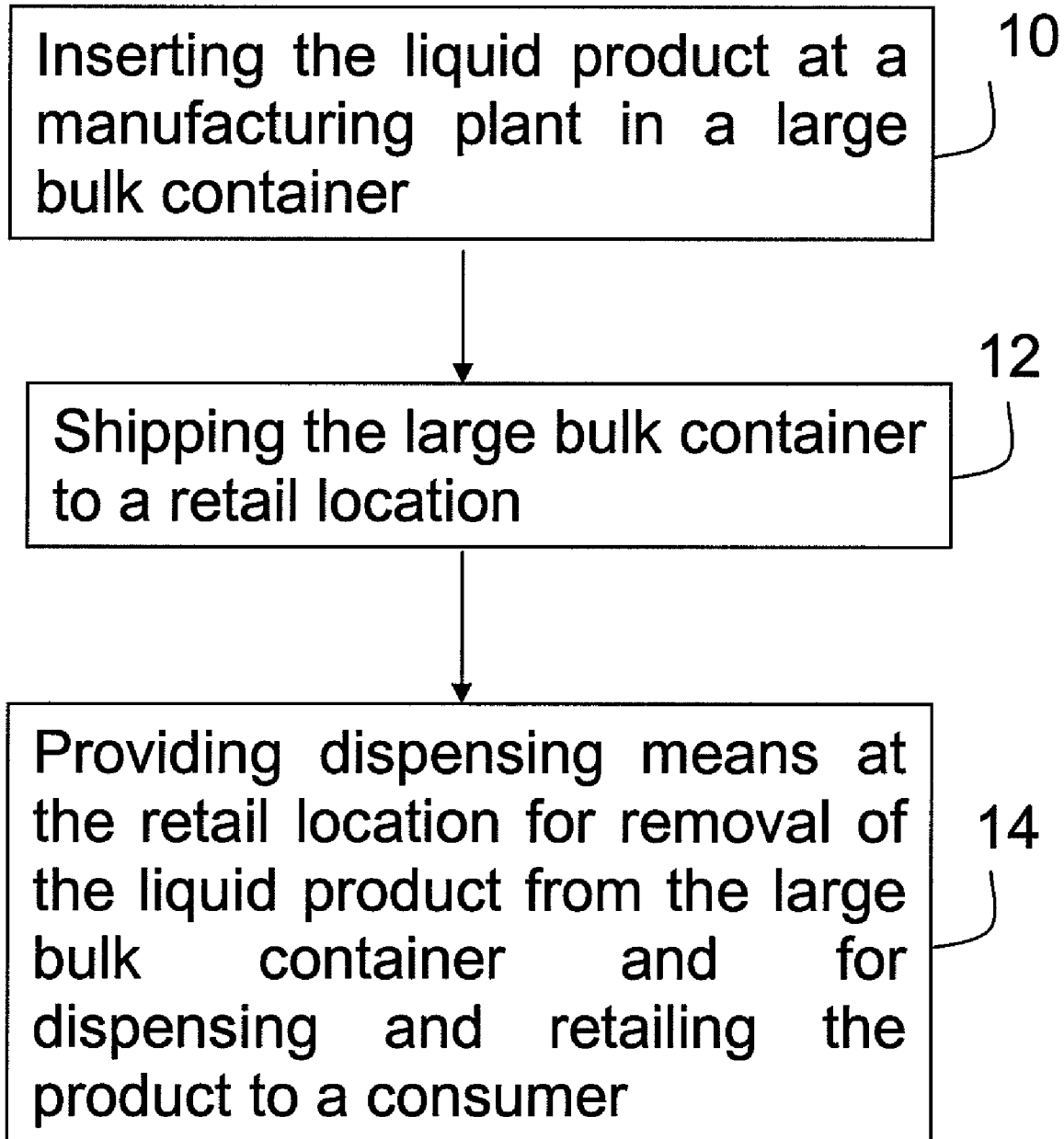


Fig. 1

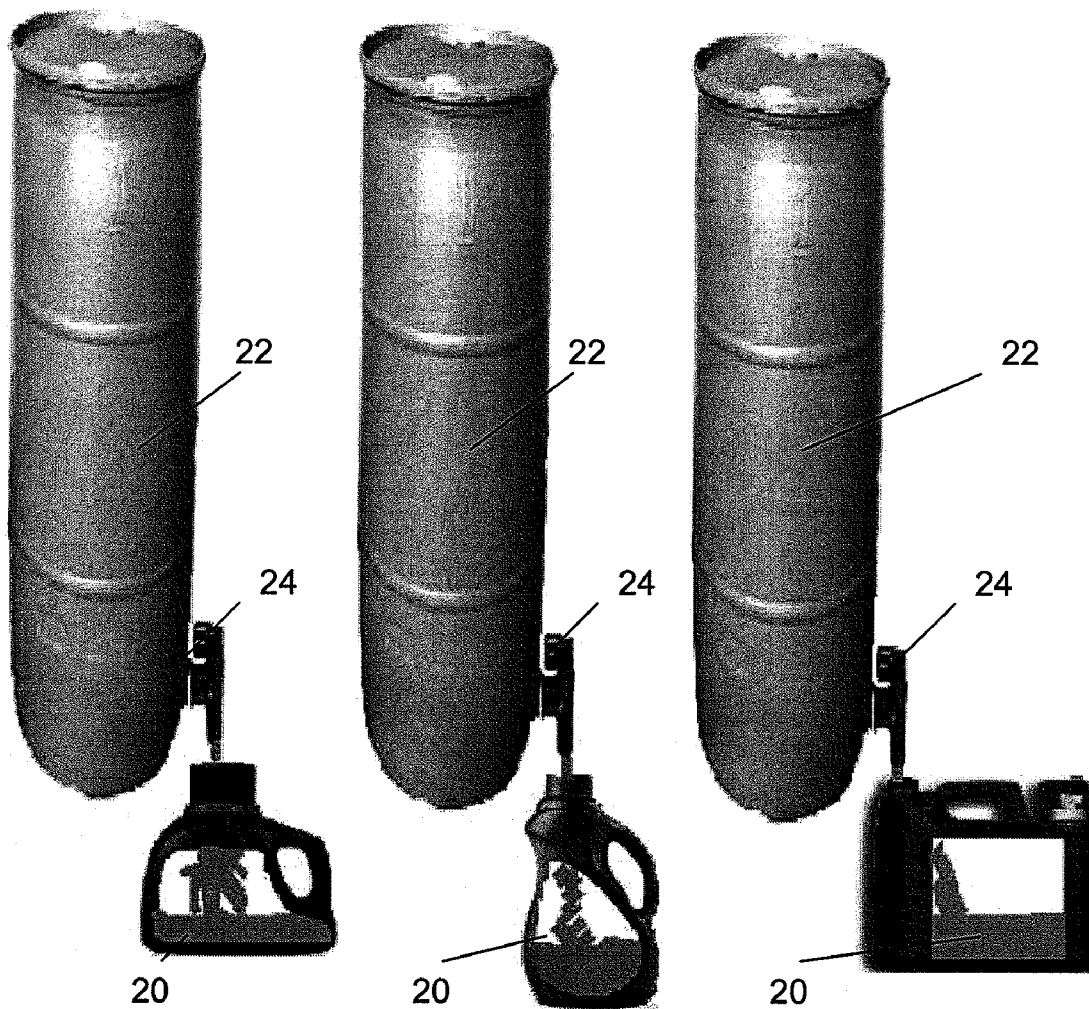


FIG. 2

**METHOD OF DISTRIBUTING AND  
RETAILING LIQUID WASHING/CLEANING  
PRODUCTS**

[0001] The present application claims priority of U.S. Provisional patent application No. 60/924,278 filed Jun. 4, 2007, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

**FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

[0002] The present invention generally relates to the distribution and retail sale of consumer products. More particularly, it relates to a method of distributing and retailing liquid washing/cleaning products.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

[0003] Usage of liquid washing/cleaning products such as dish washing and hand washing soaps, laundry detergents, fabric softeners, shampoo and conditioners, hand soaps are increasingly being used by consumers.

[0004] Typically, these products have been distributed and sold in individual containers for each product.

[0005] The increased use of these products is creating a bigger amount of pollution, as used empty containers are either ending up in garbage dump sites or in recycling plants creating land or air pollution.

[0006] As the product containers end up at land fill sites, a huge area of land is occupied, causing land pollution. Not only are these containers filling up land sites, but also the decomposition of these plastic containers can take several years to be completed if even at all.

[0007] In the cases where the containers make their way to a recycling plant, a different type of pollution results: air pollution. Polluted air is sent into the environment from the melting process of these containers, thus affecting air quality and the ozone layer.

[0008] In order to reduce costs associated with the distribution and retailing of liquid washing products, certain producers offer for sale refill containers that consumers can purchase in order to refill their used or empty washing liquid containers. These refill containers often do not have all the features of the original container and thus offer cost savings in terms of packaging as they are simpler to manufacture or can be offered in larger individual sizes for distribution and retail sale. However, the environmental benefits resulting from the sale of simpler refill containers that might consume less material are greatly diminished by the fact that the refill container itself typically ends up in land fill sites or recycling plants with the environmental consequences explained above.

[0009] Furthermore, consumers typically use a wide variety of liquid washing/cleaning products in different quantities for different applications. For example, for liquid laundry detergents, a same consumer might wish to have at their disposal different detergents for different clothing materials, clothing colours, washing/cleaning scents and washing/cleaning water temperatures being used. However, current liquid washing/cleaning products are offered for retail sale in a limited number of standard-size containers that attempt to address the needs of the widest amount of consumers. Given the wide variety of usage of liquid washing/cleaning products by consumers, certain consumers might appreciate more flexibility in the choices for purchasing liquid washing/cleaning products from a retail outlet.

[0010] Thus there is still presently a need to reduce, reuse and recycle used and empty containers for economic and environmental reasons.

[0011] There is also a need for a method of distribution and retailing of liquid washing/cleaning products which could reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants.

[0012] There is also a need for a method of distribution and retailing of liquid washing/cleaning products which offers more flexibility in the choices for purchasing liquid washing/cleaning products from a retail outlet.

**SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

[0013] An object of the present invention is to propose a method of distributing and retailing liquid washing/cleaning products that satisfies at least one of the above-mentioned needs.

[0014] According to the present invention, that object is accomplished with a method of distributing and retailing a liquid washing/cleaning product comprising the steps of:

[0015] a) inserting the liquid washing/cleaning product at a manufacturing plant in a large bulk container;

[0016] b) shipping the large bulk container to a retail location; and

[0017] c) providing dispensing means at the retail location for removal of the liquid washing/cleaning product from the large bulk container and for dispensing and retailing the product to a consumer.

[0018] The following are advantages of this invention:

[0019] Provision of a place for consumers where they can reduce/reuse and recycle their containers by bringing them to a designated area and re-fill their empty containers with similar products.

[0020] Reduction of land pollution by consumers reusing their containers instead of having to throw them out.

[0021] Reduction of air pollution by consumers reusing their containers instead of having to them going to recycling plants where they create air pollution in the melting process.

[0022] Provision of a less expensive alternative to consumers buying liquid washing/cleaning products. Not only there is provided a satisfaction of paying less for the same product but also the satisfaction of knowing they are participating in helping the environment.

[0023] A non-restrictive description of a preferred embodiment of the invention will now be given with reference to the appended drawings.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

[0024] FIG. 1 is a diagrammatic view of a method of distributing and retailing a liquid washing/cleaning product in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0025] FIG. 2 is a side perspective view of large containers being used to refill smaller consumer containers in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

**DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED  
EMBODIMENTS**

[0026] According to the present invention, as shown in FIG. 1, there is provided a method of distributing and retailing a liquid washing/cleaning product comprising the steps of:

[0027] a) inserting the liquid washing/cleaning product at a manufacturing plant in a large bulk container 10;

**[0028]** b) shipping the large bulk container to a retail location **12**; and

**[0029]** c) providing dispensing means at the retail location for removal of the liquid washing/cleaning product from the large bulk container and for dispensing and retailing the product to a consumer **14**.

**[0030]** Preferably, the present invention provides a process for recycling of liquid product containers that contain washing/cleaning products, detergents or fabric softeners of all sizes. According to the method, there is a purchase of large drums or containers of liquid washing/cleaning materials from the distributor that would be made available in bulk and resold to end consumers at the retail location. As illustrated in FIG. 2, at the retail location, the consumer would bring their empty containers **20** to be refilled from the bulk product containers **22** described above. Consequently, customers recycle and refill their own empty liquid containers with similar products in order to reduce pollution.

**[0031]** Preferably, the dispensing means is any valve or faucet system **24** that can be installed directly on the large bulk container **22**. Alternately, the dispensing means is any system for transferring the liquid washing/cleaning product from the large bulk container **22** to a dispensing container located at the retail location through manual or automated means.

**[0032]** Preferably, after dispensing all of its liquid washing/cleaning product contents, the large bulk container is returned to the manufacturing plant in order to be refilled.

**[0033]** Preferably, a number of different large bulk containers containing different liquid washing/cleaning products are delivered to a same retail location in order to offer a wide range of different products to the consumer who can then selectively purchase different quantities of each product, and refill previously-used empty liquid washing/cleaning containers or any other container the consumer would bring to the retail outlet.

**[0034]** Preferably, the retail outlet is located near other traditional retail stores or shopping centers.

**[0035]** Preferably, the large bulk container has a dispensing opening that is closed during shipping and opened for removal of the washing product during dispensing at the retail location.

**[0036]** Preferably, the large bulk container has a connector for detachably connecting to the dispensing means.

**[0037]** Preferably, the dispensing means further comprises a measurement system for measuring an amount of washing liquid removed from the bulk container. The measurement system may be a measuring valve or any known system for measuring the amount of fluid traversing the dispensing means.

**[0038]** Preferably, if the dispensing means is a system for transferring the liquid washing/cleaning product from the large bulk container to a dispensing container through automated means, this automated means may include a pump sub-system for facilitating transfer of the liquids.

**[0039]** As can be seen, this method reduces the waste associated with the use and production of liquid washing/cleaning containers as consumers reuse empty containers for their needs, while offering cost savings to the consumer through the bulk distribution of liquid washing/cleaning products. The consumer also has a much greater freedom of choice in purchases of liquid washing/cleaning products as the consumer can possibly purchase a greater quantity of different products which might not otherwise have occurred if the

consumer was constrained to purchase products from a limited number of standard-sized containers.

**[0040]** Although the present invention has been explained hereinabove by way of preferred embodiments thereof, it should be pointed out that any modifications to these preferred embodiments within the scope of the appended claims is not deemed to alter or change the nature and scope of the present invention.

**1.** A method of distributing and retailing a liquid washing product comprising the steps of:

- a) inserting the liquid washing product at a manufacturing plant in a large bulk container;
- b) shipping the large bulk container to a retail location; and
- c) providing dispensing means at the retail location for removal of the liquid washing product from the large bulk container and for dispensing and retailing the product to a consumer.

**2.** The method according to claim **1**, wherein the dispensing means is a valve system installed directly on the large bulk container.

**3.** The method according to claim **1**, wherein the dispensing means is a faucet system installed directly on the large bulk container.

**4.** The method according to claim **1**, wherein the dispensing means is a liquid transfer system for transferring the liquid washing product from the large bulk container to a dispensing container located at the retail location.

**5.** The method according to claim **1**, further comprising the step of:

- d) returning the large bulk container to the manufacturing plant in order to be refilled after all of the liquid washing product contents are dispensed from the large bulk container at the retail location.

**6.** The method according to claim **1**, further comprising the step of delivering a plurality of different large bulk containers containing different liquid washing products to a same retail location.

**7.** The method according to claim **1**, wherein the large bulk container comprises a dispensing opening that is closed during step b) and opened for removal of the washing product during step c).

**8.** The method according to claim **1**, wherein the large bulk container comprises a connector for detachably connecting to the dispensing means.

**9.** The method according to claim **1**, wherein the dispensing means further comprises a measurement system for measuring an amount of washing liquid removed from the bulk container.

**10.** The method according to claim **4**, wherein the liquid transfer system comprises a pump sub-system.

**11.** A method of distributing and retailing a liquid cleaning product comprising the steps of:

- a) inserting the liquid cleaning product at a manufacturing plant in a large bulk container;
- b) shipping the large bulk container to a retail location; and
- c) providing dispensing means at the retail location for removal of the liquid cleaning product from the large bulk container and for dispensing and retailing the product to a consumer.

**12.** The method according to claim **11**, wherein the dispensing means is a valve system installed directly on the large bulk container.

**13.** The method according to claim **11**, wherein the dispensing means is a faucet system installed directly on the large bulk container.

**14.** The method according to claim **11**, wherein the dispensing means is a liquid transfer system for transferring the liquid cleaning product from the large bulk container to a dispensing container located at the retail location.

**15.** The method according to claim **11**, further comprising the step of:

- d) returning the large bulk container to the manufacturing plant in order to be refilled, after all of the liquid cleaning product contents are dispensed from the large bulk container at the retail location.

**16.** The method according to claim **11**, further comprising the step of delivering a plurality of different large bulk containers containing different liquid cleaning products to a same retail location.

**17.** The method according to claim **11**, wherein the large bulk container comprises a dispensing opening that is closed during step b) and opened for removal of the washing product during step c).

**18.** The method according to claim **11**, wherein the large bulk container comprises a connector for detachably connecting to the dispensing means.

**19.** The method according to claim **11**, wherein the dispensing means further comprises a measurement system for measuring an amount of cleaning liquid removed from the bulk container.

**20.** The method according to claim **14**, wherein the liquid transfer system comprises a pump sub-system.

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