CONTAINER COMPRISING A DISPOSABLE CLEANING IMPLEMENT AND A METHOD OF PROMOTING THE SALE OF A DISPOSABLE CLEANING IMPLEMENT

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ABSTRACT
A packaging container (10) for at least one, though preferably two, disposable cleaning implements (12), having an opening (30) formed therein extending from a top section (18), through a front display section (22), and ending in a side section (24). The opening (30) is defined by two generally arcuate intersecting cuts or lines (32, 34). The arrangement of the cleaning implements (12) within the container (10) along with the opening (30) provide visual and physical access to the implements (12) such that a potential purchaser may see, touch and/or manipulate components of the cleaning implements (12). The container (10) may also include printed graphics (49) and written instructions of use (48) or marketing claims for promoting the sale of the cleaning implement (12).
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CROSS-REFERENCE(S) TO RELATED APPLICATION(S)

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Ser. No. 11/450,315, filed Jun. 10, 2006, which itself is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Ser. No. 11/141,099 filed May 31, 2005, the contents of these patent applications are hereby incorporated by reference into the present application.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to cleaning devices, and specifically to packaging for a disposable cleaning implement that is capable of picking up and retaining particulate debris located on a fabric surface and a method of promoting the sale thereof. More specifically, a preferred embodiment of the present invention relates to packaging for one or two cleaning implements with an opening enabling consumers to touch and/or manipulate components of the cleaning implements, instructions for using the same, along with various marketing and performance claims.

[0003] It is common practice in the industry to provide merchandise for sale in boxes, containers and the like made from varying materials. One type of such packaging material is chipboard which is easily formed into a rugged package with a rectangular or square-shaped cross section. The typical chipboard package container provides no visual or physical access to the contents therein. Typically, the package may contain a graphic image of the product along with product usage information and promotional material.

[0004] However, sealed packaging creates a barrier and separates a potential purchaser from the product. This may be acceptable for established products where the features and functionality of the cleaning implement is readily apparent. However, where features or the functionality of the product are not readily evident by merely looking at the packaging, it can be difficult to market that cleaning product to the consumer. This is particularly true when a new or unique cleaning product is brought to the market. Accordingly, some manufacturers have attempted to provide means in the packaging to operate or at least view features of their products that are best understood when in operation.

[0005] One example of this approach is the use of cellophane “windows” such that a consumer is able to see features of the packaged product. However, merely viewing a product through a cellophane window gives only a limited visual indication of the design and not the functionality of a particular product. Other packaging, such as is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 7,059,471 for a flexible toothbrush package, permits a consumer to both see and manipulate the product contained therein. Still other packaging includes CD-ROMs, DVDs and the like in an attempt to market and educate a consumer about a cleaning product. However, this approach does not help market a product at the point of sale, it only helps educate a consumer once the item has been purchased.

[0006] Therefore, the present invention was developed as a way to provide both visual and physical access to a cleaning item such as a fabric sweeper, while still in the packaging container in an effort to market the product and educate the consumer at the same time.

SUMMARY AND OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

[0007] According to one aspect of the present invention, a disposable cleaning implement comprising a clear housing and a cleaning surface is provided. The housing comprises a handle and a cavity defined by the housing comprises a receptacle for particulate debris. The cleaning surface comprises preferably two unidirectional fabric-covered rollers connected to the housing.

[0008] According to another aspect of the present invention, a container comprising at least one disposable cleaning implement is provided. The container comprises a box of thin-walled plastic, cardboard, pressboard or chipboard having a top, bottom, front, back and two sides defining a cavity. An opening defined by two intersecting arcuate cuts is formed in the container wherein a portion of the cleaning surface of the cleaning implement is presented to consumers to be touched and manipulated while the cleaning implement is in the container. In another embodiment, the container houses two cleaning implements such that the cleaning implements are arranged in an opposing manner such that a non-cleaning surface of one cleaning implement and the cleaning surface of the other cleaning implement are presented to consumers.

[0009] The container may further include instructions for using the disposable cleaning implement. This may include the steps of: a) sliding the cleaning implement side-to-side; and b) disposing the cleaning implement when the implement appears to be either full or to no longer pick up debris. The instructions may be described with text or depicted visually with graphics.

[0010] The container may further include marketing claims regarding the cleaning implement. This may include a statement that the cleaning implement lifts and traps pet hair, lint, dust and allergens, from upholstered furniture. The container may further comprise graphics or text indicating that a roller cleaning surface is lightly colored for showing debris retained by the cleaning surface. The cleaning implement may also have a printed pattern, graphic, logo, brand information, or similar information formed on the cleaning implement.

[0011] According to another aspect of the present invention, a method of promoting the sale of a disposable cleaning implement such as a fabric sweeper includes the steps of: a) displaying a chipboard container with a opening formed therein with two cleaning implements; and b) arranging a non-cleaning surface of the first cleaning implement and a cleaning surface of the second cleaning implement so that both are simultaneously presented to a consumer. Instructions for use and marketing claims such as described above may also be included as part of the method.

[0012] These and other aspects, objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be more clearly understood and appreciated from a review of the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments and appended claims, and by reference to the accompanying drawings. It should be understood, however, that the following description, while indicating preferred embodiments of the present invention, is given by way of illustration and not of limitation. Many changes and modifications may be made
within the scope of the present invention without departing from the spirit thereof, and the invention includes all such modifications.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] A clear conception of the advantages and features constituting the present invention, and of the construction and operation of typical mechanisms provided with the present invention, will become more readily apparent by referring to the exemplary, and therefore non-limiting, embodiments illustrated in the drawings accompanying and forming a part of this specification, wherein like reference numerals designate the same elements in the several views.

[0014] In the drawings:

[0015] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a cleaning implement package with an elongate opening and two cleaning implements according to one preferred embodiment of the present invention, viewed from in front of, above, and the right side of the package;

[0016] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the package of FIG. 1, viewed from in front of, above, and the left side of the package;

[0017] FIG. 3 is a front view of the package of FIG. 1;

[0018] FIG. 4 is a rear view of the package of FIG. 1;

[0019] FIG. 5 is a side view of one side of the package of FIG. 1;

[0020] FIG. 6 is a side view of the other side of the package of FIG. 1;

[0021] FIG. 7 is a top view of the package of FIG. 1;

[0022] FIG. 8 is a bottom view of the package of FIG. 1; and

[0023] FIG. 9 is a perspective view of an alternative cleaning implement package with an elongate opening according to another preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0024] In describing the preferred embodiment of the invention which is illustrated in the drawings, specific terminology will be resorted to for the sake of clarity. However, it is not intended that the invention be limited to the specific terms so selected and it is to be understood that each specific term includes all technical equivalents which operate in a similar manner to accomplish a similar purpose.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0025] The present invention and the various features and advantageous details thereof are explained more fully with reference to the non-limiting embodiments described in detail in the following description. With reference now to FIGS. 1-8 in which like reference numerals designate like parts throughout the disclosure, a packaging container 10 constructed according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in connection with two cleaning implements 12.

[0026] The preferred disposable cleaning implement, i.e., fabric sweeper 12, is partially shown in FIGS. 1-3, 5, 7 and 9 and described in greater detail in co-pending U.S. Published Patent Application No. 2006/0265824, the contents of which are herein incorporated by reference. The fabric sweeper 12 comprises a pair of fabric covered rollers 14 such that when the sweeper 12 is positioned on a fabric surface and moved in a direction generally perpendicularly to the long axis of the sweeper 12, debris is retained on the fabric surface and transported to a collection chamber defined by a housing 17. A cleaning surface 15 of the fabric sweeper 12 can be generally defined as the fabric covered rollers 14 while a non-cleaning surface 16 is generally defined as the housing 17, or handle.

[0027] In one preferred embodiment, the container 10 is a packaging box comprised of a top section, or panel, 18, a bottom section 20, front section 22, back section 24, first side section 26 and second side section 28 defining a cavity 29. An elongate opening 30 is formed in the container 10. The opening 30 is defined by two generally arcuate edges, lines or cuts 32, 34 beginning at a first point 36 in the top section 18, extending through the front “facing” section 22 and ending at a second point 38 in the second side section 28. Alternatively, the opening extends through and terminates in the first side section 26. Moreover, the opening 30 could be formed in any way such that the salient features of the fabric sweeper 12 are both visually and physically presented to consumers. The cuts 32, 34 are made to maximize presentation of the fabric sweepers 12 while minimizing the cost of the packaging 10.

[0028] Although not limited to these shapes, a portion 39 of the opening 30 in the top section 18 is formed by arcuate cuts into a “shark fin” shape. A portion 40 of the opening 30 extends across the front section 22 with opening-defining edges 32, 34 generally equidistant apart. An extension 42 extends into the opening 30 for the placement of a logo or other graphics. A portion 44 of the opening 30 in the second side section 28 converges to and terminates at the aforementioned second point 38.

[0029] The container 10 is preferably formed from a thin-walled material such as plastic, cardboard, pressboard, chipboard or a combination thereof. The container 10 is designed to be displayed on a retail shelf with at least the front section 22 readily visible to a potential purchaser. As shown in FIGS. 1-3 and 7, in a preferred embodiment, the container 10 contains two cleaning implements, i.e., fabric sweepers 12, arranged in an opposing manner. A first fabric sweeper 12 is arranged such that the non-cleaning surface 16 faces towards the front section 22 and opening 30 while the cleaning surface 15 faces the back section 24. A second fabric sweeper 12 is arranged in an opposing manner such that the non-cleaning surface 16 faces the back section 24 while the cleaning surface 15 faces the front section 22 and opening 30. One preferred container 10 for two fabric sweepers 12 has approximate dimensions of 7/8" wide by 8/16" tall by 3" deep.

[0030] In this opposing arrangement, a consumer may easily see, touch, feel and/or manipulate several features of the fabric sweeper 12 including the fabric covered rollers 14 and clear housing 17. For example, the “shark fin” shaped opening portion 39 in the top section 18 gives a clear view of the housing 17 including a icon showing directions of use and the debris collection chamber if the housing 17 is formed of clear plastic. The opening portion 40 in the front section 22 provides visual and physical access to the rollers 14. A consumer can therefore touch or manipulate the rollers 14 and feel the fabric covering the rollers to appreciate how the fabric sweeper works. The opening portion 44 on the second side 28 provides further access to the non-cleaning surface 16 and in particular the grip portion of the handle 17.

[0031] In another preferred embodiment shown in FIG. 9, a container 110 contains one fabric sweeper 12, arranged such that cleaning surface 15 faces towards the front section 122 and opening 130 while the non-cleaning surface 116 faces away from the front section 122. In this arrangement, a consumer may still see, feel and manipulate the rollers 114 through the opening 130 and see the housing 117 through the “shark fin” portion 139 of the opening 130. One preferred
container 110 for a single fabric sweeper 12 has approximate dimensions of 4/4" wide by 8/16" tall by 3" deep.

[0032] Referring again to FIG. 1, the container 10 preferably comprises instructions 47 of use for a potentially purchasing consumer. Instructions for using the fabric sweepers 12 may be communicated to a consumer via consumer-friendly text 48, photographs, graphical depictions 49, and the like. By consumer-friendly language, it is meant that consumers would be instructed how to preferably use the product to achieve best results, e.g., “slide the fabric sweeper 12 side-to-side” and “dispose of the sweeper 12” when the sweeper 12 appears full or is no longer picking up debris.” Pictures can be used, either with, or without, words to help make the instructions consumer-friendly such as the preferred “side-to-side” usage. Special packaging design can also be advantageously used to convey instructions in a consumer-friendly fashion. Ergonomic appeal can also make product use more intuitive, either with or without words and pictures. Text 48 on the container 10 may also encourage the consumer to touch and feel the cleaning product 12 inside.

[0033] The container 10 preferably also comprises marketing or performance statements e.g., performance claims, etc., intended to pique the interest of a potentially purchasing consumer. For example, the marketing claims may include statements such as “lifts and traps pet hair, lint, dust and allergens from your upholstered furniture” while the performance claims may include that “one unit [12] picks up as much pet hair as [an equivalent number] of lint roller sheets.”

[0034] A method for promoting the sale of the fabric sweeper 12 may incorporate the sweeper 12 itself, the arrangement of one or two sweepers 12 in a packaging container 10 having an opening 30 formed therein, the instructions of use and the marketing/performance claims. The method consists of the steps of displaying the fabric sweepers 12 in an alternating manner in a container 10 having an opening 30 formed therein. Alternatively, a transparent window can be used instead of an opening to display the fabric sweepers 12. Instructions and marketing/performance claims similar to those stated above may be present on the packaging container to educate consumers.

[0035] All the disclosed embodiments are useful in conjunction with consumer goods packaging such as are used for the purpose of packaging cleaning implements, or the like. There are virtually innumerable uses for the present invention, all of which need not be detailed here. All the disclosed embodiments can be practiced without undue experimentation.

[0036] Although the best mode contemplated by the inventors of carrying out the present invention is disclosed above, practice of the present invention is not limited thereto. It will be manifest that various additions, modifications and rearrangements of the features of the present invention may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the underlying inventive concept. For example, the package 10 could be enhanced by providing a hologram or LCD screen showing proper usage. Alternatively, the package 10 could have a switch of fabric material, e.g., velour, affixed to the package for consumers to feel.

[0037] In addition, the individual components need not be fabricated from the disclosed materials, but could be fabricated from virtually any suitable materials. Moreover, the individual components need not be formed in the disclosed shapes, or assembled in the disclosed configuration, but could be provided in virtually any shape, and assembled in virtually any configuration. It is intended that the appended claims cover all such additions, modifications and rearrangements. Expedient embodiments of the present invention are differentiated by the appended claims. Various other features, embodiments and advantages of the present invention are contemplated as being within the scope of the following claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter regarded as the invention.

1-14. (canceled)

15. A method of promoting the sale of a disposable cleaning implement comprising at least one fabric covered roller and a housing, the method comprising the steps of:

a) displaying a container comprising at least a first and second cleaning implement; and

b) arranging a non-cleaning surface of the first cleaning implement and a cleaning surface of the second cleaning implement so that both are simultaneously presented to a consumer.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising: constructing the container from plastic, cardboard, chip-board, or a combination thereof.

17. The method of claim 15, further comprising: constructing the container to be at least partially transparent.

18. The method of claim 15, further comprising: constructing the container to have at least one opening defined by two generally curved cuts meeting at both ends of the opening.

19. The method of claim 15, further comprising: presenting usage instructions for the disposable cleaning implement.

20. The method of claim 15, further comprising presenting instructions that comprise the steps of:

i) sliding the cleaning implement side-to-side; and

ii) disposing the cleaning implement when the implement appears at least one of: full or to no longer pick up debris.

21. A method of packaging a disposable cleaning implement for display on a merchant display shelf, wherein the cleaning implement has at least one fabric covered roller and a housing, the method comprising the steps of:

a) forming a single continuous display window in at least two contiguous exterior surfaces of a container adapted to hold the cleaning implement;

b) loading the cleaning implement into container; and

c) arranging the cleaning implement within the container such that the fabric covered roller is viewable through a first portion of the single continuous display when the container is closed and another portion of the cleaning implement is viewable through a second portion of the single continuous display, and wherein the second portion is perpendicular to the first portion.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein the container is comprised of cardboard.

23. The method of claim 21 further comprising closing the single continuous display with a transparent film.

24. The method of claim 21 wherein forming the single continuous display window includes removing portions of a front surface and a side surface of the container.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein forming the single continuous display includes removing a portion of a top surface of the container.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein removal of the portion of the top surface creates a fin-shaped cutout in the top surface of the container.
27. The method of claim 21 further comprising adding text to an exterior surface of the container, wherein the text includes instructions on how to use the cleaning implement.

28. The method of claim 21 wherein the single continuous display window is sized to prevent removal of the cleaning implement through the single continuous display window but sized to allow a user to touch the cleaning implement without removal of the cleaning implement from the container.

29. A method for promoting the sale of a cleaning implement having a roller and a handle, the method comprising the steps of:
   - removing first and second portions from first and second surfaces, respectively, of a container in the shape of a rectangular prism to form a single continuous opening in an exterior of the container, wherein the first and second surfaces are formed on adjacent and perpendicular exterior surfaces of the container;
   - placing the cleaning implement in the container;
   - arranging the cleaning implement in the container such that fabric of the roller can be felt through a first portion of the single continuous opening and the handle of the implement is viewable through a second portion of the single continuous opening.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein the step of removing includes cutting a complex geometrical shape into the exterior surfaces of the container.

31. The method of claim 29 wherein the step of removing includes removing a third portion from a top surface of the container so that single continuous opening extends onto the top surface of the container.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein the first portion, the second portion, and the third portion are removed from a front surface, a side surface, and the top surface of the container, and wherein the front surface is orthogonal to both the side surface and the top surface and wherein the front surface is adjacent to the top surface at a first edge and is adjacent the side surface at a second edge perpendicular to the first edge.

33. The method of claim 29 wherein the container is formed of cardboard.

34. The method of claim 29 further comprising covering the single continuous opening with a transparent film.

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