

TITLE

Storage device with three-dimensional protrusions on the outer surface

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the invention

The present invention relates to a storage device, particularly a piece of baggage or a purse, according to the precharacterizing part of claim 1.

Description of the prior art

Storage devices, such as e.g. a suitcase or a bag, can comprise three-dimensional protrusions on the outer surface. The three-dimensional protrusions can be rib-shaped and respectively groove-shaped. In suitcase shells made of plastic, such rib- and respectively groove-shaped protrusions will be molded during the production process of the suitcase shell itself.

It is however desired that such three-dimensional protrusions arranged on the outer surfaces of storage devices can be produced in a particularly simple and inexpensive manner.

It is an object of the invention to provide a storage device having at least one of its outer surfaces provided with three-dimensional protrusions that can be produced in the most simple and inexpensive manner.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The above object is achieved by the features defined in claim 1. The invention advantageously provides that the at least one three-dimensional protrusion extending from the outer surface comprises at least two mutually superimposed and interconnected layers.

This has the advantage that the three-dimensional protrusions can be produced independently from the production of the outer surface. In this manner, the three-dimensional protrusions can be produced in a simple and inexpensive manner, while the shape of the three-dimensional protrusions is variable.

The at least one protrusion can be rib-shaped.

The protrusion extending from the outer surface can be formed of at least two mutually superimposed and interconnected layers.

The layers of the at least one protrusion can be printed. Thus, different shapes of protrusions can be produced in a very fast and simple manner.

The at least one protrusion can comprise more than three mutually superimposed and interconnected layers which preferably are printed onto each other.

The layers can consist of a material which comprises silicone and/or a ceramic paste.

The individual layers can have different widths.

That layer of the at least one protrusion which is adjacent to the outer surface can be the lowermost layer, and the layer of the protrusion which is most remote from the outer surface can be the uppermost layer, wherein

the layers have different widths and the lowermost layer is wider than the uppermost layer.

The widths of a plurality of mutually superimposed layers decrease, preferably continuously, from the lowermost layer to the uppermost layer.

The layers can be printed by offset printing or screen printing or by a 3D printing method.

It can be provided to arrange a plurality of said protrusions on the outer surface, which preferably are positioned on the outer surface with uniform distribution.

The rib-shaped protrusion can have a varying and respectively variable height in the longitudinal direction of the rib-shaped protrusions, wherein the central area of the rib-shaped protrusion is higher than the edge areas of the rib-shaped protrusion.

The layer thicknesses of the rib-shaped protrusions can vary in the longitudinal direction of the rib-shaped protrusion. This means that the respective individual layers can have different colors.

The colors of the individual layers of the protrusion can vary.

It is possible to provide an additional outer layer which is arranged on the protrusions and preferably also on the outer surface of the storage device.

Said additional outer layer can comprise at least one three-dimensional protrusion, applied by means of a thermoforming method, which is adapted to the at least one three-dimensional protrusion arranged on the outer surface. The additional outer layer can consist of plastic, leather or a textile material.

The storage device can be a piece of baggage comprising two major surfaces and four lateral surfaces, wherein at least one of the major surfaces comprises rib-shaped protrusions and wherein the longitudinal direction of the rib-shaped protrusion extends parallel to the longitudinal direction of the major surface. Particularly, the storage device can be suitcase.

There can be provided a method for applying at least one protrusion on at least one outer surface of a storage device, particularly a piece of baggage or a purse, said method comprising the following steps:

- applying, particularly impressing, a first layer to the outer surface of an outer wall of a storage device,
- applying, particularly impressing, a second layer to the first layer for forming a three-dimensional protrusion,
- preferably, applying further layers onto the second layer.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A full and enabling disclosure of the present invention, including the best mode thereof, enabling one of ordinary skill in the art to carry out the invention, is set forth in greater detail in the following description, including reference to the accompanying drawing in which

Figure 1 shows a storage device formed as a piece of baggage, comprising three-dimensional protrusions on the outer surface,

Figure 2 shows a storage device formed as a bag,

Figure 3 shows the storage device of Figure 2 in lateral view,

Figure 4 shows three-dimensional protrusions on the outer surface of a storage device,

Figure 5 shows the protrusions on the outer surface depicted in Figure 4,

Figure 6 shows an alternative embodiment of the three-dimensional protrusions,

Figure 7 shows a further alternative embodiment of the three-dimensional protrusions,

Figure 8 shows three-dimensional protrusions provided with an additional outer layer, and

Figure 9 shows a thermoforming plant for applying three-dimensional protrusions onto the outer layer.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Fig. 1 shows a storage device formed as a suitcase 6. Said suitcase 6 is a piece of baggage. Suitcase 6 comprises at least one outer surface 12 having three-dimensional protrusions 10 arranged on it, said protrusions 10 extending outward relative to said outer surface 12. The three-dimensional protrusions 10 are rib-shaped. The design of the three-dimensional protrusions 10 is illustrated in greater detail in Figs. 4 – 8. The suitcase can be a hard-shell suitcase made of aluminum or plastic, e.g. PE.

Fig. 2 shows a storage device formed as a bag 8. Said bag 8 comprises at least one outer surface 14 and one outer surface 16 which form the front side and respectively rear side of bag 8. On at least one of said outer surfaces 14, 16, projecting three-dimensional protrusions 10 are arranged.

Said three-dimensional protrusion 10 are rib-shaped. On a given outer surface 14 and respectively 16, a plurality of such three-dimensional protrusions 10 are arranged, the protrusions 10 running parallel next to each other. In Fig. 3, bag 8 is shown in lateral view.

It can be provided that the storage devices shown in Figs. 1, 2 and 3, i.e. suitcase 6 and bag 8, comprise three-dimensional protrusions 10 only on one of their outer surfaces 12, 14. Alternatively, suitcase 6 and bag 8 can comprise three-dimensional protrusions 10 also on two or more of their outer surfaces.

Preferably, suitcase 6 of Fig. 1 comprises three-dimensional protrusions on all outer surfaces.

Preferably, the respective outer surfaces 12, 14, 16 are provided with a plurality of three-dimensional protrusions 10, wherein these three-dimensional protrusions 10 are preferably rib-shaped, and the rib-shaped three-dimensional protrusions 10 are preferably arranged parallel next to each other and at equal distances to each other. The three-dimensional protrusions 10 can also be arranged on the outer surface of a purse.

The design of the three-dimensional protrusions 10 of the storage device of Figs. 1 - 3 is illustrated in greater detail in Figs. 4 - 8.

The three-dimensional protrusions 10 comprise at least two mutually superimposed and interconnected layers. In Figs. 1 - 3, the three-dimensional protrusions are merely schematically outlined. For this reason, the individual layers cannot be seen in Figs. 1 - 3.

Fig. 4 illustrates the three-dimensional protrusions 10. The term "three-dimensional" means that the protrusions have a width B, a height H and a length L. The three-dimensional protrusions 10 are arranged both on the

outer surface 12 of suitcase 6 and on the outer surfaces 14, 16 of bag 8. The three-dimensional protrusions 10 comprise five layers 1 – 5 which are mutually superimposed and are connected to each other. The mutually superimposed and interconnected layers 1 – 5 can be arranged on the outer surface 12, 14, 16 e.g. by a printing method. For this purpose, the first layer 1 will be printed onto the outer surface 12, 14, 16. This first layer forms the lowermost layer and is the layer adjacent to the outer surface 12, 14, 16. Subsequently, a second layer 2 will be printed onto the first layer 1. Onto the second layer 2, in turn, the third layer 3 will be printed; onto the third layer 3, the fourth layer 4 will be printed; and onto the fourth layer 4, the fifth layer 5 will be printed. In the illustrated embodiment, the fifth layer 5 is the uppermost layer and is the layer arranged at the largest distance from outer surface 12, 14, 16. The three-dimensional protrusion can also comprise a different number of layers.

Since the layers are printed onto the outer surface 12, 14, 16 and the three-dimensional protrusion 10 consists of a plurality of layers 1 – 5, the three-dimensional protrusion can have any desired shape. Thus, in a production process, the shape and the design of the three-dimensional protrusion 10 can be changed and adjusted as desired.

With preference, the three-dimensional protrusions 10 are formed as rib-shaped protrusions, wherein these rib-shaped protrusions 10 are conically tapering. This is realized in that, as shown in Fig. 4, the mutually superimposed and interconnected layers 1 – 5 each have a different width. The lowermost layer 1 has the largest width B1. The uppermost layer 5 has the smallest width B5. The width B2 – B4 of the intermediate layers 2 – 4 are each between width B1 and width B5 and are ever more decreasing with each layer so that the width of the three-dimensional protrusions 10 is undergoing a regular decrease with increasing height.

Further, the different layers 1 – 5 can have different colors. With the aid of the colors, the design of the three-dimensional protrusions can be considerably influenced. For instance, by means of dark colors, shadows can be represented, and the contour of the three-dimensional protrusions 10 can be particularly emphasized. For instance, the lowermost layer 1 can have the darkest layer. Further, the three-dimensional protrusions 10 can have different colors than the outer surface 12, 14, 16 of the storage device.

Since the layers are preferably printed, the colors can also be conveniently changed, and storage devices with differently colored three-dimensional protrusions can be produced in a simple manner.

In Fig. 5, the three-dimensional protrusions of Fig. 4 are shown in lateral view. As can be gathered from Fig. 5, the lengths L_1 , L_2 , L_3 , L_4 , L_5 of the layers 1 – 5 are identical. Further, the layers 1 – 5 shown in Fig. 5 and Fig. 4 have identical thicknesses D_1 , D_2 , D_3 , D_4 , D_5 .

However, the thicknesses D_1 – D_5 and the lengths L_1 – L_5 of the three-dimensional protrusions can also vary. The individual layers 1 – 5 can thus have different lengths L_1 – L_5 and/or different thicknesses D_1 – D_5 . In this manner, slight variations can be performed on the design of the three-dimensional protrusion 10.

In Fig. 6, an embodiment is shown wherein the thicknesses D_1 – D_5 of the individual layers 1 – 5 varies along the length L_1 – L_5 . In the intermediate region of the rib-shaped, elongate three-dimensional protrusions, the thicknesses D_1 – D_5 are considerably larger than in the edge regions. In this manner, the three-dimensional protrusion is gradually coming to an end toward the edge regions.

Alternatively, the individual layers 1 – 5 can also have different lengths L_1 – L_5 . Shown in Fig. 7 is an embodiment wherein the lowermost layer 1 has

the largest length L1 and the uppermost layer 5 has the shortest length L5. The intermediate layers 2 – 4 have lengths L2 – L4 which correspondingly are between the lengths L1 and L5.

The three-dimensional protrusion 10 shown in Fig. 7 is also gradually coming to an end toward the edge regions.

Fig. 8 shows a further embodiment wherein, on the three-dimensional protrusions 10 and on the outer surface 12, 14, 16, an additional outer layer 20 is arranged. Said outer layer 20 comprises three-dimensional protrusions 11 which correspond to the three-dimensional protrusions 10. The additional outer layer 20 is arranged together with the three-dimensional protrusions 11 on the three-dimensional protrusions 10. The additional outer layer 20 is preferably fastened by means of an adhesive layer on the outer surface 12, 14, 16 and/or on the three-dimensional protrusions 10.

The three-dimensional protrusions 11 of the additional outer layer 20 can already have been formed in the outer layer 20 prior to application on the outer surface 12, 14, 16 and the three-dimensional protrusions 10. This can be performed e.g. by means of a thermoforming method. In a thermoforming method, as shown in Fig. 9, a band-shaped layer 22 will be wound off a roll and be heated by means of a heating oven 24. Within a thermoforming device 26, the shape – in this case, the three-dimensional protrusion 11 – will be molded in said band-shaped layer 22. In a punching device 28 following said thermoforming device 26, the band-shaped layer 22 will be divided into individual elements which in this case form the additional outer layer 20 and with respect to the outer dimensions correspond to the outer surface 12, 14, 16.

Alternatively, the thermoforming method can also be performed using plate articles. In this case, plates which already have a specific size will be individually heated and molded.

By means of said additional outer layer 20, the outer surface and/or the protrusions 10 can be provided with a high-quality coating.

Although the invention has been described and illustrated with reference to specific illustrative embodiments thereof, it is not intended that the invention be limited to those illustrative embodiments. Those skilled in the art will recognize that variations and modifications can be made without departing from the true scope of the invention as defined by the claims that follow. It is therefore intended to include within the invention all such variations and modifications as fall within the scope of the appended claims and equivalents thereof.

CLAIMS

1. A storage device, particularly a piece of baggage or a purse, said storage device comprising
 - at least one outer surface (12, 14, 16), wherein said at least one outer surface (12, 14, 16) has arranged on it at least one three-dimensional protrusion (10) extending from the outer surface (12),

wherein

said three-dimensional protrusion (10) extending from the outer surface (12, 14, 16) comprises at least two mutually superimposed and interconnected layers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).
2. The storage device according to claim 1, wherein the at least one protrusion (10) is rib-shaped.
3. The storage device according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the protrusion (10) extending from the outer surface (12, 14, 16) is formed of at least two mutually superimposed and interconnected layers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).
4. The storage device according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the layers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) of the at least one protrusion (10) are printed.
5. The storage device according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the at least one protrusion (10) comprises more than three mutually superimposed and interconnected layers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) which preferably are printed onto each other.

6. The storage device according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the layers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) consist of a material which comprises silicone and/or a ceramic paste.
7. The storage device according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein that layer (1) of the at least one protrusion (10) which is adjacent to the outer surface (12, 14, 16) is the lowermost layer, and that layer (5) of the protrusion (10) which is most remote from the outer surface (12, 14, 16) is the uppermost layer, the layers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) having different widths and the lowermost layer (1) being wider than the uppermost layer (5).
8. The storage device according to claim 7, wherein the widths (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5) of a plurality of mutually superimposed layers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) decrease, preferably continuously, from the lowermost layer (1) to the uppermost layer (5).
9. The storage device according to any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein the layers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) are printed by offset printing or screen printing or by a 3D printing method.
10. The storage device according to any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein a plurality of protrusions (10) are arranged on the outer surface (12, 14, 16), which preferably are positioned on the outer surface (12, 14, 16) with uniform distribution.
11. The storage device according to any one of claims 2 to 9, wherein the rib-shaped protrusion (10) has a varying height in the longitudinal direction of the rib-shaped protrusions (10), the central area of the rib-shaped protrusion (10) being higher than the edge areas of the rib-shaped protrusion (10).

12. The storage device according to any one of claims 2 to 11, wherein the individual layer thicknesses (D1, D2, D3, D4, D5) of the rib-shaped protrusion (10) are varying in the longitudinal direction of the rib-shaped protrusion (10).
13. The storage device according to any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein the colors of the individual layers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) of the protrusion (10) are varying.
14. The storage device according to any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein an additional outer layer (20) is provided, being arranged on the protrusions (10) and preferably also on the outer surface (12, 14, 16) of the storage device.
15. The storage device according to claim 14, wherein said additional outer layer (20) comprises at least one three-dimensional protrusion (11), applied by means of a thermoforming method, which is adapted to the at least one three-dimensional protrusion (10) arranged on the outer surface (12, 14, 16).
16. The storage device according to any one of claims 1 to 15, wherein the storage device is a piece of baggage comprising two major surfaces and four lateral surfaces, at least one of the major surfaces comprising rib-shaped protrusions (10), and the longitudinal direction of the rib-shaped protrusion (10) extending parallel to the longitudinal direction of the major surfaces.