

Description

This invention relates to plastics carrier devices for forming packages for a plurality of containers. More specifically, the invention relates to a multi-packaging device, strip-stock for producing such a multi-packaging device, methods of producing the device and methods and machinery for applying a carrier device to containers.

Multi-packaging devices configured from plastics material strips of integrally connected, resilient bands have become commonplace for the formation of packages of arrays of containers. Various machines and methods have also been developed for application of the strips in a high speed production line basis.

Packaging devices of the type referred to above began with the early developments described in US-A-2 874 835 and have been continually improved up to and including the devices shown in US-A-4 219 117. Likewise, machinery and method for applying the carriers have been described in US-A-3 032 943, US-A-3 032 944, US-A-3 383 828 and US-A-4 250 687. Present commercial versions of such multi-packaging systems which include the devices, machinery and methods, incorporate the latest of each of the above noted patents.

A typical carrier device of thermoplastic material for an array of containers having a particular peripheral dimension (see for instance US-A-3 032 944), includes a corresponding array of apertures formed by interconnected bands, the apertures being elongate in the longitudinal direction of the device and having an unstressed peripheral dimension substantially less than said particular peripheral dimension.

According to one aspect of this invention (claim 1) such a carrier device is formed to have a plurality of transversely directed corrugated sections to enable the device to be elongated by tensioning and thereby enlarge the peripheral dimension of the apertures to allow them to be associated with a container to be multi-packaged.

According to another aspect of this invention (claim 10) a package consists of a carrier in accordance with the one aspect of this invention and a plurality of cylindrical containers arranged in an array, the containers having circumferential surface portions of the particular peripheral dimension immediately below an upper chime, a container being located in each aperture with each of the bands encircling one of the containers immediately below its chime and resiliently tensioned about it.

According to a further aspect of this invention (claim 11) a method of making multi-packages includes the steps of:

providing an elongated web of resilient plastics material, creating a series of preforms by producing a lengthwise series of apertures of a predetermined size, configuration and pitch in the web, deforming the preforms to produce a series of transverse corrugations which include

small discrete sections of lengthwise, elongated, carrier material, wherein a series of carrier device are created which include apertures of increased aperture length and pitch from the preform aperture length and pitch.

The invention further relates to a method of multi-packaging containers according to claim 14 and to a machine for multi-packaging according to claim 16.

The multi-packaging device of the present invention includes resilient, elastic, plastics bands which have a cross-sectional configuration that includes a series of relatively closely spaced ribs, which are interconnected by short struts of elongated plastic material. The combination of ribs and struts, in the composite create corrugated sections. This configuration, in comparison with the prior art cross-sectional configuration of a thin, flat sheet of material, provides material content and performance advantages. When the carrier device is associated with a container to form a package each band includes a plurality of alternating, thin discrete sections, that have been prestretched and oriented, and thicker rib sections. The alternating sections are arranged to be generally lengthwise of the container and the rib sections act to maintain the necessary stiffness of the carrier device in the length direction of the containers while permitting less material and sufficient flexure and tensioning to remain in the radial direction about the container. The package may include means to facilitate grasping with a finger gripping aperture formed between each group of four containers.

The carrier device of the present invention is capable of being manufactured with appreciably less material than prior art devices as a result of the corrugated sections of ribs and struts. As will be apparent from the description, the selective elongation of the discrete strut portions increases the "effective" material content of the device. The corrugation of the strip may be accomplished by feeding a strip of a preformed material through a nip formed between meshing rolls of gear-like reconfiguring devices. Each tooth of the mating gear device is designed to register in a root area in the associated mating gear. In doing so, the crests of the teeth of alternating mating gears each capture a segment of the preformed sheet and together stretch the segment between the two captured segments to an extent sufficient to "work" or elongate the segment, beyond its elastic limit to axially orient it, while the captured segments are unstretched and thus retain their elasticity.

It will be clear upon a further reading of the specification, that, for a given aperture size of a carrier device, significantly less material can be used and yet provide as much and if not, more container retention capabilities.

Examples of the various aspects of this invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a plan view of a carrier device;

Figure 2 is a plan view of a preform used to form the carrier device;

Figure 3 is a side view of the apparatus used to convert the preform into the carrier device also illustrates the side elevation of the finished carrier;

Figure 4 is a perspective view of the application system used to apply a continuous strip of carriers;

Figure 5 is a cross-sectional view of a portion of the application system taken along line 5 - 5 shown in Figure 4;

Figure 6 is a fragmentary, enlarged, end elevation of the wheel assembly of the application system;

Figure 7 is a top plan of a package of six containers;

Figure 8 is a partial side elevation of the package; and,

Figure 9 is a partial end elevation of the package.

Turning first to Figures 1 and 2, the novel characteristics of the carrier device 10 and a preform 100 for creating such a device shall become readily apparent. The device 10 generally resembles prior art carrier devices such as shown in U.S. patent 4 219 117, in that it includes a series of D-shaped apertures 12 arranged in a plurality of ranks and rows which are created by bands 14 interconnected by webs 16 and 18. The preferred embodiment of the carrier device is shown to have two rows of three ranks to create a six-pack. The bands 14, again similar to the prior art carrier noted above, are configured to include relatively straight outer section band 21 and a U or V-shaped inner band section 22. The preferred embodiment also shows the lateral webs means 18 to be created by a plurality of longitudinally spaced straps including a pair of outer straps 15 and central strap means 17. An enlarged finger hole 20, in a preferred embodiment is shown as being positioned between web means 18. The outer band 21 may also be slightly undulating at its outer edges, providing slightly bulged regions 27 at the juncture of the outer and inner band to further strengthen the band when stretched during application.

It is important to note that the preform device 100, shown in Fig. 2 which creates the final product in Fig. 1 is significantly shorter and narrower than a typical prior art carrier for a similar container size. A representative comparison will reveal typical prior art carriers to be approximately 8-1/2" X 5-1/2" (216 x 140 mm) while a preform according to this invention for a similar application will be approximately 4" X 2-1/2" (102 x 64 mm) this type of comparison will indicate that substantially less material is required to create a carrier device than as typified in the prior art. The preform 100 may be manufactured by essentially the same process that is utilized in manufacturing the prior art carrier shown in U.S. 4 219 117, i.e., punching

predesigned apertures in an endless strip of polyethylene or similar resilient thermoplastic material.

The preform 100 is substantially identical in all respects except length and cross-sectional configuration to the finished carrier device 10 and therefore like elements are identified with like numerals with the addition of prefix 1 in description of the preform.

Turning back to Fig. 1 and with reference to Fig. 3, certain novel characteristics of the invention will now be described.

Device 10 will include a plurality or series of closely spaced corrugations 24 extending laterally across the device. The cross-sectional configuration of device 10 and corrugations 24 can be seen at the right most extremity of Fig. 3. The corrugations are essentially alternating thick rib sections 25 and thin strut sections 26. For purposes of this discussion "one" corrugation is defined as one complete "pitch" of the series of alternating ribs and struts as shown as "P" in Fig. 3.

The corrugations are created continuously by feeding the strip of preforms 100 into a set of meshing gear-like rollers 28 and 30 in directions of movement as shown in Fig. 3. The gears will include a series of teeth 29 and root sections 32 alternating at a given pitch. Teeth 29 will also be defined as including a crest section 31 and flank sections 33. The exact dimensions and gear parameters will of course be determined by the speed of production, thickness of material and thickness of rib and strut sections desired. As the strip of preforms 100 is fed into the meshing gears, it is grasped and reconfigured by the meshing of the teeth. The rib sections 25 will essentially remain the thickness of the preform strip, as these discrete sections are grasped by the crest 31 of one of the teeth of a gear and the root 32 of the corresponding gear. As that combination of crest and root with the discrete section therebetween become completely meshed, the regions 26 between adjacent ribs 25 are stretched, elongated, and/or compressed and become significantly thinner and molecularly oriented. The thickness of the stock and gear component dimensions and parameters are designed so that the sections 26 do not return to their initial thickness and thus are permanently oriented, thinned and elongated.

It should also be noted from Fig. 3, that the gear meshing operation creates a wave-like pattern in cross-section for the finished device 10. The wave-like pattern will provide an alternating series of ribs extending above and below a central cross-sectional plane of the device. This alternating, wave-like configuration creates a device which can be elongated by applying predetermined lengthwise tension on the strip or device sufficient to relocate the relative elevations of the rib sections 25 to be essentially coplanar. Thus, the effective length of the device may be increased without significantly stretching the material that still has stretch capabilities, i.e.,

the ribs 25. Since the device 10 does have "memory" or a desire to return to the shortened configuration shown in Fig. 3, there is a certain amount of static reactive tension built into the device when elongated as just described.

The carrier device 10, in its at rest or non-elongated state is also appreciable smaller than a prior art carrier. A typical carrier device, in relaxed state, will be approximately 7" 2-1/2" (178 x 64 mm) compare to the prior art dimensions previously noted. Thus while, the carrier device 10 of the instant invention is appreciatively smaller than the prior art devices, it follows that device 10 must be subjected to significantly greater stretching forces than the prior art.

The carrier device 10 or series of interconnected devices are designed to be an integral part of a system for creating multi-packages in a manner similar to the systems referred to in the background of the invention.

The preferred applying apparatus 40, for this system is shown in Figs. 4 and 6 and can be described as basically including; a drum-like member 42, designed to rotate about an axis which is located above conveyor feeding a series of continuous moving containers 11 through a star wheel locating means 44 to create a series of multi-packages 13.

The drum 42 will include a circumferentially arranged series of equally spaced pairs of opposing jaw assemblies 46. Each jaw assembly includes a jaw member 48 which faces a similar jaw in the opposing assembly across an open "throat" region 47 of the drum. Jaws 48 are connected by rods to a cam follower 54 which engages a cam track means 52 on either side of the throat region. The rods are supported by fixed bearing block means 51. It should be noted by comparison, that the machine described in the prior art patent 4 250 682 incorporates a drum which includes jaw assemblies that have a moving portion and a stationary portion; while the instant invention incorporates a jaw assembly with both jaw portions designed to move relative to the center line of movement of containers. Since the device of Fig. 1 is designed to be more highly stretched than any prior art device, it requires an equal distribution of the stretching forces created by the jaw mechanism, thus the departure from the rather simple teachings of the 4 250 682 patent while retaining the "open throat" or totally cantilevered jaw mechanism techniques.

Continuing to review Fig. 4 it will be shown that a reel 64 of the carriers which create a succession of devices 10, is positioned to be above and preferably on the entry side of the drum 42 and fed through a series of idler or guiding rollers 62 into a tensioning wheel 58. This tensioning wheel includes a circumferentially spaced series of cogs 60, each cog designed to interfit within each aperture 12 in the device 10. It is important to note that prior to being received on the tensioning wheel, the strip of devices resembles the cross-sectional configuration as shown in Fig. 3,

i.e., it has not been tensioned longitudinally. As the strip is fed onto and interrelated with the cogs and ultimately associated with the jaw devices 48 of the drum, it will be shown that the strip is tensioned to elongate and increase the pitch or the distance between ranks of apertures. This tensioning which occurs between the existing cog on the wheel 58 and the entry jaw assembly 46 is not appreciably stretching the thermoplastic material but essentially bringing the rib sections 15 to a co-planar position as compared to the stepped position of Fig. 3. For example, on one style of carriers, the pitch or distance between jaws 48 and distance between cans of a package, is designed to be 72.4 mm (2.85 inches) while the pitch distance of aperture 12 of the untensioned carrier device and the cogs 60 is 55.6 mm (2.19 inches). To obtain the tensioning a speed differential between the surface of the tensioning wheel and the jaw members is created so that there is a drag placed upon the carrier device from the wheel 58 to the drum 42 thus causing it to be elongated between the tensioning wheel and the drum mechanism. This surface speed differential can be accomplished in a number of ways, for example, the preferred manner is to develop a tensioning wheel with a diameter less than that of the diameter of the drum and rotate the tensioning wheel and drum at the same rotational speed by driving them off the same mechanism thus creating a surface speed of the jaws greater than the surface speed of the cogs.

The tensioned strip section "a" as represented in Fig. 4 and in comparison to untensioned section "b" is bowed since the tensioning pressure is essentially at the outer margins of the strip with no control at the innermost regions of the carriers. This configuration is shown clearly in the bow shaped section as shown in Fig. 5. This bow shaped section tends to facilitate the alignment of the outer bands on the jaws in that they assume a position that does not require pre-alignment to create a surface engagement between the jaws and the bands. Heretofore the prior art systems required some sort of a positive band alignment device to insure that the bands, when placed on the jaws, uniformly would uniformly instantaneously assume the proper position against the surface of the jaws.

A more detailed showing of the application drum 42 is shown in partial assembly Fig. 6 with the cams 52, cam followers 54, jaws 48 and pretensioned carrier 10 in a practically totally laterally stretched arrangement. As in the prior art machine the carrier device is stripped from the jaws through the use of a stripping plate 56 as the can tops are inserted through the laterally stretched apertures.

As the stream of containers is fed through the machine of Fig. 4 with a suitable apparatus at the exit end, not shown, the continuous strip and the continuous stream of containers are separated into their desired array, for example a six-pack 13.

The packages 13 thus created are shown more clearly in Figs. 7, 8 and 9. These Figs. show that the rib-like or corrugated structure described in detail relative to the device of Fig. 1, creates a closely spaced series of ribs 24 which act as struts abutting against the rims 1 of the cans, thus serving to essentially stiffen the package while minimizing the material content. It should be recalled that the struts or thick rib sections 25 are regions which have a stretch capability remaining in them while the thin, oriented, sections 26, have essentially no stretch remaining in them. These thinned oriented sections 26, however support and compliment the strut-like configuration of the bands. It has been found that a package 13 created using the device 10 can be manufactured with approximately 25 % less material than the prior art device of U.S. patent 4 119 117 while retaining the cans under jolting conditions as well as not better than the prior art device.

A preferred embodiment of the device 10 and package 13 will have a density of corrugations 24 which is approximately 40 to 50 per inch (1.6 to 2 per mm). This density creates an appropriate number of ribs and individually stretchable thick sections 25 about the periphery of the band and can.

It should be clear that the bands creating the dimension of the apertures 12 can be significantly increased in diameter e.g., in the range of 2 to 1 from the original diameter. This will become apparent in comparing the apertures shown in Fig. 1 to the dimension of the diameters of the cans associated with the device shown in Fig. 7. This comparison clearly illustrates one of the important features of the invention i.e., ability to use far less material, reconfigure the device by stretching significantly and still create a usable, functional package.

Thus it should be apparent that a unique and clearly advantageous multi-packaging system is created by this invention. One in which a carrier device can be created which is capable of utilizing significantly less material than prior art devices, capable of being stretched significantly greater amounts without failure, capable of creating a package which is equal to or superior to the prior art devices which utilize more material, capable of being incorporated into a multi-packaging system which utilizes very high-speed applying machines that cooperate and compliment the carrier design.

Claims

1. A multiple container carrier device (10) of thermoplastic material for an array of containers having a particular peripheral dimension, the carrier device including a corresponding array of apertures (12) formed by interconnected bands (14), the apertures being elongate in the longitudinal direction of the device (10) and having an

unstressed peripheral dimension substantially less than said particular peripheral dimension characterised in that the carrier device (10) is formed to have a plurality of transversely directed corrugated sections to enable the device (10) to be elongated by tensioning and thereby enlarge the peripheral dimension of the apertures (12) to allow them to be associated with a container to be multi-packaged.

2. A carrier device according to claim 1, wherein the array of apertures (12) has two or more rows of laterally aligned ranks of apertures, first web means (18) interconnecting adjacent ranks of apertures and second web means (16) interconnecting adjacent rows of apertures (12).

3. A carrier device according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the bands (14) include an outer marginal region (24) and an inner region, the outer marginal region (24) being substantially straight and the inner region being substantially C-shaped.

4. A carrier device according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the lateral margins (27) of the device (10) are slightly undulating creating a slightly greater width for the device (19) in locations adjacent the longitudinal extremities of the apertures (12) than in locations adjacent the second web means (16) and central portions of the apertures (12) the width of the device (10) at the locations adjacent the second web means (16) and central portions of the apertures (12) being substantially equal.

5. A carrier device according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the corrugated sections are formed by an alternating series of thick (25) and thin (26) strips throughout the length of the device (10).

6. A carrier device according to claim 5, wherein the thin transverse strips (26) are pre-stretched and oriented and the thick strips (25) are not oriented.

7. A carrier device according to claim 5 or 6, wherein alternating relatively thick sections (25) project on opposite sides of a central plane containing the device (10).

8. A carrier device according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the second web means (18) include a plurality of longitudinally spaced straps (15, 17) interconnecting each adjacent pair of laterally aligned apertures (12).

9. A carrier device according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the apertures (12) have a peripheral dimension approximately one-half that of the particular peripheral dimension of the container to be inserted in it.

10. A package consisting of a carrier in accordance with any one of the preceding claims and a plurality of cylindrical containers (13) arranged in an array, the containers having circumferential surface portions of the particular peripheral dimension immediately below an upper chime (19), a container (13) being located in each aperture (12) with each of the bands (14) encircling one of the containers (13) immediately below its chime (19) and resiliently tensioned

The packages 13 thus created are shown more clearly in Figs. 7, 8 and 9. These Figs. show that the rib-like or corrugated structure described in detail relative to the device of Fig. 1, creates a closely spaced series of ribs 24 which act as struts abutting against the rims 1 of the cans, thus serving to essentially stiffen the package while minimizing the material content. It should be recalled that the struts or thick rib sections 25 are regions which have a stretch capability remaining in them while the thin, oriented, sections 26, have essentially no stretch remaining in them. These thinned oriented sections 26, however support and compliment the strut-like configuration of the bands. It has been found that a package 13 created using the device 10 can be manufactured with approximately 25 % less material than the prior art device of U.S. patent 4 119 117 while retaining the cans under jolting conditions as well as not better than the prior art device.

A preferred embodiment of the device 10 and package 13 will have a density of corrugations 24 which is approximately 40 to 50 per inch (1.6 to 2 per mm). This density creates an appropriate number of ribs and individually stretchable thick sections 25 about the periphery of the band and can.

It should be clear that the bands creating the dimension of the apertures 12 can be significantly increased in diameter e.g., in the range of 2 to 1 from the original diameter. This will become apparent in comparing the apertures shown in Fig. 1 to the dimension of the diameters of the cans associated with the device shown in Fig. 7. This comparison clearly illustrates one of the important features of the invention i.e., ability to use far less material, reconfigure the device by stretching significantly and still create a usable, functional package.

Thus it should be apparent that a unique and clearly advantageous multi-packaging system is created by this invention. One in which a carrier device can be created which is capable of utilizing significantly less material than prior art devices, capable of being stretched significantly greater amounts without failure, capable of creating a package which is equal to or superior to the prior art devices which utilize more material, capable of being incorporated into a multi-packaging system which utilizes very high-speed applying machines that cooperate and compliment the carrier design.

Claims

1. A multiple container carrier device (10) of thermoplastic material for an array of containers having a particular peripheral dimension, the carrier device including a corresponding array of apertures (12) formed by interconnected bands (14), the apertures being elongate in the longitudinal direction of the device (10) and having an

unstressed peripheral dimension substantially less than said particular peripheral dimension characterised in that the carrier device (10) is formed to have a plurality of transversely directed corrugated sections to enable the device (10) to be elongated by tensioning and thereby enlarge the peripheral dimension of the apertures (12) to allow them to be associated with a container to be multi-packaged.

2. A carrier device according to claim 1, wherein the array of apertures (12) has two or more rows of laterally aligned ranks of apertures, first web means (18) interconnecting adjacent ranks of apertures and second web means (16) interconnecting adjacent rows of apertures (12).

3. A carrier device according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the bands (14) include an outer marginal region (24) and an inner region, the outer marginal region (24) being substantially straight and the inner region being substantially C-shaped.

4. A carrier device according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the lateral margins (27) of the device (10) are slightly undulating creating a slightly greater width for the device (19) in locations adjacent the longitudinal extremities of the apertures (12) than in locations adjacent the second web means (16) and central portions of the apertures (12) the width of the device (10) at the locations adjacent the second web means (16) and central portions of the apertures (12) being substantially equal.

5. A carrier device according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the corrugated sections are formed by an alternating series of thick (25) and thin (26) strips throughout the length of the device (10).

6. A carrier device according to claim 5, wherein the thin transverse strips (26) are pre-stretched and oriented and the thick strips (25) are not oriented.

7. A carrier device according to claim 5 or 6, wherein alternating relatively thick sections (25) project on opposite sides of a central plane containing the device (10).

8. A carrier device according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the second web means (18) include a plurality of longitudinally spaced straps (15, 17) interconnecting each adjacent pair of laterally aligned apertures (12).

9. A carrier device according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the apertures (12) have a peripheral dimension approximately one-half that of the particular peripheral dimension of the container to be inserted in it.

10. A package consisting of a carrier in accordance with any one of the preceding claims and a plurality of cylindrical containers (13) arranged in an array, the containers having circumferential surface portions of the particular peripheral dimension immediately below an upper chime (19), a container (13) being located in each aperture (12) with each of the bands (14) encircling one of the containers (13) immediately below its chime (19) and resiliently tensioned



about it.

11. A method of manufacturing multi-packages including the steps of:

- providing an elongated web of resilient plastics material;
- creating a series of preforms by producing a lengthwise series of apertures of a predetermined size; configuration and pitch in the web;

- deforming the preforms to produce a series of transverse corrugations which include small discrete sections of lengthwise, elongated, carrier material, wherein a series of carrier devices are created which include apertures of increased aperture length and pitch from the preform aperture length and pitch.

12. A method according to claim 11, wherein the preforms are deformed and corrugations provided by passing the preforms through a nip between a pair of meshing gear-like rollers.

13. A method according to claim 11 or 12, wherein the pitch of the apertures and length of the apertures are increased by approximately 20 %.

14. A method for multi-packaging containers including the steps of:

- providing a reel of container carrier devices which are interconnected end-to-end and which include apertures;

- associating the apertures with jaw members and transversely moving the jaw members to expand the apertures in the transverse direction; and

- telescopically associating a container within each stressed aperture, characterised by using a container carrier device transversely directed corrugated sections and in that the container carrier device is subjected to a tension sufficient to elongate it and its apertures by approximately 20 %.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the carrier devices are bowed in the lateral direction while being tensioned so that the outer band regions are rotated upwardly to lie generally flat against the outer surface of upstanding jaw members.

16. In a machine for multi-packaging a plurality of substantially adjacent rows of containers with a resilient flexible plastic material strip, wherein the width of the strip is substantially less than the width of the plurality of rows of containers, including an applying drum assembly mounted at a work station for rotation about a horizontal axis perpendicular to and above the line of movement of said containers through the work station, said drum assembly comprising a plurality of jaw stations mounted on said drum assembly circumferentially spaced there about at a given pitch, each of said jaw stations comprising a single pair of jaws each of the pair mounted thereon for reciprocation toward and away from each other along an axis substantially parallel to the axis of rotation of said drum assembly and extending radially from said drum assembly a distance sufficient to pass below the top surfaces of said containers, means for

moving said rows of containers through said work station as said drum assembly is rotated, means for successively reciprocating each of said pair of jaws from a strip receiving position with the spacing between the jaws less than the width of the carrier device, to a strip applying position with a spacing substantially greater than the width of the strip, a tensioning wheel having a plurality of cogs radiating from the outer periphery and circumferentially spaced from each other by a given pitch, each of the drum assembly and tensioning wheel being positively driven to rotate about their axes, the surface speed of the jaws being greater than the surface speed of the cogs so that a carrier strip wound about the tensioning wheel and onto the jaw stations cause the strip to be tensioned to increase the pitch distance between the apertures in the carrier stripe by approximately 20 %.

17. The machine of claim 16, wherein the pitch distance between the laws on the drum is greater than the pitch distance between the cogs on the tensioning wheel and the diameter of the tensioning wheel is less than the diameter of the applying drum.

Patentansprüche

1. Mehrfachbehälter-Trägervorrichtung (10) aus thermoplastischem Werkstoff für eine Anordnung von Behältern mit einer besonderen Umfangsabmessung, wobei die Trägervorrichtung eine entsprechende Anordnung von Öffnungen (12) aufweist, die durch Verbindungsbänder (14) gebildet werden, wobei die Öffnungen in Längsrichtung der Vorrichtung (10) langgestreckt sind und eine unbelastet Umfangsabmessung aufweisen, die wesentlich kleiner ist als die besondere Umfangsabmessung, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Trägervorrichtung (10) so ausgebildet ist, daß sie mehrere quer ausgerichtete gewellte Abschnitte aufweist, so daß durch Spannen die Vorrichtung streckbar ist und dadurch die Umfangsabmessung der Öffnungen (12) vergrößert wird, damit sie mit einem Behälter zu einer Mehrfachpackung zusammenbringbar sind.

2. Trägervorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Anordnung von Öffnungen (12) zwei oder mehr Reihen seitlich ausgerichteter Glieder von Öffnungen aufweist, erste Stegmittel (18) zur Verbindung benachbarter Glieder von Öffnungen und zweite Stegmittel (16) zur Verbindung benachbarter Reihen von Öffnungen (12).

3. Trägeranordnung nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Bänder (14) einen äußeren Randbereich (24) und einen inneren Bereich aufweisen, wobei der äußere Randbereich (24) im wesentlichen gerade und der innere Randbereich im wesentlichen C-förmig ist.

4. Trägervorrichtung nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, dadurch gekennzeichnet,



daß die Seitenränder (27) der Vorrichtung (10) leicht gewellt sind, wodurch für die Vorrichtung (10) an Stellen nahe den Endpunkten der Öffnungen (12) in Längsrichtung eine etwas größere Breite als an Stellen nahe den zweiten Stegmitteln (16) und zentralen Abschnitten der Öffnungen (12) erzeugt wird, wobei die Breite der Vorrichtung (10) an Stellen nahe den zweiten Stegmitteln (16) und den zentralen Abschnitten der Öffnungen (12) im wesentlichen gleich ist.

5. Trägervorrichtung nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die gewellten Abschnitte durch eine abwechselnde Serie von dicken (25) und dünnen (26) Streifen über die Länge der Vorrichtung (10) erzeugt werden.

6. Trägervorrichtung nach Anspruch 5, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die dünnen Querstreifen (26) vorgestreckt und ausgerichtet sind und die dicken Streifen (25) nicht ausgerichtet sind.

7. Trägeranordnung nach Anspruch 5 oder 6, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß abwechselnd relativ dicke Abschnitte (25) an gegenüberliegenden Seiten einer zentralen Ebene welche die Vorrichtung (10) enthält, herausragen.

8. Trägervorrichtung nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die zweiten Stegmittel (18) mehrere in Längsrichtung beabstandete Riemen (15, 17) aufweisen, die jedes benachbarte Paar von seitlich ausgerichteten Öffnungen (12) verbinden.

9. Trägervorrichtung nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Öffnungen (12) eine Umfangsabmessung aufweisen, die ungefähr ein Hälfte der besonderen Umfangsabmessung des Behälter beträgt, der in sie eingesetzt wird.

10. Packung, bestehend aus einem Träger nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche und einer Vielzahl von in eine Anordnung angeordneten zylindrischen Behältern (13), dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Behälter Umfangsflächen abschnitte der besonderen Umfangsabmessung unmittelbar unterhalb einer oberen Bördelkante (19) aufweisen, ein Behälter (13) in jeder Öffnung (12) angeordnet ist, wobei jedes der Bänder (14) einen der Behälter (13) unmittelbar unterhalb seiner Bördelkante (19) umschlingt und nachgiebig umspannt.

11. Verfahren zum Herstellen von Mehrfachpackungen gekennzeichnet durch die Schritte:

- Bereitstellen einer langgestreckten Bahn eines nach giebigen Kunststoffwerkstoffs,

- Erzeugen einer Serie von Vorformen durch Erzeuge einer längsgerichteten Serie von Öffnungen von vorbestimmter Größe, Gestalt und Teilung in der Bahn,

- Verformen der Vorformen zur Erzeugung einer Serie von Querwellen, die kleine getrennte Abschnitte eine längsgerichteten langgestreckten Trägerwerkstoffs aufweisen, wobei eine Serie von Trägervorrichtungen erzeugt wird, die Öffnungen von vergrößerter Öffnungslänge und Teilung gegenüber der vorgeformten Öffnungslänge und Teilung aufweisen.

12. Verfahren nach Anspruch 11, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Vorformen verformt werden und Wellen durch Führen der Vorformen durch einen Walzspalt zwischen einem Paar von kämmenden zahnradähnlichen Walzen geschaffen werden.

13. Verfahren nach Anspruch 11 oder 12, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Teilung der Öffnungen und die Länge der Öffnungen um etwa 20 % vergrößert werden.

14. Verfahren für Mehrpackbehälter mit dem Schritten:

- Bereitstellen einer Rolle von Behälterträgervorrichtungen, die jeweils an den Enden verbunden sind und Öffnungen aufweisen,

- Zusammenbringen der Öffnungen mit Backengliedern und Querbewegen der Backenglieder, um die Öffnungen in Querrichtung auszuweiten, und teleskopartiges Zusammenbringen eines Behälters mit jeder erweiterten Öffnung,

gekennzeichnet durch den Einsatz einer Behälterträgervorrichtung mit quergerichteten gewellten Abschnitten und dadurch, daß die Behälterträgervorrichtung einer Spannung unterworfen wird, die ausreicht, um sie und ihre Öffnungen um etwa 20 % langzustrecken.

15. Verfahren nach Anspruch 14, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Trägervorrichtungen in seitlicher Richtung gekrümmt werden, während sie gestreckt werden, so daß die äußeren Bandbereiche aufwärts gedreht werden und allgemein flach gegen die Außenfläche der aufgerichteten Backenteile anliegen.

16. Maschine zum Mehrfachpacken einer Vielzahl von im wesentlichen benachbarten Reihen von Behältern mit einem nachgiebigen flexiblen Streifen aus Kunststoffwerkstoff, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Breite des Streifens wesentlich geringer als die Breite der Vielzahl von Reihen von Behältern ist, eine Anwendungstrommelanordnung in einer Arbeitsstation zur Drehung um eine horizontale Achse senkrecht zu und oberhalb der Bewegungslinie der Behälter durch die Arbeitsstation vorgesehen ist, wobei die Trommelanordnung mehrere Backenstationen aufweist, die auf der Trommelanordnung in vorgegebener Teilung in Umfangsrichtung beabstandet angeordnet sind, wobei jede Backenstation ein einzelnes Paar Backen aufweist, wobei jedes darauf angebrachte Paar sich hin zu und zurück voneinander entlang einer Achse im wesentlichen parallel zur Drehachse der Trommelanordnung bewegt und sich radial von der Trommelanordnung in einem Abstand erstreckt, der ausreicht, um unter den oberen Flächen der Behälter entlangzufahren, Mittel zum Bewegen der Reihen von Behältern durch die Arbeitsstation beim Drehen der Trommelanordnung, Mittel zum aufeinanderfolgenden Her- und Hinbewegen jedes Paares Backen von einer Streifenaufnahme-position, wobei der Abstand zwischen den Backen kleiner ist als die Breite der Trägervorrichtung, zu einer Streifenanbringstation mit einem Abstand, der wesentlich größer als die



Breite des Streifens ist, ein Spannrad mit mehreren Zähnen, die sich radial vom äußeren Umfang erstrecken und in vorgegebener Teilung in Umfangsrichtung voneinander beabstandet sind, wobei die Trommelanordnung und das Spannrad jeweils selbst zur Drehung um ihre Achse angetrieben werden, wobei die Flächengeschwindigkeit der Backen größer ist als die Flächengeschwindigkeit der Zähne, so daß ein um das Spannrad und auf die Backenstation gewickelter Trägerstreifen gestreckt wird und dadurch der Teilungsabstand zwischen den Öffnungen im Trägerstreifen um etwa 20 % erhöht wird.

17. Maschine nach Anspruch 16, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Teilungsabstand zwischen den Backen der Trommel größer ist als der Teilungsabstand zwischen den Zähnen auf dem Spannrad und der Durchmesser des Spannrades kleiner ist als der Durchmesser der Aufbringtrommel.

Revendications

1. Dispositif porteur (10) de récipients multiples en matière thermoplastique destiné à un ensemble de récipients ayant une dimension périphérique particulière, le dispositif porteur comprenant un ensemble correspondant d'ouvertures (12) formé par des bandes (14) reliées entre elles, les ouvertures étant allongées dans la direction longitudinale du dispositif (10) et ayant une dimension périphérique sans contrainte sensiblement inférieure à ladite dimension périphérique particulière, caractérisé en ce que le dispositif porteur (10) est formé de façon à comporter plusieurs sections ondulées orientées transversalement pour permettre au dispositif (10) d'être allongé en étant tendu et d'élargir ainsi la dimension périphérique des ouvertures (12) pour leur permettre d'être associées à un récipient devant faire partie de l'emballage multiple.

2. Dispositif porteur selon la revendication 1, dans lequel l'ensemble d'ouvertures (12) comporte deux ou plus de deux rangées de colonnes d'ouvertures alignées latéralement, un premier moyen à voile (18) reliant entre elles des colonnes adjacentes d'ouvertures et un second moyen à voile (16) reliant entre elles des rangées adjacentes d'ouvertures (12).

3. Dispositif porteur selon la revendication 1 ou 2, dans lequel les bandes (14) comprennent une zone marginale extérieure (24) et une zone intérieure, la zone marginale extérieure (24) étant sensiblement droite et la zone intérieure étant de forme sensiblement en C.

4. Dispositif porteur selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel les marges latérales (27) du dispositif (10) sont légèrement ondulées, établissant une largeur légèrement supérieure pour le dispositif (19) dans des emplacements adjacents aux extrémités

longitudinales des ouvertures (12), que dans des emplacements adjacents au second moyen à voile (16) et les parties centrales des ouvertures (12), la largeur du dispositif (10) aux emplacements adjacents au second moyen à voile (16) et aux parties centrales des ouvertures (12) étant sensiblement égale.

5. Dispositif porteur selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel les sections ondulées sont formées par une série alternée de rubans épais (25) et minces (26) sur toute la longueur du dispositif (10).

6. Dispositif porteur selon la revendication 5, dans lequel les rubans transversaux minces (26) sont préétirés et orientés et les rubans épais (25) ne sont pas orientés.

7. Dispositif porteur selon la revendication 5 ou 6, dans lequel des sections alternées, relativement épaisses (25) font saillie sur les côtés opposés d'un plan central contenant le dispositif (10).

8. Dispositif porteur selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel les second moyens à voile (18) comprennent plusieurs languettes (15, 17) espacées longitudinalement, reliant entre elles chaque paire adjacente d'ouvertures alignées latéralement (12).

9. Dispositif porteur selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, dans lequel les ouvertures (12) ont une dimension périphérique approximativement égale à la moitié de la dimension périphérique particulière du récipient devant y être inséré.

10. Emballage constitué d'un dispositif porteur selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes et de plusieurs récipients cylindriques (13) agencés en un ensemble, les récipients ayant des parties de surface circonférentielles de la dimension périphérique particulière, immédiatement au-dessous d'un bourrelet supérieur (19), un récipient (13) étant placé dans chaque ouverture (12) de façon que chacune des bandes (14) entoure l'un des récipients (13) immédiatement au-dessous de son bourrelet (19) et soit tendue élastiquement autour de lui.

11. Procédé de fabrication d'emballages multiples comprenant les étapes qui consistent:

- à utiliser un voile allongé de matière plastique élastique,

- à former une série de préformes en produisant une série longitudinale d'ouvertures d'une dimension, d'une configuration et d'un pas prédéterminés dans le voile,

- à déformer les préformes pour produire une série d'ondulations transversales qui comprennent de petites sections distinctes de matière de support longitudinale, allongée, une série de dispositifs porteurs étant formée, lesquels dispositifs comprennent des ouvertures de longueur et de pas accrus à partir de la longueur et du pas des ouvertures de la préforme.

12. Procédé selon la revendication 11, dans lequel les préformes sont déformées et des ondulations sont réalisées par passage des préformes dans une zone de serrage entre deux



rouleaux en prise, analogues à des roues dentées.

13. Procédé selon la revendication 11 ou 12, dans lequel le pas des ouvertures et la longueur des ouvertures sont augmentés d'environ 20 %.

14. Procédé pour l'emballage multiple de récipients, comprenant les étapes qui consistent:

- à utiliser une bobine des dispositifs porteurs de récipients qui sont reliés entre eux bout à bout et qui comprennent des ouvertures;

- à associer les ouvertures à des éléments de mâchoires et à déplacer transversalement les éléments de mâchoires pour expander les ouvertures dans la direction transversale; et

- à associer télescopiquement un récipient dans chaque ouverture contrainte, caractérisé en ce qu'il consiste à utiliser un dispositif porteur de récipients ayant des sections ondulées orientées transversalement et en ce que le dispositif porteur de récipients est soumis à une tension suffisante pour allonger le dispositif et ses ouvertures d'environ 20 %.

15. Procédé selon la revendication 14, dans lequel les dispositifs porteurs sont bombés dans la direction latérale pendant qu'ils sont tendus afin que les zones des bandes extérieures soient tournées vers le haut pour s'étendre à peu près à plat contre la surface extérieure des éléments de mâchoires orientés vers le haut.

16. Machine pour l'emballage multiple de plusieurs récipients en rangées sensiblement adjacentes, avec un ruban de matière plastique flexible et élastique, dans laquelle la largeur du ruban est sensiblement inférieure à la largeur des rangées de récipients, comprenant un ensemble à tambour d'application monté dans un poste de travail de façon à tourner sur un axe horizontal perpendiculaire à et au-dessus de la ligne de mouvement desdits récipients à travers le poste de travail, ledit ensemble à tambour comprenant plusieurs postes à mâchoires montés sur ledit ensemble à tambour, espacés sur la circonférence de celui-ci suivant un pas donné, chacun desdits postes à mâchoires comprenant une paire unique de mâchoires montées chacune sur ce poste afin d'effectuer un mouvement alternatif la rapprochant et l'éloignant de l'autre mâchoire suivant un axe sensiblement parallèle à l'axe de rotation dudit ensemble à tambour et s'étendant radialement à partir dudit ensemble à tambour sur une distance suffisante pour passer au-dessous des surfaces supérieures desdits récipients, des moyens destinés à déplacer lesdites rangées de récipients à travers ledit poste de travail pendant que ledit ensemble à tambour est en rotation, des moyens destinés à animer d'un mouvement alternatif successivement chacune desdites paires de mâchoires à partir d'une position de réception de ruban, dans laquelle l'écartement entre les mâchoires est inférieur à la largeur du dispositif porteur, jusqu'à une position d'application de ruban dans laquelle l'écartement est sensiblement supérieur à la largeur du ruban, une roue de tension comportant plusieurs taquets qui rayonnent de la périphérie extérieure et qui

sont espacés circonférentiellement les uns des autres d'un pas donné, chacun de l'ensemble à tambour et de la roue de tension étant entraîné à force pour tourner sur son axe, la vitesse superficielle des mâchoires étant plus grande que la vitesse superficielle des taquets afin qu'un ruban porteur enroulé sur la roue de tension et sur les postes à mâchoires soit tendu pour augmenter d'environ 20 % la valeur du pas entre les ouvertures du ruban porteur.

17. Machine selon la revendication 16, dans laquelle la valeur du pas entre les mâchoires fixées sur la tambour est plus grande que la valeur du pas entre les taquets situés sur la roue de tension et le diamètre de la roue de tension est inférieur au diamètre du tambour d'application.

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

60

65

9

