

CONTAINER HAVING MULTIPLE CONNECTED PACKS

The present invention relates to a container comprising two or more connected packs.

Smoking articles and other consumer goods are commonly packaged and sold in hinge-lid containers that comprise a box part and a lid, which is hinged to the back wall of the box part. It is known to package smoking articles in containers comprising two or more hinge-lid packs that are connected together in some way. For example, FR-A-2 614 720 discloses a so-called "booklet pack" for smoking articles comprising two or more cuboid packs connected together and pivotable relative to one another like the covers of a book.

It would be desirable to provide a container comprising two or more connected packs that provides novel ways for the consumer to access the smoking articles or other consumer goods within the container. It would also be desirable to provide a container comprising two or more connected packs that can be manufactured in a simple way.

According to one aspect, there is provided a container comprising two or more connected packs, the container comprising: a first pack formed of one or more laminar blanks and comprising a box part and a lid hinged to the box part; a second, hinge-lid pack formed of one or more laminar blanks and comprising a box part and a lid connected to the box part along a hinge line extending across a back wall of the second pack, wherein the laminar blanks for forming the first pack are separate from the laminar blanks for forming the second pack and wherein the front wall of the lid is affixed to the bottom of a first wall of the first pack such that when the second pack is in a closed position, the front wall thereof lies against the first wall of the first pack.

Also disclosed is a container comprising two or more connected packs, the container comprising a first pack formed of one or more laminar blanks and having a first wall; a second, hinge-lid pack formed of one or more laminar blanks and comprising a box part and a lid connected to the box part along a hinge line extending across a back wall of the second pack, wherein the laminar blanks forming the first pack are separate from the laminar blanks forming the second pack and wherein a wall of the lid is affixed to the first wall of the first pack.

The terms "front", "back", "top" and "bottom" are used in the present specification to describe the relative positions of the components of a hinge-lid pack when the pack is in an upright position. A hinge-lid pack is typically held in an upright position by the consumer during opening of the pack so that the articles in the pack may be removed through the top side of the open pack. When describing containers according to the present invention, these terms are used irrespective of the orientation of the hinge-lid pack being described.

Throughout the specification, the terms are used as follows for a hinge-lid pack. The top wall is the wall of the lid that covers the opening of the box part of the container. The bottom wall is the wall opposite the top wall. The top wall and the bottom wall are connected by a number of upright walls. Typically, the lid and the box part have the following upright walls: a front wall; a back wall; and at least two side walls. However, in a pack with a triangular cross-section the front wall is missing. The hinge is located on the back wall. Where present, the front wall is the wall opposite the back wall. The side walls are the remaining upright walls. Typically, in hinge-lid packs the back wall and the front wall are major walls, that is, they have the biggest surface area of the pack. In so-called side-opening packs the hinge is located on a

minor wall, such that the side walls are the major walls of the pack. In packs with a quadratic cross-section the front wall, back wall and side walls are all major walls.

The first pack and the second pack of containers according to the present invention are formed from separate laminar blanks, so that during production of the containers the first and second packs may be formed and filled in separate and independent process steps. The separately formed packs are subsequently connected to each other by affixing, or attaching a wall of the lid of the second pack to the first wall of the first pack.

The first and second packs of containers according to one embodiment of the present invention are connected directly to each other without intermediate connecting panels. Containers according to the present invention can therefore be produced in a simple way using the same blanks as known packs and using apparatus used to manufacture known packs.

Preferably, the first wall of the first pack is the front wall or a side wall. Preferably, the wall of the lid of the second pack affixed to the first wall of the first pack is the front wall of the lid or a side wall of the lid. Advantageously, containers according to the present invention provide a greater external surface area upon which manufacturer or brand logos, trade marks, slogans and other consumer information can be displayed. In preferred embodiments of the invention, a portion of the exterior surface of the first and second packs will only be exposed when the second pack is opened. This portion may therefore be used to display additional information or graphics.

The first pack may be a slide and shell pack comprising an outer shell and an inner slide within the outer shell, or a side opening pack. Also, the second pack may be a sliding lid pack as disclosed in Registered EU Community Design No. 000557590.

Alternatively, and preferably, the first pack is a hinge-lid pack comprising a box part and a lid hinged to the box part. The first hinge-lid pack and the second hinge-lid pack may be connected together such that first hinge-lid pack may be opened independently from the second hinge-lid pack. Alternatively, the first hinge-lid pack and the second hinge-lid pack may be connected together such that the second hinge-lid pack is at least partially open before the first hinge-lid pack can be opened.

Preferably, where the first pack is a hinge-lid pack, the front wall of the lid of the second pack is affixed to the front wall of the box part of the first pack. Particularly preferably, the front wall of the lid of the second hinge-lid pack is affixed to the lower end of the front wall of the box part of the first hinge-lid pack, so that when the second pack is in a closed position the front wall of the first pack lies against the front wall of the second pack. Alternatively, the front wall of the lid of the second pack may be attached to the lower end of the back wall of the first pack.

In an open position of one embodiment of the present invention, the opening in the box part of the second hinge-lid pack is at the top of the pack. Similarly, in an open position, the opening in the box part of the first hinge-lid pack

is at the top of the pack. This allows the consumer to open both the first hinge-lid pack and the second hinge-lid pack at the same time, without the risk of losing articles housed in either pack.

Containers according to the present invention preferably further comprise retention means to provide resistance to movement of the second pack relative to the first pack from a closed position to an open position, such that a positive force must be applied to move the second pack relative to the first pack. The retention means may comprise any suitable known magnetic fasteners, mechanical fasteners, adhesive fasteners or combinations thereof. For example, the retention means may comprise one or more releasable pressure-actuated hook and loop type fasteners, snap fasteners or other mating plug and socket type fasteners.

In one preferred embodiment of the invention, the first pack is a hinge-lid pack comprising a lid that closes over both the second hinge-lid pack and the box part of the first hinge-lid pack. The lid of the first hinge-lid pack therefore acts as a retention means, holding the first and second hinge-lid packs together with the second pack in a closed position. The lid of the first hinge-lid pack must be opened before the lid of the second hinge-lid pack can be opened. Conversely, the first hinge-lid pack may be opened simply by opening the lid thereof.

At least one of the packs of the containers according to one embodiment of the present invention is for housing a bundle of smoking articles. The smoking articles may be, for example, cigarettes, such as lit end cigarettes or cigarettes for use with electrical smoking systems, cigars or cigarillos. Preferably, the first pack and the second pack are each for housing a separate bundle of cigarettes. Alternatively, one of the first pack or the second pack is for housing one or more items other than a smoking article, for example, cigarette butts, filter components, matches, lighters, cosmetics or an information leaflet or booklet.

Through an appropriate choice of the dimensions thereof, the first pack and the second pack of containers according to the present invention may be designed to house separate bundles of different numbers of cigarettes. Alternatively, or in addition, the first pack and the second pack may be designed to house separate bundles of cigarettes of different dimensions (for example, cigarettes of different length or different circumference). The first pack and the second pack may, for example, be designed to house separate bundles of different numbers of short (for example between about 30 mm and about 75 mm in length), regular size (for example about 80 mm in length), king size (for example about 84 mm in length), super king size, slim, super-slim or wide cigarettes.

Through an appropriate choice of the dimensions of the first pack and the second pack thereof, containers according to the present invention may also be designed to hold different total numbers of smoking articles. For example, containers according to the present invention may comprise a first pack and a second pack for housing, in combination, a total of twenty

- 4 -

regular size cigarettes. The number of smoking articles housed in the first pack may be the same as, or different to, the number of smoking articles housed in the second pack.

Through an appropriate choice of the dimensions thereof, containers according to the present invention or each of the first and second packs thereof may be designed to hold a total of, for example, ten, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one or twenty-five smoking articles. These may be arranged in different collations, depending on the total number of smoking articles. For example, the smoking articles may be arranged in one row of six, seven, eight, nine or ten; two rows of five, six, seven, eight, nine or ten; two rows of 5-6, 6-7, 7-8; three rows of 5-5-5, 5-6-5, 6-5-6, 5-6-7, 6-7-6, 7-5-7, 7-6-7, 7-7-7, 8-9-8; four rows of four, five or six.

The length, width and depth of the first pack and the second pack of containers according to the present invention may be such that, when the second pack is in a closed position, the resultant overall dimensions of the containers are, for example, substantially the same as those of known hinge-lid containers holding twenty smoking articles.

Containers according to the present invention may advantageously comprise a first pack and a second pack for housing separate bundles of smoking articles of different types. A wide variety of different types of cigarettes are produced and sold. For example, different types of tobacco having unique characteristic tastes and aromas, such as Burley, Oriental and Virginia tobacco, are used alone or in varying amounts in tobacco blends to produce brands of cigarettes having different characteristic tastes. In addition, both filterless cigarettes and cigarettes having many different types of filter tips are manufactured as well as cigarettes of differing length (for example, regular size, king size or super-king size), circumference (for example, slim or super-slim), strength of taste, resistance to draw and total particulate matter delivery. Furthermore, cigarettes containing flavourings such as menthol are also available.

Containers according to the present invention may comprise a first pack and a second pack for housing separate bundles of cigarettes of a different tobacco blend or flavour. Alternatively, or in addition, containers according to the present invention may comprise a first pack and a second pack for housing separate bundles of cigarettes of a different size (different length, different circumference, or both).

Preferably, the first pack and the second pack of containers according to the present invention are substantially parallelepipedal. More preferably, the first pack and the second pack of containers according to the present invention are substantially cuboid.

Preferably, the first pack and the second pack of containers according to the present invention are of substantially the same shape. The dimensions of the first pack and the second pack of containers according to the present invention may be the same or different. Preferably, the first pack and the second pack of containers according to the present invention are of

- 5 -

different dimensions. More preferably, the first pack and the second pack are of substantially the same length (or height) and width, but of different depth, that is, the same size major walls, but different size minor walls. Preferably, the faces of the first pack and the second pack that abut one another when the packs are closed are of substantially the same dimensions.

The first pack and the second pack of containers according to the present invention may have one or more right-angled longitudinal edges, one or more right-angled transverse edges, one or more rounded longitudinal edges, one or more rounded transverse edges, one or more bevelled longitudinal edges, one or more bevelled transverse edges, or any suitable combination thereof. Preferably, the longitudinal edges of the abutting walls of the two packs are right-angled, such that the container has a smooth side where the edges of the two packs abut.

The first pack and the second pack of containers according to the present invention are preferably formed from one or more folded laminar blanks, more preferably from one or more folded laminar cardboard blanks.

The second pack is preferably adhered to the first wall of the first pack in order to form the container, for example, using hot melt adhesive, contact adhesive or double-sided adhesive tape. However, it will be appreciated that a variety of other known connecting means may be employed to affix the lid of the second pack to the first wall of the first pack such as, for example, hook and loop type fasteners, magnetic fasteners or mating plug and socket type fasteners.

The exterior surfaces of the first pack and the second pack of containers according to the present invention may be printed, embossed, debossed, or otherwise embellished (for example using labels or stickers) with manufacturer or brand logos, trade marks, slogans and other consumer information and indicia. It will be appreciated that the same or different manufacturer or brand logos, trade marks, slogans and other consumer information and indicia may be applied to the exterior surfaces of the first pack and the second pack.

At least one of the walls of the first pack, or the second pack, or both, may be at least partially provided with a higher friction exterior surface in order to improve the consumer's grip on the packs during opening and closing thereof. Preferably, the two side walls of the first pack are at least partially provided with such a high friction surface. Alternatively, or in addition, the first pack, or the second pack, or both, may include a mirrored surface on at least one surface thereof that only becomes exposed when the second pack is open.

The exterior surfaces of the first pack and the second pack may be printed such that when the packs are both closed, the container has the appearance of a single pack. Alternatively, the exterior surfaces of the first pack and the second pack may be printed so that they contrast with each other and it is easy for the consumer to distinguish the packs from each

other. This may be desired, for example, if different brands of smoking articles are housed in the first pack and the second pack, since each of the packs may be printed with marketing and consumer information relating to the brand of smoking articles housed within that pack.

The interior surfaces of the lid of the first pack, or the second pack, or both, may also be printed. For example, the interior surfaces of the lid of the second pack may be printed with a continuation of the image that is printed on the first wall of the first pack, so that the image is continued or completed when the second pack is in its open position and the interior surfaces of the lid of the second pack are exposed.

The container may be printed with indicia to indicate the direction in which to open the packs, for example, with one or more arrows, or explanatory text.

Containers according to the present invention may comprise more than two packs, for example, three, four, five or six packs. Third and subsequent packs may be connected to one or more other packs in the same or a different manner to that in which the first pack and the second pack are connected. For example, a third hinge-lid pack may be incorporated into the container described above, in which the front wall of the lid of the second hinge-lid pack is affixed to the front wall of the box part of the first pack, by attaching the front wall of the lid of the third pack to the front wall of the box part of the second pack. In the closed position, the third pack lies between the first pack and the second pack with the lid of the second pack closed over both the third pack and the box part of the second pack. In order to open the second pack, the box part of the second pack and the third pack are together rotated about the hinge line in the back wall of the second pack, away from the first pack, (in the same way as described above to open the second pack in a container according to the present invention having only two packs). The third pack can then be opened by rotating it about the hinge line in the back wall thereof, away from the second pack. The third pack may house the same or different smoking articles or other items to the first pack and the second pack.

Containers according to the present invention may be shrink wrapped, or otherwise over wrapped with a transparent polymeric film of, for example, polyethylene or polypropylene, in a known manner. Where containers according to the present invention are over wrapped, the over wrapper may include a tear tape. Preferably, the tear tape extends in a vertical direction around the pack, so that the entire over wrap is removed when the consumer pulls on the tear tape.

Also disclosed is a method for producing containers. The method comprises: forming the first pack from one or more laminar blanks; forming the second pack from one or more laminar blanks; applying adhesive to a wall of the lid of the second pack; and affixing the wall of the lid of the second pack to which the adhesive has been applied to the first wall of the first pack.

- 7 -

Preferably, the application of the adhesive and the affixing of the second pack to the first pack are carried out in line. Advantageously, therefore, only simple modifications to existing methods and apparatus for making known packs are required in order to incorporate the additional steps required for producing containers according to the present invention.

The invention will be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 shows a side view of a container according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention, with the first pack and the second pack both in a closed position; and

Figure 2 illustrates a method for opening the second pack of the container shown in Figure 1.

The container 2 shown in Figures 1 and 2 is substantially rectangular cuboidal in shape and comprises a first hinge-lid pack 4 connected to a second hinge-lid pack 6. The first hinge-lid pack 4 contains a wrapped bundle of two rows of filter cigarettes and has a construction similar to that of known hinge-lid cigarette packs, with a box part 8 and a lid 10 hinged to the back wall of the box part 8. The second hinge-lid pack 6 contains a wrapped bundle 12 of one row of filter cigarettes and also has a construction similar to that of known hinge-lid cigarette packs, with a box part 14 and a lid 16 hinged to the back wall of the box part 14. The first pack 4 and the second pack 6 are both rectangular cuboidal in shape and have the same height and width as each other; however, the depth of the second pack 6 is approximately half of the depth of the first pack 4, since it contains one less row of cigarettes.

The front wall of the lid 16 of the second pack 6 is affixed, by means of an adhesive 18, to the bottom end of the front wall of the box part 8 of the first pack 4, such that the top wall of the lid 16 of the second pack 6 and the bottom wall of the box part 8 of the first pack 4 are substantially co-planar and form the bottom wall of the container 2. As shown in Figure 1, when the first pack 4 and the second pack 6 are both in a closed position, their front faces lie against one another with their front walls substantially coinciding, so that the front face of the first pack is entirely covered by the second pack and vice versa.

Figure 2 illustrates one possible method of opening the second pack in order to access the cigarettes housed therein. The first pack 4 is held in an upright position while the box part 14 of the second pack 6 is rotated away from the first pack 4 about the hinge line in the back wall of the second pack 6, in the direction shown by the arrow in Figure 2. The lid 16 of the second pack 6 remains attached to the first pack and therefore as the box part 14 of the second pack 6 is rotated away from the first pack 4 the opening in the box part 14 of the second pack 6 is exposed.

- 8 -

Once the second pack 6 has been at least partially opened, the first pack 4 can be opened by pivoting the lid 10 of the first pack 4 about the hinge line in the back wall of the first pack 4.

To form a container 2 as described above, the first hinge-lid pack 4 and the second hinge-lid pack 6 are each formed from a laminar cardboard blank, in a known manner, and filled with a wrapped bundle of cigarettes. Adhesive 18 is applied to the front wall of the lid 16 of the second pack 6 and the front wall of the lid 16 of the second pack 6 with the adhesive 18 applied thereto is affixed to the bottom end of the front wall of the first pack 4, so that the first 4 and second 6 packs are lined up with each other to provide a rectangular cuboidal container 2. The container 2 comprising the connected first 4 and second 6 packs is then over wrapped in a known manner with a transparent film (not shown).

CLAIMS

1. A container comprising two or more connected packs, the container comprising:
a first pack formed of one or more laminar blanks and comprising a box part and a lid hinged to the box part;
a second, hinge-lid pack formed of one or more laminar blanks and comprising a box part and a lid connected to the box part along a hinge line extending across a back wall of the second pack,
wherein the laminar blanks for forming the first pack are separate from the laminar blanks for forming the second pack and wherein the front wall of the lid is affixed to the bottom of a first wall of the first pack such that when the second pack is in a closed position, the front wall thereof lies against the first wall of the first pack.
2. A container according to claim 1 wherein the front wall of the lid of the second pack is affixed to the front wall of the box part of the first pack.
3. A container according to claim 2 wherein the first pack comprises a lid that closes over the second pack when the second pack is in a closed position.
4. A container according to any preceding claim wherein the first pack and the second pack are of different dimensions.
5. A container according to any preceding claim further comprising a third hinge-lid pack comprising a box part and a lid connected to the box part along a hinge line extending across a back wall of the third pack, wherein a wall of the lid of the third pack is affixed to the front wall of the second pack.