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(54) **Retail couponing system.**

(57) A couponing system by which a consumer selects one of two values (14,16), hidden from the consumer, by pulling one (26) of two zipper pulls

(26,28) which shears, destroys and renders invalid the non-selected value (14), while keeping intact the selected value (16).

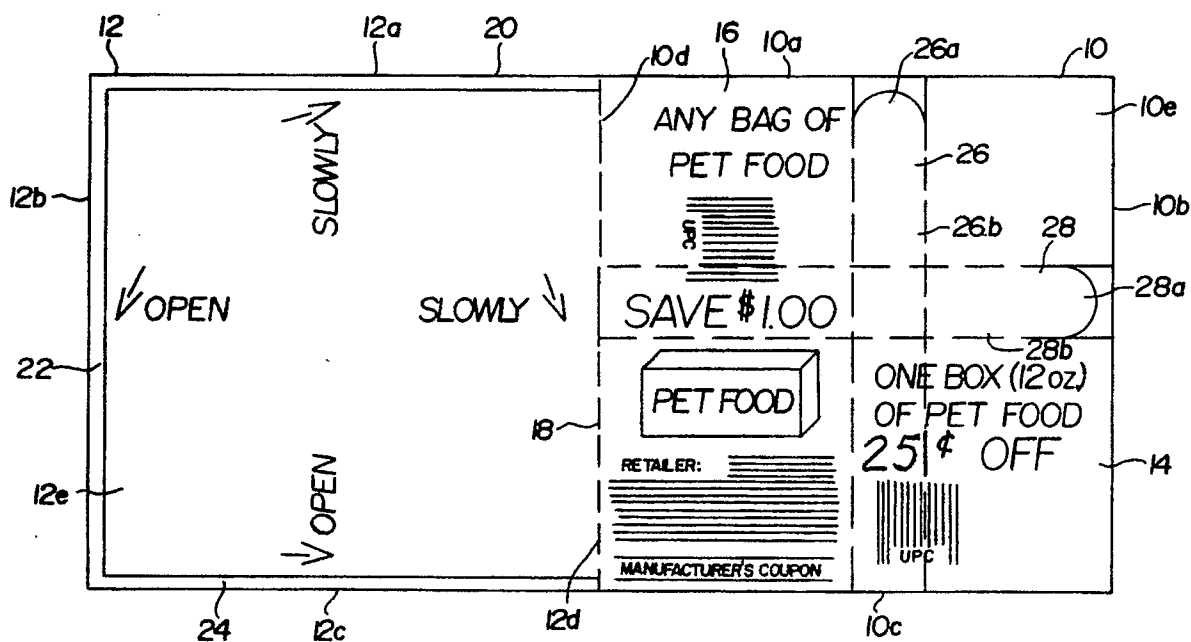


FIG. 1

EP 0 459 007 A1

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates, in general, to retail coupons and, in particular, to multiple value coupons of the so-called "option" or "self-destruct" type.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Consumer packaged goods companies are always looking for effective ways to increase the market share of their brands. The "option" or "self-destruct" retail coupon is one such technique. The consumer is encouraged to purchase more product or convert from a competitor's product. The "option" or "self-destruct" retail coupon is arranged with multiple portions whose corresponding values are concealed from the consumer until the consumer makes a selection of one of the options. When the selection is made, the selected portion remains intact and can be redeemed at the store, while the non-selected portion is destroyed and rendered invalid, thereby negating double redemption of the non-selected coupon value. A coupon is rendered invalid when it lacks the legal terms and conditions covering the consumer redemption conditions and retailer reimbursement text. The number of coupons redeemed or not redeemed provides useful information to the sponsor of the option or self-destruct coupon.

Various designs for option or self-destruct coupons have been suggested or put into actual use. Generally, they have not been adequately satisfactory in accomplishing their intended purpose. Because these devices involve the consumers about whom the information is being developed, they fall short when their application is not clearly understood by the consumers. The result can be consumer confusion and, if the coupon is not removed correctly, there can be even more confusion at the check-out counter of the store where the consumer is seeking redemption of the coupon.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A couponing system, according to the present invention, has first and second sections removably attached to each other along their edges to hide from view text on the inside surface of the first section. The first section has first and second coupons on its inside surface and means for tearing the first section along first and second lines. The first line extends through the first coupon and is displaced from the second coupon and the second line extends through the second coupon and is displaced from the first coupon.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a plan view of a first preferred embodiment of a couponing system constructed in accordance with the present invention prior to its formation into a product as it is actually used.

Figure 2 is an exploded, perspective view of a second preferred embodiment of a couponing system constructed in accordance with the present invention prior to its formation into a product as it is actually used.

Figure 3 is an exploded, perspective view of the Figure 2 couponing system but from an opposite direction.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to Figures 1, 2 and 3, a couponing system, constructed in accordance with the present invention, includes first and second sections 10 and 12, respectively, attached to each other along their edges 10a and 12a, 10b and 12b, 10c and 12c, and 10d and 12d. The attachment of sections 10 and 12 is such that text on either of the inside surfaces 10e and 12e of sections 10 and 12, respectively, which face each other are hidden from view.

Section 10 has first and second coupons 14 and 16, respectively, with the text of the coupons on inside surface 10e of section 10. For the embodiment of the invention illustrated in Figures 1, 2 and 3, each of the coupons 14 and 16 extends along an edge of section 10. In particular, section 10 is shown as being rectilinear with coupon 14 extending along edge 10c, while coupon 16, disposed perpendicular to coupon 14, extends along edge 10d which adjoins edge 10c. With this arrangement, coupons 14 and 16 have a common portion in the corner of the adjoining edges which contains the required redemption text.

Section 12 is removably attached to section 10 to permit separation of portions of section 10 from section 12. For the embodiment of the invention illustrated in Figure 1, sections 10 and 12 are attached along a perforated line 18 along which coupon 16 extends and by adhesive strips 20, 22 and 24 extending along the remaining edges of sections 10 and 12. For the embodiment of the invention illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, a fourth adhesive strip 25 is substituted for perforated line 18, so that sections 10 and 12 are removably attached by adhesive strips extending around their entire peripheries.

A couponing system, constructed in accordance with the present invention, also includes means for tearing section 10 along first and second lines, the first line extending through coupon 14 and displaced from coupon 16 and the second line extending through coupon 16 and displaced from coupon 14. For the embodiment of the invention

illustrated in Figures 1, 2 and 3, the tearing means are in the form of first and second zipper pulls 26 and 28, respectively, disposed perpendicular to each other and extending between the mid-points of opposite edges of section 10. A zipper pull is a perforated portion of a body of paper which can be separated from the body of paper along the perforations. Each of the zipper pulls 26 and 28 has a zipper pull tab end 26a and 28a, respectively, and a zipper run 26b and 28b, respectively. When pulled at their respective pull tab ends, the zipper pulls separate from section 10 along their respective runs. To facilitate tearing, the perforated lines which define zipper pulls 26 and 28 are cut along selected lengths at their points of intersection. In addition, perforated line 18, by which sections 10 and 12 are attached, is cut between the perforated lines which define zipper pull run 28b to facilitate complete removal of zipper pull 28 when it is pulled.

The couponing system of the present invention is intended to give a consumer the choice of selecting one of the coupons 14 and 16 which are contained on section 10 but which are concealed from the consumer prior to selection by the consumer. Once the selection is made, the selected coupon remains intact and can be presented for redemption, while the non-selected coupon is destroyed and rendered invalid, thereby preventing double-redemption. Thus, the selection process in using the couponing system of the present invention involves simultaneously making possible the removal of the chosen coupon, while destroying and rendering invalid the non-selected coupon.

Coupon selection is made by pulling either zipper pull 26 or zipper pull 28. The zipper pulls are so disposed, relative to coupons 14 and 16, that when zipper pull 26 is pulled, coupon 14 is torn and destroyed and rendered invalid, while coupon 16 remains intact and when zipper pull 28 is pulled, coupon 16 is torn and destroyed, while coupon 14 remains intact. When one or the other of the zipper pulls is pulled, text on inside surface 12e of section 12 is exposed and revealed to the user, instructing the user how to remove the selected coupon. This is done by gently pulling the selected coupon away from section 12. Text which instructs the user on how to remove the selected coupon need not be presented on the inside surface of section 12 but instead can be presented on the exposed, outside surface of section 10 along with instructions on which zipper pull is associated with each coupon.

For the embodiment of the invention illustrated in Figure 1, when coupon 14 is chosen, the adhesive bond along edges 10b and 12b and the adhesive bond along edges 10c and 12c are broken and perforated line 18 is torn along one half its length

and when coupon 16 is chosen, the adhesive bond along edges 10a and 12a and the adhesive bond along edges 10c and 12c are broken and perforated line 18 is torn along its entire length. For the embodiment of the invention illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, the adhesive bond along the strip substituted for perforated line 18 is broken, along with the other adhesive bonds, as the chosen coupon is separated from section 12. The nature of the adhesive selected for the couponing system is such that it serves as a bond in attaching sections 10 and 12 together and withstands the tendency of sections 10 and 12 to separate as one of the zipper pulls is pulled, but the adhesive bond is easily broken as a selected portion of section 10 is gently pulled away from section 12. Any of a variety of fugitive adhesives may be used as the adhesive.

Although the preferred embodiments of the invention have been illustrated as having square shapes, other configurations, such as a rectangle, can be employed.

While in the foregoing there have been described preferred embodiments of the present invention, it should be obvious to those skilled in the art that various modifications and changes can be made without departing from the true spirit and scope of the invention.

Claims

1. A couponing system having first and second sections removably attached to each other along their edges to hide from view text on the inside surface of said first section, said first section having first and second coupons with text of said coupons on the inside surface of said first section and means for tearing said first section along first and second lines, said first line extending through said first coupon and displaced from said second coupon and said second line extending through said second coupon and displaced from said first coupon.
2. A couponing system according to claim 1 wherein each of said first and said second coupons extends along an edge of said first section and said first line terminates at the edge of said first section along which said first coupon extends and said second line terminates at the edge of said first section along which said second coupon extends.
3. A couponing system according to claim 2 wherein said first and said second coupons extend perpendicular to each other and said first and said second lines extend perpendicular to each other.

4. A couponing system according to claim 2 wherein said first and said second sections are rectilinear.
5. A couponing system according to claim 4 wherein:
 - (a) said first and said second sections are identical squares,
 - (b) said first and said second coupons extend perpendicular to each other along adjoining edges of said first section, and
 - (c) said first and said second lines extend perpendicular to each other between the mid-points of opposite edges of said first section.
6. A couponing system according to claim 5 wherein said tearing means include a first zipper pull extending along said first line and a second zipper pull extending along said second line.
7. A couponing system according to claim 6 wherein the perforated lines which define said first and said second zipper pulls are cut along selected lengths at their points of intersection.
8. A couponing system according to claim 6 wherein said first and said second sections are attached to each other by a perforated line along which one of said coupons extend and by adhesive strips extending along the remaining three edges of each of said first and said second sections.
9. A couponing system according to claim 8 wherein said perforated line by which said first and said second sections are attached is cut between said perforated lines defining that zipper pull terminating at said perforated line by which said first and said second sections are attached.
10. A couponing system according to claim 6 wherein said first and said second sections are attached to each other by adhesive strips extending along the four edges of each of said first and said second sections.
11. A couponing system according to claim 8 wherein said second section contains text on its inside surface facing said inside surface of said first section which is revealed to a user when either of said zipper pulls is pulled to expose said text.
12. A couponing system according to claim 10 wherein said second section contains text on its inside surface facing said inside surface of said first section which is revealed to a user when either of said zipper pulls is pulled to expose said text.
13. A couponing system comprising:
 - a first section having:
 - (a) first and second coupons, and
 - (b) first and second zipper pulls extending through said first and second coupons, respectively, and so disposed that when:
 - (i) said first zipper pull is pulled through said first coupon, said first coupon is torn, destroyed and rendered invalid and said second coupon remains intact, and
 - (ii) said second zipper pull is pulled through said second coupon, said second coupon is torn, destroyed and rendered invalid and said first coupon remains intact;
 - and a second section overlying said first section to cover the text of said first and said second coupons and removably attached to said first section to permit separation of portions of said first section from said second section after one of said first and said second zipper pulls has been pulled through its associated coupon.
14. A couponing system according to claim 13 wherein each of said first and said second coupon extends along an edge of said first section and each of said first and said second zipper pulls terminates at the edge of said first section along which its associated coupon extends.
15. A couponing system according to claim 13 wherein said first and said second coupons extend perpendicular to each other and said first and said second zipper pulls extend perpendicular to each other.
16. A couponing system according to claim 14 wherein said first and said sections are rectilinear.
17. A couponing system according to claim 15 wherein:
 - (a) said first and said second sections are identical squares,
 - (b) said first and said second coupons extend perpendicular to each other along adjoining edges of said first section, and
 - (c) said first and said second zipper pulls extend perpendicular to each other between

the mid-points of opposite edges of said first section.

18. A couponing system according to claim 17 wherein the perforated lines which define said first and said second zipper pulls are cut along selected lengths at their points of intersection. 5
19. A couponing system according to claim 18 wherein said second section is attached to said first section by a perforated line along which one of said coupons extend and by adhesive strips extending along the remaining three edges of each of said first and said second sections. 10 15
20. A couponing system according to claim 18 wherein said perforated line by which said first and said second sections are attached is cut between said perforated lines defining that zipper pull terminating at said perforated line by which said first and said second sections are attached. 20
21. A couponing system according to claim 18 wherein said first and said second sections are attached to each other by adhesive strips extending along the four edges of each of said first and said second sections. 25 30
22. A couponing system according to claim 19 wherein said second section contains text revealed to a user when either of said zipper pulls is pulled to expose said text. 35
23. A couponing system according to claim 21 wherein said second section contains text revealed to a user when either of said zipper pulls is pulled to expose said text. 40

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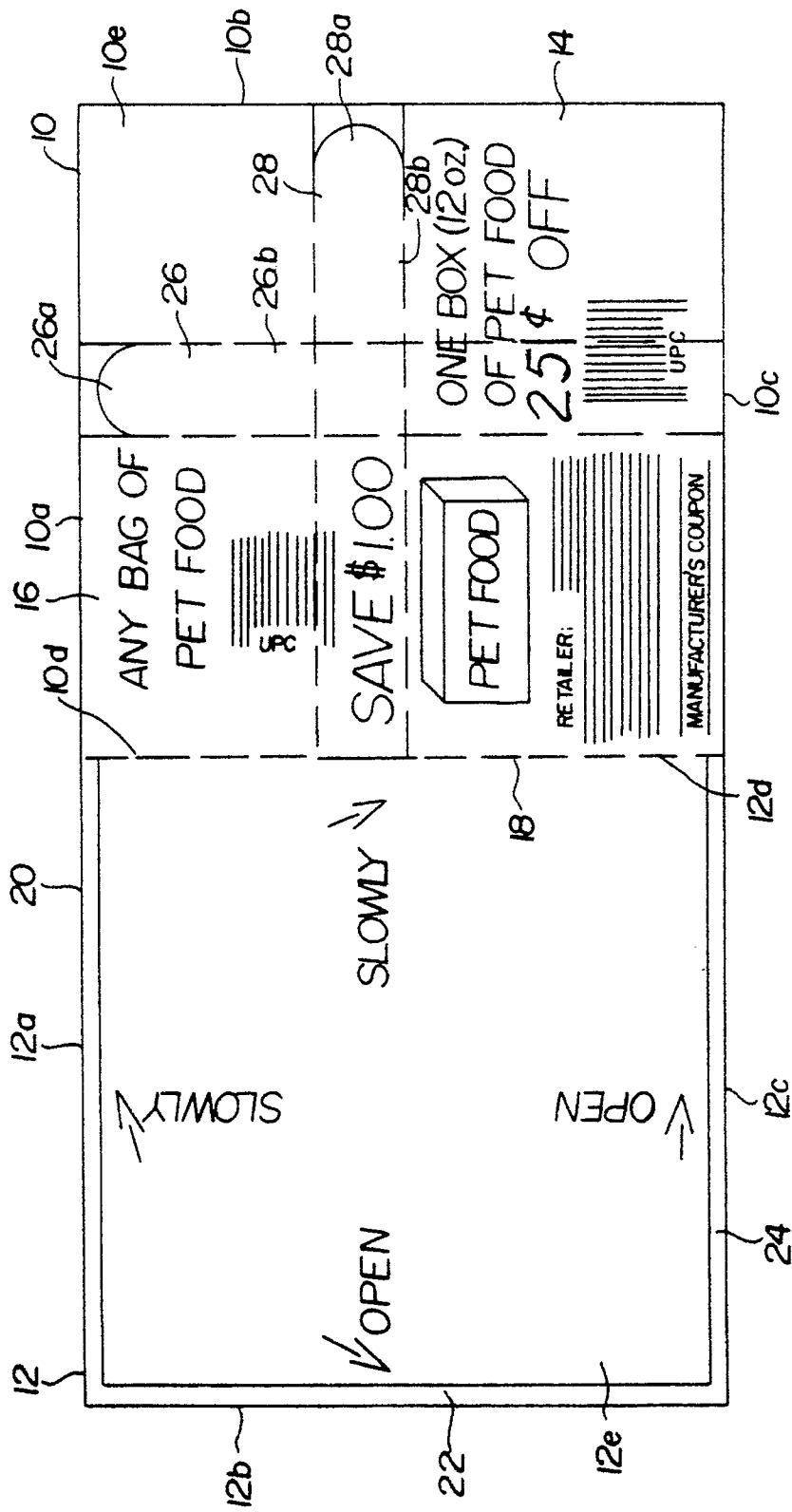


FIG. 1

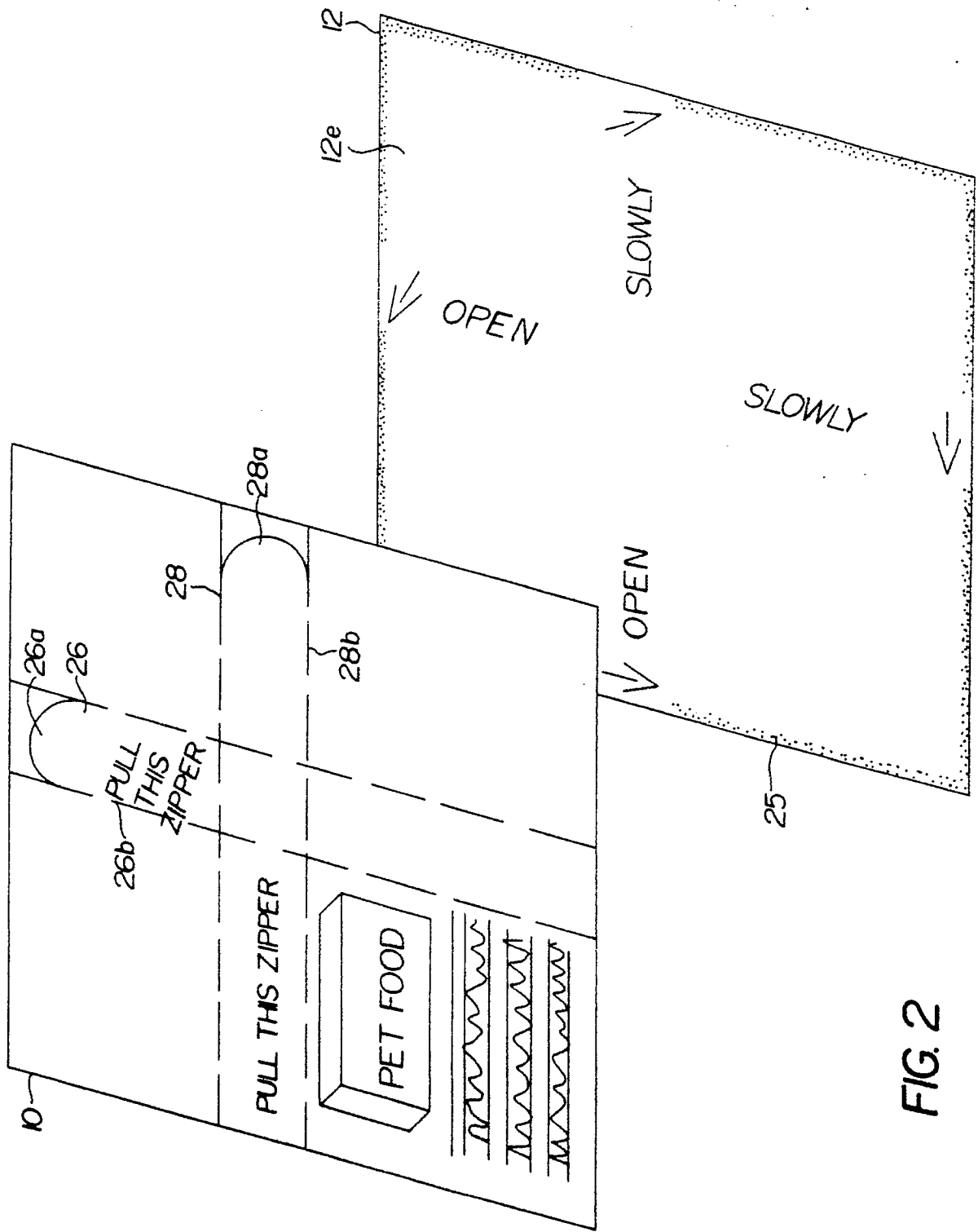


FIG. 2

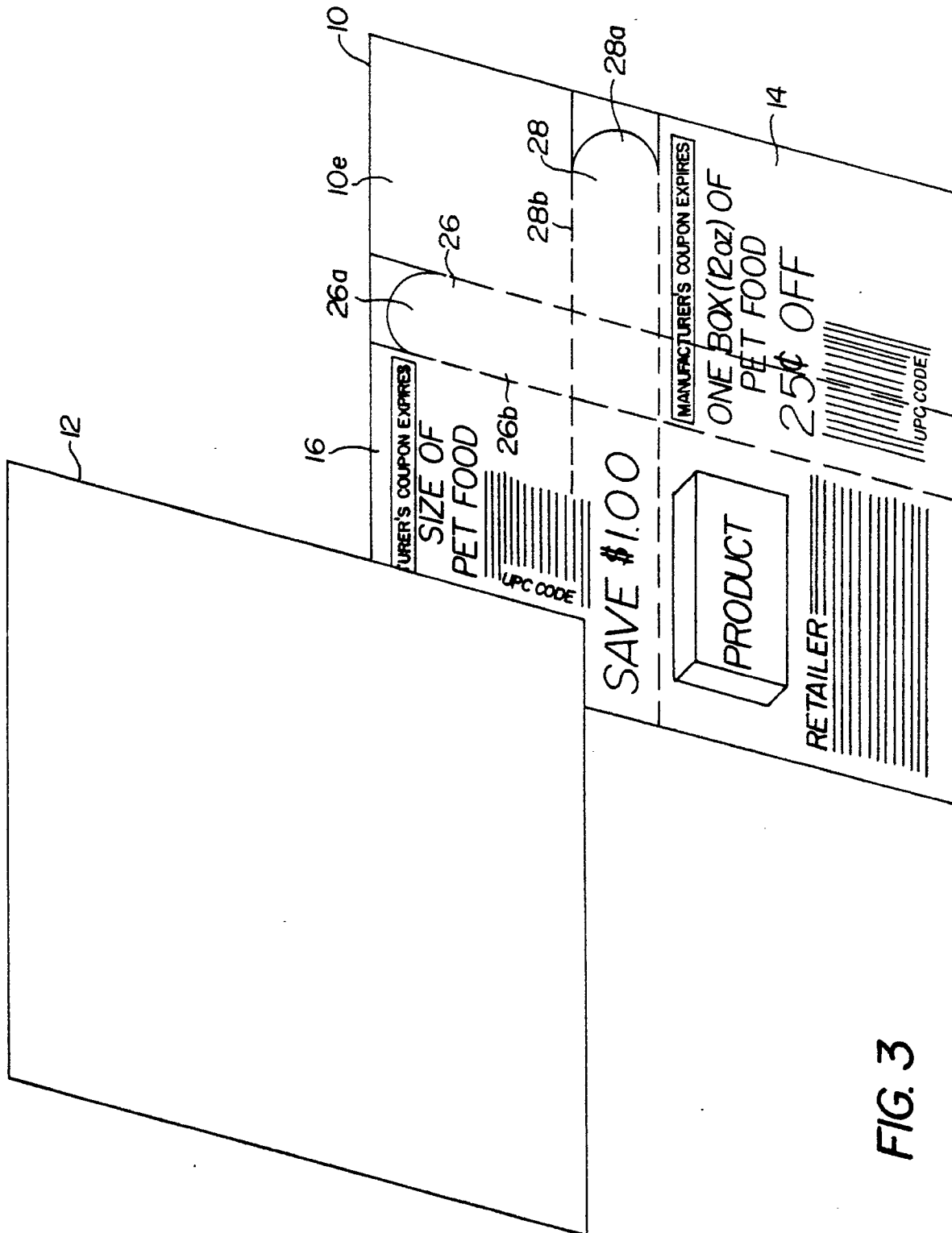


FIG. 3



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 90 11 5174

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.5)
Y,A	WO-A-8 902 636 (LEE KROST) * the whole document *	1,2,4,13, 3,5-12, 15-23	G 09 F 3/02 A 63 F 3/06
Y,A	US-A-4 318 235 (AUGERI) * column 1, line 40 - line 59; figure 2 *	1,2,4,13, 3,5-12, 15-23	
A	GB-A-1 302 438 (TICKET SEAL) * page 1, line 28 - line 69; figure 1 *	1-23	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.5)
			G 09 F B 65 B A 63 F
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search	Date of completion of search	Examiner	
The Hague	30 August 91	POTTIEZ M.G.	
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
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