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(54) Triangular plan sale unit for shops

(57) A sale unit for shops includes a footboard (P) having the shape of an equilateral triangle with truncated vertices, where three functional elements (E, E') are arranged, and along the sides of the footboard (P) there are arranged three counters (B) whose plan has the shape of an isosceles trapezium, with the longer base on the outside and convex, which are arranged in a symmetrical position with respect to the functional elements (E, E'). The lengths of the inner and outer sides of said counters (B) are such as to leave between each counter (B) and the functional elements adjacent thereto a pair of passages (S) suitable to allow a smooth entrance and exit of the operators. In this way a plurality of operators can freely move within the sale unit to travel among the counters (B) and the functional elements (E, E'), it is possible to canalize the customer flow around the central unit, there is a 360° control of the retail environment by the operators, and the overall length of the outer sides of the counters (B) allows a direct simultaneous access to a great number of customers.

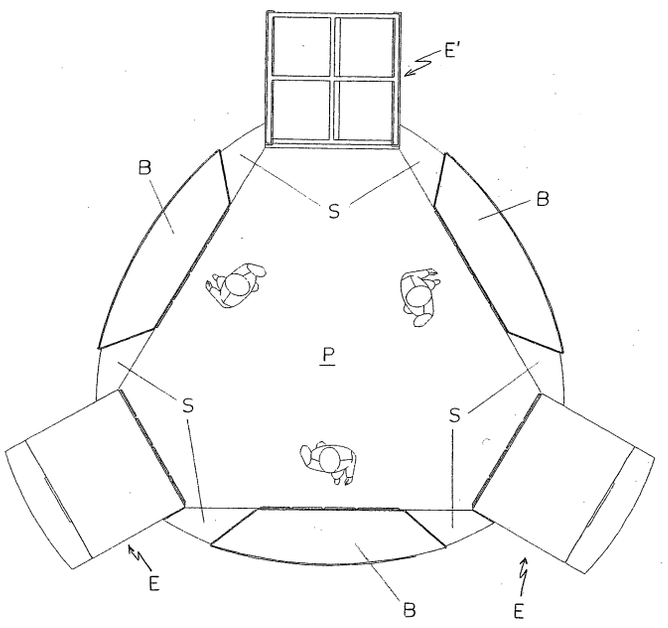

Fig.1

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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to sale units for shops and the like, and in particular to a central unit with a substantially triangular plan. Specific reference will be made hereafter to a sale unit for pharmacies, yet it is clear that what is being said can be applied *mutatis mutandis* to other retail shops such as clothing shops, perfumery shops, horology shops, optician's/photography shops and so on.

[0002] In conventional pharmacies the only element that can promptly be recognized by a customer entering the shop is the pharmacist's counter, usually located at the bottom of the shop or along a side thereof. The rest of the room is occupied by displays on which the products are divided into commodity categories that are not promptly recognizable, and sometimes are difficult to see and/or access.

[0003] This situation creates a general effect of disorientation on the customer, that results in a longer time to find the product he/she needs and/or in a request to the pharmacist for help in finding the desired product. As a consequence, the customer takes more time to obtain what he/she needs, and the pharmacist can serve fewer customers since his/her "active time" for sale and promotion of the products is limited by the dispersion and distance of the products arranged in the shop.

[0004] Another drawback of this known structure is that not all areas of the shop can be directly observed by the pharmacist, thus resulting in an increased risk of shoplifting. Moreover, in case of a great flow of customers the conventional counter offers a limited room for contact with the sale operators, especially when also the counter top is partially used as display space.

[0005] Furthermore, in the case of long lateral counters with a narrow aisle behind for the passage of the sale operators (pharmacist(s), assistant(s), etc.), the opening of the drawers to access the products stored in the wall-high chests of drawers makes difficult when not impossible the passage of the other operators. This means that each operator may hinder another operator with a further increase in customer serving time.

[0006] Therefore the object of the present invention is to provide a sale unit which overcomes the above-mentioned drawbacks.

[0007] This object is achieved by means of a sale unit that consists of a triangular footboard, three functional elements arranged at the vertices of the footboard and three counters arranged along the sides of the footboard, two passages remaining between each counter and the functional elements adjacent thereto. Other advantageous features are disclosed in the dependent claims.

[0008] The main advantage of this sale unit is that of having a central integrated structure that allows to organize and arrange the space in such a way as to make the operators' work simpler and more efficient. This results is several advantages:

a) 360° control of the retail shop with reduced risk of shoplifting;
b) increase in the room for contact between customers and operators;
c) easy operator/customer interaction thanks to the plurality of passages to enter and exit the sale unit and to the nearness of the products on display;
d) easy movement of the operators within the sale unit without being hindered by the opening of the drawers;
e) possibility of smoothly canalizing the flow of customers towards the areas they are specifically interested into;
f) decrease in customer's waiting time with greater commercial turnout;
g) flexibility and adaptability of the sale unit according to the specific needs of the shop while retaining all of the above-mentioned advantages.

[0009] These and other advantages and characteristics of the sale unit according to the present invention will be clear to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description of an embodiment thereof, with reference to the annexed drawings wherein:

Fig.1 is a diagrammatic plan view showing the elements that make up the sale unit;
Figs.2 and 3 are diagrammatic plan views showing some of the advantages obtained by employing the sale unit;
Figs.4 and 5 are diagrammatic perspective views showing two examples of functional elements suitable for a pharmacy sale unit; and
Fig.6 is a diagrammatic plan view of a detail of a preferred embodiment of the above sale unit.

[0010] With reference to fig.1, there is seen that the preferred embodiment of the present sale unit includes a footboard P having the shape of an equilateral triangle with truncated vertices, where three functional elements E, E' of two different types are arranged, as better illustrated further on.

[0011] Along the sides of footboard P there are arranged three counters B whose plan has the shape of an isosceles trapezium, with the longer base on the outside and convex, which are arranged in a symmetrical position with respect to the functional elements E, E'. The lengths of the inner and outer sides of said counters are such as to leave between each counter B and the functional elements adjacent thereto a pair of passages S suitable to allow a smooth entrance and exit of the operators.

[0012] As clearly shown in this figure, a plurality of operators can freely move within the sale unit to travel among counters B and functional elements E, E'. Typically, there are provided two operators for each counter B so that even when an operators exits the sale unit to assist a customer the counter remains manned, yet it is

clear that the number of operators can change according to the size of the sale unit and to operational needs.

[0013] Figures 2 and 3 make evident the capabilities of canalization of the customer flow around the central unit, without risks of jamming at any point, and of 360° control of the retail environment by the operators. Furthermore, it is clear that the overall length of the outer sides of counters B allows a direct simultaneous access to a great number of customers, while still leaving room on counters B to place counter displays thereon.

[0014] Referring now also to figs.4-6, there are illustrated some particularly advantageous solutions to apply the above-described sale unit to a pharmacy.

[0015] A first type of functional element E (fig.4) consists of a pharmacy chest of drawers arranged with the drawers C facing on the inside of the sale unit, while on the rear of the chest of drawers there are secured a plurality of shelves R to display the products. The sides F of the chest of drawers can be used for the bill-posting of informative and/or commercial messages that can easily be seen by the customer standing at counter B, so as to promptly direct him/her towards the required product without the need to ask the operator for directions.

[0016] A second type of functional element E' (fig.5) consists of a cabin provided with access doors A (e.g. sliding doors) both on a side inside the sale unit and on the outside. In this way, the cabin provides the required privacy for a meeting between operator and customer when the latter asks for a service such as measuring the blood pressure, or a consultation or the like. Screens D can be placed on the sides of the cabin to transmit informative and/or entertainment messages, and are another source of information to the customer. It is obvious that bills as those on the chests of drawers could be there instead of screens D or together therewith, and vice versa that screens D could be placed also on the chests of drawers.

[0017] The detail of fig.6 illustrates how the particularly clever arrangement of the chests of drawers with respect to the counters and the shape of the latter allows to maintain passage S free even when drawers C are fully extracted. Moreover, the position of maximum extension of drawers C roughly corresponds to the inner vertex of counter B, so that the drawers are not even an obstacle on the path between counter B and the other elements of the sale unit.

[0018] It should also be noted that each counter B typically includes a cash register and a plurality of drawers C', and the top thereof can be made transparent to obtain a display window.

[0019] For the passage of all wires and cables required to supply the cash registers, screens D and other devices of the sale unit it is preferable that the central footboard P is raised 10 cm from the ground so as to act as a container for said wiring. As a consequence, passages P may have ramps to prevent having a step between footboard P and the floor.

[0020] Another possibility not illustrated in the figures is that of providing a fourth functional element located in the center of footboard P, typically to carry out particular functions for which the operators share this central element. For example, said element could be an end station of a pneumatic system to transfer cash from the cash registers to a safer remote location, or an elevator to receive goods from a depot under the retail shop and so on.

[0021] Obviously, the central element could also be a further display or container, or simply a support structure for the bill-posting of commercial advertising, of the shop's logo or the like. Similarly, for the three elements at the vertices there are several other possible solutions different from the above-described elements E, E', depending on the kind of shop. For example, in a clothing shop there could be three fitting cabins provided with mirrors, in a pharmacy with night service there could be a safety window in communication with the outside of the shop and so on.

[0022] Therefore, it is clear that the above-described and illustrated embodiment of the sale unit according to the invention is just an example susceptible of various modifications. In particular, the triangular shape of footboard P may also not be equilateral, counters B may have a plan shape different from the preferred shape illustrated above and/or a position that is not symmetric with respect to the functional elements, and the latter may be of any type.

Claims

1. Sale unit for shops **characterized in that** it consists of a triangular footboard (P) with truncated vertices, three functional elements (E, E') arranged at the vertices of said footboard (P) and three counters (B) arranged along the sides of the footboard (P), said counters (B) being sized so as to leave two passages (S) between each of them and said functional elements (E, E') adjacent thereto.

2. Sale unit according to claim 1, **characterized in that** the footboard (P) has the shape of an equilateral triangle.

3. Sale unit according to claim 1 or 2, **characterized in that** the counters (B) are arranged in a symmetrical position with respect to the functional elements (E, E') adjacent thereto.

4. Sale unit according to one or more of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the counters (B) have the shape of an isosceles trapezium, with the longer base on the outside and convex.

5. Sale unit according to one or more of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the central footboard

(P) is raised from the ground so as to act as a container for wiring.

6. Sale unit according to claim 5, **characterized in that** at the passages (S) there are provided ramps connecting the raised footboard (P) to the floor.

7. Sale unit according to one or more of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** at least one functional element (E) consists of a pharmacy chest of drawers arranged with the drawers (C) facing on the inside of the sale unit and with a plurality of shelves (R) secured on the rear.

8. Sale unit according to claim 7, **characterized in that** the position of maximum extension of the drawers (C) roughly corresponds to the inner vertex of the adjacent counters (B).

9. Sale unit according to one or more of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** at least one functional element (E') consists of a cabin provided with access doors (A) both on a side inside the sale unit and on the outside.

10. Sale unit according to one or more of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** it further includes screens (D) located on the sides of one or more of the functional elements (E, E').

11. Sale unit according to one or more of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** it further includes a fourth functional element located at the center of the footboard (P).

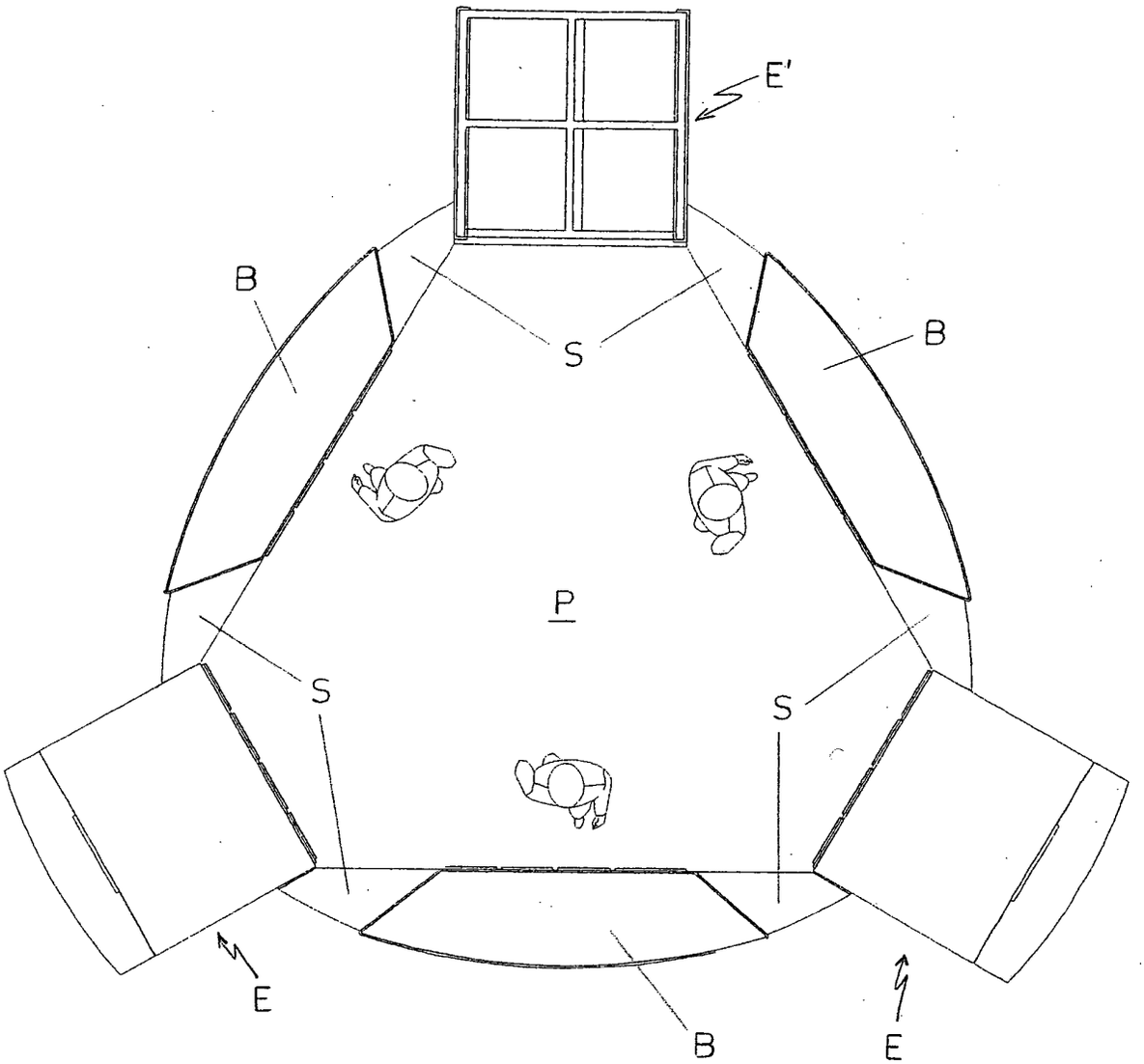


Fig.1

Fig.2

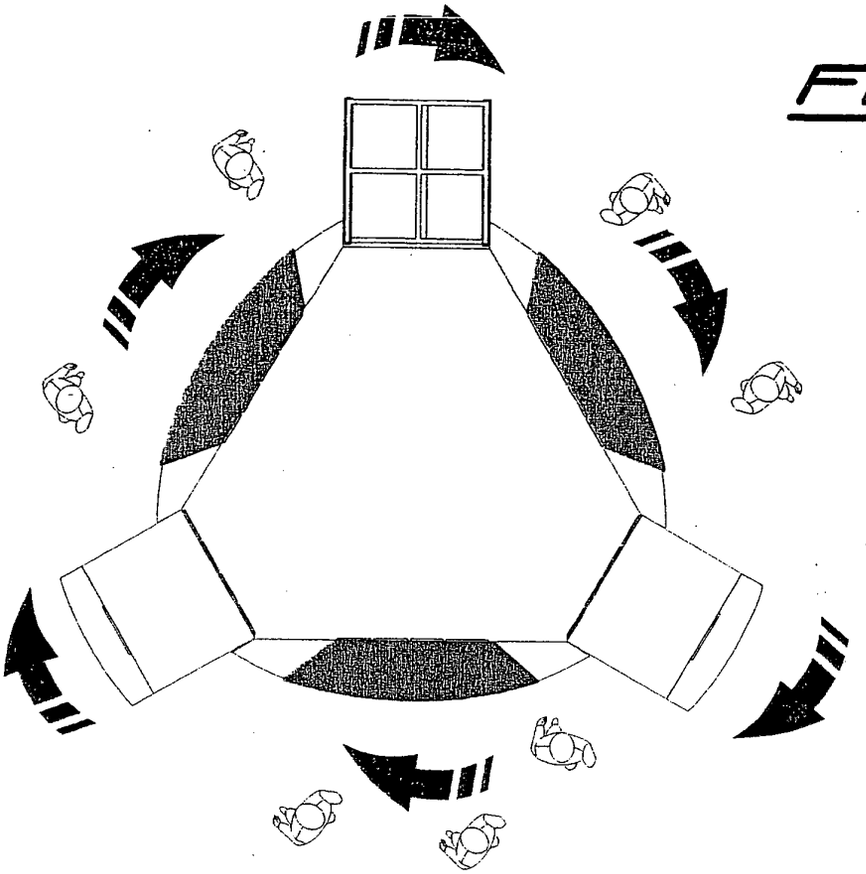
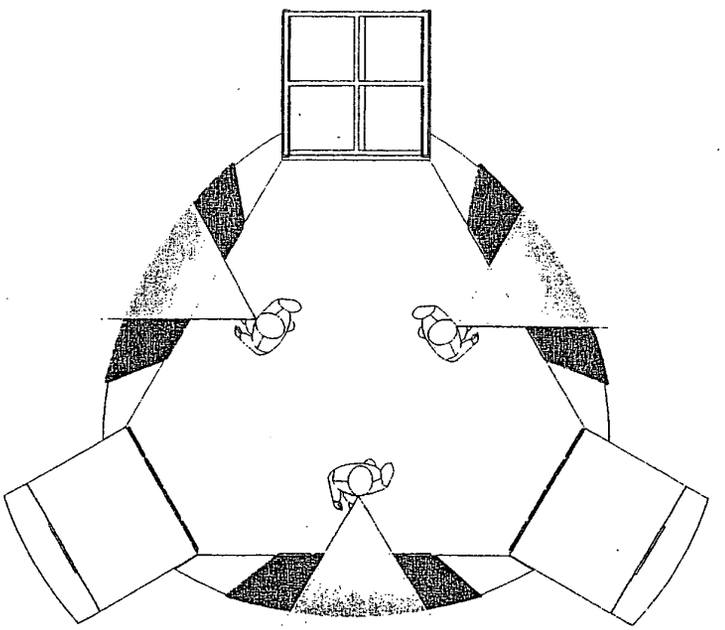


Fig.3



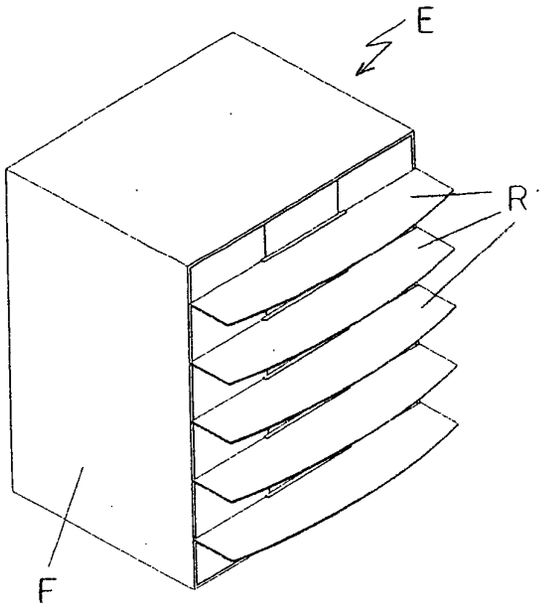


Fig.4

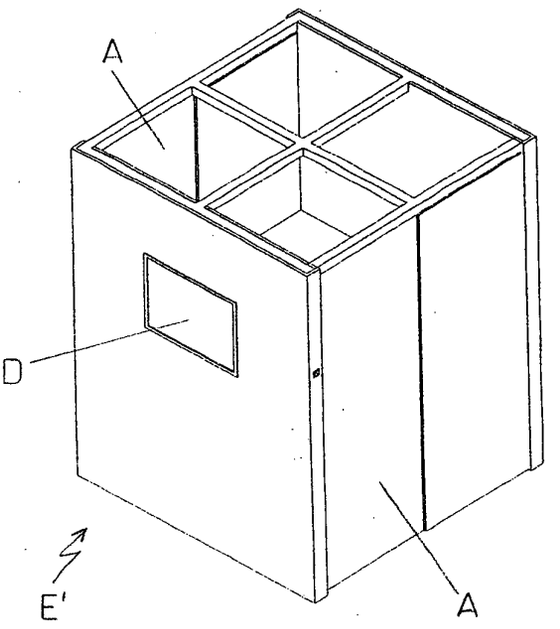
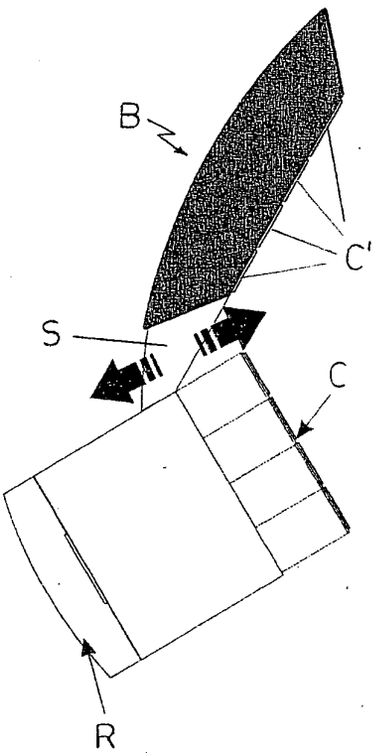


Fig.5

Fig.6



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 04 42 5885

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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims

Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner
Munich	25 February 2005	Stefanescu, R

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