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(54) **A cabinet for tobacconists' and similar retail shops.**

(57) A cabinet for tobacconists' and similar retail shops comprises a frame (10) with two side walls (14, 16) and several superposed, parallel shelves (24, 26, 28) extending between the side walls and intended to carry rows of boxes or packets. The shelves consist in respective flat boards each having a front parapet (28) extending upward from its front edge, and the front of each shelf (24, 26, 28) is staggered back with respect to the front of the immediately underlying shelf by at least the thickness of one box or packet, so that the first box or packet in each row will project and be easy to grasp.

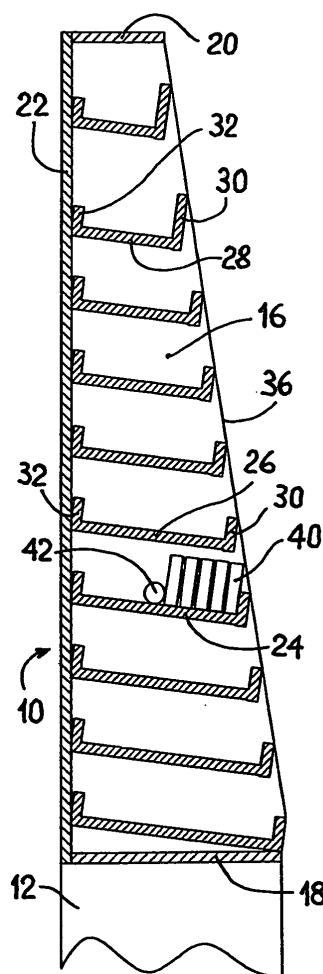


Fig. 2

Description

[0001] This invention is concerned with a cabinet for holding standardized consumer products such as packets of cigarettes, boxes of cigars and cheroots, tins of candies, etc., particularly for tobacconists' and similar retail shops.

[0002] Many products that are on sale in retail shops such as tobacconists' and other shops are packaged in generally block-shaped boxes and packets, mostly having a thickness of 2 to 3 cm. The products, such as packets of cigarettes and the like, are standardized, and are of numerous brands and varieties, each of which should be quickly retrieved by the shopkeeper when requested by a customer, and quickly delivered to him.

[0003] For the purpose of facilitating such operations, tobacconists' shops and other retail shops are mostly equipped with open cabinets having a number of stacked shelves. Each shelf has a low parapet at its front, and the boxes rest on the shelf in several close-packed rows or lines extending at right angles to the parapet and arranged side by side, so that the parapet prevents the first box in the row from accidentally dropping over the edge of the shelf, while allowing the labeling of the product to remain visible. In certain cases, the shelves are sloped downwardly toward the open front of the cabinet, and a heavy roller lies on the shelf behind each row of boxes. As each box is lifted from the front of the row, the roller will roll down by gravity and shove the row forward against the parapet. As an alternative to gravity rollers, spring-biased bumper means are sometimes used, and in this case the shelves may be horizontal.

[0004] In order to extract a box from a conventional cabinet as described above, a user will insert one or two fingers above the row of boxes and hook the desired front box, and then lift the box obliquely upward and then over the parapet. This maneuver implies that there must be a considerable free space above the products on each shelf, and the shelves therefore need to be well spaced in height. In consequence of this wide spacing, the overall volume of the cabinet is in fact empty to a large extent, and this puts a limitation on the variety of products that can be made available in the cabinet.

[0005] It is now a main object of the invention to improve conventional cabinets of the kind disclosed above, in order to achieve a better utilization of the cabinet volume, while maintaining the same visibility and accessibility of the stored products as in cabinets of the prior art.

[0006] Another object is to provide such a cabinet at a manufacturing cost that is equal or lower than the typical cost of an equivalent prior art cabinet.

[0007] The invention achieves the above and other objects, such as will become apparent by reading the following description, by providing a cabinet having the new features recited in claim 1. Other advantageous features are set forth in the dependent claims.

[0008] The invention is described in more detail with reference to a preferred embodiment shown in the at-

tached drawings, wherein:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a cabinet according to a preferred embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 2 is a view in vertical, transverse cross-section of the cabinet of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a perspective view from behind, to an enlarged scale, of a shelf belonging to the cabinet of Figs. 1 and 2.

[0009] With reference to Figs. 1 and 2, a cabinet according to a preferred embodiment of the invention comprises a frame 10 rising from a base 12 and comprising two parallel, vertical side walls 14, 16, which are joined together at their ends by horizontal crosspieces 18 and 20, an at the back by a vertical backboard 22. Shelves such as 24, 26, 28 extend between side walls 14, 16. The shelves have respective front parapets such as 28 and back parapets such as 30, and are supported on pegs or other conventional brackets attached to the inside faces of the side walls, not shown for simplicity.

[0010] According to the invention, the front edges 34, 36 of side walls 14, 16 are backwardly inclined from the vertical, preferably at an angle of 8° to 10°, so that the side walls have identical tapered shapes, generally trapezoidal. The parapet of each shelf is substantially aligned with the front edges 34, 36 of the side walls at its respective height and, in consequence of the tapered side walls, each parapet is staggered back by a few centimeters with respect to the underlying shelf, as can be seen on Fig. 2. Obviously, the shelves also are progressively shorter starting from the lowest shelf towards the top of the cabinet.

[0011] Each shelf is intended to carry several rows of boxes 40 extending side by side at right angles from the front parapet toward the back of the shelf, as shown on Figs. 1 and 2. The rows will normally fill the entire width of a shelf. The lower portion of the first box in each row will be hidden by the front parapet, but its upper portion and its labeling will be visible to a person standing in front of the cabinet. Because of the staggered arrangement of the shelves, the first box in each row will project beyond the edge of the overlying shelf, and therefore will be readily accessible for grasping by approaching the top of the box from above and the pulling the box obliquely out, without having to insert one's fingertips into the gap between two superposed shelves and without interfering with the shelf above. Consequently, no free maneuvering room is required above the row of boxes, and the shelves can therefore be arranged more close-packed. The overall inner space of the cabinet can therefore be used more fully, since a larger variety of products can be stored in the cabinet.

[0012] The shelves are preferably arranged with a slight slope, as shown in Figs. 1 and 2, and a roller of iron or lead such as 42 is placed behind each row of

boxes (only visible in Fig. 2). The roller will roll under gravity and will continuously shove the row forward to abut against the parapet, while the first box is pulled out. Alternatively, the shelves may be horizontal, and in that case each row may be pushed by a spring-biased bumper, as obvious for a person skilled in the art (not shown).

[0013] The majority of the shelves, such as 24, 26, have parapets of equal height and are equally spaced in the vertical direction, consistently with the fact that many products have more or less uniform sizes, such as packets of cigarettes. However, some of the shelves may have taller parapets and be more widely spaced in height, in order to display bigger boxes, such as boxes of cigars. This is shown on Figs. 1 and 2 for the two top shelves in the cabinet. Generally speaking, the spacing of the shelves and the geometry of their parapets are not limited, and only depend on the types and sizes of the products that are expected to be carried.

[0014] According to another advantageous feature of the invention, the shelves are provided with dividing means having the task of maintaining the rows of products separate and aligned (not shown on Fig. 2). A preferred arrangement is shown on Fig. 3, which represents shelf 24 as viewed in perspective from behind. In Fig. 3, the dividing means comprise rods 50, for instance aluminum rods, each having one end received in a respective dead hole 52 made in the inside face of front parapet 30 of the shelf, and the opposite end received in a respective open slot 54 cut in the back parapet 32. It will be appreciated that the dividing rods as well as the holes and slots into which the rods engage can be easily and cheaply manufactured by means of elementary operations with very simple tools.

[0015] Alternatively to the embodiment shown in Fig. 3, the back parapets of the shelves could be dispensed with, and in that case the back ends of rods 50, instead of being held in positioning slots 54, would be received in holes made in backboard 22 (not shown).

[0016] Persons skilled in the art will appreciate from the above disclosure that, due to the staggered arrangement of the shelves, the cabinet according to the invention can accommodate a much larger number of boxed products, for a given front surface, while maintaining ease and quickness in picking out each product. It should also be evident that this object is achieved without increasing the cost of manufacture; on the contrary, by using dividing means consisting of simple straight rods, the cost of manufacture is reduced.

[0017] While a few preferred embodiments of the invention have been described, they should not to be construed as a limitation to the invention, the definition of its scope being defined only by the claims.

Claims

1. A cabinet for tobacconists' and similar retail shops, comprising a frame (10) with two side walls (14, 16)

and a plurality of superposed, parallel shelves (24, 26, 28) extending between the side walls, wherein the shelves consist in respective flat boards each having a front parapet (28) extending upward from its front edge, **characterized in that** the front of each shelf (24, 26, 28) is staggered back with respect to the front of the immediately underlying shelf by a predetermined length, whereby, when one or more rows of boxes or packets are laid side by side on any of the shelves, the first box or packet in each row will project with respect to the overlying shelf.

2. The cabinet of claim 1, **characterized in that** the front edges (34, 36) of the side walls (14, 16) are inclined backwardly, and the front of each shelf (24, 26, 28) is aligned with the front edges of both side walls at its respective height.
3. The cabinet of claim 2, **characterized in that** the inclination of said front edges (34, 36) of the side walls from the vertical is 8° to 10°.
4. The cabinet of any of claims 1 to 3, **characterized in that** the shelves (24, 26, 28) are sloped downwardly toward the front of the cabinet.
5. The cabinet of any of claims 1 to 4, **characterized in that** each shelf (24, 26, 28) is provided with a plurality of dividing means (50) for separating respective rows of boxes or packets lying side by side.
6. The cabinet of claim 5, **characterized in that** said plurality of dividing means (50) comprise parallel rods (50) respectively extending at right angles from the front parapet (30) of the shelf.
7. The cabinet of claim 6, **characterized in that** each of said rods (50) has one end received in a respective seat (52) in the front parapet and the opposite end received a corresponding seat (54) in the cabinet's backboard (22).
8. The cabinet of claim 6, **characterized in that** each shelf (24, 26, 28) has a back parapet (32) and each of said rods (50) has one end received in a respective seat (52) in the front parapet and the opposite end received a corresponding seat (54) in the back parapet (32).
9. The cabinet of claim 8, **characterized in that** said seats (52) in the front parapet are respective dead holes and said seats (54) in the back parapet are respective open slots in the upper edge of the back parapet.

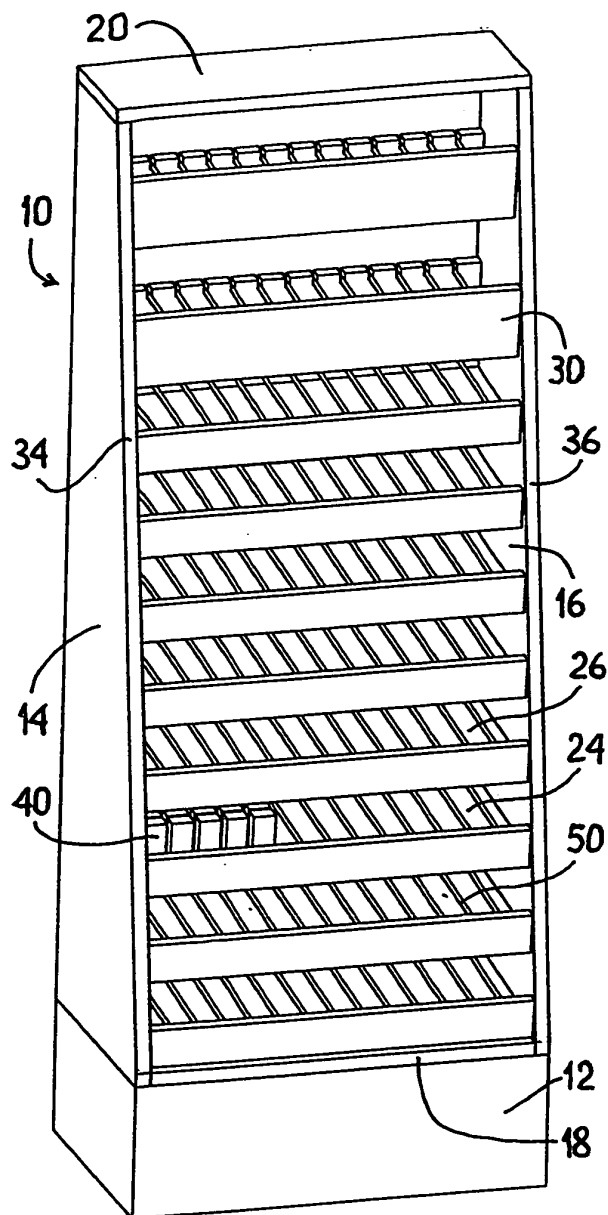


Fig. 1

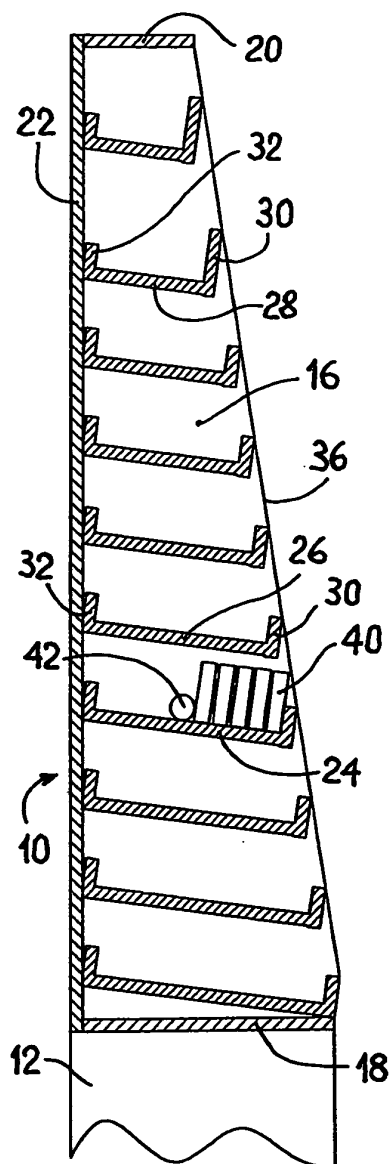


Fig. 2

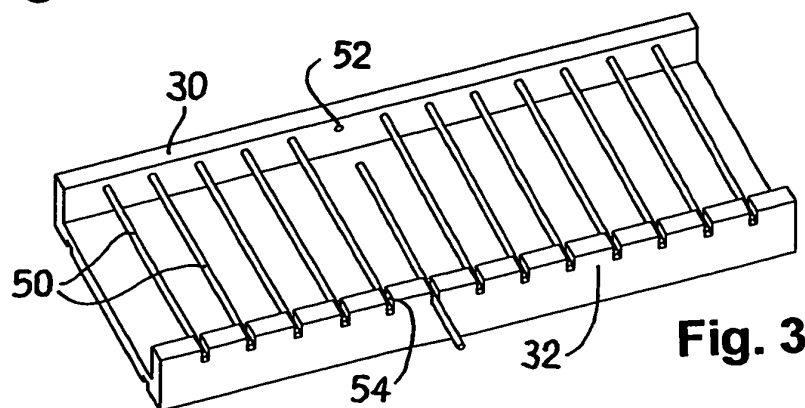


Fig. 3