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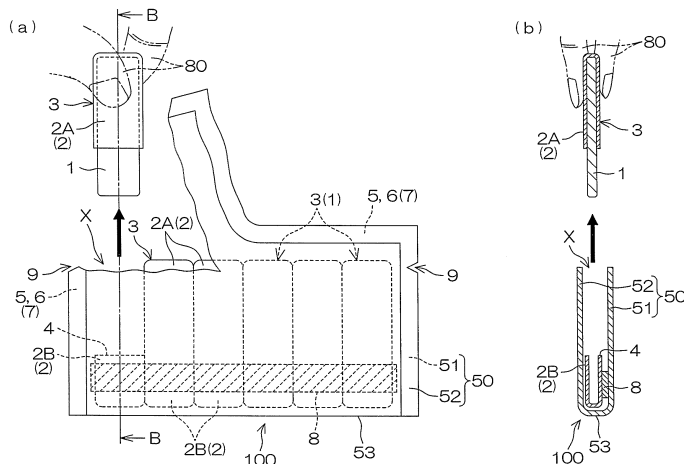
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(54) **PACKAGING CONTAINER AND PACKAGING METHOD FOR FOOD**

(57) A food packaging container and a packaging method are provided which ensure convenient use of the container when and after an outer bag is opened. An individual wrapping sheet (2) for individually wrapping a chewing gum piece (1) is dividable into a separation portion (2A) and a fixing portion (2B) longitudinally of the chewing gum piece (1). A plurality of individually wrapped chewing gum pieces (1) (food units (3)) are aligned side by side on a rear outer packaging material (51), and a front outer packaging material (52) is folded along one edge (53) of the rear outer packaging material (51) to cover upper surfaces of the food units (3). The

rear outer packaging material (51) and the front outer packaging material (52) are combined with each other with their peripheral edge portions sealed with a seal portion (7). A packaging container (100) (outer bag) is completed with the rear outer packaging material (51) and the front outer packaging material (52) thus combined, whereby the food units (3) are sealingly enclosed in the packaging container (100). The fixing portions (2B) of the individual wrapping sheets (2) of the respective food units (3) are fixed to at least one of the rear outer packaging material (51) and the front outer packaging material (52) via an adhesive member (8).

FIG. 5



Description

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates to a packaging container for containing food, and a food packaging method.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002] There is known a packaging configuration such that confectionery pieces or the like individually wrapped in small bags are contained in an outer bag (see, for example, PLT 1).

CITATION LIST

PATENT LITERATURE

[0003] PLT 1: JP-SHO57(1982)-131454-U1

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

TECHNICAL PROBLEM

[0004] In the packaging configuration of PLT 1, the confectionery pieces (small bags) are not fixed in the outer bag. Therefore, there is a possibility that, when the outer bag is torn to be open, the inside confectionery pieces are inadvertently scattered out of the outer bag onto floor. This packaging configuration is inconvenient with poorer portability of the confectionery pieces in the outer bag.

[0005] In view of the foregoing, it is a principal object of the present invention to provide a food packaging container and a packaging method which ensure convenient use of the container when and after an outer bag is opened.

[0006] It is another object of the present invention to provide a food packaging container and a packaging method which ensure that food pieces contained in the container can be eaten in a hygienic way.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM

[0007] According to an inventive aspect of claim 1, there is provided a food packaging container for packaging a predetermined number of elongated food strips, the packaging container including: individual wrapping sheets for individually wrapping the strips, the individual wrapping sheets being each preliminarily processed to be dividable into a first side wrapping sheet portion and a second side wrapping sheet portion longitudinally of a strip wrapped therein; a rear outer packaging material which receives the strips individually wrapped with the individual wrapping sheets and aligned in side-by-side relation; a front outer packaging material extending from one edge of the rear outer packaging material and folded

along the edge to cover upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips; an adhesive member provided between the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped strips and at least one of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material; and a seal portion which seals peripheral edge portions of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material to sealingly enclose the individually wrapped strips in an inside space.

[0008] According to an inventive aspect of claim 2, there is provided a food packaging container for packaging a predetermined number of elongated food strips, the packaging container including: individual wrapping sheets for individually wrapping the strips, the individual wrapping sheets being each preliminarily processed to be dividable into a first side wrapping sheet portion and a second side wrapping sheet portion longitudinally of a strip wrapped therein; a rear outer packaging material which receives the strips individually wrapped with the individual wrapping sheets and aligned in side-by-side relation; a front outer packaging material provided separately from the rear outer packaging material and covering upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips; an adhesive member provided between the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped strips and at least one of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material; and a seal portion which seals peripheral edge portions of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material to sealingly enclose the individually wrapped strips in an inside space.

[0009] According to an inventive aspect of claim 3, the packaging container of claim 1 or 2 has an opening guide incision provided in the seal portion for tearing the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material from the seal portion.

[0010] According to an inventive aspect of claim 4, the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material each have a generally rectangular shape as seen in plan, and are each made of a flexible soft packaging material in the packaging container of claim 1 or 2.

[0011] According to an inventive aspect of claim 5, there is provided a packaging method for packaging a predetermined number of elongated food strips, the method comprising the steps of: preparing individual wrapping sheets for individually wrapping the strips, the individual wrapping sheets being each preliminarily processed to be dividable into a first side wrapping sheet portion and a second side wrapping sheet portion longitudinally of a strip wrapped therein; preparing a rear outer packaging material formed with an adhesive layer, and a front outer packaging material extending from one edge of the rear outer packaging material and conformal to the rear outer packaging material; individually wrapping the food strips with the individual wrapping sheets, aligning

the wrapped food strips in side-by-side relation on the rear outer packaging material, and fixing the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped strips to the rear outer packaging material via the adhesive layer; folding the front outer packaging material along the edge to cover upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips; and sealing peripheral edge portions of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material to sealingly enclose the individually wrapped strips in an inside space defined between the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material.

[0012] According to an inventive aspect of claim 6, there is provided a packaging method for packaging a predetermined number of elongated food strips, the method comprising the steps of: preparing individual wrapping sheets for individually wrapping the strips, the individual wrapping sheets being each preliminarily processed to be dividable into a first side wrapping sheet portion and a second side wrapping sheet portion longitudinally of a strip wrapped therein; preparing a rear outer packaging material, and a front outer packaging material extending from one edge of the rear outer packaging material, the front outer packaging material being conformal to the rear outer packaging material and formed with an adhesive layer; individually wrapping the food strips with the individual wrapping sheets and aligning the wrapped food strips in side-by-side relation on the rear outer packaging material; folding the front outer packaging material along the edge to cover upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips, and fixing the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped strips to the front outer packaging material via the adhesive layer; and sealing peripheral edge portions of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material to sealingly enclose the individually wrapped strips in an inside space defined between the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material.

[0013] According to an inventive aspect of claim 7, there is provided a packaging method for packaging a predetermined number of elongated food strips, the method including the steps of: preparing individual wrapping sheets for individually wrapping the strips, the individual wrapping sheets being each preliminarily processed to be dividable into a first side wrapping sheet portion and a second side wrapping sheet portion longitudinally of a strip wrapped therein; individually wrapping the strips with the individual wrapping sheets and aligning the wrapped strips in side-by-side relation on a rear outer packaging material; covering upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips with a front outer packaging material conformal to the rear outer packaging material; and sealing peripheral edge portions of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material to sealingly enclose the individually wrapped strips in an inside space.

[0014] According to an inventive aspect of claim 8, the

packaging method of claim 7 further includes the step of preliminarily providing an adhesive layer on the rear outer packaging material for fixing the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped and aligned strips to the rear outer packaging material.

[0015] According to an inventive aspect of claim 9, the packaging method of claim 7 further includes the step of preliminarily providing an adhesive layer on the front outer packaging material for fixing the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped and aligned strips to the front outer packaging material.

15 ADVANTAGEOUS EFFECTS OF INVENTION

[0016] According to the inventive aspects of claims 1, 5 and 6, the individual wrapping sheets for individually wrapping the food strips are each dividable into the first side wrapping sheet portion and the second side wrapping sheet portion longitudinally of the strip wrapped therein. The individually wrapped strips are aligned in side-by-side relation on the rear outer packaging material, and the front outer packaging material is folded along the edge of the rear outer packaging material to cover the upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips. By sealing the peripheral edge portions of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material with the seal portion, the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material are combined together to complete the packaging container (outer bag), in which the plurality of individually wrapped strips are sealingly enclosed.

[0017] Here, the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped strips are fixed to at least one of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material via the adhesive member (adhesive layer). When the packaging container is opened, therefore, the strips are not displaced in the packaging container. This prevents these strips from scattering out of the packaging container. Thus, the packaging container ensures convenient use when and after the packaging container (outer bag) is opened.

[0018] When the individually wrapped strips are each taken out of the opened packaging container, the strip is held via the first side wrapping sheet portion. In this state, the strip is pulled out of the packaging container. Then, the first side wrapping sheet portion is separated from the second side wrapping sheet portion fixed to the packaging container by the adhesive member (adhesive layer). Therefore, a second side part of the strip that has been covered with the second side wrapping sheet portion is uncovered and, in this state, the strip is taken out of the packaging container. By thus uncovering the second side part of the strip, the strip can be eaten from the second side part without removing the individual wrapping sheet by hands. In this manner, the food pieces

(strips) contained in the packaging container can be eaten in a hygienic way without directly touching the strips when the strips are taken out of the packaging container before the eating.

[0019] Since the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material are connected to each other on the one edge to be thereby unified, the packaging container can be easily produced by folding the front outer packaging material on the rear outer packaging material and sealing the peripheral edge portions of the packaging materials with the seal portion. In this case, it is merely necessary to seal the packaging materials along the three edges (there is no need to seal the packaging materials along the four edges), thereby simplifying the sealing step. According to the inventive aspect of claim 6, the adhesive layer is not provided on the rear outer packaging material on which the individually wrapped strips are aligned, but provided on the front outer packaging material. This increases the process flexibility of the adhesive layer providing step, thereby correspondingly increasing the diversity of a manufacturing apparatus to be employed.

[0020] According to the inventive aspects of claims 2 and 7, the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material may be provided as separate members. Where the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets are fixed to the rear outer packaging material according to the inventive aspect of claim 8, the adhesive layer is preferably preliminarily provided on the rear outer packaging material before the upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips are covered with the front outer packaging material. Where the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets are fixed to the front outer packaging material according to the inventive aspect of claim 9, the adhesive layer is preferably preliminarily provided on the front outer packaging material before the upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips are covered with the front outer packaging material.

[0021] According to the inventive aspect of claim 3, the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material can be smoothly torn from the opening guide incision provided in the seal portion to open the packaging container. Thus, the packaging container ensures convenient use.

[0022] According to the inventive aspect of claim 4, it is preferred that the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material each have a generally rectangular shape as seen in plan, and are each made of a flexible soft packaging material.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0023]

FIGS. 1 are diagrams for explaining how to wrap a chewing gum piece 1 (food strip) with an individual

wrapping sheet 2 to provide a food unit 3, particularly, FIG. 1(a) illustrates a chewing gum piece 1 placed on an individual wrapping sheet 2, and FIG. 1(b) illustrates a food unit 3 completed with the chewing gum piece 1 wrapped with the individual wrapping sheet 2.

FIG. 2 is an expansion plan view of a packaging container 100 according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIGS. 3 illustrate the packaging container 100 in a complete state, particularly, FIGS. 3(a) and 3(b) are a plan view of the packaging container 100 and a sectional view taken along a line A-A and seen in an arrow direction in FIG. 3(a), respectively.

FIG. 4 is a plan view of the packaging container 100 illustrating a state in which a part of the packaging container 100 is torn.

FIGS. 5 are diagrams for explaining a state in which a chewing gum piece 1 is taken out of the partly torn packaging container 100, particularly, FIGS. 5(a) and 5(b) are a plan view of the packaging container 100 and a sectional view taken along a line B-B and seen in an arrow direction in FIG. 5(a), respectively. FIG. 6 is a diagram for explaining a state in which the packaging container 100 is folded after one chewing gum piece 1 is taken out.

DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

[0024] With reference to the drawings, an embodiment of the present invention will hereinafter be described specifically.

[0025] A packaging container 100 according to the embodiment of the present invention is adapted to collectively accommodate (package) a plurality of strip-shaped chewing gum pieces (food strips) 1. Prior to the description of the packaging container 100, the chewing gum pieces (strips) 1 will be described.

[0026] FIGS. 1 are diagrams for explaining how to wrap a chewing gum piece 1 (food strip) with an individual wrapping sheet 2 to provide a food unit 3.

[0027] Referring to FIG. 1(a), the chewing gum piece 1 has a vertically-elongated rectangular-solid thin block shape (elongated strip shape).

[0028] The chewing gum piece 1 is wrapped with the individual wrapping sheet 2. The food unit 3 is constituted by the chewing gum piece 1 and the individual wrapping sheet 2 which wraps the chewing gum piece 1.

[0029] Examples of the individual wrapping sheet 2 include a so-called foil paper sheet, a wax paper sheet and a film. In an expanded state, the individual wrapping sheet 2 is a rectangular sheet which is large enough to wrap the entire chewing gum piece 1. The individual wrapping sheet 2 has a perforation line 4 provided closer to one of longitudinally opposite edges as extending widthwise of the individual wrapping sheet 2 across the individual wrapping sheet 2.

[0030] As shown in FIG. 1(a), a single chewing gum

piece 1 is placed on a center portion of a single individual wrapping sheet 2 with its longitudinal axis aligning with the longitudinal axis of the individual wrapping sheet 2. Portions of the individual wrapping sheet 2 protruding from the chewing gum piece 1 are folded, whereby the chewing gum piece 1 is wrapped with the individual wrapping sheet 2 as shown in FIG. 1(b). The food unit 3 is provided by thus wrapping (individually wrapping) the chewing gum piece 1 with the individual wrapping sheet 2. The food unit 3 has a vertically elongated block shape having a size that is slightly greater than the size of the chewing gum piece 1 by the thickness of the individual wrapping sheet 2. With the food unit 3 vertically postured, the perforation line 4 of the individual wrapping sheet 2 of the food unit 3 is located in a longitudinal (vertical) position closer to a lower edge thereof as extending (horizontally) widthwise of the food unit 3 to surround the chewing gum piece 1. With the food unit 3 vertically postured, the perforation line 4 partitions the individual wrapping sheet 2 wrapping the chewing gum piece 1 into a separation portion 2A (first side wrapping sheet portion) located on an upper side of the perforation line 4 and a fixing portion 2B (second side wrapping sheet portion) located on a lower side of the perforation line 4. The individual wrapping sheet 2 is dividable into the separation portion 2A and the fixing portion 2B with the chewing gum piece 1 wrapped with the individual wrapping sheet 2. It is noted that the individual wrapping sheets 2 may be regarded as parts of the packaging container 100. As long as the individual wrapping sheet 2 is dividable into the separation portion 2A and the fixing portion 2B, a half cut line may be provided instead of the perforation line 4 in the individual wrapping sheet 2.

[0031] A predetermined number of chewing gum pieces 1 (here six chewing gum pieces for a single packaging container 100) are prepared, and individually wrapped with individual wrapping sheets 2 to provide a plurality of food units 3 (six food units). The perforation line 4 is not necessarily required to be formed in a longitudinally offset position, but may be formed in a longitudinally middle position. The individual wrapping sheets 2 may each include two sheets serving as the separation portion 2A and the fixing portion 2B which are partly overlapped with each other and adapted to be separated from each other by holding and extracting one of the sheets.

[0032] Next, the packaging container 100 will be described.

[0033] FIG. 2 is an expansion plan view of the packaging container 100 according to the embodiment of the present invention. FIGS. 3 illustrate the packaging container 100 in a complete state, particularly, FIGS. 3 (a) and 3 (b) are a plan view of the packaging container 100 and a sectional view taken along a line A-A and seen in an arrow direction in FIG. 3(a), respectively. The line A-A in FIG. 3(a) is a phantom line which extends widthwise of the packaging container 100 to cut the packaging container 100 and a food unit 3 in the packaging container 100.

[0034] Referring to FIG. 2, the packaging container 100 is a generally rectangular sheet 50 as seen in plan when it is in an expanded state. The sheet 50 is generally equally divided into two parts, one of which is defined as a rear outer packaging material 51 and the other of which is defined as a front outer packaging material 52. In FIG. 2, an upper half of the sheet 50 is the rear outer packaging material 51, and a lower half of the sheet 50 is the front outer packaging material 52. One edge (lower edge in FIG. 2) 53 of the rear outer packaging material 51 is a boundary between the rear outer packaging material 51 and the front outer packaging material 52, and linearly extends horizontally. The edge 53 also serves as one edge (upper edge in FIG. 2) of the front outer packaging material 52. The front outer packaging material 52 extends from the edge 53 of the rear outer packaging material 51.

[0035] The rear outer packaging material 51 and the front outer packaging material 52 are unitarily made of a flexible soft packaging material. The rear outer packaging material 51 and the front outer packaging material 52 each have a horizontally-elongated generally-rectangular shape and have the same size. That is, the rear outer packaging material 51 and the front outer packaging material 52 are conformal to each other. The rear outer packaging material 51 and the front outer packaging material 52 are each dimensioned so that, when the six food units 3 (chewing gum pieces 1) are aligned in side-by-side relation with no gap therebetween with their longitudinal axes extending widthwise of the packaging material, these six food units can be accommodated on the packaging material with sufficient margins.

[0036] Then, the six food units 3 are aligned in side-by-side relation with no gap therebetween with their longitudinal axes extending widthwise of the rear outer packaging material 51 and the front outer packaging material 52. In turn, the food units 3 thus aligned are placed on the rear outer packaging material 51 of the sheet 50. In other words, the rear outer packaging material 51 receives these food units 3. The food units 3 are placed closer to the edge 53 on a center portion of the rear outer packaging material 51 so as to be accommodated inward of peripheral edges of the rear outer packaging material 51 as seen in plan. The fixing portions 2B of the individual wrapping sheets 2 of the respective food units 3 are located closer to the edge 53 than the separation portions 2A.

[0037] With the food units 3 thus placed, a generally U-shaped margin (inverted U-shaped margin in FIG. 2) is formed around a set of the six food units 3 as surrounding the food units 3 on the rear outer packaging material 51. A rear seal portion 5 is provided on the margin. The rear seal portion 5 is made of an adhesive agent which exhibits an adhesive force by heat-sealing or cold-sealing.

[0038] The rear seal portion 5 extends along three edges of the rear outer packaging material 51 except for the edge 53. On the front outer packaging material 52, a front

seal portion 6 is provided symmetrically with the rear seal portion 5 with respect to the edge 53. The front seal portion 6 is made of the same adhesive agent as the rear seal portion 5, and has a generally U-shape extending along three peripheral edges of the front outer packaging material 52 except for the edge 53. The rear seal portion 5 and the front seal portion 6 are connected to each other, and cooperatively define a seal portion 7. In FIG. 2, the seal portion 7 is hatched with oblique lines extending rightward downward, and has a generally rectangular frame shape which extends along all the peripheral edges of the sheet 50. It is noted that only one of the rear seal portion 5 and the front seal portion 6 of the seal portion 7 may be made of the adhesive agent. The other seal portion is not necessarily required to be made of the adhesive agent. In this case, the other seal portion is defined by a peripheral edge portion of the sheet 50 per se.

[0039] Here, a band-shaped adhesive member 8 (adhesive layer) is preliminarily provided on a surface of the rear outer packaging material 51 on which the food units 3 are to be placed. The adhesive member 8 may be an adhesive agent or may be an adhesive tape. The adhesive member 8 is included in the packaging container 100. The adhesive member 8, which is hatched by oblique lines extending rightward upward in FIG. 2, is disposed adjacent the edge 53 of the rear outer packaging material 51. With the six food units 3 aligned on the rear outer packaging material 51 as described above, therefore, the adhesive member 8 is present between the fixing portions 2B of the individual wrapping sheets 2 of all the six food units 3 and the rear outer packaging material 51 (see FIG. 3(b)) and extends across the fixing portions 2B of all the food units 3 as seen in plan. The adhesive member 8 fixes the fixing portions 2B of all the food units 3 to the rear outer packaging material 51. Thus, all the food units 3 are fixed to the rear outer packaging material 51 in a relatively immovable manner. The adhesive member 8 is not necessarily required to have a band-shape, as long as it can bond the fixing portions 2B of all the food units 3. In this case, the adhesive member 8 may have an intermittent broken-line shape.

[0040] After all the food units 3 are thus fixed to the rear outer packaging material 51, the front outer packaging material 52 is folded along the edge 53 of the rear outer packaging material 51 over the food units 3 on the rear outer packaging material 51. Then, the front outer packaging material 52 is completely overlaid on the rear outer packaging material 51. Therefore, the front seal portion 6 extending along the three edges of the front outer packaging material 52 except for the edge 53 is completely overlaid on the rear seal portion 5 extending along the three edges of the rear outer packaging material 51 except for the edge 53. This state is shown in FIGS. 3.

[0041] In FIGS. 3, the front outer packaging material 52 covers upper surfaces of all the food units 3 (chewing gum pieces 1) aligned on the rear outer packaging ma-

terial 51 (the front side in FIG. 3(a) and the left side in FIG. 3(b)).

[0042] The rear seal portion 5 of the rear outer packaging material 51 and the front seal portion 6 of the front outer packaging material 52 are bonded to each other by heat-sealing or cold-sealing. Thus, the peripheral edge portions of the front outer packaging material 52 and the rear outer packaging material 51 except for the edge 53 are sealed with the rear seal portion 5 and the front seal portion 6 (seal portion 7). As a result, a horizontally elongated rectangular bag-shaped packaging container 100 is formed by the front outer packaging material 52 and the rear outer packaging material 51 thus overlaid. The six food units 3 fixed to the rear outer packaging material 51 are contained inside the packaging container 100. That is, the packaging container 100 serves as an outer bag in which the food units 3 are contained. The peripheral edge portions of the front outer packaging material 52 and the rear outer packaging material 51 except for the edge 53 are sealed with the seal portion 7, and the front outer packaging material 52 and the rear outer packaging material 51 are connected to each other via the edge 53. Therefore, the six food units 3 are sealingly enclosed in the packaging container 100.

[0043] Thus, the packaging container 100 can be easily produced by folding the front outer packaging material 52 on the rear outer packaging material 51 provided unitarily with the front outer packaging material 52 and sealing the peripheral edge portions of these packaging materials with the seal portion 7. In this case, it is merely necessary to seal the packaging materials along the three edges (there is no need to seal the packaging materials along the four edges). This simplifies the sealing step.

[0044] Here, opening guide incisions 9 are provided in horizontally opposite edge portions of the seal portion 7 at positions of the completed packaging container 100 away from the edge 53. The opening guide incisions 9 may each have a triangular shape tapered inward of the packaging container 100 as shown in FIG. 3 (a), or a home base shape tapered inward of the packaging container 100, or may each have a linear shape extending horizontally.

[0045] FIG. 4 is a plan view of the packaging container 100 illustrating a state in which a part of the packaging container 100 is torn. FIGS. 5 are diagrams for explaining a state in which a chewing gum piece 1 is taken out of the partly torn packaging container 100, particularly, FIGS. 5(a) and 5(b) are a plan view of the packaging container 100 and a sectional view taken along a line B-B and seen in an arrow direction in FIG. 5 (a), respectively. FIG. 6 is a diagram for explaining a state in which the packaging container 100 is folded after one chewing gum piece 1 is taken out. The line B-B in FIG. 5(a) is a phantom line which extends widthwise of the packaging container 100 to cut the packaging container 100 and the food unit 3 taken out of the packaging container 100.

[0046] Referring to FIG. 4, a part of the packaging con-

tainer 100 located adjacent one of the left and right opening guide incisions 9 away from the edge 53 is held and pulled. Then, the front outer packaging material 52 and the rear outer packaging material 51 are torn from a starting point defined by the opening guide incision 9 provided in the seal portion 7, whereby the packaging container 100 is opened. With the provision of the opening guide incisions 9, the rear outer packaging material 51 and the front outer packaging material 52 are smoothly torn, so that the packaging container 100 can be conveniently opened.

[0047] As described above, the fixing portions 2B of the individual wrapping sheets 2 of the food units 3 are fixed to the rear outer packaging material 51 via the adhesive member 8 in the packaging container 100 (see FIG. 3(b)). When the packaging container 100 is opened, therefore, the chewing gum pieces 1 are neither displaced in the packaging container 100 nor scattered around out of the packaging container 100. Thus, the packaging container 100 ensures convenient use when and after the packaging container 100 (outer bag) is opened.

[0048] Distal edges of the separation portions 2A of the individual wrapping sheets 2 of some of the food units 3 in the packaging container 100 are exposed from the opened (torn) part of the packaging container 100 (opening X).

[0049] In turn, as shown in FIGS. 5, the separation portion 2A of one of the food units 3 thus exposed from the opening X is picked by figure tips 80, and the food unit 3 is pulled up through the opening X as indicated by bold arrows.

[0050] Since the fixing portion 2B of the individual wrapping sheet 2 of the picked food unit 3 is fixed to the packaging container 100 by the adhesive member 8, the individual wrapping sheet 2 is divided into the separation portion 2A and the fixing portion 2B. Thus, the picked food unit 3 is further picked out of the packaging container 100 with the separation portion 2A combined with the wrapped chewing gum piece 1. The other food units 3 are fixed to the packaging container 100 by the adhesive member 8 and, therefore, are not displaced in the packaging container 100.

[0051] An eater can eat the chewing gum piece 1, while holding a portion of the chewing gum piece 1 of the picked food unit 3 exposed from the separation portion 2A by eater's mouth.

[0052] The eater picks out the other food units 3 from the packaging container 100 in the same manner to eat the chewing gum pieces 1 of the respective food units 3.

[0053] When the individually wrapped chewing gum pieces 1 are each taken out of the opened packaging container 100, the chewing gum piece 1 is held via the separation portion 2A. When the chewing gum piece 1 is pulled out of the packaging container 100 in this state, the separation portion 2A is separated from the fixing portion 2B. Therefore, a part of the chewing gum piece 1 that has been covered with the fixing portion 2B is un-

covered and, in this state, the chewing gum piece 1 is taken out of the packaging container 100. By thus uncovering the part of the chewing gum piece 1, the chewing gum piece 1 can be eaten from this part without removing the individual wrapping sheet 2 by hands. That is, the food pieces (chewing gum pieces 1) contained in the packaging container 100 can be eaten in a hygienic way without directly touching the chewing gum pieces 1 when the chewing gum pieces 1 are taken out of the packaging container 100 before the eating.

[0054] If not all the chewing gum pieces 1 are eaten, a first portion 100A of the packaging container 100 from which food units 3 have already been picked out may be folded on a second portion 100B of the packaging container 100 with the food units 3 of the remaining chewing gum pieces 1 left in the packaging container 100. Then, the packaging container 100 can be simply sealed again with a reduced size. Alternatively, the first portion 100A may be cut out.

[0055] It is noted that the present invention be not limited to the embodiment described above, but various modifications may be made within the scope of the present invention defined by the claims.

[0056] Referring to FIG. 2, for example, the adhesive member 8 may be provided on a portion of the front outer packaging material 52 which covers the fixing portions 2B of the individual wrapping sheets 2 of the respective food units 3, rather than on the rear outer packaging material 51, or may be provided on both the front outer packaging material 52 and the rear outer packaging material 51. Where the adhesive member 8 is provided only on the front outer packaging material 52, the front outer packaging material 52 is folded on the rear outer packaging material 51, whereby the adhesive member 8 is located between the fixing portions 2B of the individual wrapping sheets 2 of all the six food units 3 and the front outer packaging material 52 to fix all the food units 3 to the front outer packaging material 52 in a relatively immovable manner. Where the front outer packaging material 52 and the rear outer packaging material 51 are each provided with the adhesive member 8, the adhesive member 8 is located between the fixing portions 2B of the individual wrapping sheet 2 of all the six food units 3 and the front outer packaging material 52 and between the fixing portions 2B and the rear outer packaging material 51 to fix all the food units 3 to both the rear outer packaging material 51 and the front outer packaging material 52 in a relatively immovable manner.

[0057] Where the adhesive member 8 is not provided on the rear outer packaging material 51 on which the food units 3 are aligned but provided on the front outer packaging material 52, the process flexibility is increased in the adhesive layer providing step. This correspondingly increases the diversity of a manufacturing apparatus to be employed.

[0058] The six food units 3 are aligned in side-by-side relation and contained in the packaging container 100, but the number of the food units 3 to be contained may

be properly changed.

[0059] The front outer packaging material 52 and the rear outer packaging material 51 are unitarily provided, but may be separately provided. In this case, the front outer packaging material 52 and the rear outer packaging material 51 are sealed along the four edges with the seal portion 7 when the packaging container 100 is fabricated.

[0060] Referring to FIGS. 5, when the food units 3 are each taken out of the packaging container 100, the separation portion 2A and the fixing portion 2B of the individual wrapping sheet 2 are separated from each other, but the individual wrapping sheet 2 is not necessarily required to be dividable. In this case, there is no need to provide the perforation line 4 (see FIGS. 1) in the individual wrapping sheet 2, and the food units 3 are each taken out of the packaging container 100 without dividing the individual wrapping sheet 2. The food units 3 are preferably temporarily (weakly) fixed to the packaging container 100 by the adhesive member 8 so as to be each easily taken out of the packaging container 100 without breaking the individual wrapping sheet 2.

[0061] In this embodiment, the chewing gum pieces are employed as the strips to be contained in the packaging container 100, but chocolate strips or candy strips may also be packaged in the same manner in the packaging container 100.

[0062] Further, the seal portion 7 is made of the adhesive agent, but may be an adhesive tape.

[0063] The packaging container 100 is opened by tearing a part of the packaging container 100, but may be opened by separating the front outer packaging material 52 and the rear outer packaging material 51 from each other along the seal portion.

[0064] Further, a necessary number of food units 3 may be first bundled with a bundling sheet (not shown), and then the resulting bundle of food units 3 may be set in the packaging container 100. In this case, the bundle of food units 3 may be fixed to at least one of the rear outer packaging material 51 and the front outer packaging material 52 (see FIG. 2) by the adhesive member 8 before the fabrication of the packaging container 100. When the packaging container 100 is thereafter fabricated, the packaging container 100 is completed with the bundle of food units 3 accommodated therein (see FIGS. 3).

REFERENCE SIGNS LIST

[0065]

- 1: CHEWING GUM PIECE
- 2: INDIVIDUAL WRAPPING SHEET
- 2A: SEPARATION PORTION
- 2B: FIXING PORTION

- 3: FOOD UNIT
- 4: PERFORATION LINE
- 5: REAR SEAL PORTION
- 6: FRONT SEAL PORTION
- 7: SEAL PORTION
- 8: ADHESIVE MEMBER
- 9: OPENING GUIDE INCISION
- 50: SHEET
- 51: REAR OUTER PACKAGING MATERIAL
- 52: FRONT OUTER PACKAGING MATERIAL
- 53: ONE EDGE
- 80: FINGER TIP
- 100: PACKAGING CONTAINER
- 100A: FIRST PORTION
- 100B: SECOND PORTION
- X: OPENING

Claims

1. A food packaging container for packaging a predetermined number of elongated food strips, the packaging container comprising:

individual wrapping sheets for individually wrapping the strips, the individual wrapping sheets being each preliminarily processed to be dividable into a first side wrapping sheet portion and a second side wrapping sheet portion longitudinally of a strip wrapped therein;
a rear outer packaging material which receives the strips individually wrapped with the individual wrapping sheets and aligned in side-by-side relation;
a front outer packaging material extending from one edge of the rear outer packaging material and folded along the edge to cover upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips;
an adhesive member provided between the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped strips and at least one of the rear outer packaging

- ing material and the front outer packaging material; and
 a seal portion which seals peripheral edge portions of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material to sealingly enclose the individually wrapped strips in an inside space. 5
2. A food packaging container for packaging a predetermined number of elongated food strips, the packaging container comprising: 10
- individual wrapping sheets for individually wrapping the strips, the individual wrapping sheets being each preliminarily processed to be dividable into a first side wrapping sheet portion and a second side wrapping sheet portion longitudinally of a strip wrapped therein; 15
- a rear outer packaging material which receives the strips individually wrapped with the individual wrapping sheets and aligned in side-by-side relation; 20
- a front outer packaging material provided separately from the rear outer packaging material and covering upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips; 25
- an adhesive member provided between the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped strips and at least one of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material; and 30
- a seal portion which seals peripheral edge portions of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material to sealingly enclose the individually wrapped strips in an inside space. 35
3. The packaging container according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the seal portion has an opening guide incision for tearing the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material from the seal portion. 40
4. The packaging container according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material each have a generally rectangular shape as seen in plan, and are each made of a flexible soft packaging material. 45
5. A packaging method for packaging a predetermined number of elongated food strips, the method comprising the steps of: 50
- preparing individual wrapping sheets for individually wrapping the strips, the individual wrapping sheets being each preliminarily processed to be dividable into a first side wrapping sheet portion 55

and a second side wrapping sheet portion longitudinally of a strip wrapped therein;
 preparing a rear outer packaging material formed with an adhesive layer, and a front outer packaging material extending from one edge of the rear outer packaging material and conformal to the rear outer packaging material;
 individually wrapping the food strips with the individual wrapping sheets, aligning the wrapped food strips in side-by-side relation on the rear outer packaging material, and fixing the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped strips to the rear outer packaging material via the adhesive layer;
 folding the front outer packaging material along the edge to cover upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips; and
 sealing peripheral edge portions of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material to sealingly enclose the individually wrapped strips in an inside space defined between the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material.

6. A packaging method for packaging a predetermined number of elongated food strips, the method comprising the steps of:

preparing individual wrapping sheets for individually wrapping the strips, the individual wrapping sheets being each preliminarily processed to be dividable into a first side wrapping sheet portion and a second side wrapping sheet portion longitudinally of a strip wrapped therein;
 preparing a rear outer packaging material, and a front outer packaging material extending from one edge of the rear outer packaging material, the front outer packaging material being conformal to the rear outer packaging material and formed with an adhesive layer;
 individually wrapping the food strips with the individual wrapping sheets and aligning the wrapped food strips in side-by-side relation on the rear outer packaging material;
 folding the front outer packaging material along the edge to cover upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips, and fixing the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped strips to the front outer packaging material via the adhesive layer; and
 sealing peripheral edge portions of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material to sealingly enclose the individually wrapped strips in an inside space defined between the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material.

7. A packaging method for packaging a predetermined number of elongated food strips, the method comprising the steps of:

preparing individual wrapping sheets for individually wrapping the strips, the individual wrapping sheets being each preliminarily processed to be dividable into a first side wrapping sheet portion and a second side wrapping sheet portion longitudinally of a strip wrapped therein; 5
 individually wrapping the strips with the individual wrapping sheets and aligning the wrapped strips in side-by-side relation on a rear outer packaging material; 10
 covering upper surfaces of the individually wrapped and aligned strips with a front outer packaging material conformal to the rear outer packaging material; and 15
 sealing peripheral edge portions of the rear outer packaging material and the front outer packaging material to sealingly enclose the individually wrapped strips in an inside space. 20

8. The packaging method according to claim 7, further comprising the step of preliminarily providing an adhesive layer on the rear outer packaging material for fixing the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped and aligned strips to the rear outer packaging material. 25
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9. The packaging method according to claim 7, further comprising the step of preliminarily providing an adhesive layer on the front outer packaging material for fixing the second side wrapping sheet portions of the individual wrapping sheets of the individually wrapped and aligned strips to the front outer packaging material. 35
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 50
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FIG. 1

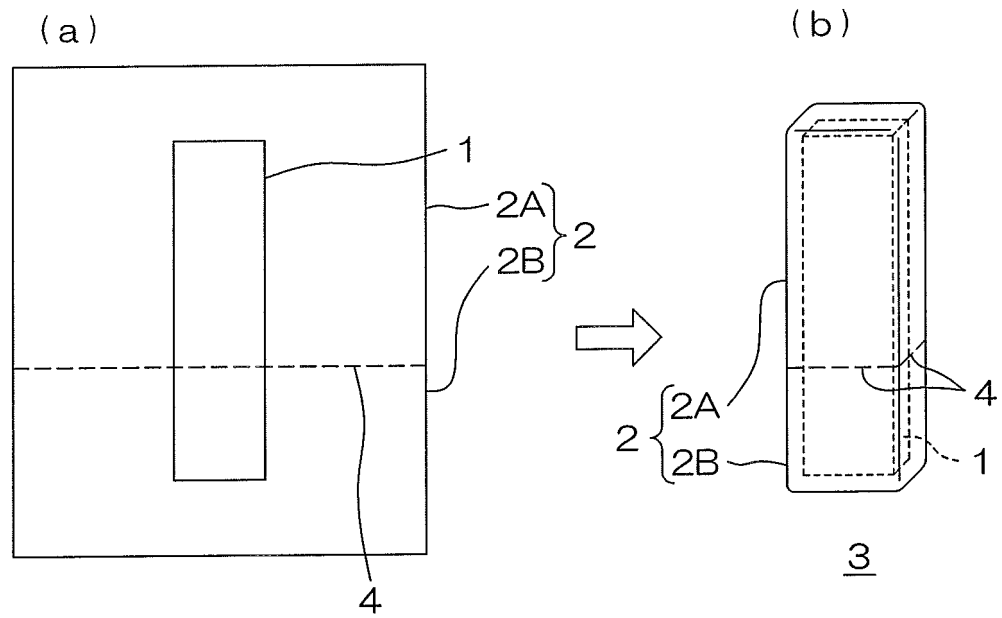
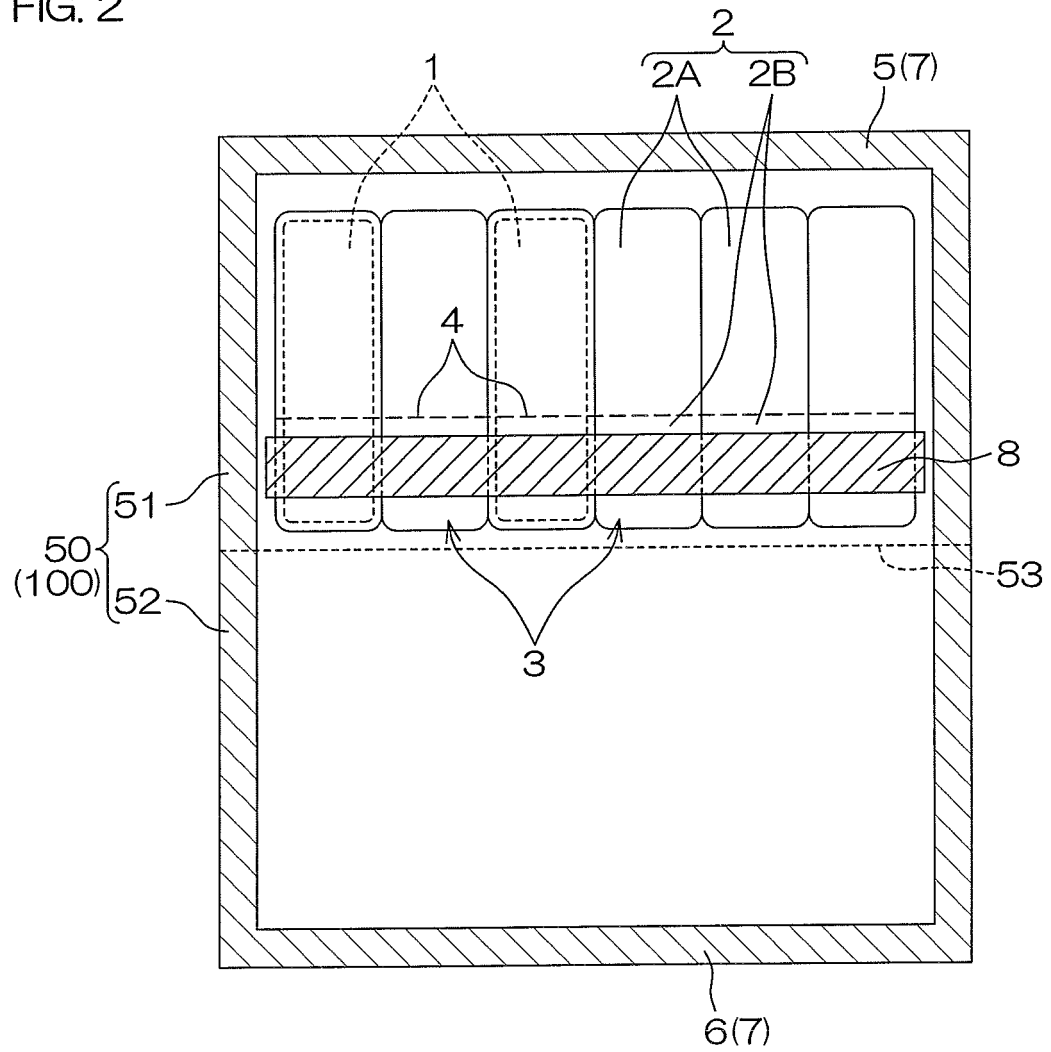


FIG. 2



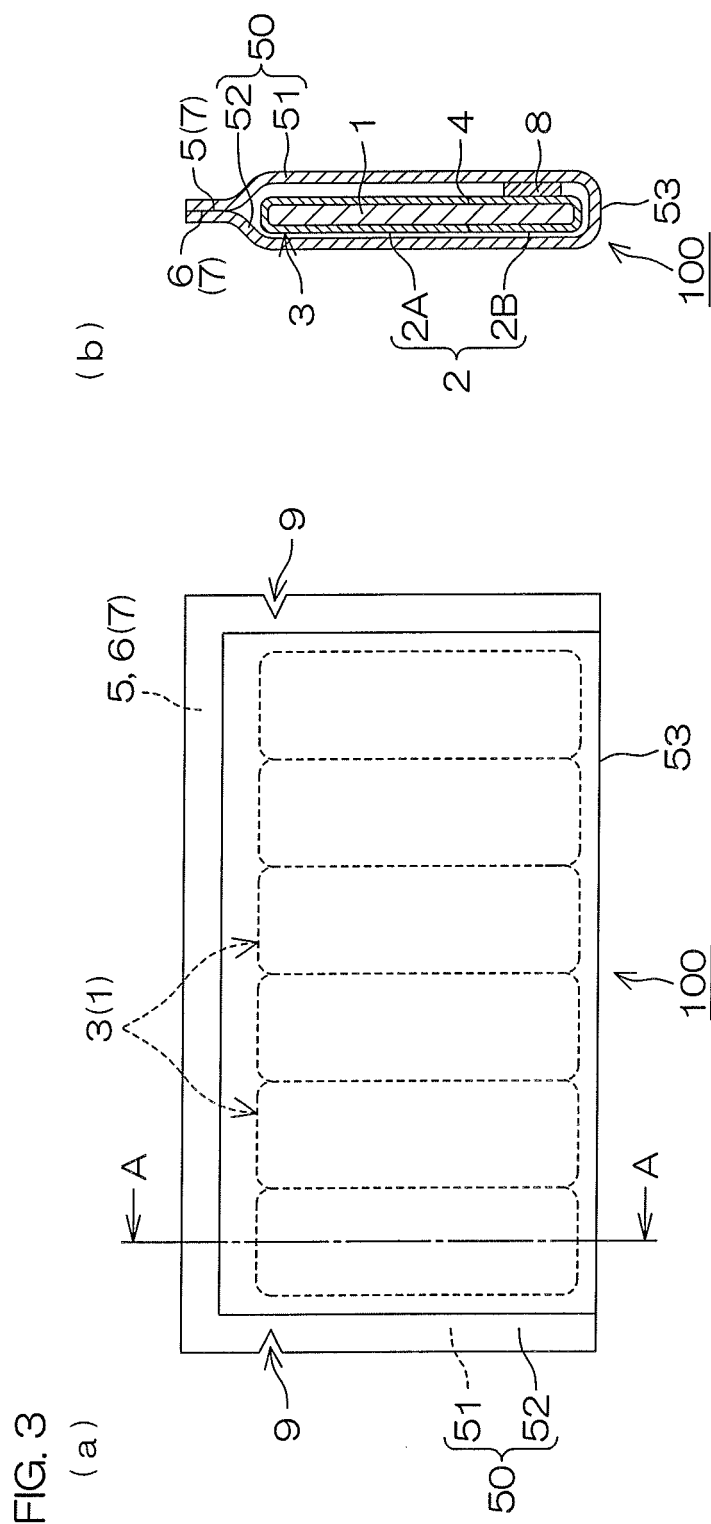
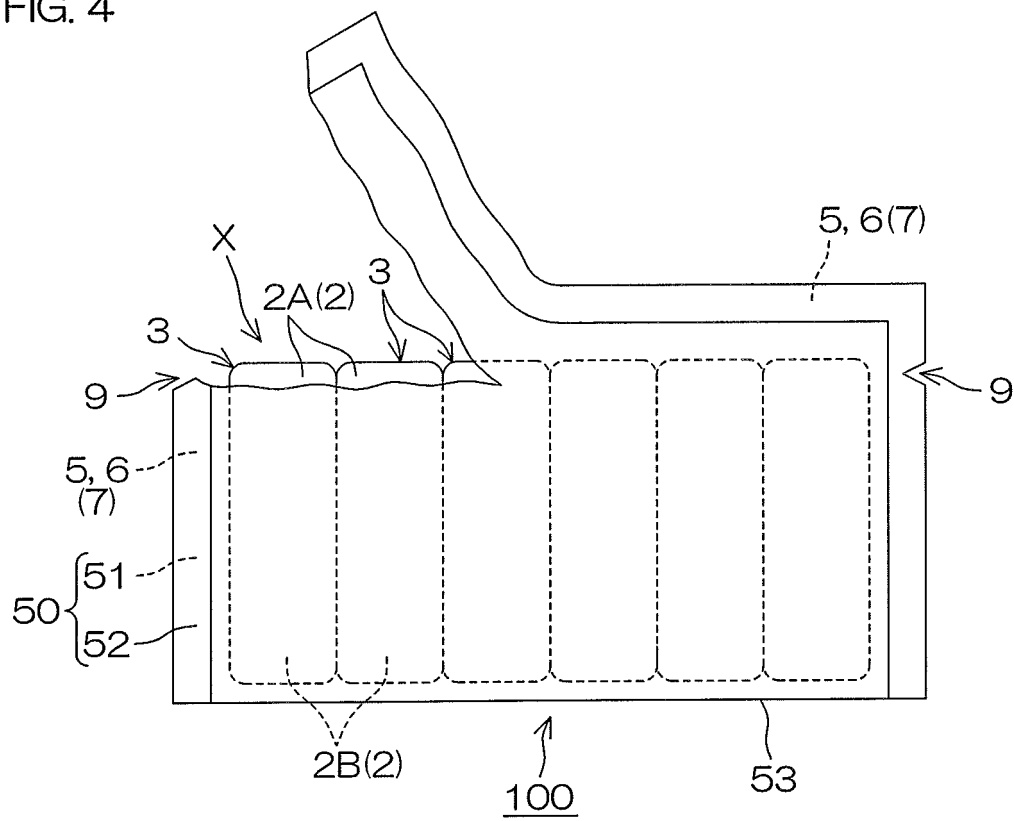


FIG. 4



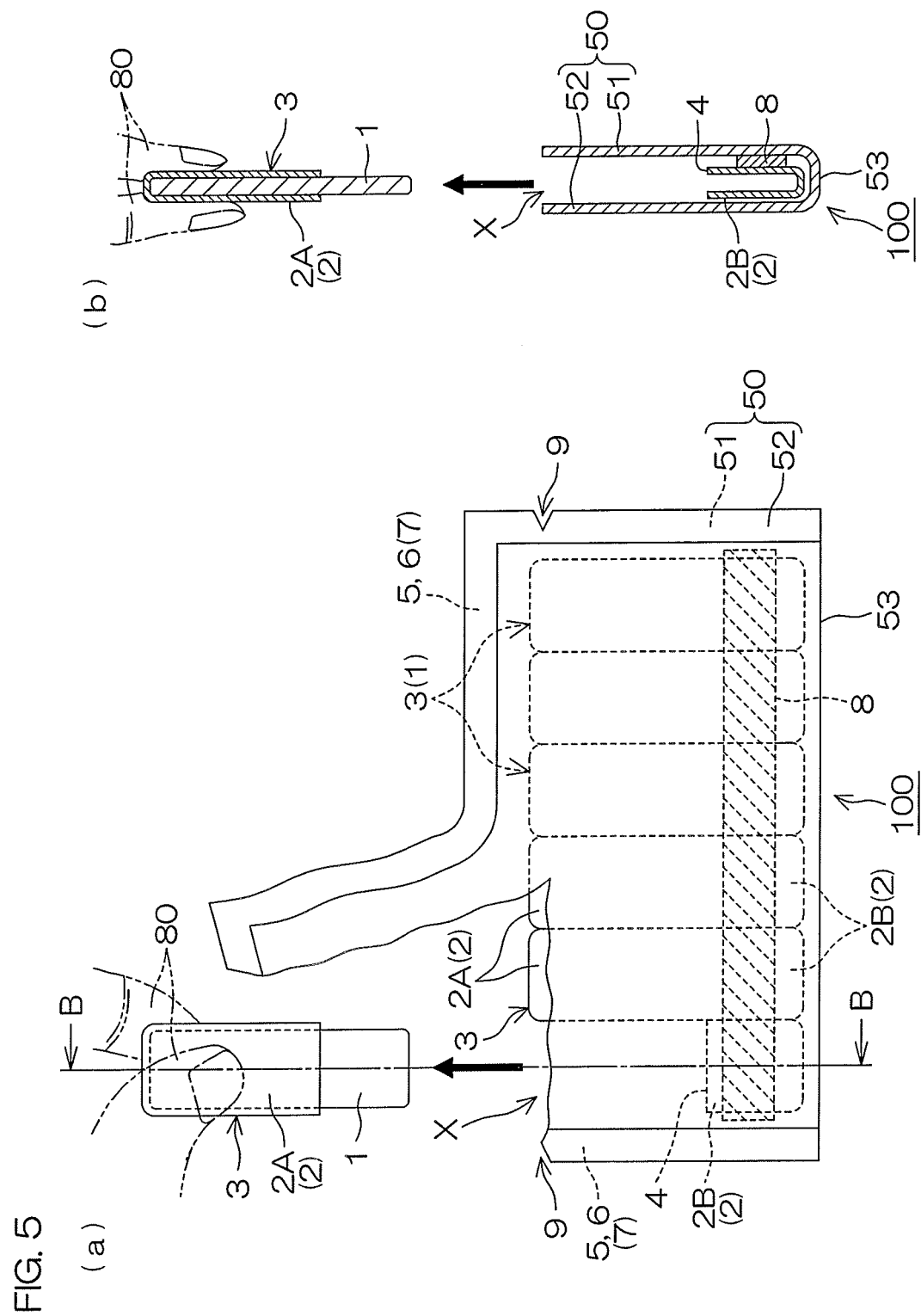
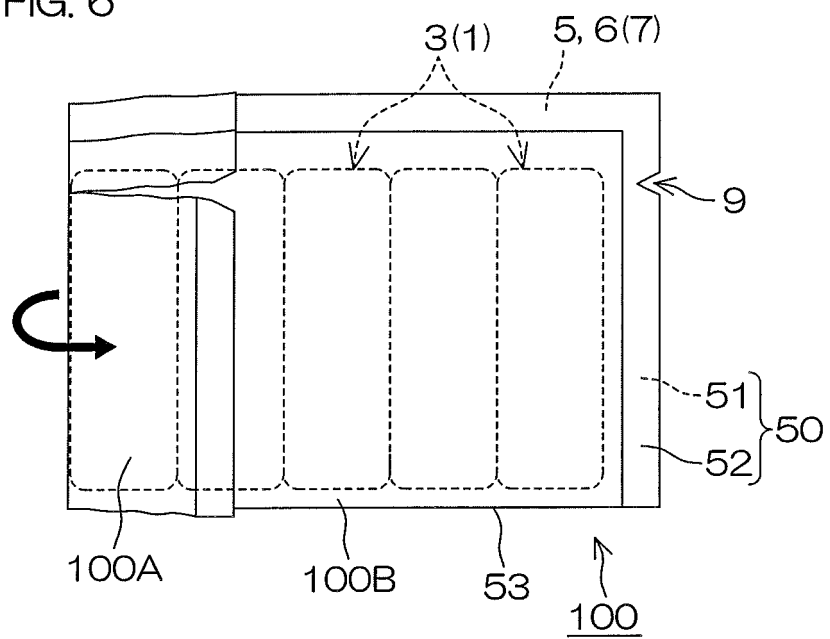


FIG. 6



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP2012/052769

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

B65D77/04 (2006.01) i, B65D85/60 (2006.01) i

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

B65D75/00-77/40, B65D85/60

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Jitsuyo Shinan Koho	1922-1996	Jitsuyo Shinan Toroku Koho	1996-2012
Kokai Jitsuyo Shinan Koho	1971-2012	Toroku Jitsuyo Shinan Koho	1994-2012

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y A	WO 2008/155626 A2 (Sergio MEZZINI), 24 December 2008 (24.12.2008), page 3, line 33 to page 4, line 7; page 6, line 29 to page 7, line 14; page 8, lines 11 to 13; fig. 17 to 18 & CN 101784455 A & EP 2162361 A2 & IT BO20070430 A1 & JP 2011-501719 A & US 2010/0187145 A1	1-4, 7 5-6, 8-9
Y A	US 2263191 A (Lawrence SALADIN), 18 November 1941 (18.11.1941), page 2, left column, lines 44 to 57; fig. 10 to 11 (Family: none)	1-4, 7 5-6, 8-9



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

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"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search
06 April, 2012 (06.04.12)Date of mailing of the international search report
24 April, 2012 (24.04.12)Name and mailing address of the ISA/
Japanese Patent Office

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP2012/052769

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	Microfilm of the specification and drawings annexed to the request of Japanese Utility Model Application No. 041637/1971 (Laid-open No. 037883/1972) (Yukichi NUMATA), 26 December 1972 (26.12.1972), page 2, line 17 to page 4, line 6; fig. 1, 3 to 4 (Family: none)	1-4
A	WO 2009/096573 A1 (Lotte Co., Ltd.), 06 August 2009 (06.08.2009), page 4, line 15 to page 6, line 12; fig. 3 & CN 101925523 A & EP 2236436 A1 & JP 2009-173322 A & KR 10-2010-0114060 A & US 2010/0297309 A1	1-4
A	JP 11-001221 A (Dainippon Printing Co., Ltd.), 06 January 1999 (06.01.1999), paragraphs [0013] to [0014]; fig. 5 (Family: none)	5-6, 8-9

Form PCT/ISA/210 (continuation of second sheet) (July 2009)

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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Patent documents cited in the description

- JP SHO571982131454 U [0003]