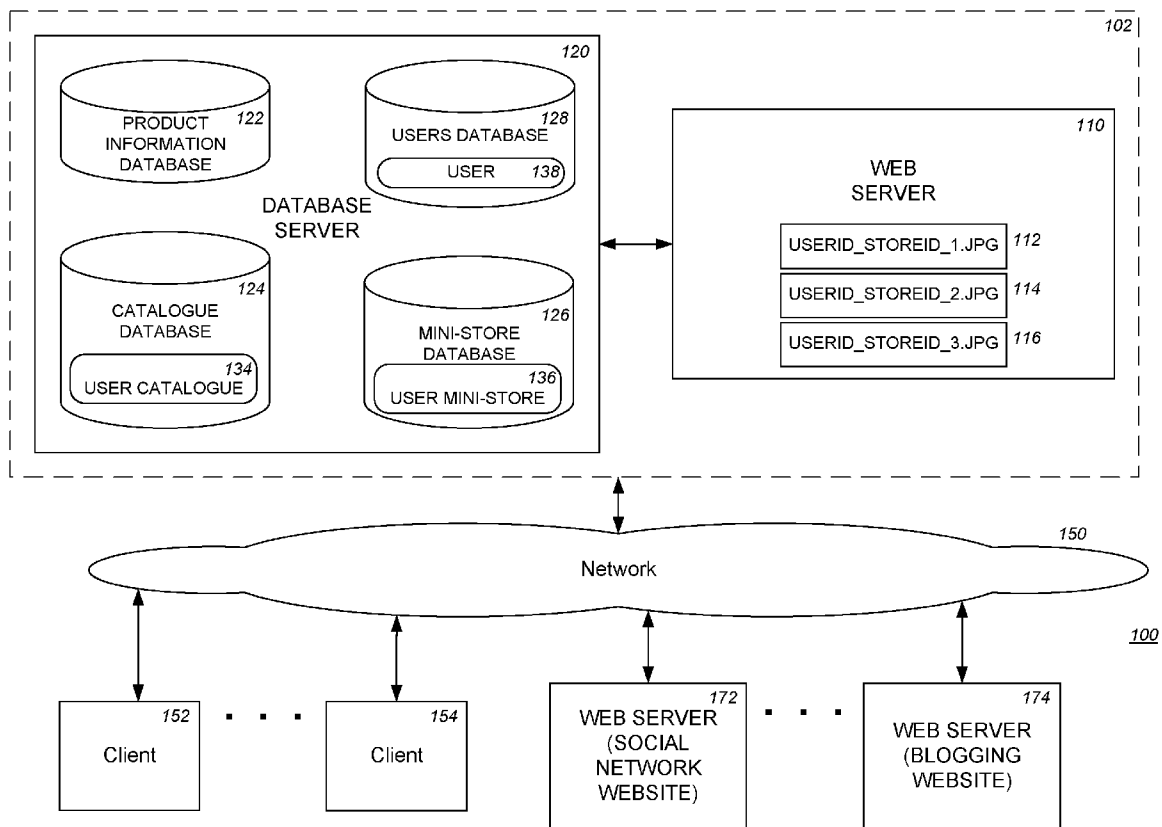


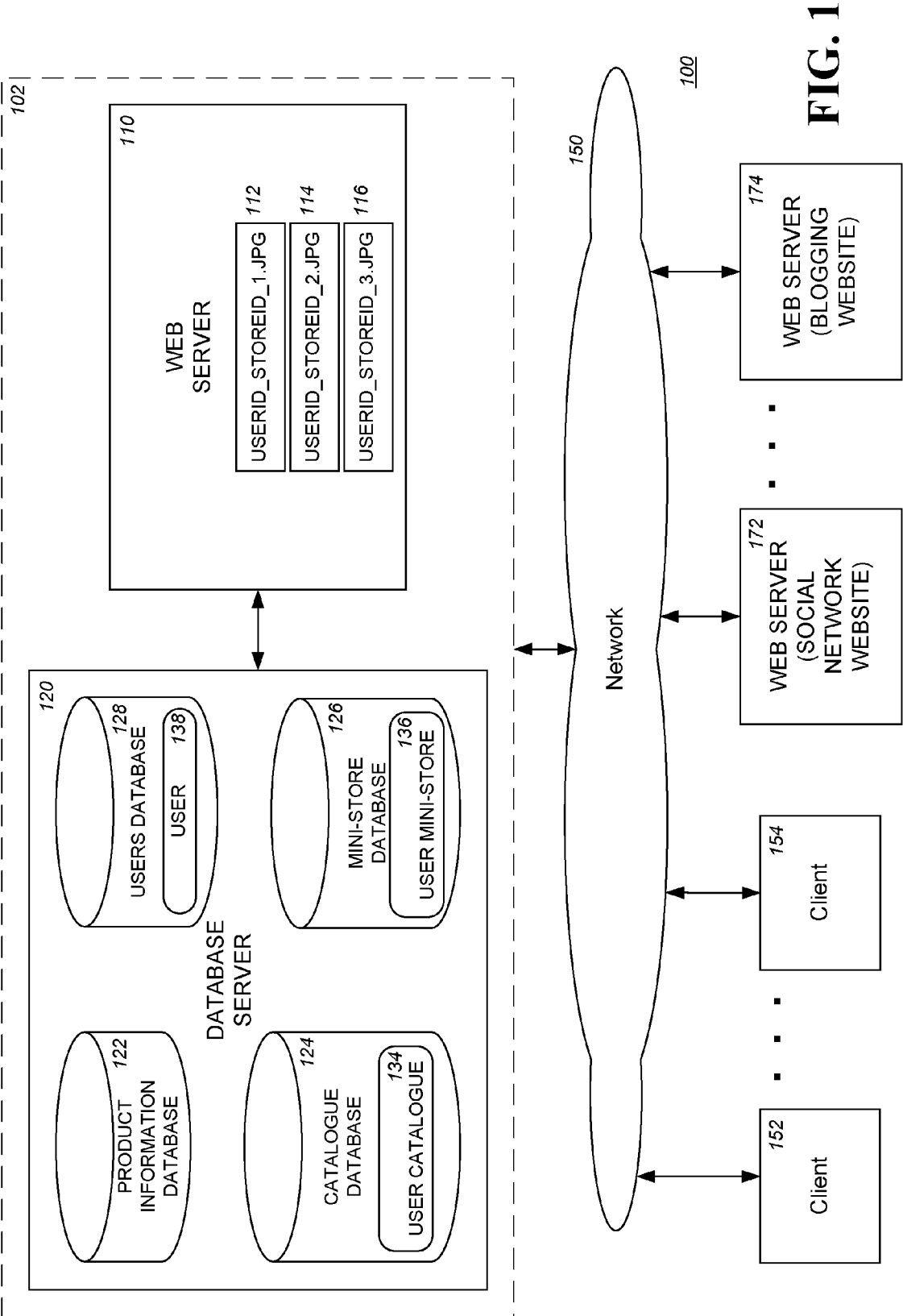


US 20080228595A1

(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Hill et al.(10) **Pub. No.: US 2008/0228595 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Sep. 18, 2008**(54) **SYSTEM FOR SUPPORTING ELECTRONIC
COMMERCE IN SOCIAL NETWORKS****Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.**
G06Q 30/00 (2006.01)
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **705/27**
(57) **ABSTRACT**(75) **Inventors:** **Matthew Hill**, Los Angeles, CA
(US); **Rhett McNulty**, Santa
Monica, CA (US)**Correspondence Address:**
JEFFER, MANGELS, BUTLER & MARMARO,
LLP
1900 AVENUE OF THE STARS, 7TH FLOOR
LOS ANGELES, CA 90067 (US)(73) **Assignee:** **SWAPEDO.COM, INC.**, Los
Angeles, CA (US)(21) **Appl. No.:** **11/685,727**(22) **Filed:** **Mar. 13, 2007**

A method for offering a plurality of items for commerce, wherein each of the items in the plurality of items includes an item identifier usable to reference that item. The method includes storing a first item identifier for the at least one of the plurality of items in a first predetermined location in a computer memory; associating a first image with the at least one of the plurality of items; and assigning a first name to the first image based on the first predetermined location in the computer memory. The method also includes creating a first reference link having the first name assigned to the first image; and, deploying the first reference link. A system for performing the method is also disclosed.





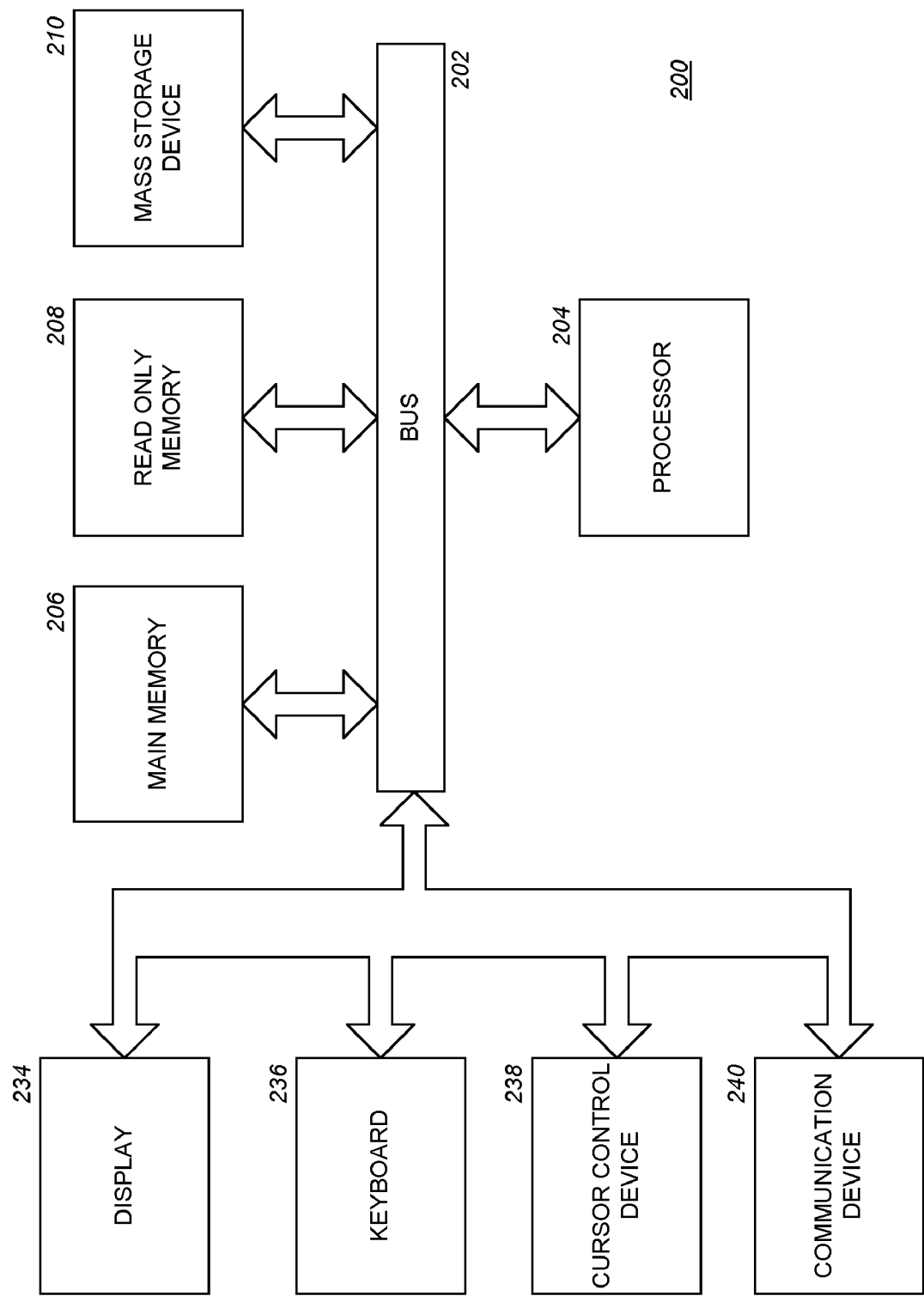


FIG. 2

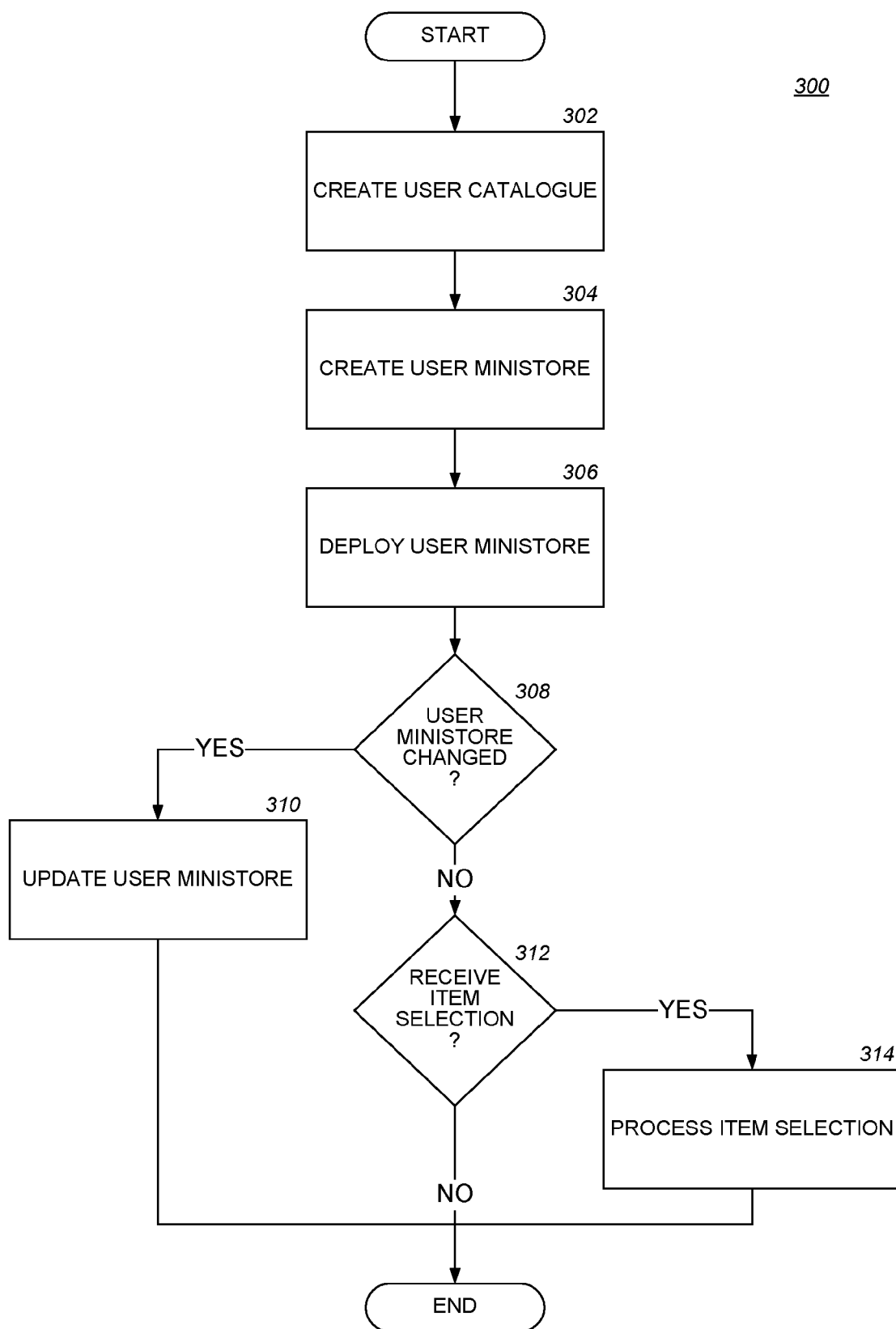
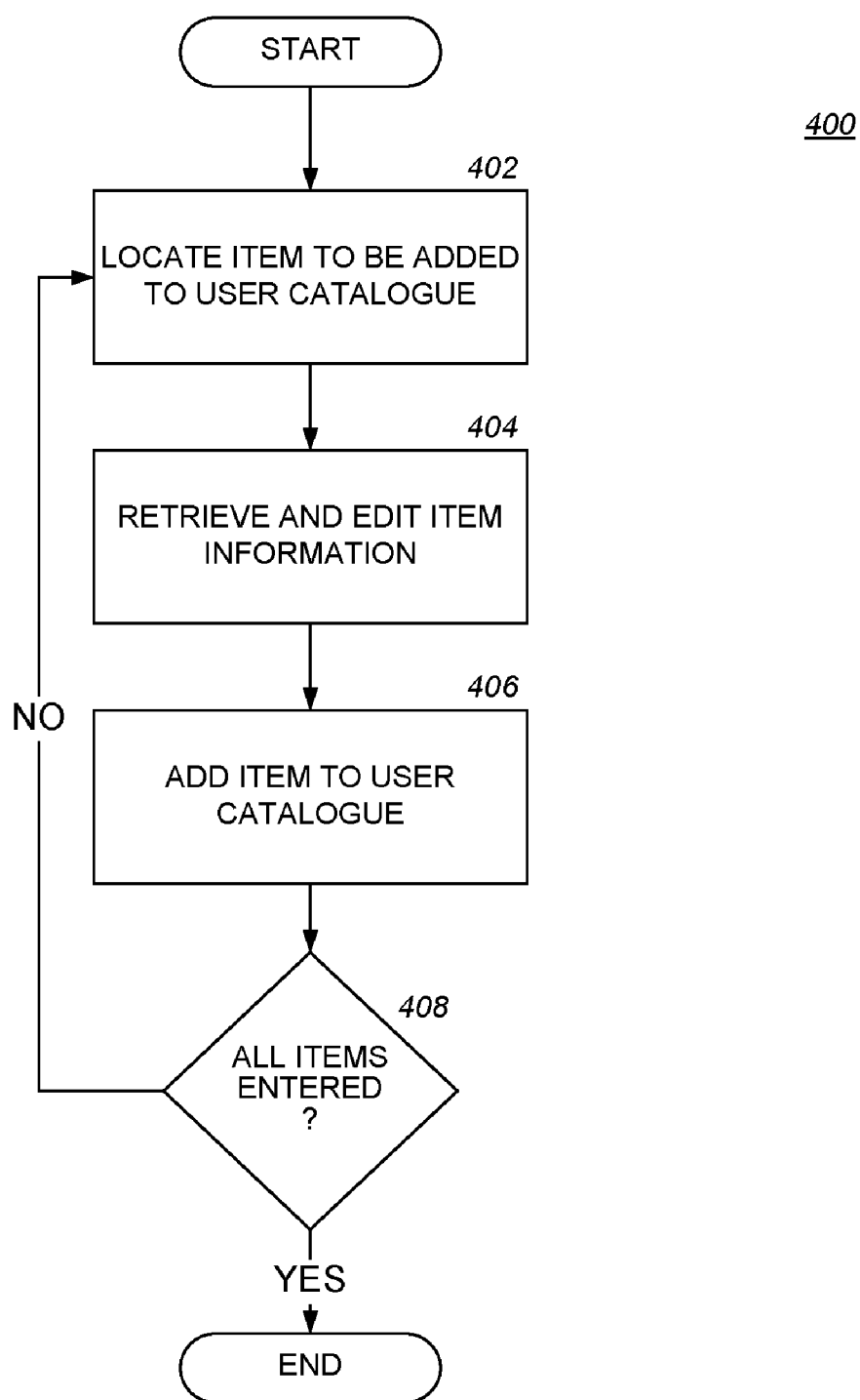


FIG. 3

**FIG. 4**

500

12

Build: Add Product Images, Descriptions & Prices

Category: [Please Select]

Item Name: []

Key Words: []

Item Description: []

Quantity: []

Condition: [Please Select]

Preference: Sell, Trade, Accept Cash Offer

Unit Price: 0 (USD) 00.00

Min Price: 0 (USD) 00.00

Is Shipping included in price? Yes or No

Cost to ship this item 0 (USD) 00.00

Start Date: []

End Date: []

Image URL: []

Image: [Browse]

Don't have an image? See Quick List

Add picture or video from
YOUR OWN ONLINE MULTIMEDIA SERVICE
[]

Quick List

Don't have an image and description for your product? Search from our Master List of Images.

Browse: [Please Categories]

Description, Name or Key Words: []

[]

Import eBay or Yahoo Stores

☒ eBay ☐ Yahoo

Enter eBay Store Name: []

.OR.

Import eBay Store XML File: [Browse]

Don't know where to get that file?
eBay | Yahoo

[]

510

544

540

570

FIG. 5

Build: Add Product Images, Descriptions & Prices

542

Add Listing

Category: [Please Select]

Item Name:

Key Words:

Item Description:

Don't have a description? See Quick List

Quantity:

Condition: [Please Select]

Preference:

Unit Price: (USD) 00.00

Min Price: (USD) 00.00

Is Shipping included in price? Yes or No ☐

Cost to ship this item (USD) 00.00

Start Date:

End Date:

Image URL:

Image:

Don't have an image? See Quick List

Add picture or video from

YOUR OWN ONLINE MULTIMEDIA SERVICE

510

Quick List

Don't have an image and description for your product? Search from our Master List of images.

Browse:

Description, Name or Key Words:

Import eBay or Yahoo Stores

Import eBay Store Name:

OR

Import eBay Store XML File:

Don't know where to get this file?
Ebay | Yahoo

544

540

Quick List Search Results

Click to add the image and description to your listing

In Lost Planet, human soldier pilotes navigate VS (Vital Suits) through treble ice-covered environments, fighting against the indigenous Akrid creatures [...]

Lara Croft Tomb Raider: Legend brings back the gaming world's sexiest and most intrepid adventurer. Follow Lara down a path of discovery as she travels [...]

It's your turn to appear on the intergalactic TV sensation, Fusion Fantasy in Fusion Fantasy 2. you play for huge prize money and a chance to save your [...]

Lara Croft Tomb Raider: Legend brings back the gaming world's sexiest and most intrepid adventurer. Follow Lara down a path of discovery as she travels [...]

It's your turn to appear on the intergalactic TV sensation, Fusion Fantasy in Fusion Fantasy 2. you play for huge prize money and a chance to save your [...]

672

FIG. 6

570

12

Build: Add Product Images, Descriptions & Prices

Add Listing

*Category: [Please Select]

*Item Name: []

Key Words: []

Item Description: []

Don't have a description? See Quick List

*Quantity: []

*Condition: [Please Select]

Preference: Sell, Trade, Accept Cash Offer

Unit Price: 0 (USD) 00.00

Min Price: 0 (USD) 00.00

Is Shipping included in price? Yes or No

Cost to ship this item 0 (USD) 00.00

Start Date: []

End Date: []

Image URL: []

Image: [Browse]

Don't have an image? See Quick List

Add picture or video from

YOUR OWN ONLINE MULTIMEDIA SERVICE

[]

410

Quick List

Don't have an image and description for your product? Search from our Master List of images.

Browse: [Please Categories]

Description, Name or Key Words: []

[]

Import eBay or Yahoo Stores

ebay Yahoo

Enter eBay Store Name: []

- OR -

Import eBay Store XML File: [Browse]

Don't know where to get this file?

Ebay | Yahoo

[]

444

440

Imported eBay Items

Click to add your eBay items to your listing.

776

772

774

Copy to Listing Form Add directly to Store

Lara Craft Tomb Raider. Legend brings back the gaming world's sexiest and most irrepressible adventurer. Follow Lara down a path of discovery as she travels [...]

Copy to Listing Form Add directly to Store

It's your turn to appear on the intergalactic TV sensation, Fusion Frenzy! In Fusion Frenzy 2, you play for huge prize money and a chance to save your [...]

Copy to Listing Form Add directly to Store

Lara Craft Tomb Raider. Legend brings back the gaming world's sexiest and most irrepressible adventurer. Follow Lara down a path of discovery as she travels [...]

Copy to Listing Form Add directly to Store

It's your turn to appear on the intergalactic TV sensation, Fusion Frenzy! In Fusion Frenzy 2, you play for huge prize money and a chance to save your [...]

Copy to Listing Form Add directly to Store

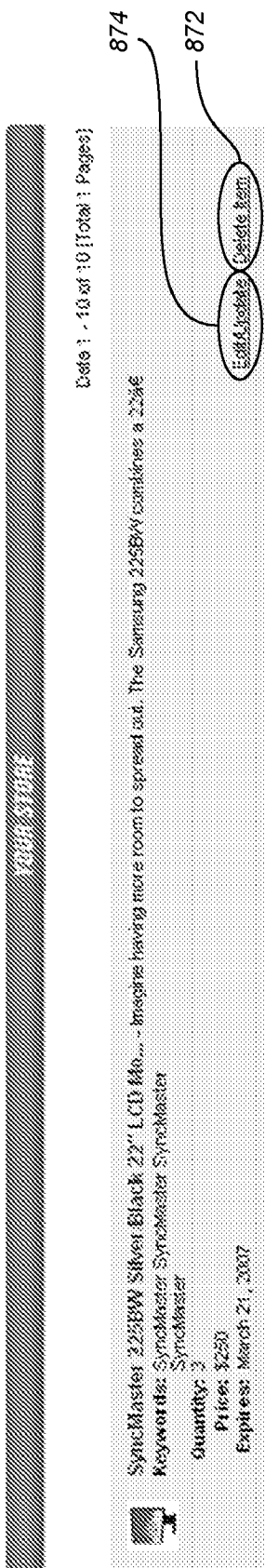
778

448 Selected to Store

470

FIG. 7

800



Def: - 10 of 10 (Total: Pages)

SynMaster 2284 Silver Black 22" LCD Hk... - machine having more room to spread out. The Samsung 2284 condense a 22" E

133569645 442204045 261000424

10

2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029 2030 2031 2032 2033 2034 2035 2036 2037 2038 2039 2040 2041 2042 2043 2044 2045 2046 2047 2048 2049 2050 2051 2052 2053 2054 2055 2056 2057 2058 2059 2060 2061 2062 2063 2064 2065 2066 2067 2068 2069 2070 2071 2072 2073 2074 2075 2076 2077 2078 2079 2080 2081 2082 2083 2084 2085 2086 2087 2088 2089 2090 2091 2092 2093 2094 2095 2096 2097 2098 2099 2100 2101 2102 2103 2104 2105 2106 2107 2108 2109 2110 2111 2112 2113 2114 2115 2116 2117 2118 2119 2120 2121 2122 2123 2124 2125 2126 2127 2128 2129 2130 2131 2132 2133 2134 2135 2136 2137 2138 2139 2140 2141 2142 2143 2144 2145 2146 2147 2148 2149 2150 2151 2152 2153 2154 2155 2156 2157 2158 2159 2160 2161 2162 2163 2164 2165 2166 2167 2168 2169 2170 2171 2172 2173 2174 2175 2176 2177 2178 2179 2180 2181 2182 2183 2184 2185 2186 2187 2188 2189 2190 2191 2192 2193 2194 2195 2196 2197 2198 2199 2200 2201 2202 2203 2204 2205 2206 2207 2208 2209 2210 2211 2212 2213 2214 2215 2216 2217 2218 2219 2220 2221 2222 2223 2224 2225 2226 2227 2228 2229 2230 2231 2232 2233 2234 2235 2236 2237 2238 2239 2240 2241 2242 2243 2244 2245 2246 2247 2248 2249 2250 2251 2252 2253 2254 2255 2256 2257 2258 2259 2260 2261 2262 2263 2264 2265 2266 2267 2268 2269 2270 2271 2272 2273 2274 2275 2276 2277 2278 2279 2280 2281 2282 2283 2284 2285 2286 2287 2288 2289 2290 2291 2292 2293 2294 2295 2296 2297 2298 2299 2300 2301 2302 2303 2304 2305 2306 2307 2308 2309 2310 2311 2312 2313 2314 2315 2316 2317 2318 2319 2320 2321 2322 2323 2324 2325 2326 2327 2328 2329 2330 2331 2332 2333 2334 2335 2336 2337 2338 2339 2340 2341 2342 2343 2344 2345 2346 2347 2348 2349 2350 2351 2352 2353 2354 2355 2356 2357 2358 2359 2360 2361 2362 2363 2364 2365 2366 2367 2368 2369 2370 2371 2372 2373 2374 2375 2376 2377 2378 2379 2380 2381 2382 2383 2384 2385 2386 2387 2388 2389 2390 2391 2392 2393 2394 2395 2396 2397 2398 2399 2400 2401 2402 2403 2404 2405 2406 2407 2408 2409 2410 2411 2412 2413 2414 2415 2416 2417 2418 2419 2420 2421 2422 2423 2424 2425 2426 2427 2428 2429 2430 2431 2432 2433 2434 2435 2436 2437 2438 2439 2440 2441 2442 2443 2444 2445 2446 2447 2448 2449 2450 2451 2452 2453 2454 2455 2456 2457 2458 2459 2460 2461 2462 2463 2464 2465 2466 2467 2468 2469 2470 2471 2472 2473 2474 2475 2476 2477 2478 2479 2480 2481 2482 2483 2484 2485 2486 2487 2488 2489 2490 2491 2492 2493 2494 2495 2496 2497 2498 2499 2500 2501 2502 2503 2504 2505 2506 2507 2508 2509 2510 2511 2512 2513 2514 2515 2516 2517 2518 2519 2520 2521 2522 2523 2524 2525 2526 2527 2528 2529 2530 2531 2532 2533 2534 2535 2536 2537 2538 2539 2540 2541 2542 2543 2544 2545 2546 2547 2548 2549 2550 2551 2552 2553 2554 2555 2556 2557 2558 2559 2560 2561 2562 2563 2564 2565 2566 2567 2568 2569 2570 2571 2572 2573 2574 2575 2576 2577 2578 2579 2580 2581 2582 2583 2584 2585 2586 2587 2588 2589 2590 2591 2592 2593 2594 2595 2596 2597 2598 2599 2600 2601 2602 2603 2604 2605 2606 2607 2608 2609 2610 2611 2612 2613 2614 2615 2616 2617 2618 2619 2620 2621 2622 2623 2624 2625 2626 2627 2628 2629 2630 2631 2632 2633 2634 2635 2636 2637 2638 2639 2640 2641 2642 2643 2644 2645 2646 2647 2648 2649 2650 2651 2652 2653 2654 2655 2656 2657 2658 2659 2660 2661 2662 2663 2664 2665 2666 2667 2668 2669 2670 2671 2672 2673 2674 2675 2676 2677 2678 2679 2680 2681 2682 2683 2684 2685 2686 2687 2688 2689 2690 2691 2692 2693 2694 2695 2696 2697 2698 2699 2700 2701 2702 2703 2704 2705 2706 2707 2708 2709 2710 2711 2712 2713 2714 2715 2716 2717 2718 2719 2720 2721 2722 2723 2724 2725 2726 2727 2728 2729 2730 2731 2732 2733 2734 2735 2736 2737 2738 2739 2740 2741 2742 2743 2744 2745 2746 2747 2748 2749 2750 2751 2752 2753 2754 2755 2756 2757 2758 2759 2760 2761 2762 2763 2764 2765 2766 2767 2768 2769 2770 2771 2772 2773 2774 2775 2776 2777 2778 2779 2780 2781 2782 2783 2784 2785 2786 2787 2788 2789 2790 2791 2792 2793 2794 2795 2796 2797 2798 2799 2800 2801 2802 2803 2804 2805 2806 2807 2808 2809 2810 2811 2812 2813 2814 2815 2816 2817 2818

Index 2078

2004 4/10/05 2:40:00

Keywords: Dell UltraSharp 2407WFP 24-Inch Flat Panel LCD Monitor... The Dell UltraSharp 2407WFP 24-Inch Flat Panel LCD Monitor is a wide aspect desktop display that redefines the performance of LCD displays with a stylish Dell industrial design, and advanced hardware.

2024

23000000

Price:

Exhibits

[illegible]

DATE RECEIVED 04/18/2006 BY: L. C. FARRER

1025697-331 1025698-331 1025699-331 1025700-331

2000

35212 10/1/83

Expires: Nov 01, 2007

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 97. *Chlorophyll arz* (Chl *arz*)
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 108. *Chlorophyll abz* (Chl *abz*)
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 113. *Chlorophyll agz* (Chl *agz*)
 114. *Chlorophyll ahz* (Chl *ahz*)
 115. *Chlorophyll aiz* (Chl *aiz*)
 116. *Chlorophyll ajz* (Chl *ajz*)
 117. *Chlorophyll akz* (Chl *akz*)
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 119. *Chlorophyll amz* (Chl *amz*)
 120. *Chlorophyll anz* (Chl *anz*)
 121. *Chlorophyll aoz* (Chl *aoz*)
 122. *Chlorophyll apz* (Chl *apz*)
 123. *Chlorophyll aqz* (Chl *aqz*)
 124. *Chlorophyll arz* (Chl *arz*)
 125. *Chlorophyll asz* (Chl *asz*)
 126. *Chlorophyll atz* (Chl *atz*)
 127. *Chlorophyll auz* (Chl *auz*)
 128. *Chlorophyll avz* (Chl *avz*)
 129. *Chlorophyll awz* (Chl *awz*)
 130. *Chlorophyll axz* (Chl *axz*)
 131. *Chlorophyll ayz* (Chl *ayz*)
 132. *Chlorophyll ayz* (Chl *ayz*)
 133.

SECRET

876

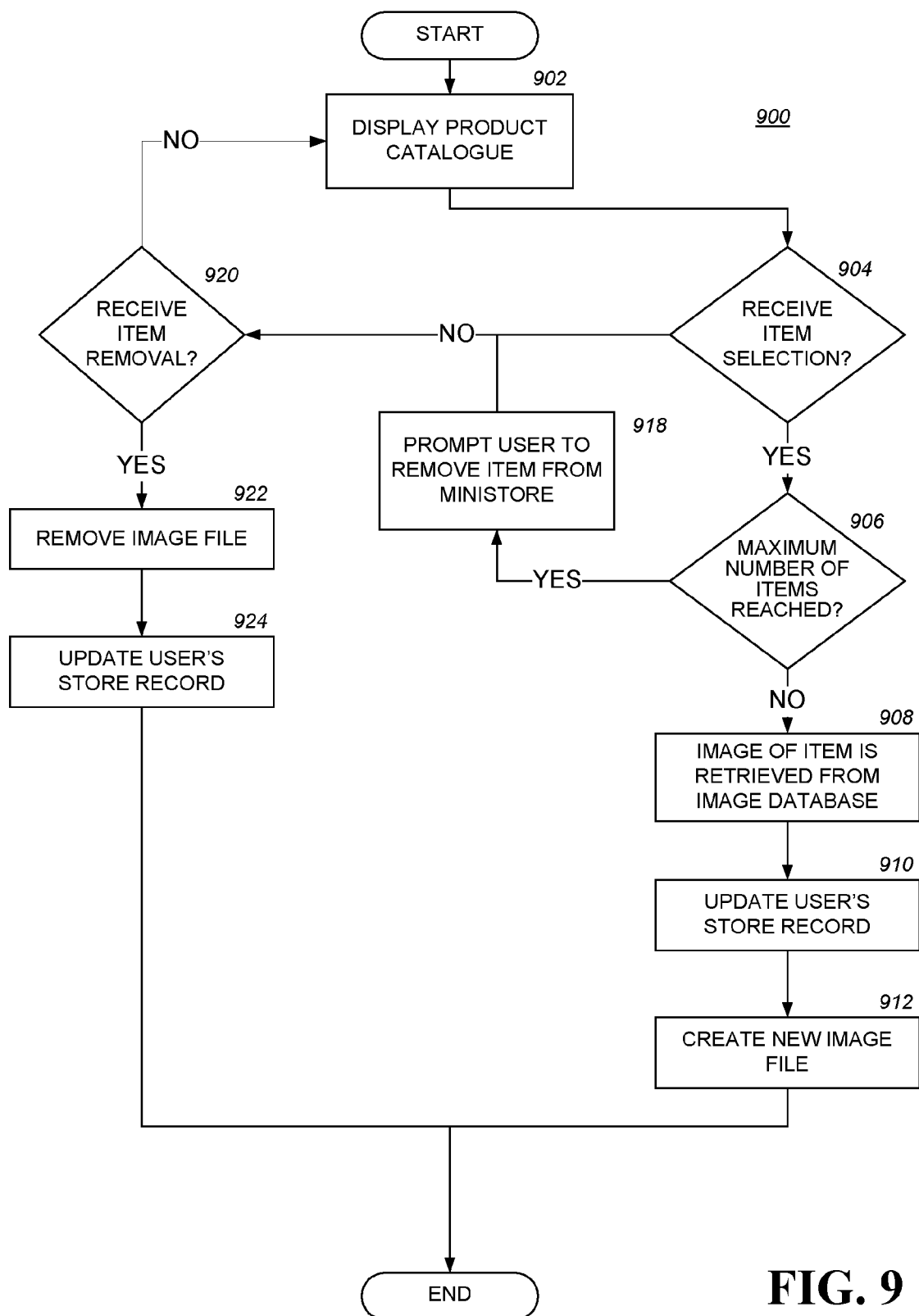


FIG. 9

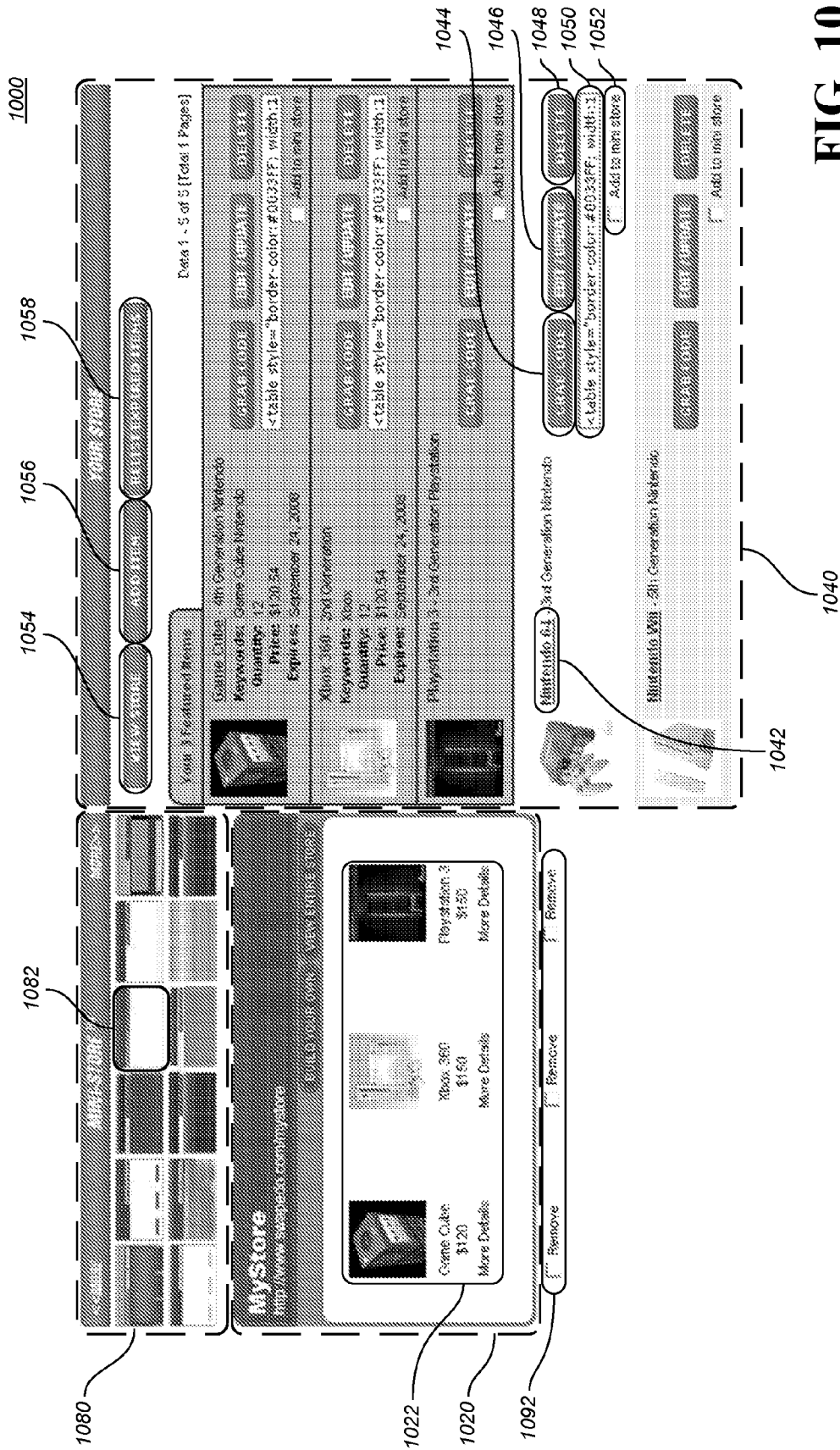


FIG. 10

1100

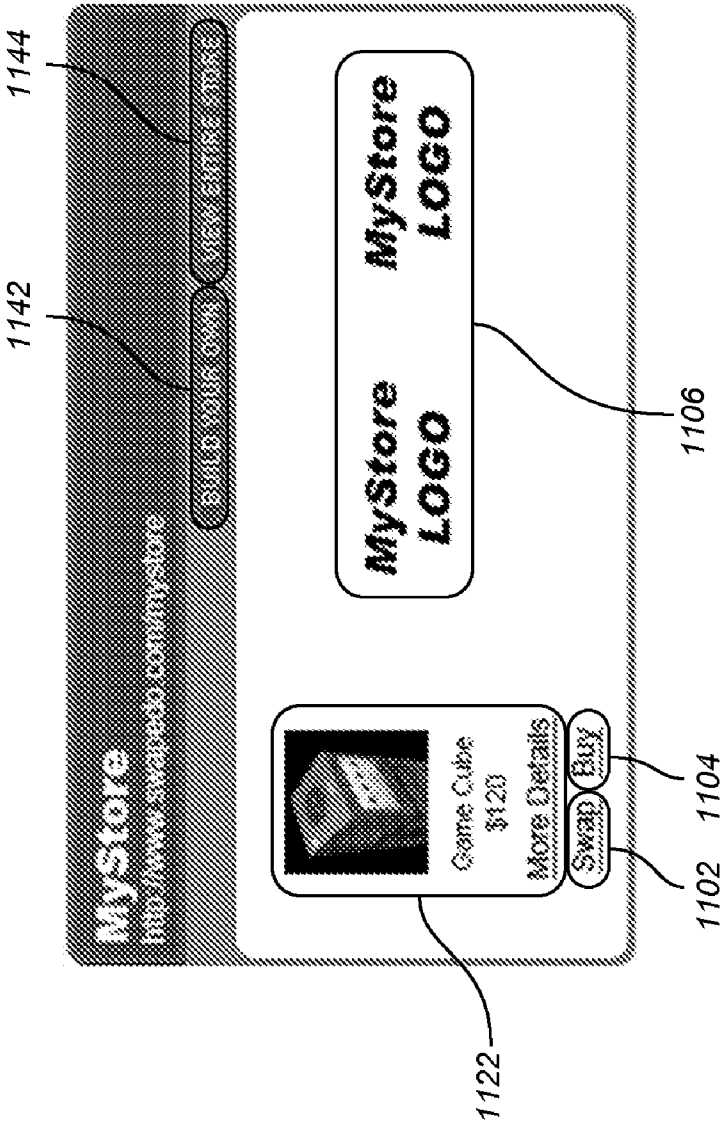


FIG. 11

1100

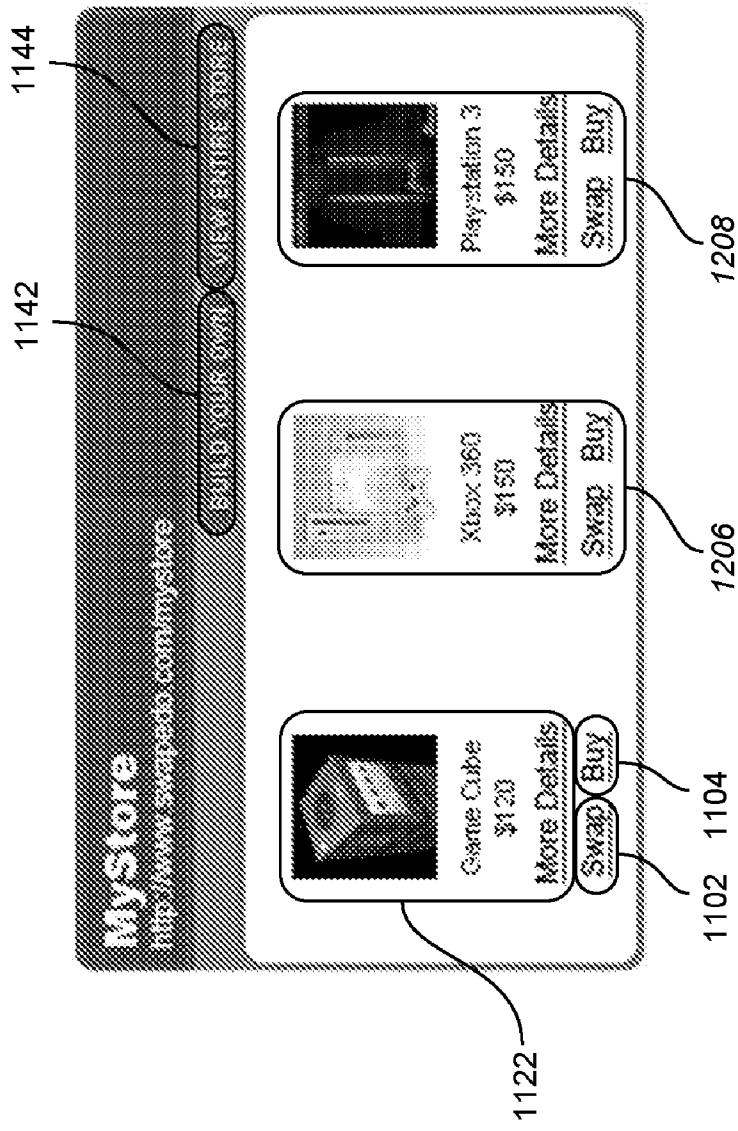
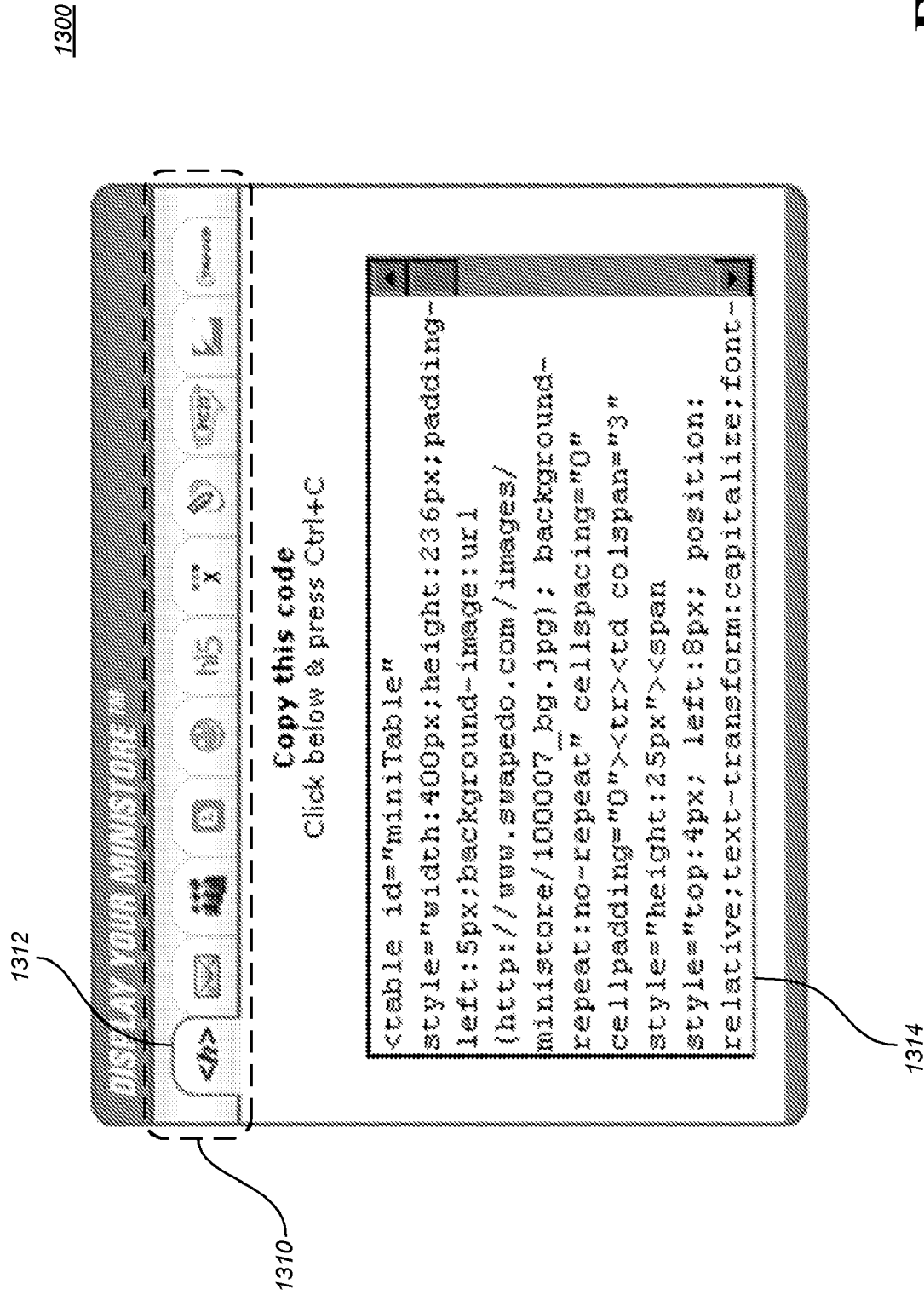
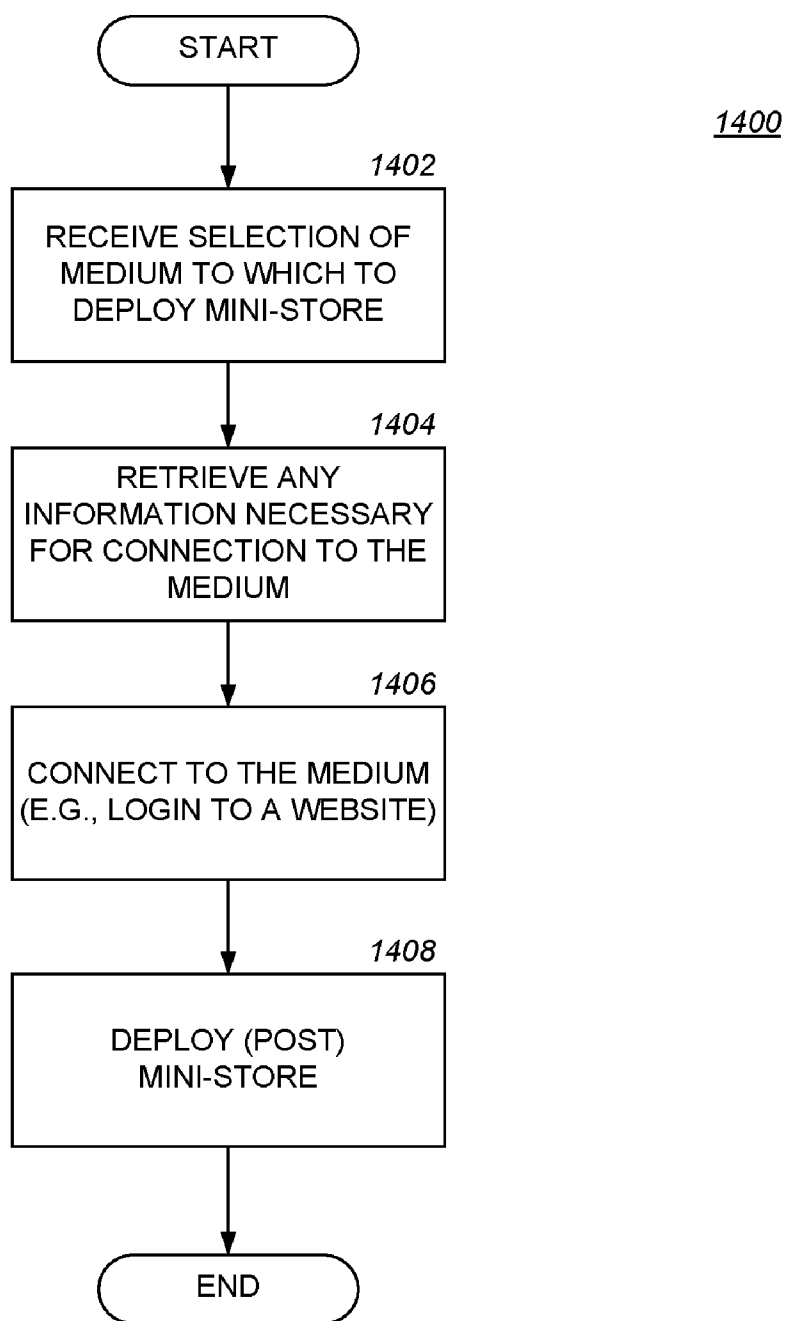


FIG. 12



**FIG. 14**

1300

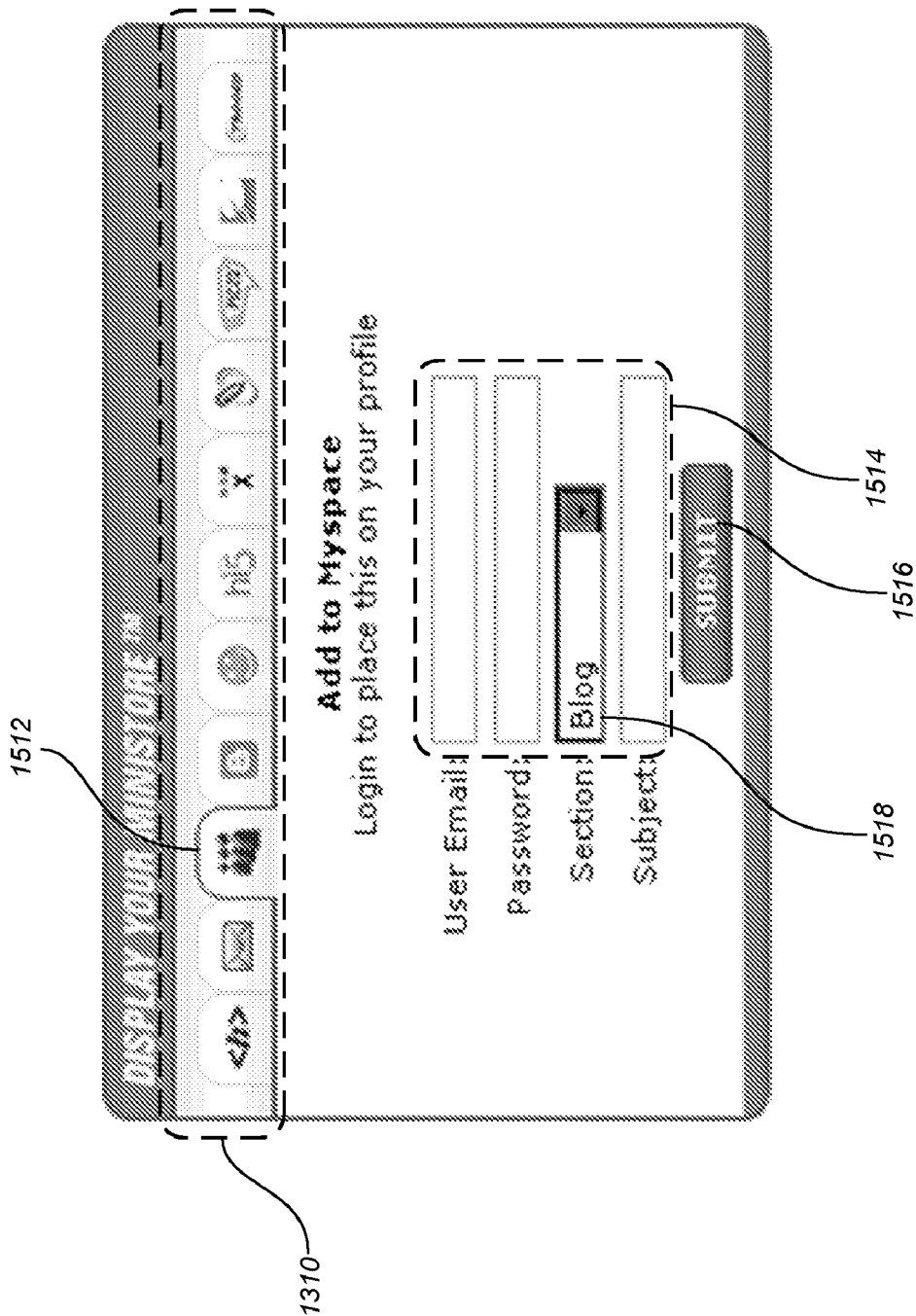


FIG. 15

1300

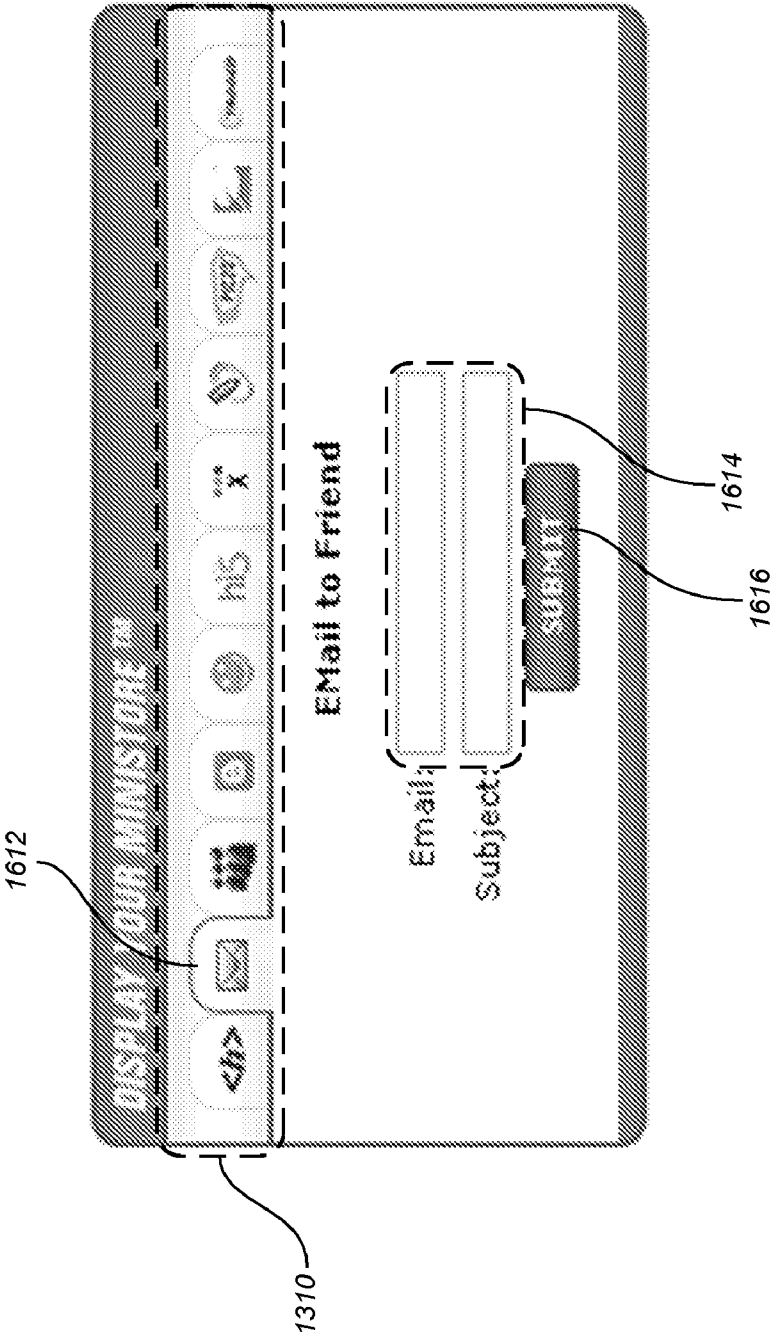
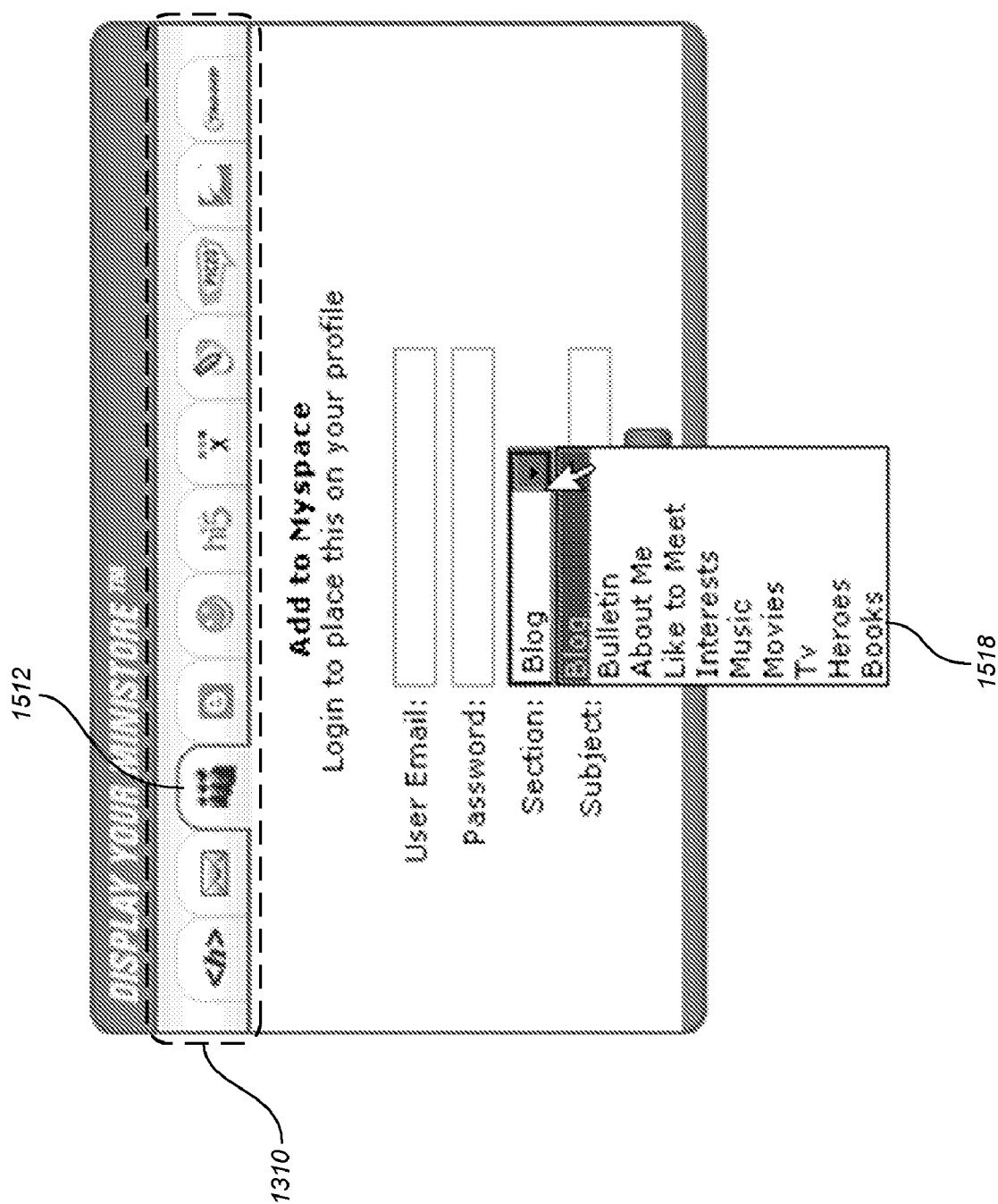


FIG. 16

1300



1512

1310-

1518

FIG. 17

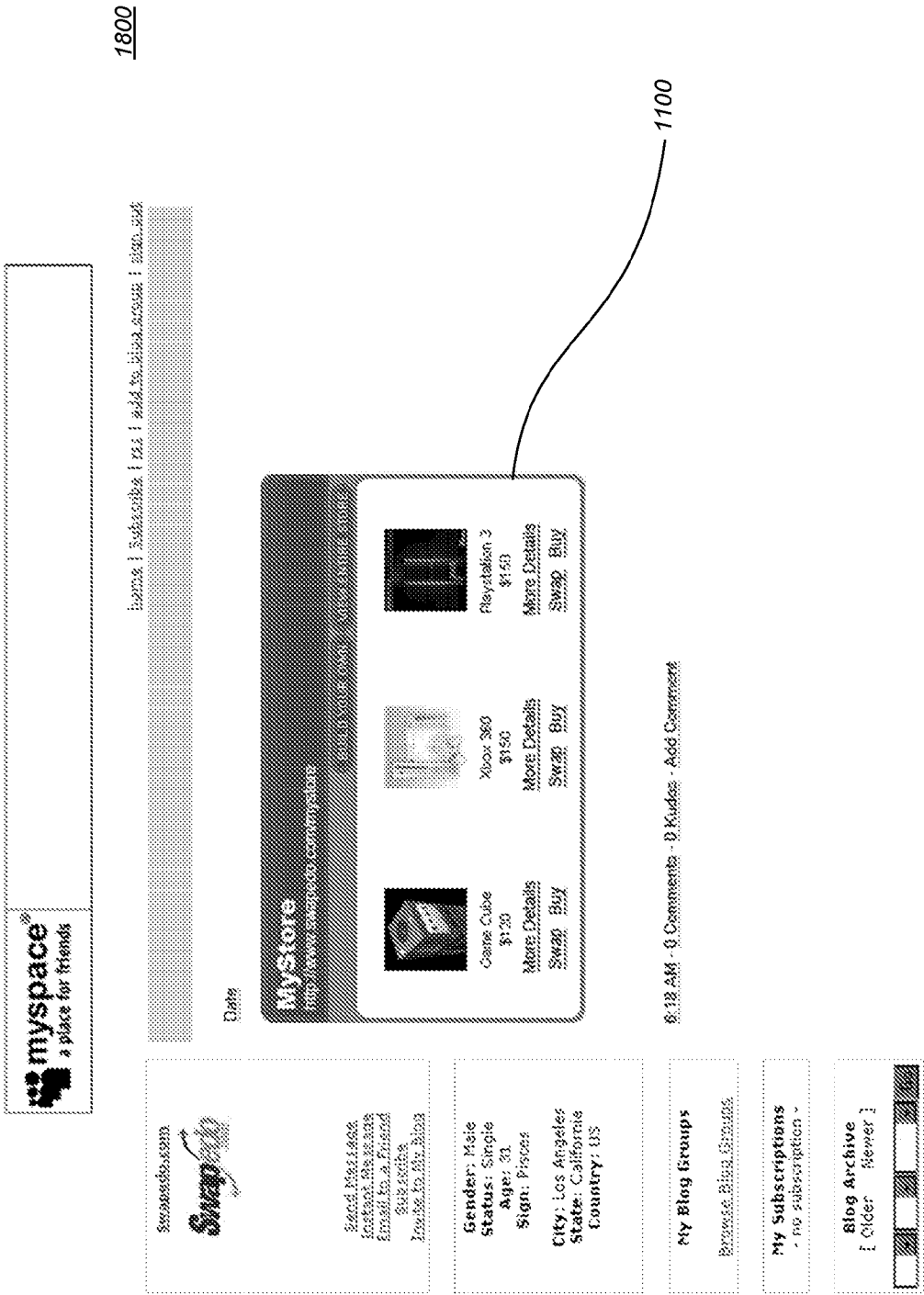


FIG. 18

About | FAQ | Terms | Privacy | Safety Tips | Contact Myspace | Promote! | Advertise | Myspace Shop
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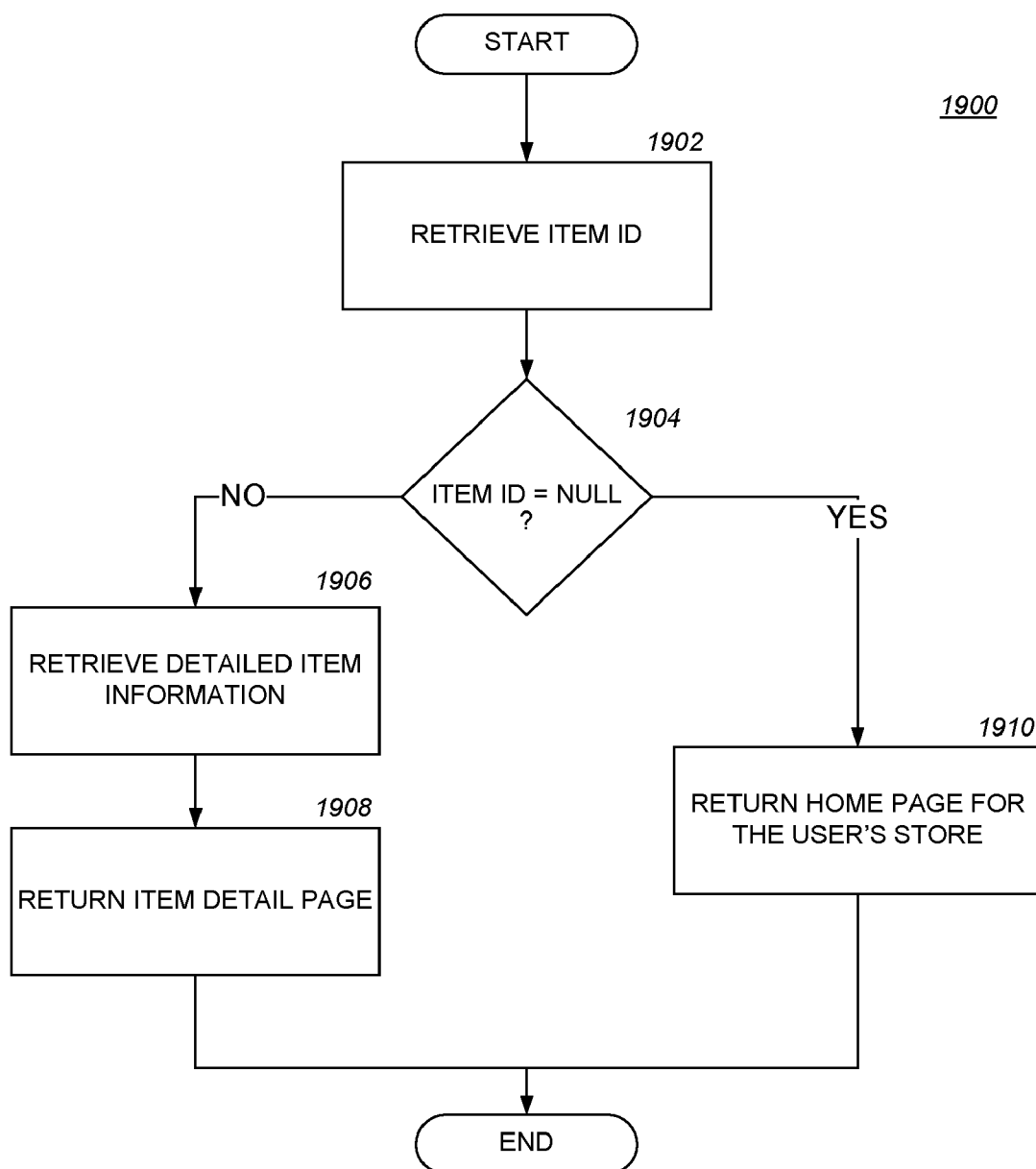
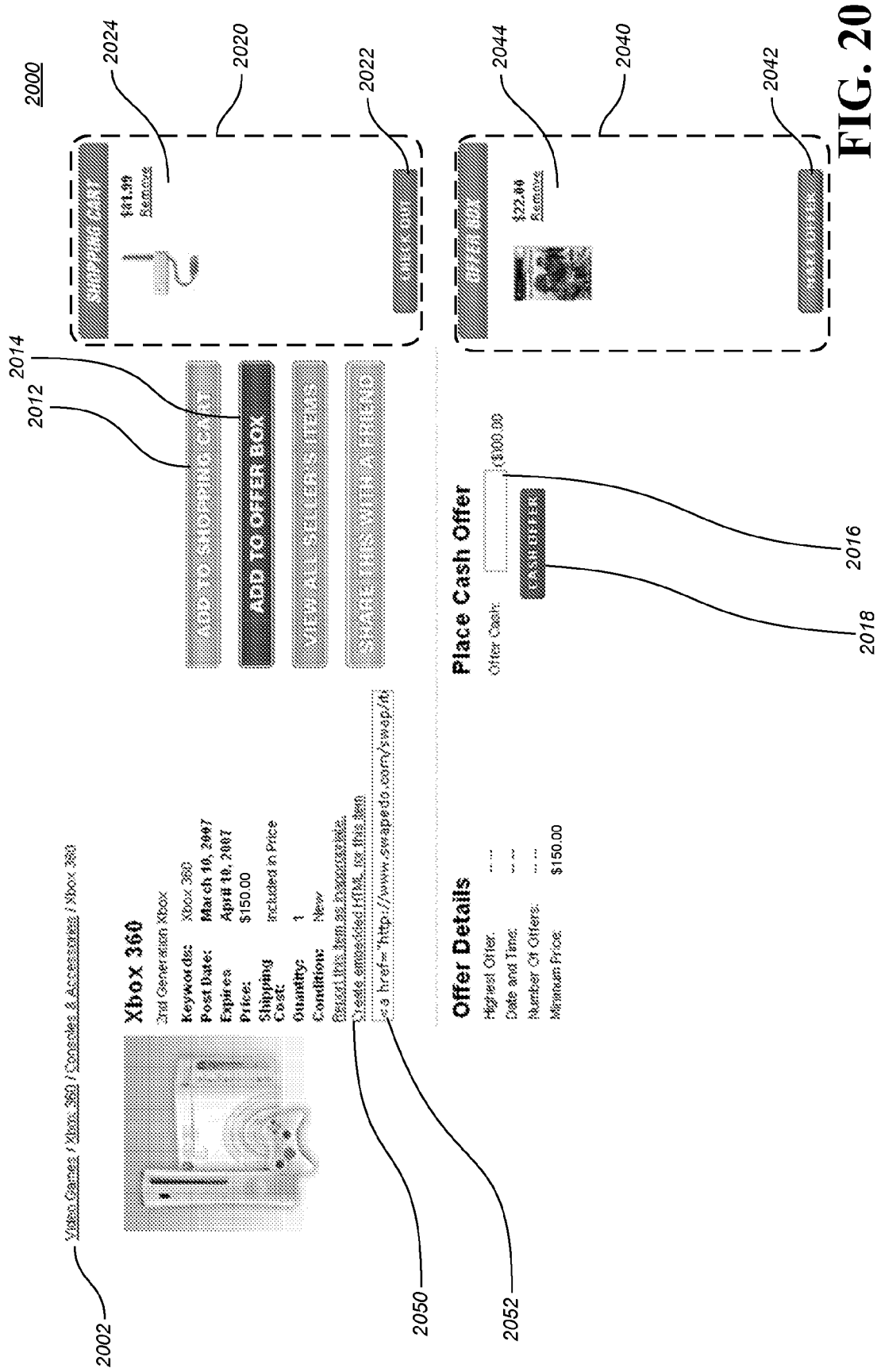
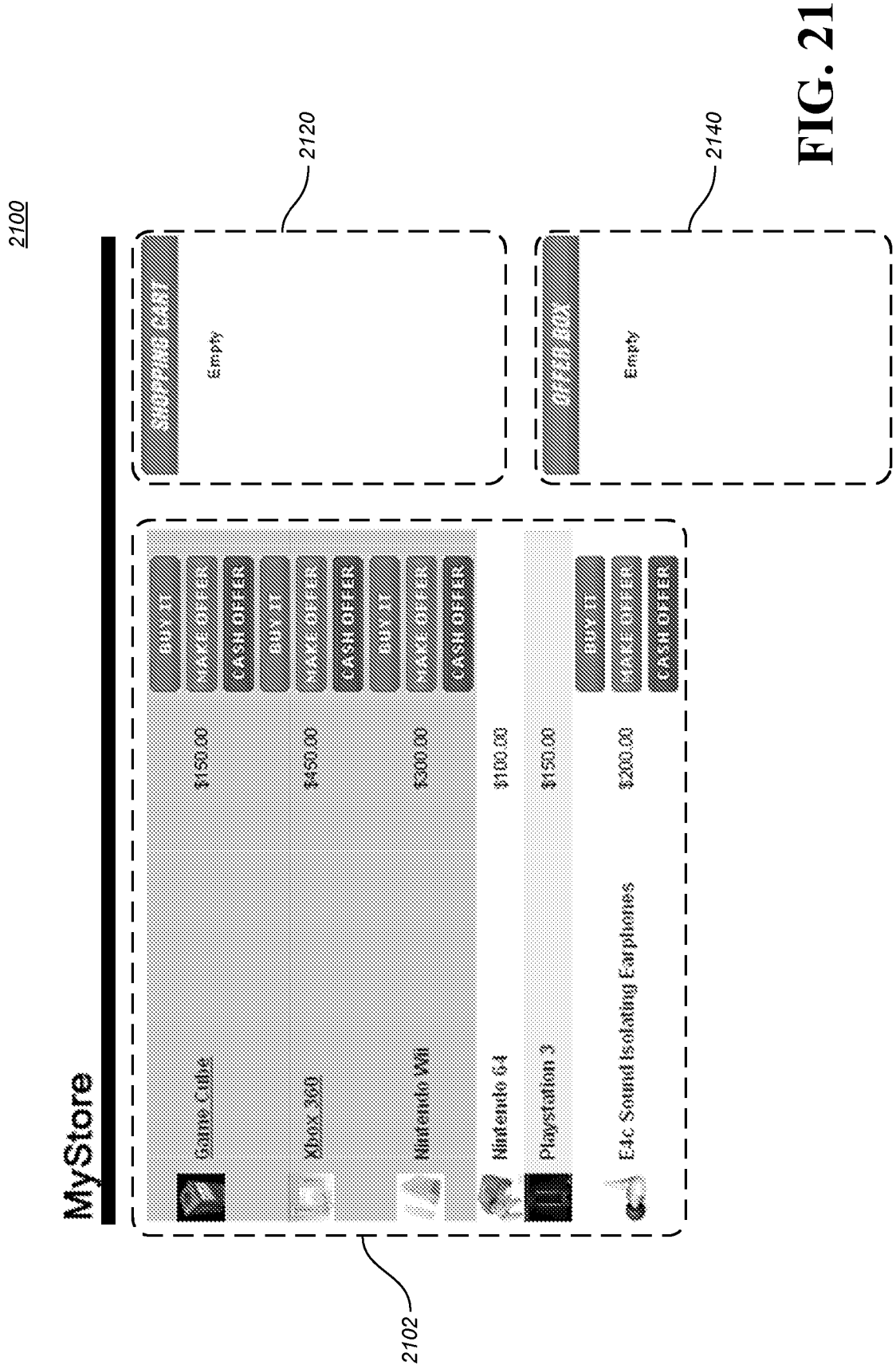


FIG. 19





SYSTEM FOR SUPPORTING ELECTRONIC COMMERCE IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

BACKGROUND

[0001] 1. Field

[0002] The present invention relates generally to electronic commerce systems, and more particularly, to a system for supporting electronic commerce in social networks.

[0003] 2. Background

[0004] Social networking websites have become extremely popular. These websites allow users to create and post a personal profile online using one or more webpages hosted by the social networking website. Typically, these webpages contain certain sections into which a user can insert Hyper-Text Markup Language (HTML) code. Electronic commerce sites allowing users to post and sell their own items (or items on which they receive a commission) have also become popular. However, the integration of the functionality provided by these two types of sites have been difficult.

[0005] For example, users may post Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) links referencing products for sale on a third-party site (e.g., a user may place HTML code on the webpages of their personal profiles that allow visitors to be directed to the webpage containing information about the product). However, these links, which are static in nature, require the user to update their personal profiles when the user wishes to change the item for sale or when the item is no longer available. Otherwise, when visitors attempt to access the products posted by the user, they will be directed to an item that is no longer for sale (e.g., an item that is being auctioned having been sold or the auction having expired). Thus, current systems do not provide the functionality of providing updated product references.

[0006] Further, creating attractive product listings on their personal profile pages usually requires users to learn HTML programming. The users also typically must gather the product information for the items they wish to sell, including any pictures or other graphics they desire to display on their store. In addition, the user has to find a location to store those elements, which is another item that the user has to maintain.

[0007] It would be desirable to address the deficiencies noted above.

SUMMARY OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0008] The present invention provides users the ability to add commerce capability (e.g., buy and sell goods and services) and syndicate product information to numerous social network third-party websites. In one preferred embodiment, the present invention is embodied in a system having a computer including a processor and a memory coupled to the processor, wherein the memory including computer-readable code that, when executed, will cause the processor to perform a method for offering a plurality of items for commerce, wherein each of the items in the plurality of items includes an item identifier usable to reference that item. The method includes storing a first item identifier for the at least one of the plurality of items in a first predetermined location in a computer memory; associating a first image with the at least one of the plurality of items; and assigning a first name to the first image based on the first predetermined location in the computer memory. The method also includes creating a first ref-

erence link having the first name assigned to the first image; and, deploying the first reference link.

[0009] In another preferred embodiment, the present invention is embodied in a method for offering a plurality of items for commerce, wherein each of the items in the plurality of items includes an item identifier usable to reference that item, the method including storing a first item identifier for the at least one of the plurality of items in a first predetermined location in a computer memory; associating a first image with the at least one of the plurality of items; and assigning a first name to the first image based on the first predetermined location in the computer memory. The method then includes creating a first reference link including the first name assigned to the first image; and, deploying the first reference link.

[0010] In yet another preferred embodiment, the present invention is embodied in an apparatus having a computer-readable medium with instructions stored thereon that, when executed by a computer, causes the computer to execute a method for offering a plurality of items for commerce, wherein each of the items in the plurality of items includes an item identifier usable to reference that item. The method includes storing a first item identifier for the at least one of the plurality of items in a first predetermined location in a computer memory; associating a first image with the at least one of the plurality of items; and assigning a first name to the first image based on the first predetermined location in the computer memory. The method then includes creating a first reference link including the first name assigned to the first image; and, deploying the first reference link.

[0011] Other objects, features and advantages will become apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description. It is to be understood, however, that the detailed description and specific examples, while indicating exemplary embodiments of a social commerce deployment network, are given by way of illustration and not limitation. Many changes and modifications within the scope of the following description may be made without departing from the spirit thereof, and the description should be understood to include all such variations.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] The invention may be more readily understood by referring to the accompanying drawings in which:

[0013] FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating a system for implementing commerce for social networks configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0014] FIG. 2 is a block diagram of a computer system configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0015] FIG. 3 is a flow diagram of a social network commerce implementation process configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0016] FIG. 4 is a flow diagram of a catalogue builder process configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0017] FIG. 5 is a screenshot of a catalogue builder graphical user interface (GUI) configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0018] FIG. 6 is a screenshot of the catalogue builder GUI of FIG. 5 after a search has been performed on a product information database in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0019] FIG. 7 is a screenshot of the catalogue builder GUI of FIG. 5 after a store listing has been imported in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0020] FIG. 8 is a screenshot of a catalogue built using the catalogue builder GUI of FIG. 5 in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0021] FIG. 9 is a flow diagram of a mini-store builder process configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0022] FIG. 10 is a screenshot of a mini-store builder GUI configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0023] FIG. 11 is a screenshot of a user mini-store being configured using the mini-store builder GUI of FIG. 10 in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0024] FIG. 12 is a screenshot of a second version of the user mini-store of FIG. 11 having been updated using the mini-store builder GUI of FIG. 10 in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0025] FIG. 13 is a screenshot of a mini-store placement tool GUI configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention for deploying the user mini-store that was created using the mini-store builder GUI of FIG. 10;

[0026] FIG. 14 is a flow diagram of the mini-store placement tool process configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention for deploying the user mini-store on a third-party website;

[0027] FIG. 15 is a screenshot of the mini-store placement tool GUI configured in accordance with another preferred embodiment of the present invention for deploying the user mini-store on a third-party website;

[0028] FIG. 16 is a screenshot of the mini-store placement tool GUI configured in accordance with another preferred embodiment of the present invention for deploying the user mini-store in an e-mail message;

[0029] FIG. 17 is a screenshot of the mini-store placement tool GUI of FIG. 15 where a pull-down menu with options specific to the third-party website is displayed;

[0030] FIG. 18 is a screenshot of the user mini-store of FIG. 12 as deployed on the third-party website in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0031] FIG. 19 is a flow diagram of a item detail information retrieval process configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0032] FIG. 20 is a screenshot of an item detail information display GUI configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0033] FIG. 21 is a screenshot of a store home page GUI for the user configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0034] Like numerals refer to like parts throughout the several views of the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0035] In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, a mechanism referred to as a “mini-store” is used to allow users to add commerce capabilities to their personal webpages on third-party websites such as social network websites. The mini-stores provide small dynamic sections on their webpages to allow users to offer items for sale or trade. To add a mini-store to a third-party website, a user will add

lines of HyperText Markup Language (HTML) code to the source file of the user's personal page on the third-party website.

[0036] For example, websites such as myspace.com or friendster.com allow users to edit the HTML code that is displayed on their profile page. Mini-stores may be deployed on any website that allows users to insert their own custom HTML code. After the code has been added, the mini-store will display items that the user wishes to sell or trade and be dynamically updatable. Through the use of the mini-store, users will attract others to view all the items they have for sale. The present invention also allows users to create and manage multiple mini-stores that can be customized for various third-party sites. For example, each customized version of a mini-store will include a different predetermined set of items selected from a product catalogue. These mini-stores act as portals from the third-party site to the user's complete store.

[0037] Mini-stores are also displayable in e-mail, instant messaging (IM), short messaging service (SMS) and other applications where web-based code may be displayed. For example, the user can display a mini-store in the content (e.g., body or signature area) of their e-mails. A user may also display a mini-store in a SMS message. Similar to the implementation of a mini-store on a third-party website, the displayed mini-store will include a link to allow a recipient of the message to go to a complete store website where the full list of items (and their details) may be viewed.

[0038] FIG. 1 illustrates a system architecture 100 in which one preferred embodiment of the present invention may be implemented, including a server system 102 having a web server 110 and a database server 120. A client 152 and a client 154 are coupled for communications with the server system 102 through a network 150. Multiple server systems and clients, as well as other computer systems may also be coupled to the server system 102 through the network 150. For example, FIG. 1 also shows a web server 172 hosting a social network website and a web server 174 hosting a blogging website coupled to the network 150. Other web servers hosting other types of websites, although not shown, may be coupled for communication with the systems connected to the network 150. As described herein, a user, using software on a client computer such as a browser application on the client 152, interacts with the server system 102.

[0039] The network 150 represents a variety of networks that may include one or more local area networks as well as wide area networks. The functionality provided by the web server 110, the database server 120, the client 152 and the client 154, as well as by any other computer systems necessary in the network 150, may be implemented using a computer system having the characteristics of the computer system described herein. It should be noted, however, that the specific implementation of the computer system or systems used to describe the present invention is not to be limiting unless otherwise specifically noted. For example, the functionality provided by the web server 110 and the database server 120 may be provided by one computer system. Further, the functionality provided by the web server 110 and the database server 120 may be distributed over several computer systems.

[0040] In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the database server 120 is implemented as a relational database management system that support the Structured Query Language (SQL) standard as adopted by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the International

Organization for Standardization (ISO) to create, retrieve, update and delete data. As part of the description, terms such as “foreign key” and “table” will be used. In the context of relational databases, a table is a set of data elements (values) that is organized using a model of horizontal rows and vertical columns. The columns are identified by name, and the rows are identified by the values appearing in a particular column subset that has been identified as a candidate key, which is a field or combination of fields that can act as a primary key field for that table to uniquely identify each row, or “record,” in that table. A foreign key is a referential constraint between two tables. The foreign key identifies a column or a set of columns in one (referencing) table that refers to a column or set of columns in another (referenced) table. The columns in the referenced table must form a primary key or unique key. The values in one row of the referencing columns must occur in a single row in the referenced table. Thus, a row in the referencing table cannot contain values that do not exist in the referenced table. This way references can be made to link information together and it is an essential part of database normalization. Multiple rows in the referencing table may refer to the same row in the referenced table. Further, it should be noted that the terms “database” and “table” (both in their singular and plural form) are used interchangeably to indicate the grouping of data and does not indicate the actual configuration of the storage of the data. Thus, although the description contained herein mentions data stored in multiple databases, the data may be consolidated in one database or may be spread over multiple databases configured differently from the version described herein.

[0041] In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the database server **120** includes a product information database **122**, a catalogue database **124**, a mini-store database **126** and a user database **128**. These databases are used to store the information necessary for the implementation of the various described embodiments of the invention. For example, the catalogue database **124** stores information related to one or more user created catalogues in tables such as a user catalogue **134**; the mini-store database **126** stores information related to one or more mini-stores in records such as a user mini-store record **136**; and the user database **128** stores information related to one or more user in records such as a user record **138**.

[0042] A web server program is executed on the web server **110** to performs the web server functionality described herein, including receiving requests for retrieving or posting information from client computers (e.g., request for files or webpages, or request to post data); interacting with the database server **120** to retrieve or store any information based on the received requests; and generating and transmitting the necessary information to fulfill those requests (e.g., transmitting files or information necessary for rendering webpages, or confirmation that the data was stored).

[0043] FIG. 2 illustrates an example of a computer system **200** in which the features of the present invention may be implemented. The computer system **200** includes a bus **202** for communicating information between the components in the computer system **200**, and a processor **204** coupled with the bus **202** for executing software code, or instructions, and processing information. The computer system **200** further comprises a main memory **206**, which may be implemented using random access memory (RAM) and/or other random memory storage device, coupled to the bus **202** for storing information and instructions to be executed by the processor

204. The main memory **206** also may be used for storing temporary variables or other intermediate information during execution of instructions by the processor **204**. The computer system **200** also includes a read only memory (ROM) **208** and/or other static storage device coupled to the bus **202** for storing static information and instructions for the processor **204**.

[0044] A communication device **240** is also coupled to the bus **202** for accessing other computer systems, as described below. The communication device **240** may include a modem, a network interface card, or other well-known interface devices, such as those used for interfacing with Ethernet, Token-ring, or other types of networks. In this manner, the computer system **200** may be coupled to a number of other computer systems.

[0045] A mass storage device **210**, such as a magnetic disk drive and/or a optical disk drive, may be coupled to the computer system **200** for storing information and instructions. The computer system **200** can also be coupled via the bus **202** to a display device **234**, such as a cathode ray tube (CRT) or a liquid crystal display (LCD), for displaying information to a user so that, for example, graphical or textual information may be presented to the user on the display device **234**. Typically, an alphanumeric input device **236**, including alphanumeric and other keys, is coupled to the bus **202** for communicating information and/or user commands to the processor **204**. Another type of user input device shown in the figure is a cursor control device **238**, such as a conventional mouse, touch mouse, trackball, track pad or other type of cursor direction key for communicating direction information and command selection to the processor **204** and for controlling movement of a cursor on the display **234**. Various types of input devices, including, but not limited to, the input devices described herein unless otherwise noted, allow the user to provide command or input to the computer system **200**. For example, in the various descriptions contained herein, reference may be made to a user “selecting,” “clicking,” or “inputting,” and any grammatical variations thereof, one or more items in a user interface. These should be understood to mean that the user is using one or more input devices to accomplish the input. Although not illustrated, the computer system **200** may optionally include such devices as a video camera, speakers, a sound card, or many other conventional computer peripheral options.

[0046] As noted herein, the user may interact with the information stored in the server system **102** through browser software in the client **152**. The browser presents a graphical user interface (GUI) to the user. In the following description, the GUI is implemented using one or more webpages (which may be referred to as “pages,” “screens,” or “forms”) provided by the web server **110** accessible by the user using any Internet web browser software, such as the Internet Explorers browser provided by Microsoft Corp., on a client computer such as the client **152**. In another embodiment, one or more custom software programs can be created to implement the system described herein. Of course, the web server **110** may itself have browser software installed on it so as to be accessed by a user. Further, throughout the description of the various embodiments of the invention herein, references are made to the user performing such actions as selecting buttons, inputting information on forms, executing searches or updates on the database server **120**. In one preferred embodiment, these actions are generated by the user during the user’s interaction with the browser. For example, one or more pages described

herein includes forms that include fields in which the user may type. Once the user has provided such data, the user may select a button or link on the page to submit the information and cause an update of the database server **120** with the information. The browser will send the web server **110** the information retrieved from the user using the form, which will cause the information stored on the web server **110** and the database server **120** to be updated.

[0047] FIG. 3 illustrates a social network commerce deployment process **300** configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention where, in step **302**, a user first creates a product catalogue such as a user catalogue **134** that is stored in the catalogue database **124**. Specifically, the user builds a catalogue of products that the user wishes to offer to other peers. Then, in step **304**, the user creates a user mini-store record **136** in the mini-store database **126**. Finally, in step **306**, the user deploys the user mini-store in the social network.

[0048] The user mini-store is dynamically updatable based on the user changing or updating the user mini-store and/or the product catalogue with which the mini-store is associated even after the user mini-store has been deployed. In addition, the system allows the deployment of multiple, independent user mini-stores whether they are based on the same or different product catalogues. Thus, for example, the user may build a mini-store with products that are specifically catered to be displayed on one specific website, such as mountaineering gear for a website discussing mountaineering.

[0049] In step **302** of the social network commerce deployment process **300** as shown in FIG. 3, the user creates a product catalogue in accordance with a catalogue building process described with reference to FIG. 4, which illustrates a catalogue building process **400** configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention. In describing the catalogue building process **400**, reference will be made to FIG. 5, which illustrates a catalogue builder GUI **500** configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention that may be used in the catalogue building process **400**. It should be noted that although the catalogue building process **400** described herein specifically emphasizes the building of a catalogue containing products, the process can equally be applicable to the building of a catalogue of services as well. Thus, a services catalogue or catalogues of other types may be created. Further, it is contemplated that catalogues may be built that includes a mix of products, services, or other items of interest.

[0050] In step **402**, information for an item or "listing" to be added to the user catalogue **134** is located. Several mechanisms are disclosed herein for the user to locate the item to be added, which may be bypassed if the user wishes to manually add a listing. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the catalogue builder GUI **500** of FIG. 5 includes three main sections: an add listing section **510**, a quick entry section **540**, and, a quick entry listing section **570**. Each of these sections will now be described as a part of step **404**, during which information for the item to be added is retrieved and edited.

[0051] The add listing section **510** contains various text entry fields in which the user may enter/edit detailed information for a particular product to be entered into the user catalogue **134**. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, certain information are required from the user for each listing to be entered into the user catalogue **134**. These include a product category, including one or more subcategory,

to which the item belongs; an item name; a quantity of the item being offered; and a condition rating of the item being offered (e.g., new or used). The user may use the add listing section **510** to directly add a listing if the user has the minimum required information.

[0052] The quick entry section **540** allows the user to locate or retrieve item information from another source as an alternative to entering the information manually. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the quick entry section **540** includes two subsection: a quick list subsection **542** and a store import subsection **544**. As illustrated in the quick list subsection **542**, the user can search for product information based on a description, name or key words in a query that is run against the product information database **122** contained in the database server **120**. The key word can be based on standardized product references, including a reference conforming to the Universal Product Code (UPC), European/Japanese Article Number (EAN/JAN), Global Trade Item Number (GTIN), or International Standard Book Number (ISBN) coding systems. In addition to performing a search, the user can also browse through the product information database **122** to select a particular item to be added. In addition to retrieving product information from the product information database **122**, the user can also import information from an existing store catalogue using the store import subsection **544**. In the illustrated example, the user can import the user's store information from eBay™ or Yahoo™ by using an extensible Markup Language (XML) file that is exported from the respective service.

[0053] The quick entry listing section **570** is used to display product listing information based on either the searching or browsing performed by the user in the quick list subsection **542**, or the importing of store information from the store import subsection **544**. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, quick entry listing **570** is blank when the catalogue builder GUI **500** is initially displayed before any searches or imports has been performed by the user, as illustrated in FIG. 5. In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, messages (e.g., help or news) may be displayed in quick entry listing **570**.

[0054] FIG. 6 illustrates the quick entry listing section **570** of the catalogue builder GUI **500** having been updated where the user has searched for a product in the quick list subsection **542**. Associated with each of the search results is a "Copy to Listing Form" link such as a copy listing link **672** that the user can select to copy the product information for the item of interest over to the respective fields in the add listing section **510**. The user can then edit the information that has been copied over.

[0055] FIG. 7 illustrates the quick entry listing section **570** of the catalogue builder GUI **500** having been updated where the user has imported a store listing using store import subsection **544**. Associated with each of the search results is a "Copy to Listing Form" link such as a copy listing link **772** that the user can select to copy the product information for the item of interest over to the respective fields in the add listing section **510**. The user can then edit the information that has been copied over. In addition, an "Add directly to store" link such as a direct store addition link **774** is associated with each of the listings so that the user can add the product associated with the link directly to the user catalogue **134** when the user does not need to edit the item descriptions. A check box such as a check box **776** is also associated with each product listing to allow the user to add multiple items to the user catalogue

134. Specifically, the user can select each check box and then select an “Add selected to store” link **778** to add all of the selected items to the user catalogue **134**. This feature allows for the user to add items to the catalogue in bulk.

[0056] Once the user has located the item to be added to the user catalogue **134**, and retrieved and edited the information related to the item using one of the mechanism described above, the item will be added to the user catalogue **134** in step **406**. This includes the creation of a record in the user catalogue **134** to store the information of the added item, with a unique identifier being used to retrieve the information after the item has been added. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the table for the catalogue database **124** contains the following columns, not all of which are necessary as discussed herein:

- [0057]** ItemID: Identifier of record (unique).
- [0058]** Name: Name of listing.
- [0059]** Keywords: Keywords used to describe listing.
- [0060]** Description: Description of listing.
- [0061]** Price: Price of listing.
- [0062]** Quantity: Quantity of items in listing offered.
- [0063]** ShippingPrice: Shipping price for the item.
- [0064]** FromDate: Start date of the listing.
- [0065]** ExpireDate: Expiration date of the listing.
- [0066]** ImageId: Unique identifier for an image.
- [0067]** ImageURL: The URL for the location of the image.
- [0068]** CategoryIdLevel1: The identifier for category level 1.
- [0069]** CategoryIdLevel2: The identifier for category level 2.
- [0070]** CategoryIdLevel3: The identifier for category level 3.
- [0071]** CategoryTextLevel1: The text for category level 1.
- [0072]** CategoryTextLevel2: The text for category level 2.
- [0073]** CategoryTextLevel3: The text for category level 3.
- [0074]** BarterType: The type of bartering transaction that can be performed for this listing, such as cash and another item, or item only.
- [0075]** NumberOfViews: The number of times the listing has been viewed.
- [0076]** DateUploaded: The date the listing was uploaded.
- [0077]** Condition: The condition of the listing.
- [0078]** UserId: The unique identifier of the user adding the product.
- [0079]** MinPrice: The minimum price acceptable to the user for the listing (e.g., a minimum bid price for an auction listing).

[0080] If no additional listings are to be added in step **408**, then operation ends. Otherwise, operation returns to step **402**, where information for another listing to be added may be retrieved and added to the user catalogue **134**.

[0081] Referring again to the social network commerce deployment process **300** in FIG. **3**, after the user has created a product catalogue such as the user catalogue **134** in step **302**, the user can create one or more mini-stores in step **304** that can be deployed in the manner as described herein to create a social network commerce system.

[0082] FIG. **9** illustrate a mini-store building process **900** for the building of a mini-store where, in step **902**, a product

catalogue such as the user catalogue **134** is displayed to allow the user to choose the items to be included in the mini-store. In one preferred embodiment, the user catalogue **134** is displayed as a listing and the user can perform standard list management functions to search, sort, or filter the listing to locate an item of interest. One or more items may then be added from the user catalogue **134** into the user mini-store record **136**, as further described herein.

[0083] In step **904**, the system detects whether the user has selected an item to add to the user mini-store record **136**. If so, operation continues with step **906**. Otherwise, operation continues with step **920**.

[0084] In step **906**, the system determines if a maximum number of items to be included in the user mini-store record **136** has already been reached. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, each mini-store is limited to three (3) items. In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, there are no limitations to the number of items that can be included in a mini-store. If the maximum number of items has not already been reached in the user mini-store record **136**, then operation continues with step **908**. Otherwise, operation continues with **918**.

[0085] In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, each user mini-store record in the mini-store database **126** is created based on a database table having the following columns: Mini-storeID, UserID, ItemID1, ItemID2 and ItemID3, wherein Mini-storeID is a primary key (i.e., a unique identifier) for each mini-store record in the mini-store database **126**; UserID is a foreign key to the UserID from the user table in the user database **128** (i.e., UserID is a unique identifier that is assigned to each user); and ItemID1, ItemID2 and ItemID3, each of which is the identifier for one of the three item images that are associated with the particular mini-store. Each one of ItemID1, ItemID2 and ItemID3 also includes the foreign key to a specific item identifier in the user catalogue **134** of the catalogue database **124**.

[0086] In step **908**, the item image associated with the item selected by the user is retrieved. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the item image as well as any item information that needs to be retrieved is based on the item identifier assigned to the item selected by the user, where the item identifier is the unique identifier that is assigned to each item in the user catalogue **134**, as discussed above.

[0087] In step **910**, the item identifier determined in step **908** is stored into the user mini-store record **136** in the mini-store database **126**. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, where each mini-store can contain up to three (3) items and there are three columns in the user mini-store record **136**, the item identifier will be placed into the first available ItemID column (i.e., ItemID1, ItemID2 or ItemID3) in the user mini-store record **136**. For example, if the mini-store record **136** only contains one existing item (i.e., the mini-store record **136** contains an item identifier only in ItemID1), then the item identifier for the item to be added will be placed into ItemID2. In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the user may select the position and order of each of the items displayed in the mini-store.

[0088] In step **912**, a copy of the item image retrieved in step **908** is created and saved on the web server **102**. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the item

image file for the retrieved item image is named according to the following naming convention:

UserID_Mini-storeID_n.jpg

[0089] where UserID is the unique identifier assigned to the user (e.g., the foreign key for the user record **138** in users database **128**), the Mini-storeID is the unique identifier assigned to the mini-store (e.g., the foreign key for the user mini-store record **136** in mini-store database **126**), and n is the number of the column in the user mini-store record **136** in which the item identifier related to the item image is stored (e.g., a number from 1 to 3, corresponding to ItemID1, ItemID2, or ItemID3). FIG. 1 illustrates the web server **102** storing three exemplary image files **112**, **114** and **116** with generic names based on the description provided herein. For example, where the user has a UserID of 10232 and a Mini-storeID of 29, then the created file name for the image associated with the product stored in ItemID1 of the user mini-store record **136** is 10232_29_1.jpg.

[0090] In step **920**, where the system has not received a selection from the user to add an item to the user mini-store record **136**, it is determined if the user is removing an item from the user mini-store record **136**. If not, then operation returns to step **902**. Otherwise, if the system receives a selection from the user to remove an item from the user mini-store record **136**, operation will continue with step **922**.

[0091] In step **922**, the image file associated with the item to be removed from the user mini-store record **136** is deleted from the web server **102**. In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, instead of deleting the image file, it is replaced with a substitute image, such as an image that is completely blank or an image of the user's choosing, such as a mini-store logo. Operation then continues with step **924**.

[0092] In step **924**, the user mini-store record **136** is updated to remove the item identifier from the column associated with the removed item. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, a predetermined number, such as a number representing a null item identifier (e.g., "000000"), is placed into the column associated with the removed item. In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, no value is placed into the slot and the content of the particular ItemID column is left as null. The use of a null item identifier allows the web server **120** to process the request the selection of the item by a visitor in a special manner. For example, the web server **120** can return a home page of the user that includes all the items the user has for sale when it detects a request for an item with an associated null item identifier.

[0093] FIG. 10 illustrates a mini-store builder GUI **1000** configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention. Mini-store builder GUI **1000** includes a mini-store preview section **1020**; a product listing section **1040**; and a mini-store template selector **1080**. The mini-store builder GUI **1000** also includes a plurality of item removal check boxes **1092**. The mini-store preview section **1020** provides a preview of what a mini-store created by the user will look like, including the items that have been selected by the user to be listed in the mini-store, such as a plurality of selected items **1022**. Each of the plurality of item removal check boxes **1092** may be used to remove a corresponding item in the plurality of selected items **1022**, as discussed above with reference to FIG. 9. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the mini-store template selector **1080** includes a plurality of graphic templates such as a template **1082** that can be applied to the mini-store.

[0094] The product listing section **1040** lists the items in the user catalogue **134** and includes a view store button **1054**, which the user can select to view the user catalogue **134**; an add item button **1056**, which is used to add further items to the user catalogue **134**; and a relist expired items button **1058**. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, each item in the user catalogue **134** has an associated period during which it is valid. Once each period has been reached, the respective item is marked as "expired" to prevent the user catalogue **134** from becoming stale. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, an expired item would remain in the mini-store of the user if it has been placed into the mini-store before it was expired, but be made unavailable for sale until the user reactivated the item. In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the mini-store would be updated to replace the expired item with the next item in the catalogue of the user. In yet another embodiment of the present invention, the item could be replaced with a "null" item (e.g., the item identifier for the expired item can be replaced with a null identifier) such that the default user page (e.g., the store home page of the user) may be displayed. Further, one or more e-mails may be sent to the user to notify the user that the item has expired.

[0095] Each listing in the product listing section **1040** also includes an item detail link **1042**, through which an item detail page may be accessed when the link is selected by the user; a grab code button **1044**; an edit/update button **1046**, which allows the user to edit or update the information pertaining to the particular item entry in the product catalogue **134**; a delete button **1048**, which allows the user to remove the item from the listing; a code display field **1050**; and an add to mini-store checkbox **1052**, which allows the user to add the item to the mini-store, as discussed herein. The grab code button **1044** and the code display field **1050** will be further detailed herein.

[0096] FIG. 11 illustrates an exemplary user mini-store GUI **1100** as configured using the mini-store builder GUI **1000** in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention. The exemplary user mini-store GUI **1000** as shown includes one item that has been added to the mini-store, which includes: an item detail link **1022** that will take the user to the item detail page when selected by the user; a swap link **1002** that will bring the user to a page to swap for the item; and a buy link **1004** that will bring the user to a page to buy the item. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, if there are fewer than three (3) items in the mini-store, a logo such as a logo **1006** will be displayed in lieu of a blank image.

[0097] FIG. 12 illustrates the exemplary user mini-store GUI **1100** as updated using the mini-store builder GUI **1000** in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention. The exemplary user mini-store GUI **1100** as shown in FIG. 12 includes two additional items **1206** and **1208** that have been added to the mini-store, each of which also includes an item detail link, a swap link, and a buy link.

[0098] Although the mini-store building process described above details a manual configuration process by the user whenever a mini-store is first created, it should be noted that a mini-store may automatically be created immediately for the user after the user has created a user catalogue. For example, a mini-store may be auto-populated with three (3) items from the user catalogue **134** based either on a predetermined or random selection process.

[0099] Once the user has created the mini-store in step 304, step 306 of the social network commerce implementation process 300 provides for the deployment of the mini-store. As described herein, a mini-store may be deployed into a social network through several mechanisms. Initially, the most simple example will involve the user cutting and pasting the code needed to render the mini-store (e.g., the contents of the user mini-store record 136) to be displayed on a webpage. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the code is static HTML code. For example, the HTML code for displaying the image and associated link of an item referenced by the item identifier in ItemID1 field in the user mini-store record 136, where the user has a UserID of 10232 and a Mini-storeID of 29, is:

```
<a href="http://www.swapedo.com/index.php?Action=Main.MiniStore&image=10232_29_1.jpg"></a>
```

where index.php is a script written in accordance with the PHP: Hypertext Preprocessor (PHP) scripting standard as provided by The PHP Group at <http://www.php.org>, and where the Main.MiniStore function of the index.php script, when executed, will first extract the proper item identifier for the item to be displayed. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the item identifier is extracted by retrieving the user mini-store record associated with the Mini-storeID of 29 (e.g., the user mini-store record 136) from the mini-store database 126 and the item identifier stored in the ItemID1 field of the record.

[0100] Similarly, the HTML code for displaying the images and associated links of the items in ItemID2 and ItemID3 are:

```
<a href="http://www.swapedo.com/index.php?Action=Main.MiniStore&image=10232_29_2.jpg"></a>, and,
```

```
<a href="http://www.swapedo.com/index.php?Action=Main.MiniStore&image=10232_29_3.jpg"></a>
```

respectively. The other HTML code necessary to generate the mini-store, such as the HTML code used to lay out the item images or the displayed border, is not shown.

[0101] The above code is static, so it is valid in websites that filter dynamic HTML code. However, the code will load images from the web server 110, which may send a different version every time the image is served from the web server 110. As described above, when the user creates the user mini-store record 136, the user creates 3 images (which are stored on the web server 110). These images are loaded based on the mini-store static HTML code. Since the image name never changes, it means that the mini-store static HTML code will never change. However, when the user updates the mini-store record 136, one or more of the images created by the user is updated. Thus, when the mini-store static HTML code is reloaded, such as when the webpage on which the mini-store is stored is reloaded, the images for the updated items are reloaded as well and will reflect the updated contents of the mini-store.

[0102] As discussed above, one aspect of the present invention provides for the simple deployment of any created mini-store by allowing the user to copy and paste the HTML code to any web page. In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, a mechanism referred to as a "mini-store placement tool" allows the user to deploy any created mini-

store to any third-party website having a standardized format for which the user has an account. Reference is made to FIG. 13, where a mini-store placement tool GUI 1300 configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. The mini-store placement tool GUI 1300 includes a plurality of tabs 1310, each of which offers the user the ability to deploy a mini-store through a particular communication medium. For example, as shown, an HTML tab 1312 of the mini-store placement tool GUI 1300 offers the user the ability to copy the HTML code for a created mini-store from a text field 1314. The HTML code can then be pasted into an appropriate location of a third-party website for display on the user's personal webpage, such as the user's personal profile page on MySpace.com. Although this approach is already simple and universal in its application, an even simpler mechanism is offered by the mini-store placement tool GUI 1300. This will be described with reference to FIG. 14, where a mini-store placement process 1400 is illustrated.

[0103] In step 1402, the user will select the website or communication medium to which the user wishes to deploy or "post" the mini-store. FIG. 15 illustrates the mini-store placement tool GUI 1300 where the user has selected a MySpace.com tab 1512 to post the mini-store to the user's MySpace.com personal profile page. FIG. 16 illustrates where the user has selected an e-mail tab 1612 to deploy the mini-store using e-mail. Other tabs in the plurality of tabs 1310 are configured to deploy the mini-store to other third-party websites as blogger.com, friendster.com, hi5.com, livejournal.com, piczo.com, tagged.com, typepad.com, and xanga.com. Once the selection of what communication medium the user wishes to deploy the mini-store has been received, operation then continues with step 1404. In the illustrated embodiment, the mini-store placement tool GUI 1300 does not illustrate the ability to allow the user to choose which created mini-store the user wishes to deploy. However, it should be noted that this selection may be made by the user at the beginning of the mini-store placement process 1400.

[0104] In step 1404, any information necessary to connect to the medium to deploy the mini-store is retrieved from the user. Referring again to FIG. 15, the MySpace.com tab 1512 includes a login information entry area 1514 where the user can input authentication information for logging into the user's account in MySpace.com. In addition, the login information entry area 1514 also include a "Section" pull-down menu 1518, as shown in FIG. 17, so that the user can specify the section on the user's MySpace.com profile under which the user wishes to post the mini-store, and a "Subject" text field for the user to enter a specific subject for the posting. Similarly, as shown in FIG. 16, the e-mail tab 1612 includes an information entry area 1614 where the user can input the e-mail address and subject of the e-mail containing the mini-store to be sent. A submit MySpace.com post button 1516 and a send e-mail button 1616 are provided on the MySpace.com tab 1512 and the e-mail tab 1612, respectively, for the user to submit the information to web server 110.

[0105] Once any connection information has been retrieved, operation continues with step 1406, where a connection is made to the medium (e.g., a login will be performed for the MySpace.com website) using the supplied connection information. Operation will then continue to 1408.

[0106] In step 1408, the mini-store code will be deployed to the medium. For example, the posting will be made to the MySpace.com website by the code being inserted into the

proper area of the user's profile. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, any existing code in the section in which the mini-store is to be deployed is appended so that any pre-existing code remains untouched. In another embodiment, the code is filtered so that no duplicates are created. In another embodiment, the code in the section is wiped out and replaced. In the case of the mini-store being posted in an e-mail message, an e-mail message will be sent to the e-mail address specified by the user.

[0107] As discussed herein, when loaded on a webpage of a third-party site, each mini-store is displayed in a sub-portion of the webpage and displays a subset of items as selected by the user during the configuration of the mini-store (e.g., the user mini-store record **136**) from the complete user catalogue (e.g., the user catalogue **134**). Further, if the predetermined set of items from the product catalogue is updated, in step **308** of the social network commerce implementation process **300**, the display of all affected mini-stores will reflect the update in step **310**.

[0108] FIG. **18** illustrates the user mini-store GUI **1100** as posted on the user on a third-party website blog page **1800**. Once the mini-store has been deployed, visitors to the user's personal profile web page on the third-party website will be able to access the items being promoted by performing an item selection action. For example, the user can click on the various links provided in the mini-stores (e.g., the "Swap", "Buy", or "More Details" links).

[0109] Referring again to the social network commerce implementation process **300** as shown in FIG. **3**, if the web server **110** receives an item selection action from the user in step **312**, operation will continue with step **314**, where the web server **110** will process the item selection action.

[0110] FIG. **19** illustrates an item selection process **1900** configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention. As discussed above, when a visitor clicks on the links in the mini-store, web server **110** will receive a request containing information needed to retrieve the item identifier of the item of interest in the form of the file name of the image that is contained in the request. Specifically, the file name contains the UserID, the Mini-storeID, and the position number of the item in the mini-store record from which the item identifier can be determined. In step **1902**, web server **110** will retrieve the item identifier. Operation will then continue with step **1904**.

[0111] In step **1904**, it is determined if the retrieved item identifier is a "valid" value. In other words, if the retrieved item identifier is a null value. As previously discussed, the user does not have to place an item into all spots of a mini-store. However, when a particular spot does not contain an item, a blank image (or a store logo image) will be displayed on the mini-store. For example, the user mini-store record **136** may only contain one item, the item identifier of which is stored in ItemID1. In this case, the other two item identifier fields, ItemID2 and ItemID3, will contain a null value, which may mean that those fields filled with a predetermined value designated as a null value (e.g., "000000") or are left blank. An illustration of this mini-store configuration is shown in the mini-store GUI **1100** of FIG. **11**. Thus, if the visitor clicks on the "MyStore LOGO" image in the mini-store GUI **1100**, the retrieved item identifier will be a "null" value, and operation will continue with step **1910**. Otherwise, if the user selects an item that is not null, operation will continue with step **1906**.

[0112] In step **1906**, the web server **110** will retrieve the detailed product information for the selected item based on

the retrieved item identifier in a query to the database server **120**. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the information is contained in the user catalogue (e.g., the user catalogue **134**) stored in the catalogue database **124**. Once the detailed product information has been retrieved, operation will continue with step **1908**.

[0113] In step **1908**, once the detailed information for the selected item has been retrieved from the user catalogue (e.g., the user catalogue **134**), a product detail page will be returned to the visitor by the web server **110**. FIG. **20** illustrates an item detail GUI **2000**, configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention, that is displayed on the browser of the visitor when the visitor has selected the "More Details" link for the "Xbox 360" item **1206** in the mini-store GUI **1100** of FIG. **12**. The item detail GUI **2000** includes such product information such as a category detail **2002**, as well as an "Add to Shopping Cart" button **2012**, which allows the visitor to add the item to a shopping cart **2020**; and an "add to offer box" button **2014**, which allows the visitor to add the item to an offer box **2040**. As illustrated, the shopping cart **2020** contains an existing item **2124** and a "Check Out" button **2122**, the use of which will allow the visitor to check out and pay for the items in shopping cart **2120**. Similarly, the offer box **2140** also contains a "Make Offer" button **2142**, which allows the visitor to make offers (e.g., request to swap items, with or without a cash component) on the items in the offer box **2140**, including an existing offer item **2144**. The visitor may also place a cash offer by filling in an "Offer Cash" field **2016** and clicking a "Cash Offer" button **2018**.

[0114] The item detail GUI **2000** also contains a "Create embedded HTML for this item" link **2050** that will display an item reference HTML code box **2052** on the item detail GUI **2000**. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the HTML code contained in the item reference HTML code box **2052**, if copied and pasted into a webpage, will display a GUI (not shown) with a link that can be selected by a visitor to the webpage to take the visitor to the detailed view of the product directly. An example of the HTML code is:

```
<a href="http://www.swapedo.com/swap/item_detail/ExampleItemID.jpg"></a>
```

where ExampleItemID can be used to retrieve the item identifier for the item. It is noted that in another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the mini-store placement tool described above with reference of deployment of mini-stores may also be used to deploy the HTML code for a single item.

[0115] In step **1910**, if the item selected by the user is a null item, the visitor will be brought to the home page of the store of the user. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the home page will list all items from the user catalogue **134**. FIG. **21** illustrates a store home page **2100** configured in accordance with one preferred embodiment of the present invention, where a listing **2102** of all the items of the user is presented to the visitor along with a shopping cart **2120** and an offer box **2140**.

[0116] Another aspect of the present invention is directed to a peer-to-peer item matching engine, by which items wanted by users may be matched up by items offered by other users in a dynamic process. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, when a user finds an item of interest, the user can add the item to a list of items that the user wants to acquire, referred to herein as a "want list." When the item is added by the user, the peer-to-peer item matching engine will query all the user catalogues in the catalogue database **124**

and return a result of potential results to the user. The user can then outright purchase, offer a swap, or offer a cash bid for one or more of the items to the respective peer. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the user is presented with the option to add items to the want list when no search results are returned for an item search of all the items in the catalogue database 124.

[0117] The peer-to-peer item matching engine will periodically attempt to match the items in the users want lists and notify the user with the search results. In addition, a matching process may be initiated when a user adds an item to their user catalogue. For example, the user may add an item in the user's catalogue to offer that item for a sale or swap. When the item has been added, the peer-to-peer item matching engine will query the database server 120 for all the items that are sought after by the users of the system (i.e., the items contained in all want lists), and present the results to the user. The user can then be offered the functionality to contact the peers on the list, such as by e-mail to initiate a transaction. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the user can choose whether to make an item that the user is adding the user's catalogue available to wishlist peers—i.e., the user may want certain items to be limited from being available and thus be excluded from item matching by the peer-to-peer product matching engine.

[0118] Several mechanisms for the user to find or create an item entry in the user catalogue have already been discussed herein. It is noted that these mechanisms are equally applicable for users creating their want lists. In addition, another aspect of the present invention is a tool that allows users to obtain, or “scrape”, relevant product information from any webpage that the users are viewing. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the scrape tool is implemented as a plug-in or extension to existing software applications such as browsers, e-mail clients, or IM clients. In addition, the scrape tool can be implemented “universally” as an application that runs when the operating system loads, thereby providing the functionality over all applications.

[0119] In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the scrape tool is a browser-based plug-in or extension that presents a tool bar interface and/or a menu interface. The user can select text on a webpage for an item of interest (i.e., an item that the user desires to either add to a catalogue to sell, swap or auction; or add to a want list to acquire by buying, swapping or bidding), and then select a button on the toolbar to indicate that the user wishes to add the item to a catalogue or want list. The selected text will then be used to retrieve product information, which will then be added to an appropriate list of the user.

[0120] In another preferred embodiment of the present invention, the scrape tool can filter the page to retrieve item information such as the manufacturer's product identifier, price, and description. For example, the scrape tool can be configured to decipher and filter an product detail page from a retail website such as amazon.com or buy.com to retrieve all relevant product information. The information retrieved by the scrape tool may either be directly added to the user catalogue or want list, or may be stored in temporary list to be edited by the user at a later time. In addition, a pop-up window may be displayed when the user uses the scrape tool to show the results of the scrape, which will then allow the user to edit the information and choose the destination of the information. For example, the pop-up may contain a GUI similar to the quick entry listing section 570 of the catalogue builder GUI 500 of FIG. 5, and include an “Add Item to Catalogue” button and an “Add Item to Want List” button. The interface may also include a pull-down or other selector menu if there are mul-

iple catalogues or want lists to which the item may be added to allow the user to select a desired catalogue or list, respectively. In addition the toolbar, a context sensitive menu and submenus is added to the right-click menu that is brought up when the user clicks with the right (or secondary) mouse button anywhere on the webpage in the browser window displaying the item of interest.

[0121] The application plug-in/extension can provide mini-store placement tool-type functionality in another aspect of the invention. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the application plug-in/extension is customized for the software such that it will post information in a format that is context sensitive. For example, the application plug-in/extension that is implemented for a chat program will not normally insert the HTML code for mini-stores, but instead, will default to inserting only URLs. This is because most chat programs are not capable of rendering complex HTML code. Similarly, the application plugin/extension for a browser or an e-mail client may insert HTML code, such as the HTML code for mini-stores as webpages and emails are capable of utilizing this code and rendering it for display. Thus, for example, the application plug-in/extension can insert information (e.g., description, title, image, and link to display the product) for one or more of the products in a user's catalog or want list. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the available lists of the user (i.e., catalogues and want lists) are updated via a web feed format conforming to a standard referred to as a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed, version 2.0, as promulgated by the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School. The plug-in/extension may also be notified of updates to the user's lists via other mechanisms, which may be scheduled or event-driven (e.g., when the user adds an item to a list).

[0122] It should be noted that the methods described herein may be implemented on a variety of hardware, processors and systems known by one of ordinary skill in the art. For example, the general requirement for the client to operate as described herein is that the client has a display to display content and information, a processor to control the operation of the client and a memory for storing data and programs related to the operation of the client. In one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the client is a personal computer. An exemplary client may be implemented using the computer system has already been described herein with reference to FIG. 2. In another preferred embodiment, the client is a handheld computer having communications capabilities. In yet another embodiment, the client is a cellular phone. The various illustrative logics, logical blocks, modules, and circuits described in connection with the embodiments disclosed herein may be implemented or performed with a general purpose processor, a digital signal processor (DSP), an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), a field programmable gate array (FPGA) or other programmable logic device, discrete gate or transistor logic, discrete hardware components, or any combination thereof designed to perform the functions described herein. A general-purpose processor may be a microprocessor, but, in the alternative, the processor may be any conventional processor, controller, microcontroller, or state machine. A processor may also be implemented as a combination of computing devices, e.g., a combination of a DSP and a microprocessor, a plurality of microprocessors, one or more microprocessors in conjunction with a DSP core, or any other such configuration.

[0123] The steps of a method or algorithm described in connection with the embodiments disclosed herein may be embodied directly in hardware, in a software module executed by a processor, or in a combination of the two. A

software module may reside in RAM memory, flash memory, ROM memory, EPROM memory, EEPROM memory, registers, a hard disk, a removable disk, a CD-ROM, or any other form of storage medium known in the art. An exemplary storage medium is coupled to the processor, such that the processor can read information from, and write information to, the storage medium. In the alternative, the storage medium may be integral to the processor. The processor and the storage medium may reside in an ASIC. The ASIC may reside in a user terminal. In the alternative, the processor and the storage medium may reside as discrete components in a user terminal.

[0124] The embodiments described above are exemplary embodiments. Those skilled in the art may now make numerous uses of, and departures from, the above-described embodiments without departing from the inventive concepts disclosed herein. Various modifications to these embodiments may be readily apparent to those skilled in the art, and the generic principles defined herein may be applied to other embodiments, without departing from the spirit or scope of the novel aspects described herein. Thus, the scope of the invention is not intended to be limited to the embodiments shown herein but is to be accorded the widest scope consistent with the principles and novel features disclosed herein. The word “exemplary” is used exclusively herein to mean “serving as an example, instance, or illustration.” Any embodiment described herein as “exemplary” is not necessarily to be construed as the most preferred or advantageous over other embodiments. Accordingly, the present invention is to be defined solely by the scope of the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A system comprising:
a computer including:
a processor;
a memory coupled to the processor, the memory comprising computer-readable code that, when executed, will cause the processor to perform a method for offering a plurality of items for commerce, wherein each of the items in the plurality of items includes an item identifier usable to reference that item, the method comprising:
storing a first item identifier for the at least one of the plurality of items in a first predetermined location in a computer memory;
associating a first image with the at least one of the plurality of items;
assigning a first name to the first image based on the first predetermined location in the computer memory;
creating a first reference link comprising the first name assigned to the first image; and,
deploying the first reference link.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein deploying the first reference link comprising displaying the first reference link on a webpage to allow a user to copy and then paste the first reference link to a web page of the user in a third-party website.
3. The system of claim 1, wherein deploying the first reference link comprises:
receiving an identification of a communication medium through which the first reference link is to be deployed; and,
deploying the first reference link through the communication medium.
4. The system of claim 3, wherein the communication medium comprises a website.
5. The system of claim 4, wherein the identification of the communication medium includes authentication information

for accessing a webpage of the user on the website, and posting the first reference link comprises:

- submitting the authentication information to obtain access to the webpage of the user; and,
 - inserting the first reference link on the webpage of the user.
6. The system of claim 3, wherein the communication medium comprises an e-mail.
 7. The system of claim 3, wherein the communication medium comprises an instant message.
 8. The system of claim 1, wherein the method further comprising:
receiving a request to replace the at least one of the plurality of items with a replacement item from the plurality of items;
storing a replacement item identifier for the replacement item from the plurality of items in the first predetermined location in the computer memory;
associating a replacement image with the replacement item from the plurality of items; and,
assigning the first name to the replacement image based on the first predetermined location in the computer memory.
 9. The system of claim 8, wherein the method further comprising removing the use of the first name with the first image.
 10. The system of claim 1, wherein the method further comprising:
storing a second item identifier for a second one of the plurality of items in a second predetermined location in the computer memory;
associating a second image with the second one of the plurality of items;
assigning a second name to the second image based on the second predetermined location in the computer memory; and,
creating a second reference link comprising the second name assigned to the second image.
 11. The system of claim 10, wherein deploying the first reference link comprising displaying the first reference link and the second reference link on a webpage to allow a user to copy and then paste the first reference link and the second link to a web page of the user in a third-party website.
 12. The system of claim 10, wherein deploying the first reference link comprises:
receiving an identification of a communication medium through which the first reference link and the second reference link to be deployed; and,
deploying the first reference link and the second reference link through the communication medium.
 13. The system of claim 10, wherein the second one of the plurality of items is a null item.
 14. The system of claim 1, wherein the method further comprising:
receiving a request to retrieve item information based on the first reference link; and,
returning item information based on the first reference link.
 15. The system of claim 14, wherein the request to retrieve item information based on the first reference link comprises the first name, and returning item information based on the first reference link comprises:
decoding the first name to locate the first predetermined location;
retrieving the first item identifier from the first predetermined location; and,

querying an item database to retrieve item information based on the first item identifier.

16. The system of claim **1**, wherein the computer memory is a database record, and the first predetermined location is an item identification field in the database record.

17. The system of claim **1**, wherein the first name comprises a user identifier.

18. The system of claim **1**, wherein the first image is an image of the item.

19. The system of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of items is a subset of larger grouping of items.

20. A method for offering a plurality of items for commerce, wherein each of the items in the plurality of items includes an item identifier usable to reference that item, the method comprising:

storing a first item identifier for the at least one of the plurality of items in a first predetermined location in a computer memory;

associating a first image with the at least one of the plurality of items;

assigning a first name to the first image based on the first predetermined location in the computer memory;

creating a first reference link comprising the first name assigned to the first image; and,

deploying the first reference link.

21. The method of claim **20**, wherein deploying the first reference link comprising displaying the first reference link on a webpage to allow a user to copy and then paste the first reference link to a web page of the user in a third-party website.

22. The method of claim **20**, wherein deploying the first reference link comprises:

receiving an identification of a communication medium through which the first reference link is to be deployed; and,

deploying the first reference link through the communication medium.

23. The method of claim **22**, wherein the communication medium comprises a website.

24. The method of claim **23**, wherein the identification of the communication medium includes authentication information for accessing a webpage of the user on the website, and posting the first reference link comprises:

submitting the authentication information to obtain access to the webpage of the user; and,

inserting the first reference link on the webpage of the user.

25. The method of claim **22**, wherein the communication medium comprises an e-mail.

26. The method of claim **22**, wherein the communication medium comprises an instant message.

27. The method of claim **20**, further comprising:

receiving a request to replace the at least one of the plurality of items with a replacement item from the plurality of items;

storing a replacement item identifier for the replacement item from the plurality of items in the first predetermined location in the computer memory;

associating a replacement image with the replacement item from the plurality of items; and,

assigning the first name to the replacement image based on the first predetermined location in the computer memory.

28. The method of claim **27**, further comprising removing the use of the first name with the first image.

29. The method of claim **20**, further comprising:

storing a second item identifier for a second one of the plurality of items in a second predetermined location in the computer memory;

associating a second image with the second one of the plurality of items;

assigning a second name to the second image based on the second predetermined location in the computer memory; and,

creating a second reference link comprising the second name assigned to the second image.

30. The method of claim **29**, wherein deploying the first reference link comprising displaying the first reference link and the second reference link on a webpage to allow a user to copy and then paste the first reference link and the second link to a web page of the user in a third-party website.

31. The method of claim **29**, wherein deploying the first reference link comprises:

receiving an identification of a communication medium through which the first reference link and the second reference link to be deployed; and,

deploying the first reference link and the second reference link through the communication medium.

32. The method of claim **29**, wherein the second one of the plurality of items is a null item.

33. The method of claim **20**, further comprising:

receiving a request to retrieve item information based on the first reference link; and,

returning item information based on the first reference link.

34. The method of claim **33**, wherein the request to retrieve item information based on the first reference link comprises the first name, and returning item information based on the first reference link comprises:

decoding the first name to locate the first predetermined location;

retrieving the first item identifier from the first predetermined location; and,

querying an item database to retrieve item information based on the first item identifier.

35. The method of claim **20**, wherein the computer memory is a database record, and the first predetermined location is an item identification field in the database record.

36. The method of claim **20**, wherein the first name comprises a user identifier.

37. The method of claim **20**, wherein the first image is an image of the item.

38. The method of claim **20**, wherein the plurality of items is a subset of larger grouping of items.

39. An apparatus comprising a computer-readable medium with instructions stored thereon that, when executed by a computer, causes the computer to execute a method for offering a plurality of items for commerce, wherein each of the items in the plurality of items includes an item identifier usable to reference that item, the method comprising:

storing a first item identifier for the at least one of the plurality of items in a first predetermined location in a computer memory;

associating a first image with the at least one of the plurality of items;

assigning a first name to the first image based on the first predetermined location in the computer memory;

creating a first reference link comprising the first name assigned to the first image; and,

deploying the first reference link.

40. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein deploying the first reference link comprising displaying the first reference link on a webpage to allow a user to copy and then paste the first reference link to a web page of the user in a third-party website.

41. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein deploying the first reference link comprises:

receiving an identification of a communication medium through which the first reference link is to be deployed; and,
deploying the first reference link through the communication medium.

42. The apparatus of claim 41, wherein the communication medium comprises a website.

43. The apparatus of claim 42, wherein the identification of the communication medium includes authentication information for accessing a webpage of the user on the website, and posting the first reference link comprises:

submitting the authentication information to obtain access to the webpage of the user; and,
inserting the first reference link on the webpage of the user.

44. The apparatus of claim 41, wherein the communication medium comprises an e-mail.

45. The apparatus of claim 41, wherein the communication medium comprises an instant message.

46. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the method further comprising:

receiving a request to replace the at least one of the plurality of items with a replacement item from the plurality of items;

storing a replacement item identifier for the replacement item from the plurality of items in the first predetermined location in the computer memory;

associating a replacement image with the replacement item from the plurality of items; and,

assigning the first name to the replacement image based on the first predetermined location in the computer memory.

47. The apparatus of claim 46, wherein the method further comprising removing the use of the first name with the first image.

48. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the method further comprising:

storing a second item identifier for a second one of the plurality of items in a second predetermined location in the computer memory;

associating a second image with the second one of the plurality of items;

assigning a second name to the second image based on the second predetermined location in the computer memory; and,

creating a second reference link comprising the second name assigned to the second image.

49. The apparatus of claim 48, wherein deploying the first reference link comprising displaying the first reference link and the second reference link on a webpage to allow a user to copy and then paste the first reference link and the second link to a web page of the user in a third-party website.

50. The apparatus of claim 48, wherein deploying the first reference link comprises:

receiving an identification of a communication medium through which the first reference link and the second reference link to be deployed; and,

deploying the first reference link and the second reference link through the communication medium.

51. The apparatus of claim 48, wherein the second one of the plurality of items is a null item.

52. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the method further comprising:

receiving a request to retrieve item information based on the first reference link; and,

returning item information based on the first reference link.

53. The apparatus of claim 52, wherein the request to retrieve item information based on the first reference link comprises the first name, and returning item information based on the first reference link comprises:

decoding the first name to locate the first predetermined location;

retrieving the first item identifier from the first predetermined location; and,

querying an item database to retrieve item information based on the first item identifier.

54. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the computer memory is a database record, and the first predetermined location is an item identification field in the database record.

55. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the first name comprises a user identifier.

56. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the first image is an image of the item.

57. The apparatus of claim 39, wherein the plurality of items is a subset of larger grouping of items.

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