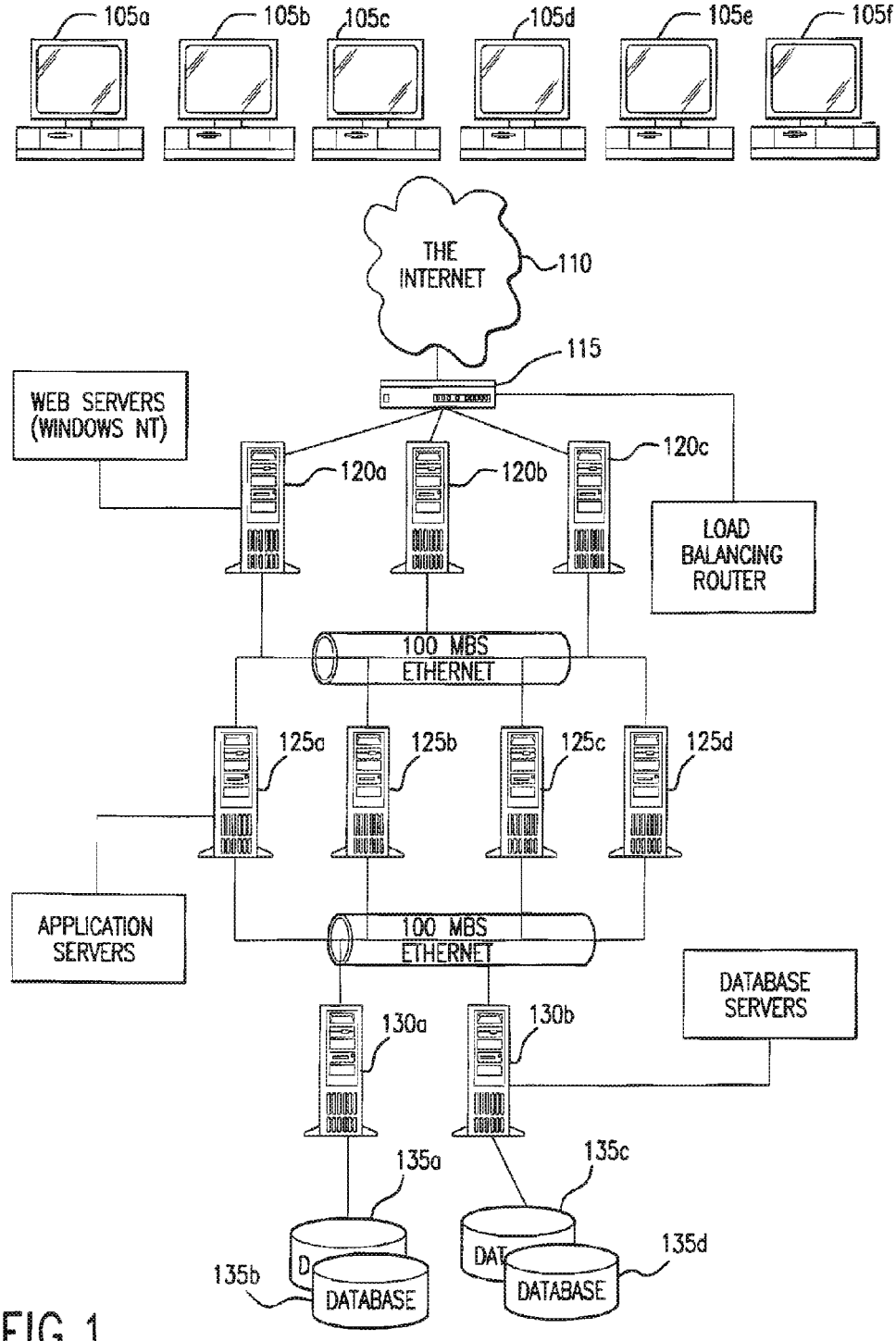



FIG. 1



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 467 of 1793

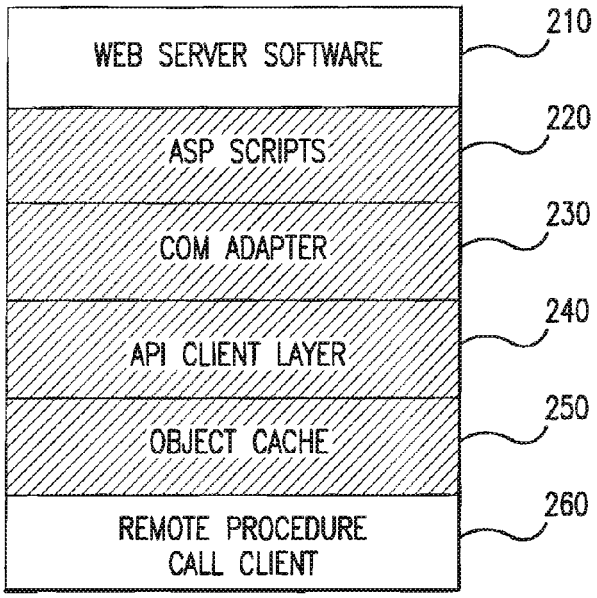



FIG.2

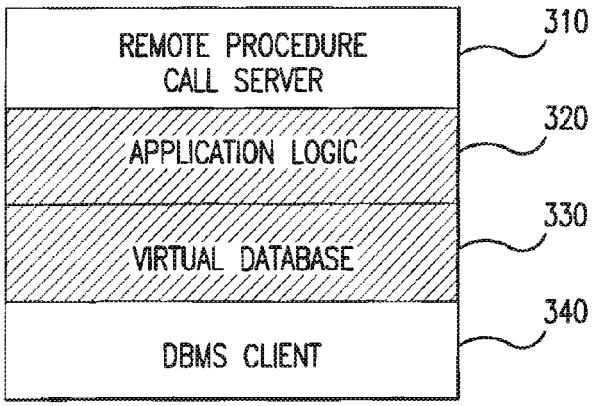



FIG.3

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 468 of 1793

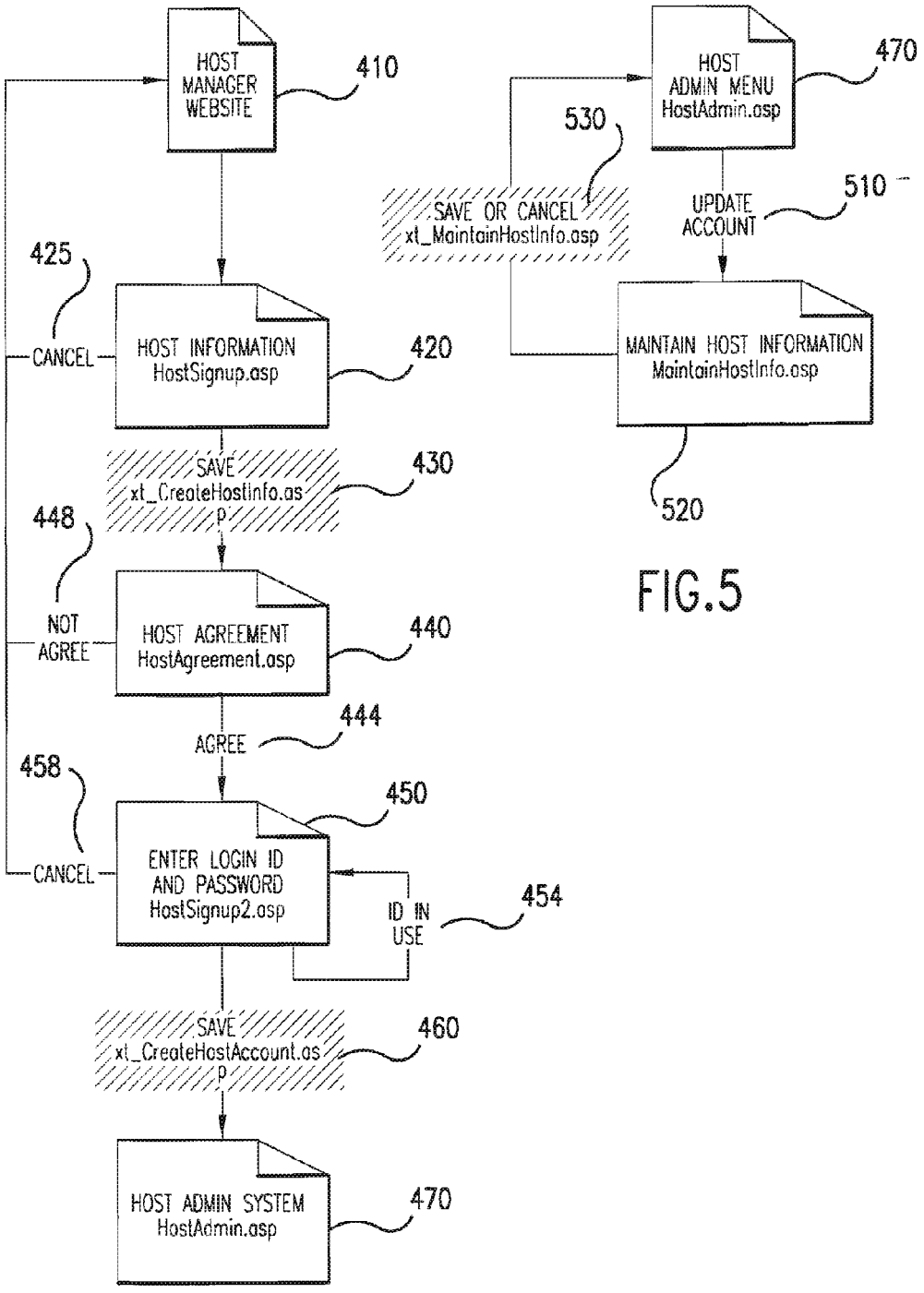



FIG.5

FIG.4



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 469 of 1793

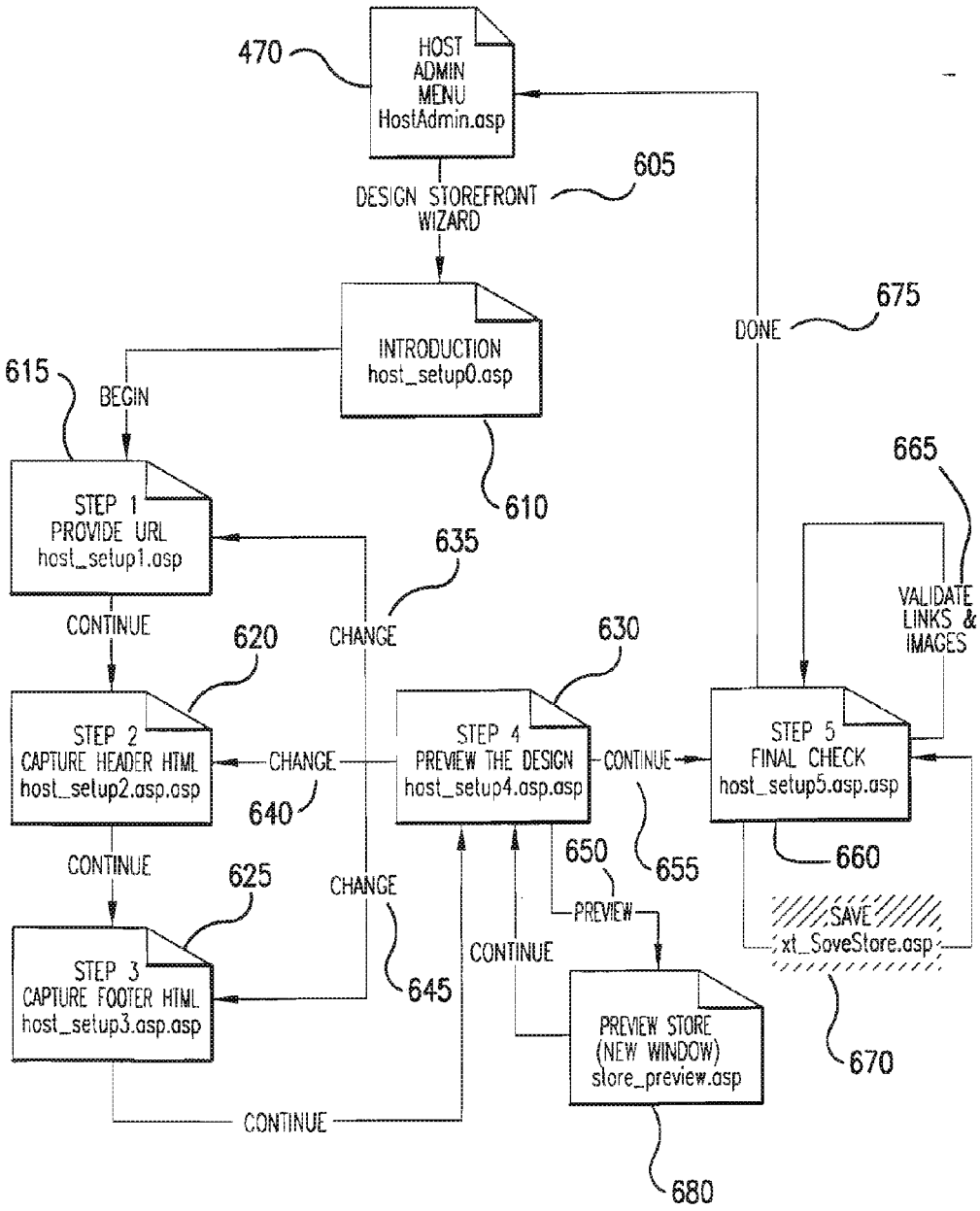



FIG.6

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 470 of 1793

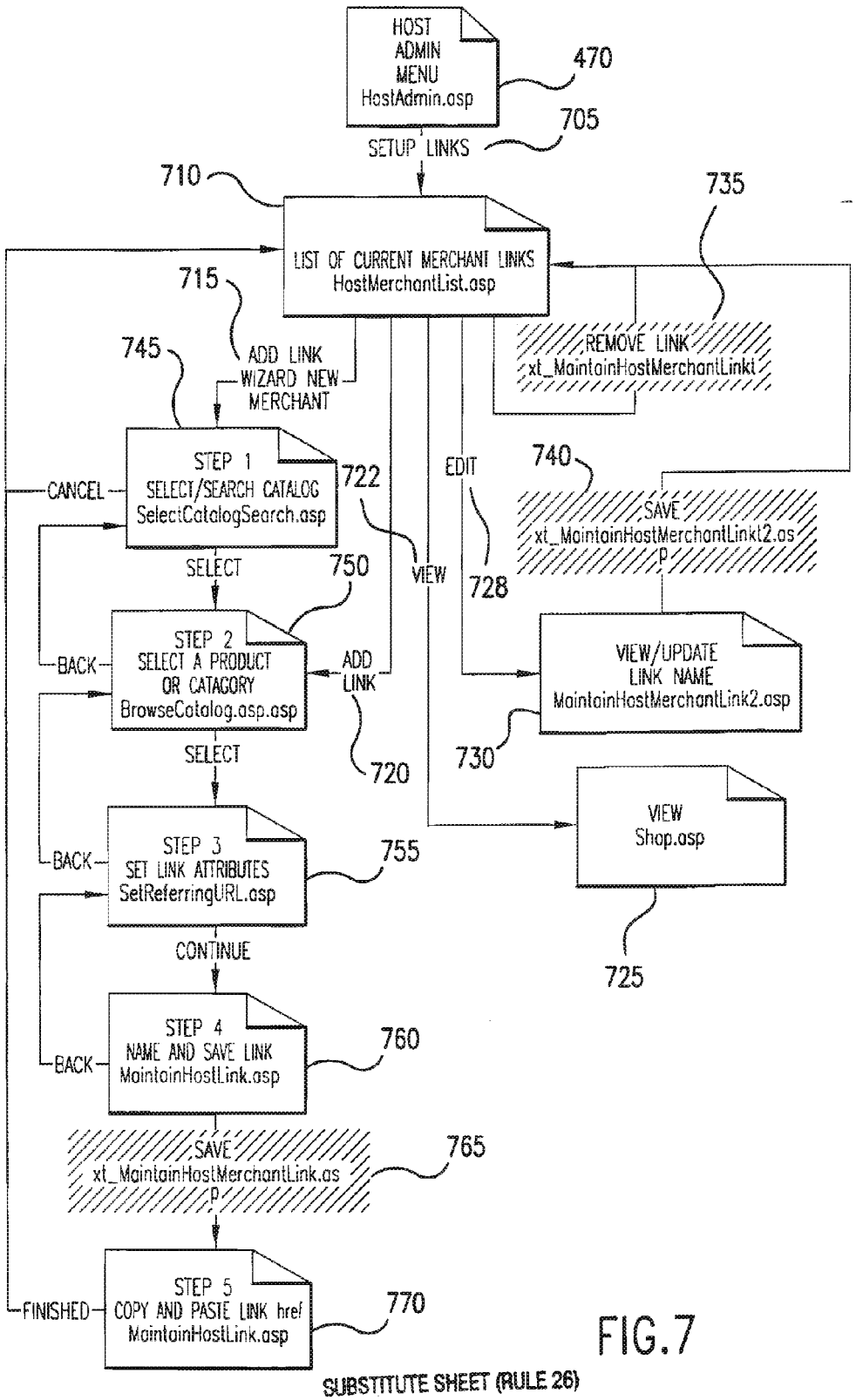



FIG.7



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 471 of 1793

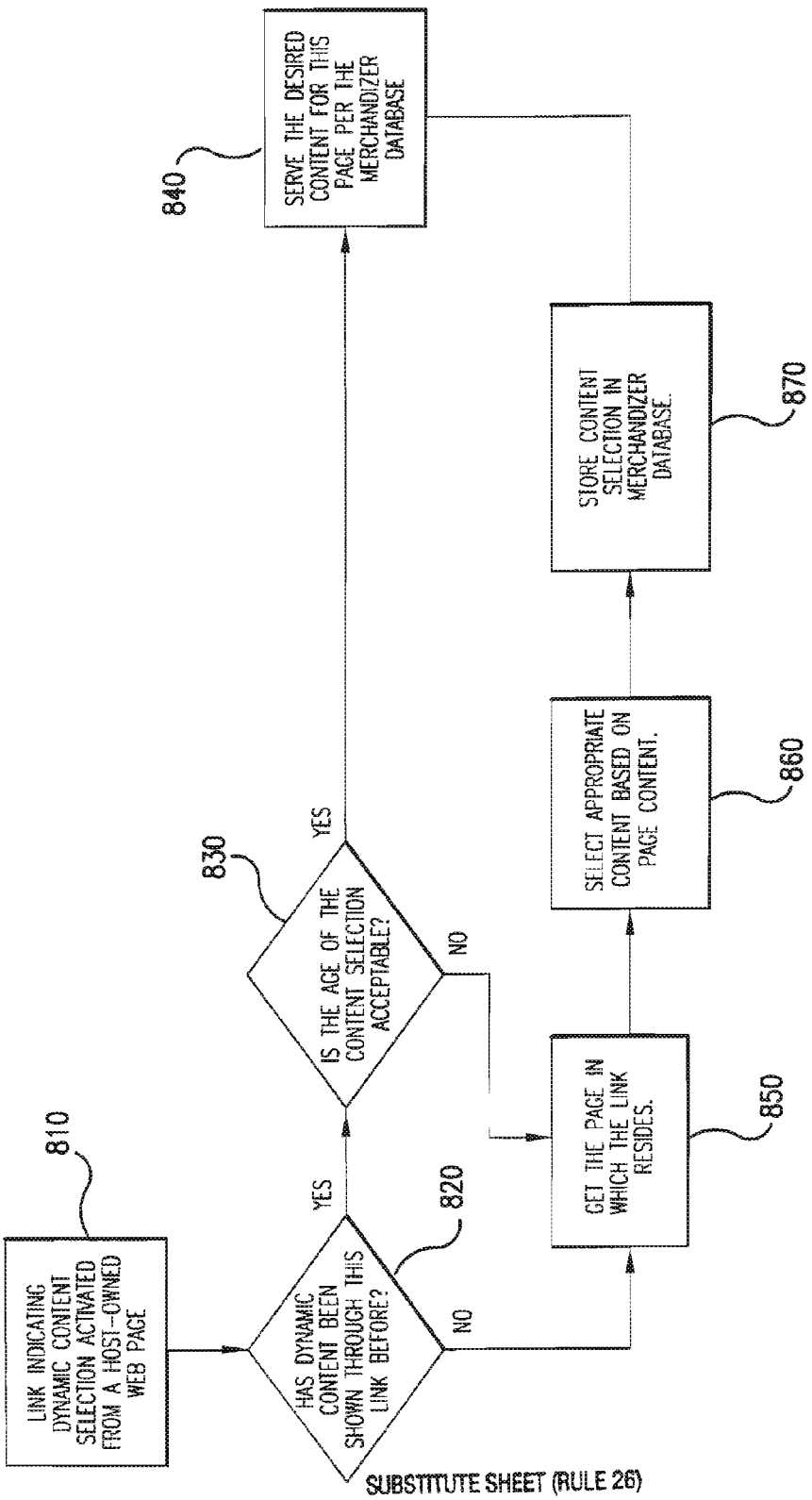



FIG.8



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 472 of 1793

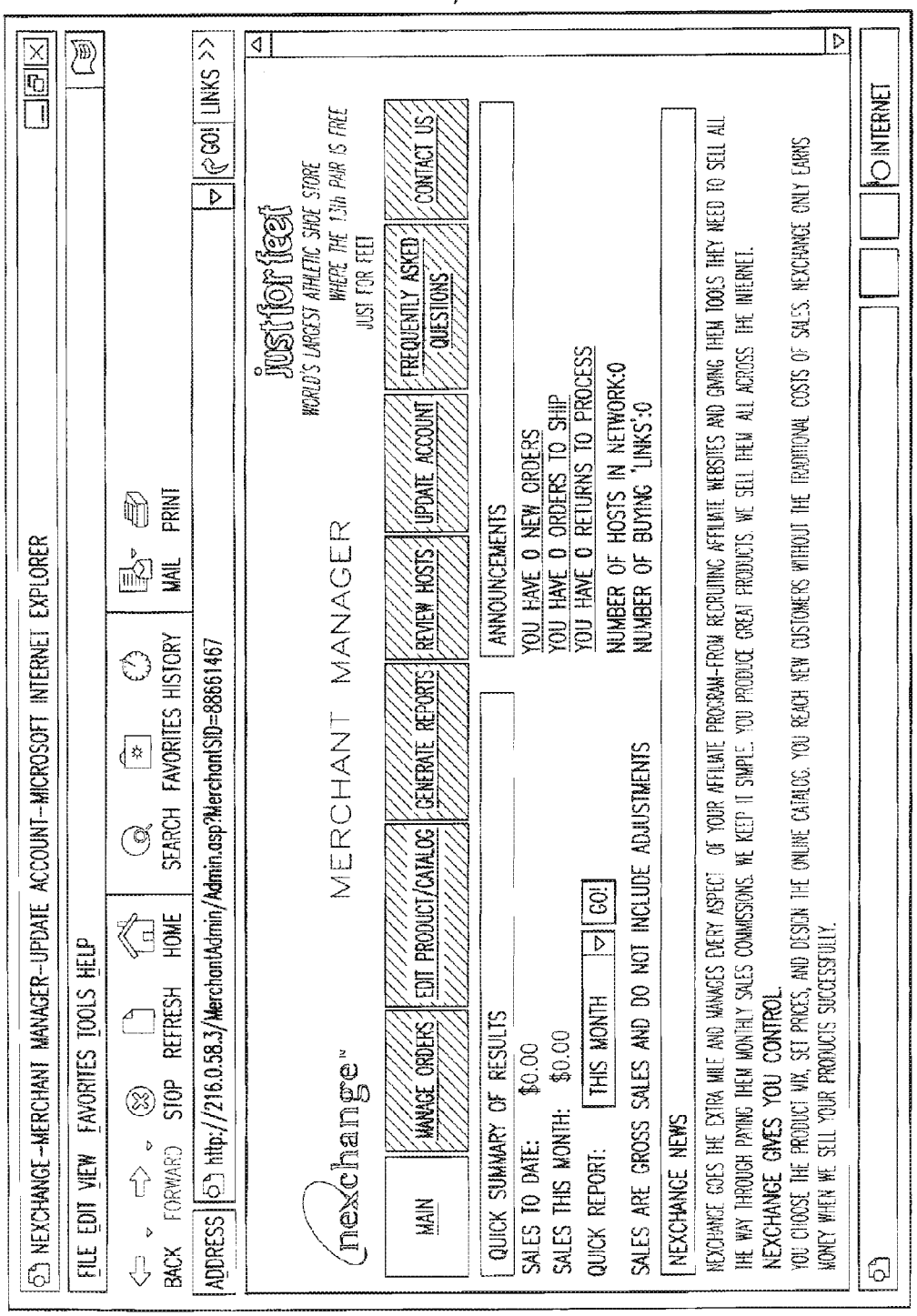



FIG.9



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 473 of 1793

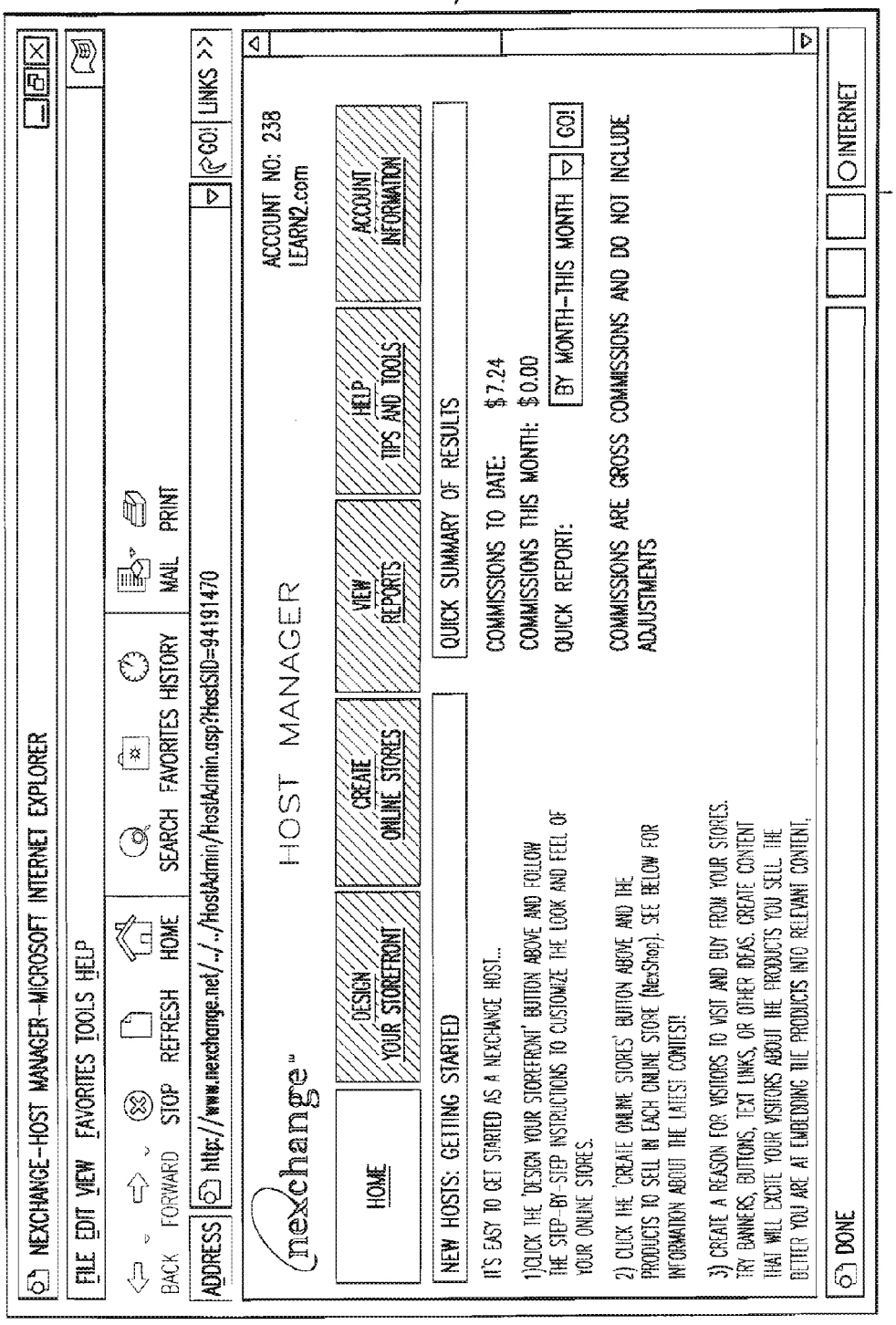



FIG.10



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 474 of 1793

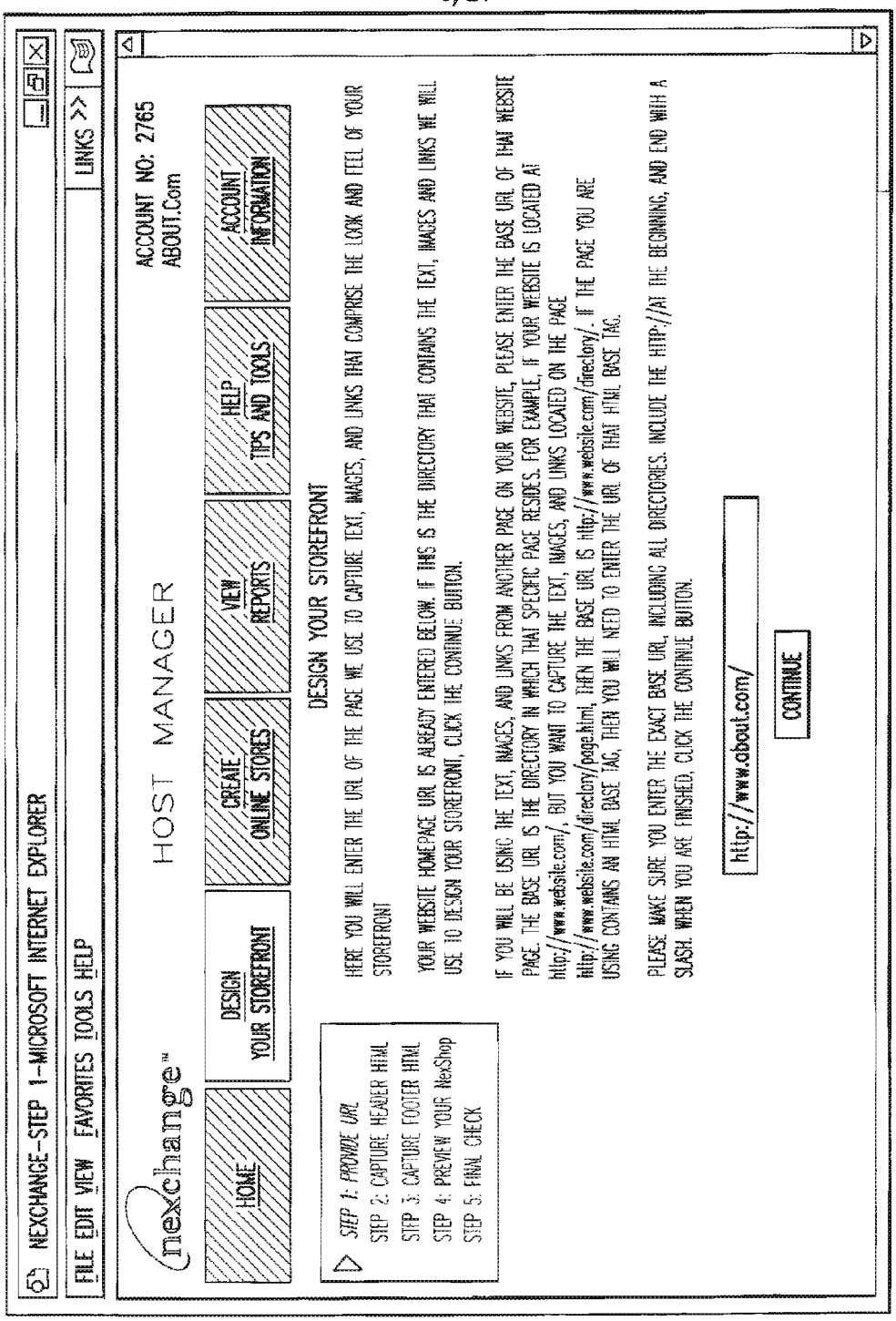



FIG.11



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 475 of 1793

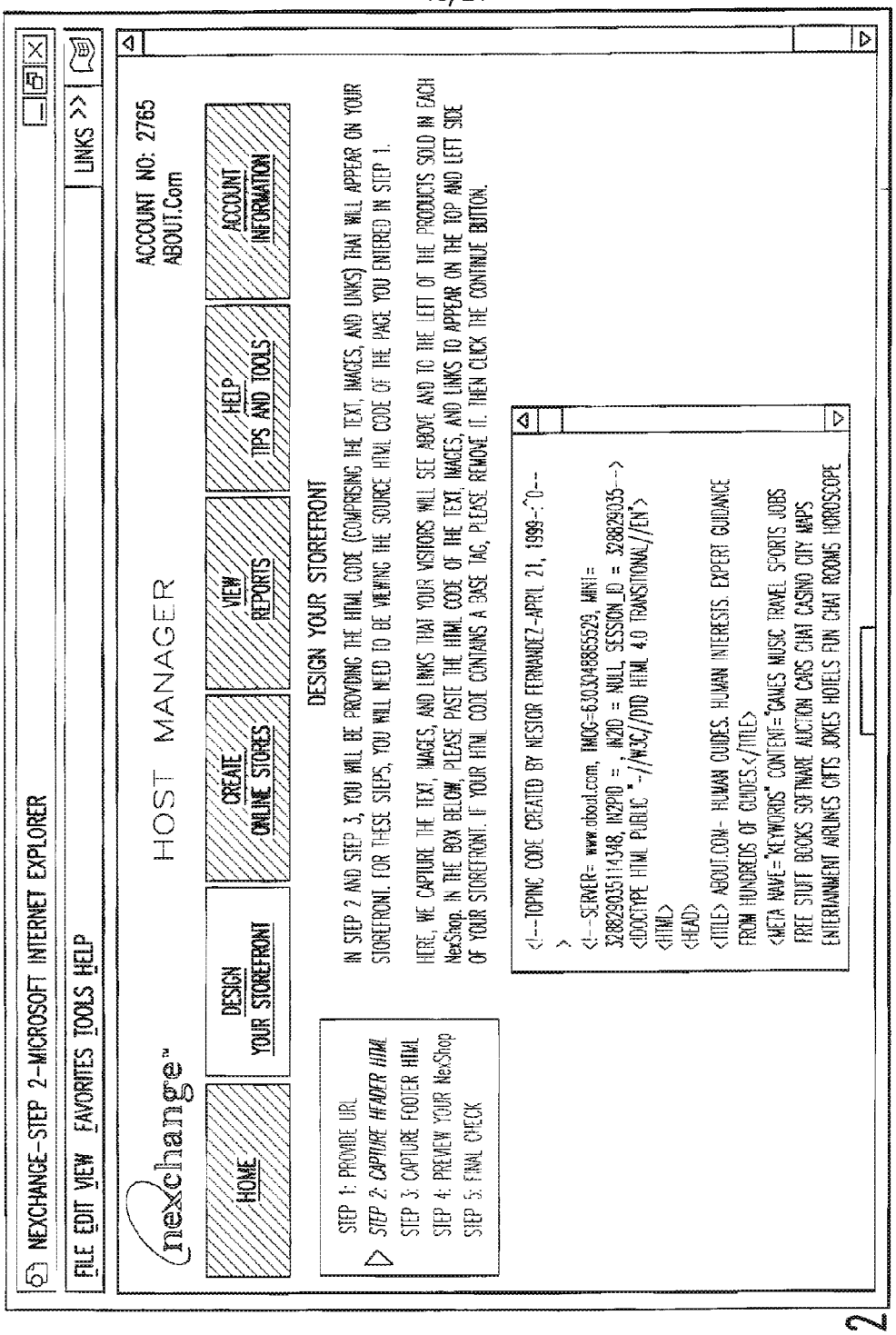



FIG. 12



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 476 of 1793

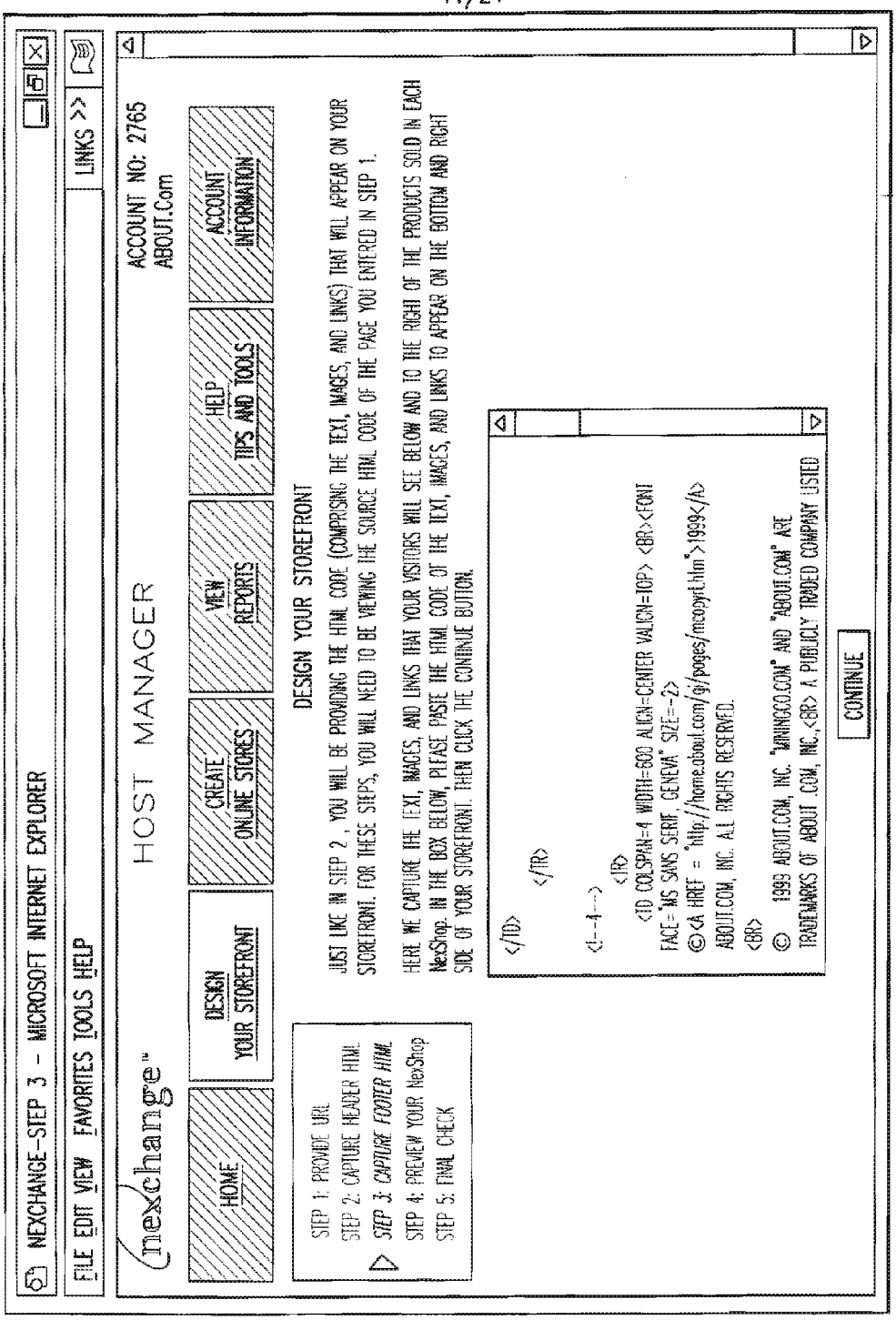



FIG. 13



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 477 of 1793

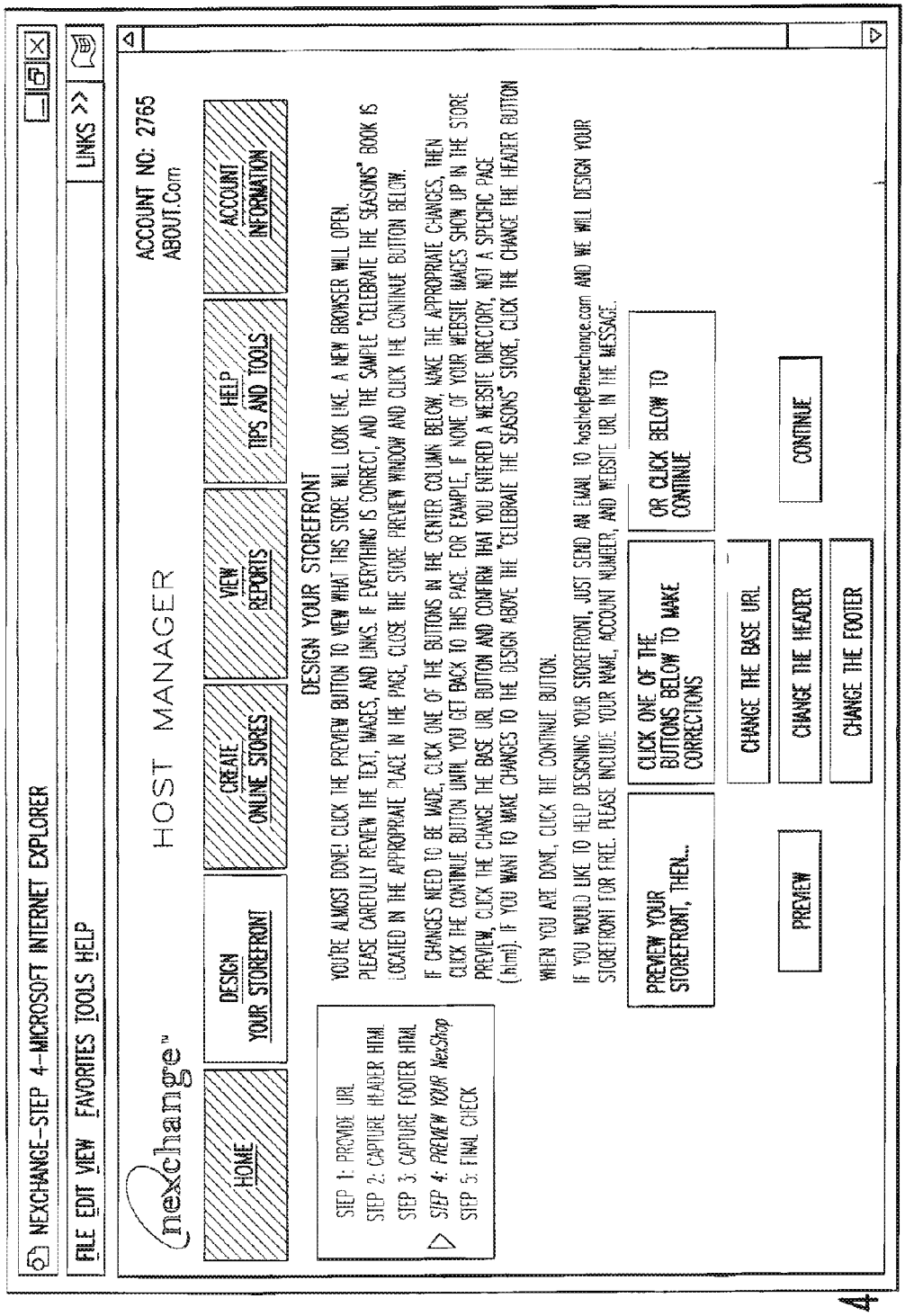



FIG. 14



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 478 of 1793

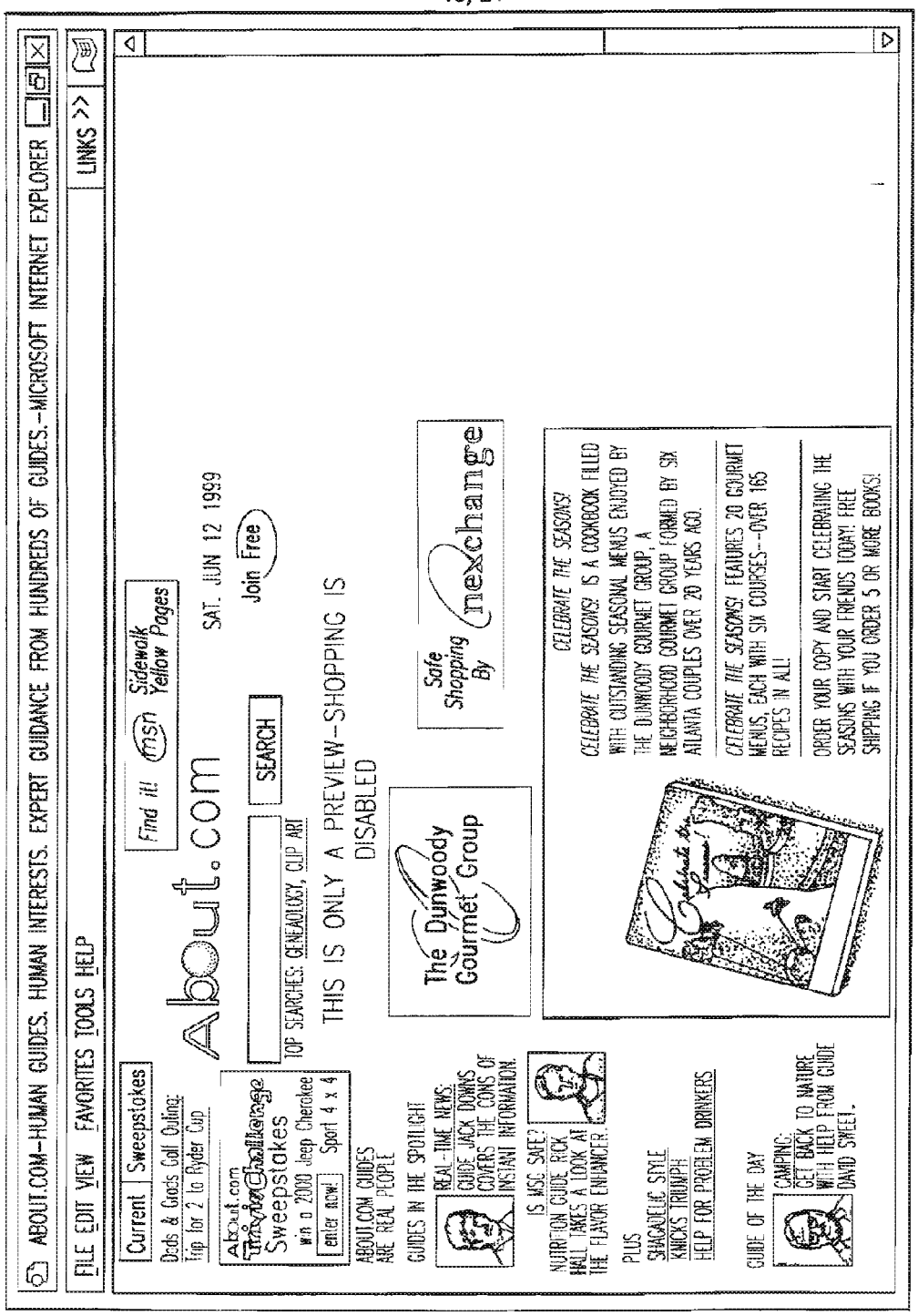



FIG.15



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 479 of 1793

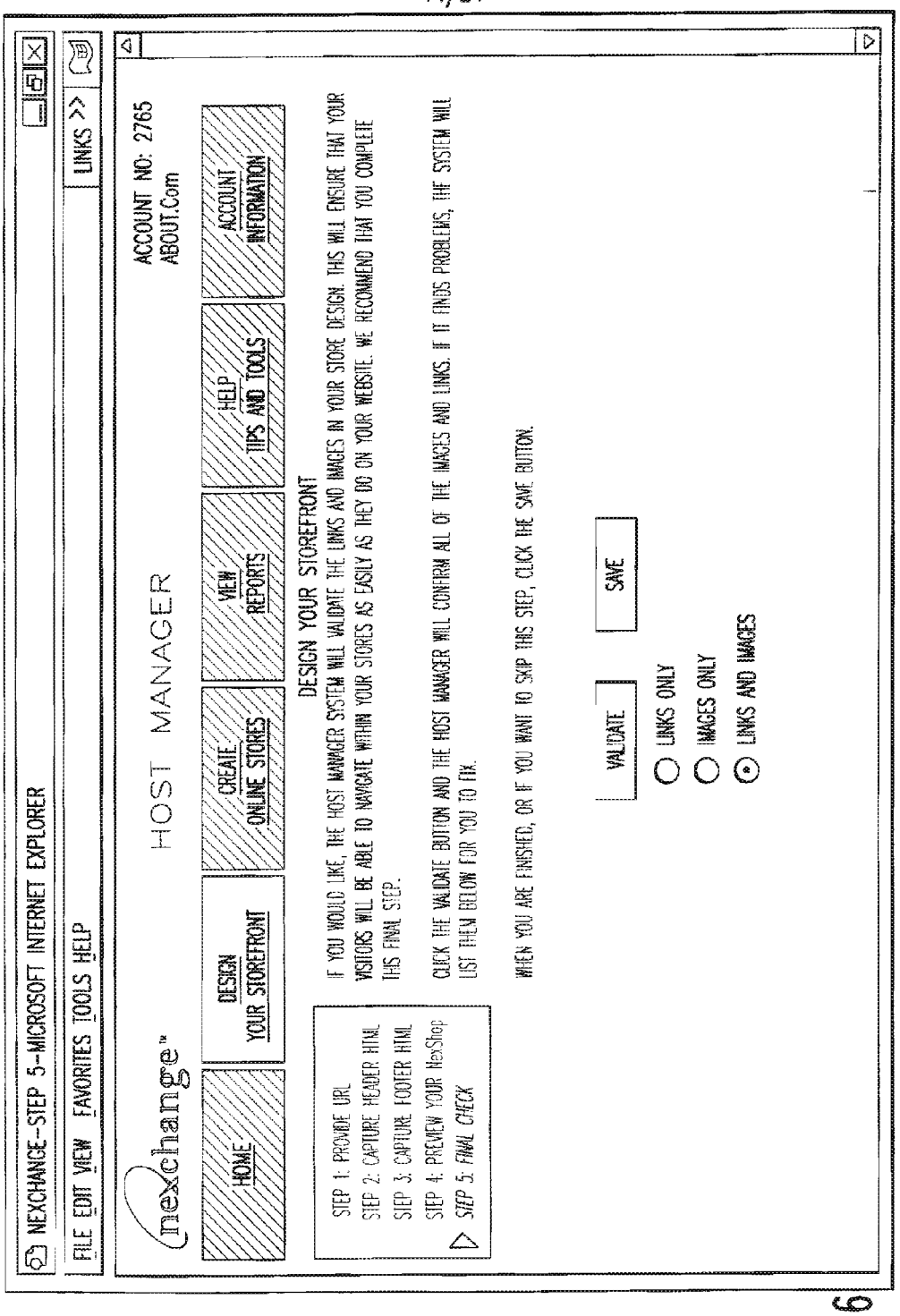



FIG.16



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 480 of 1793

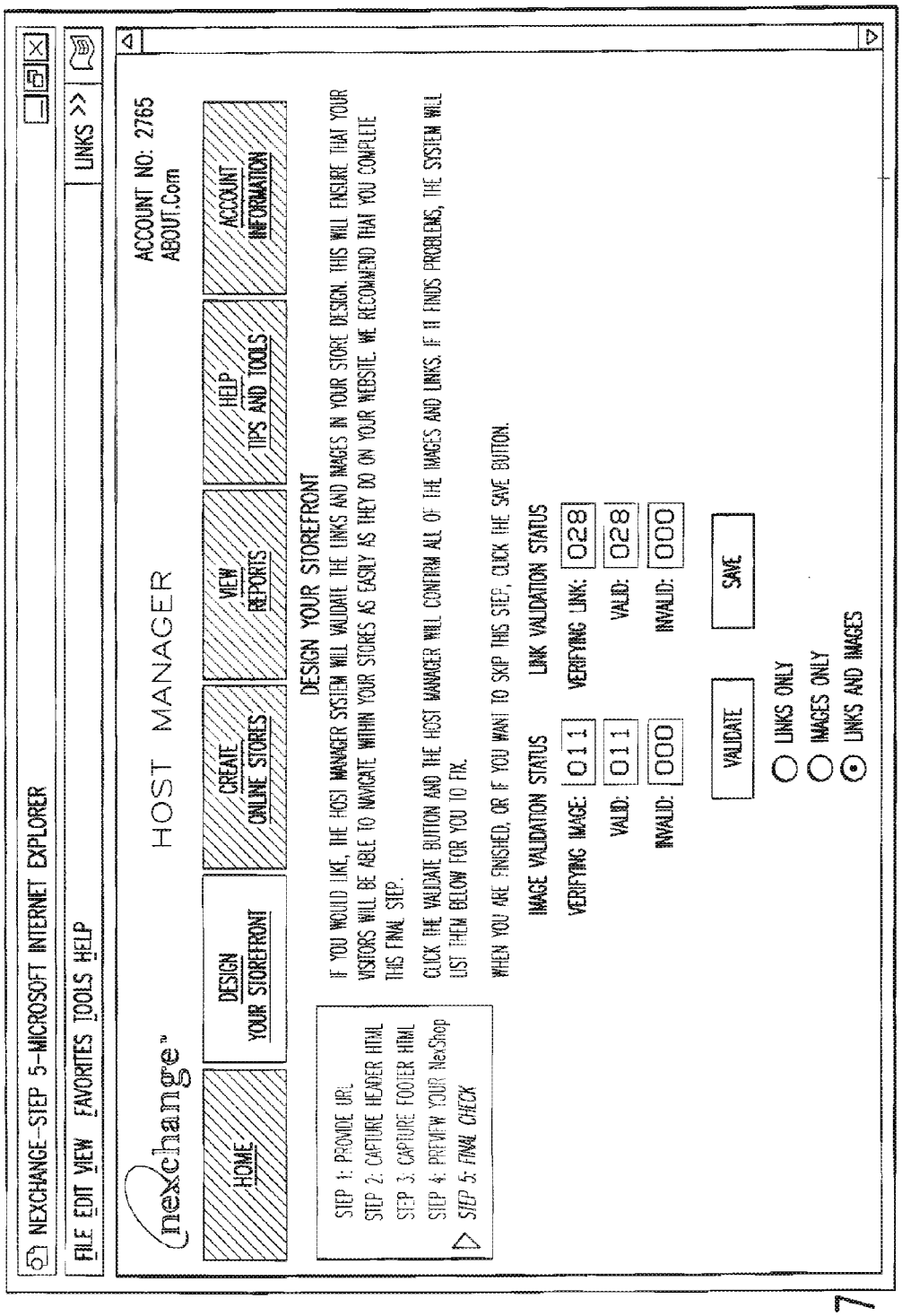



FIG.17



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 481 of 1793

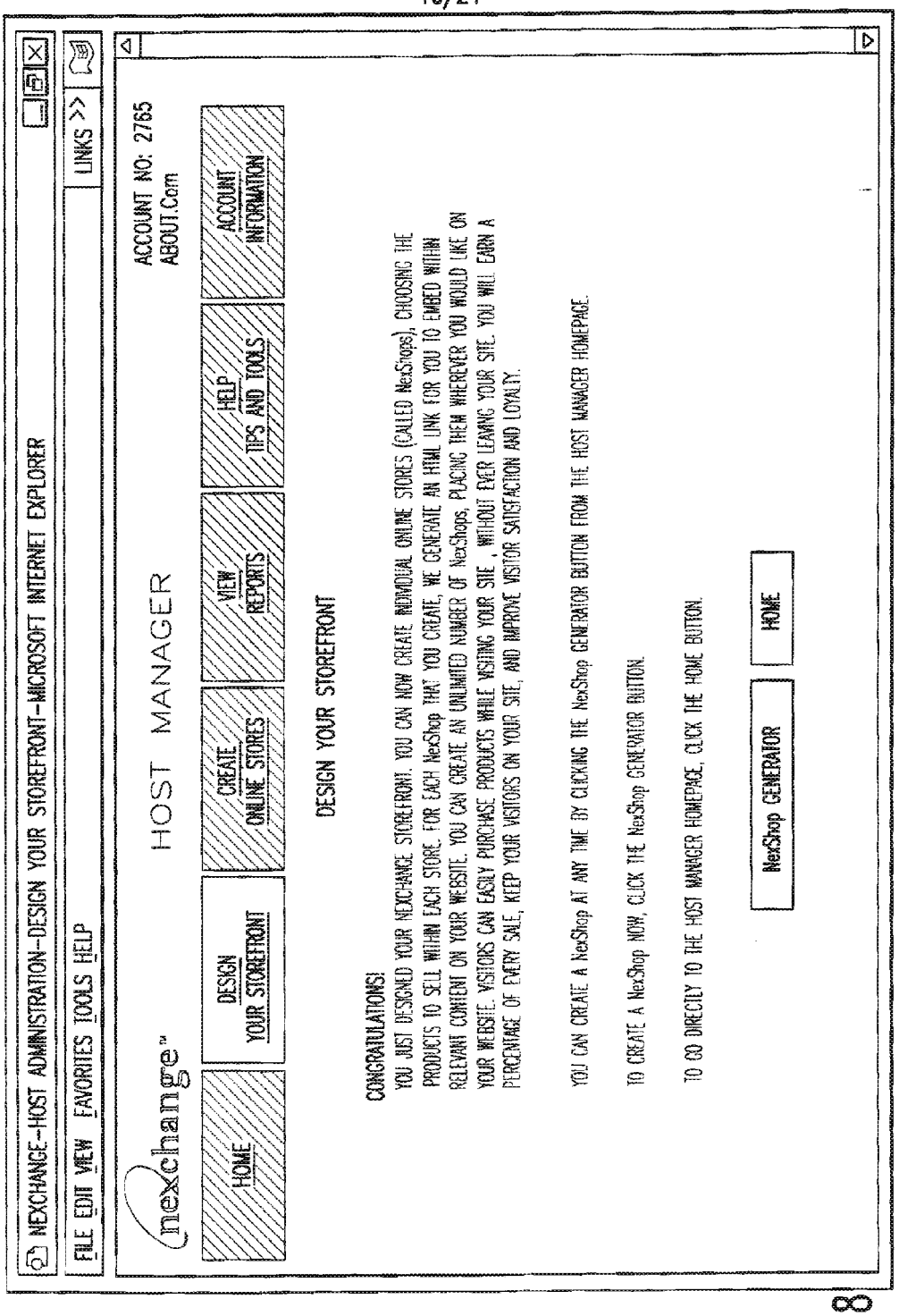



FIG.18



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 482 of 1793

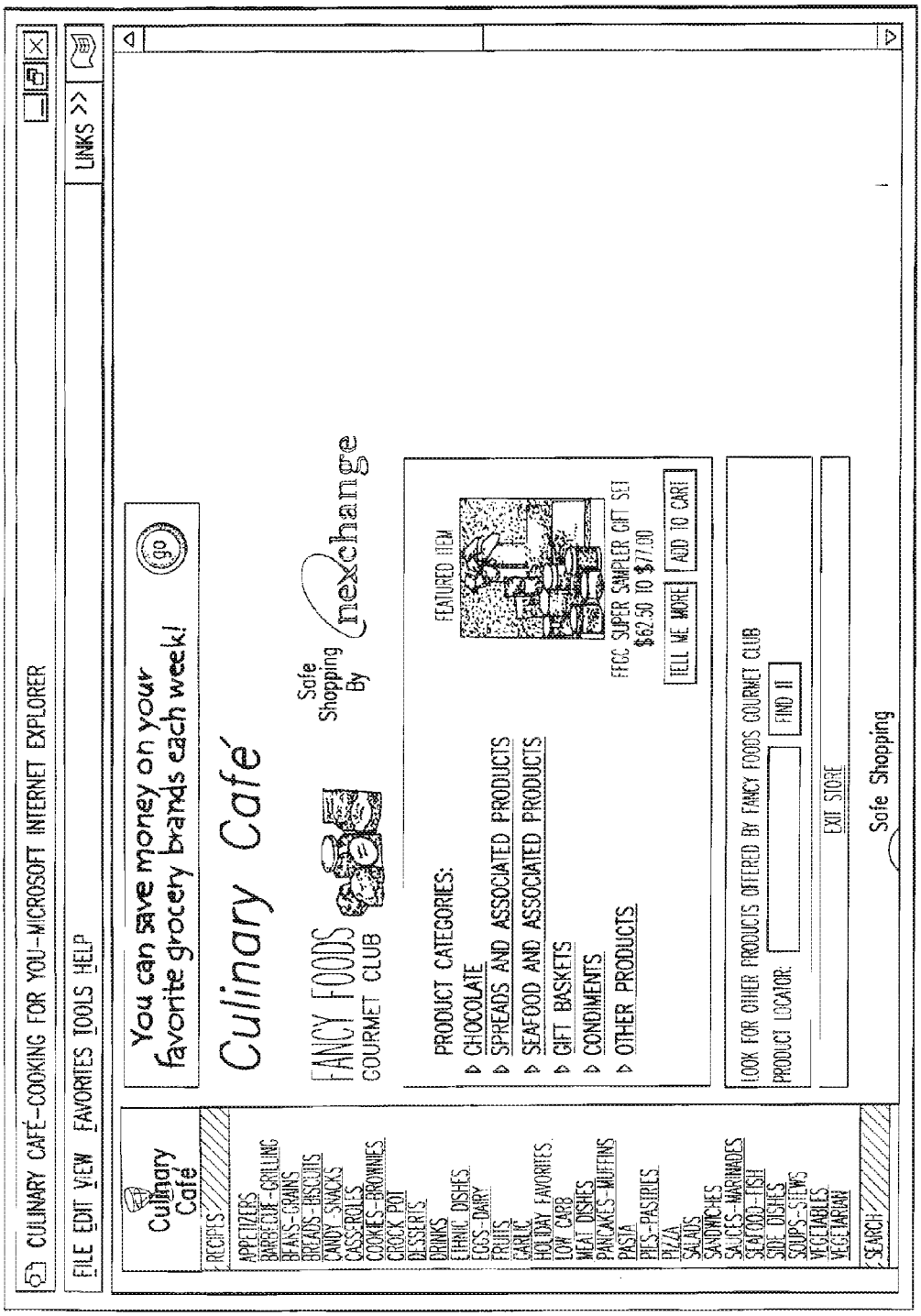



FIG.19



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 483 of 1793

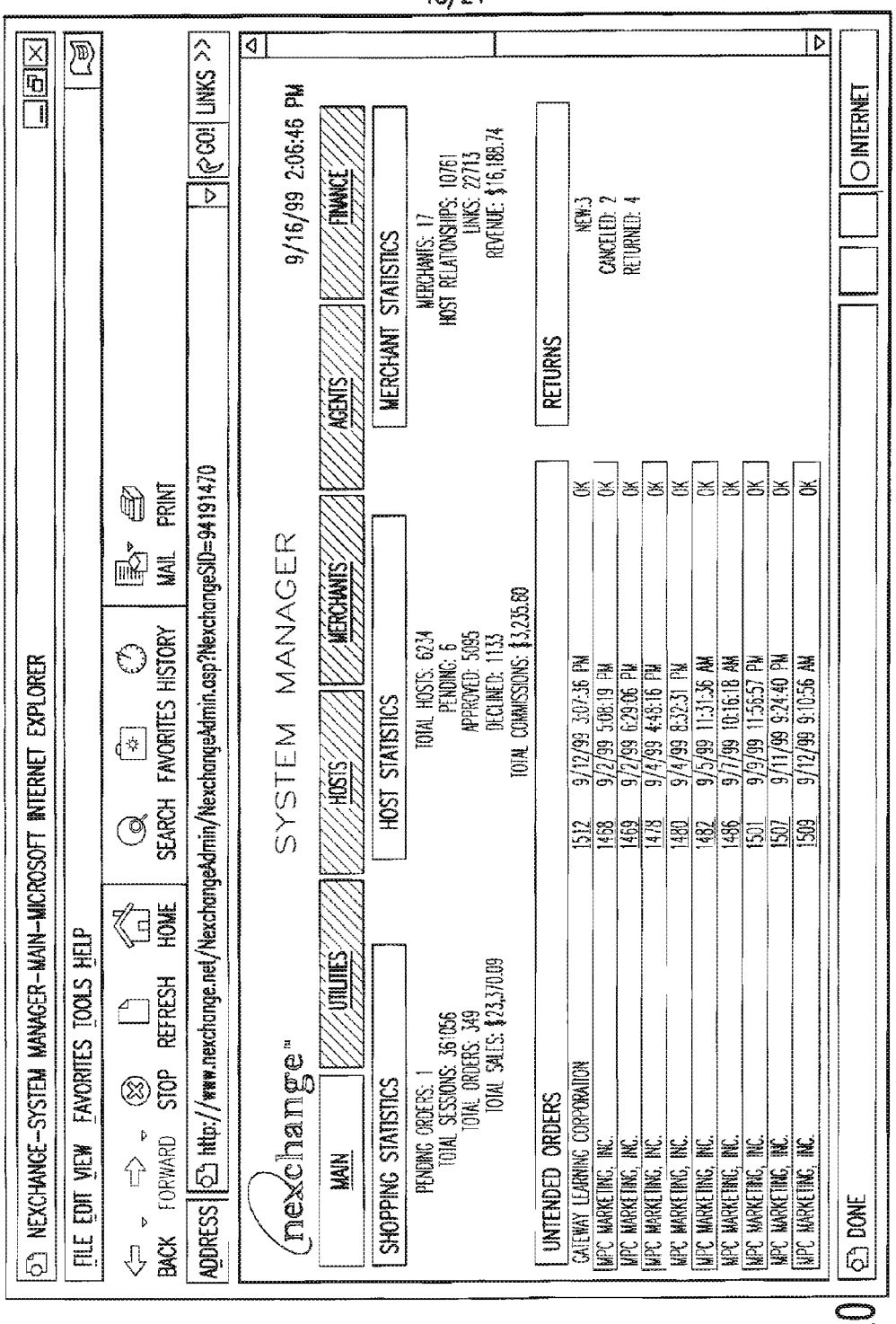



FIG.20



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 484 of 1793

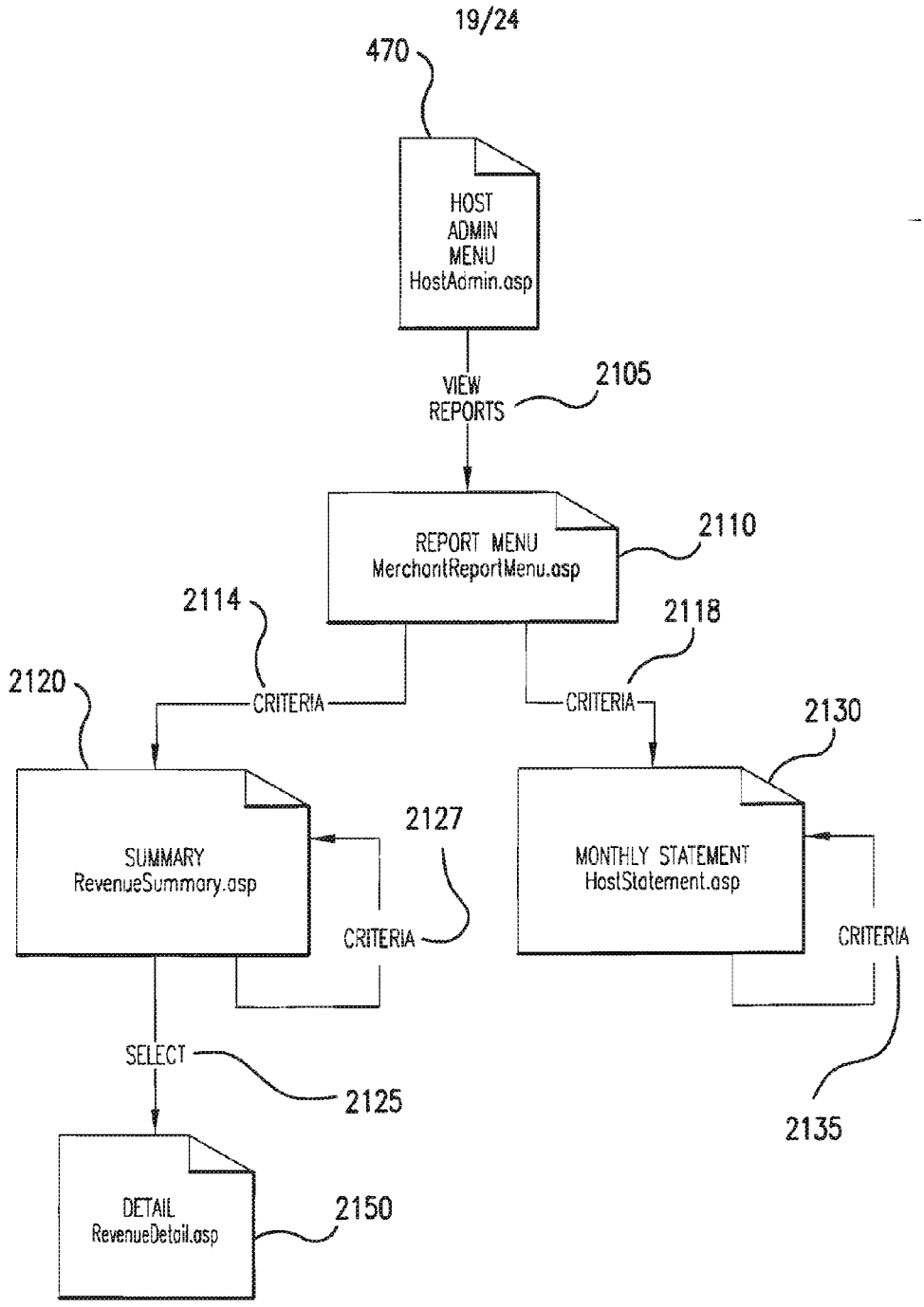



FIG.21



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 485 of 1793

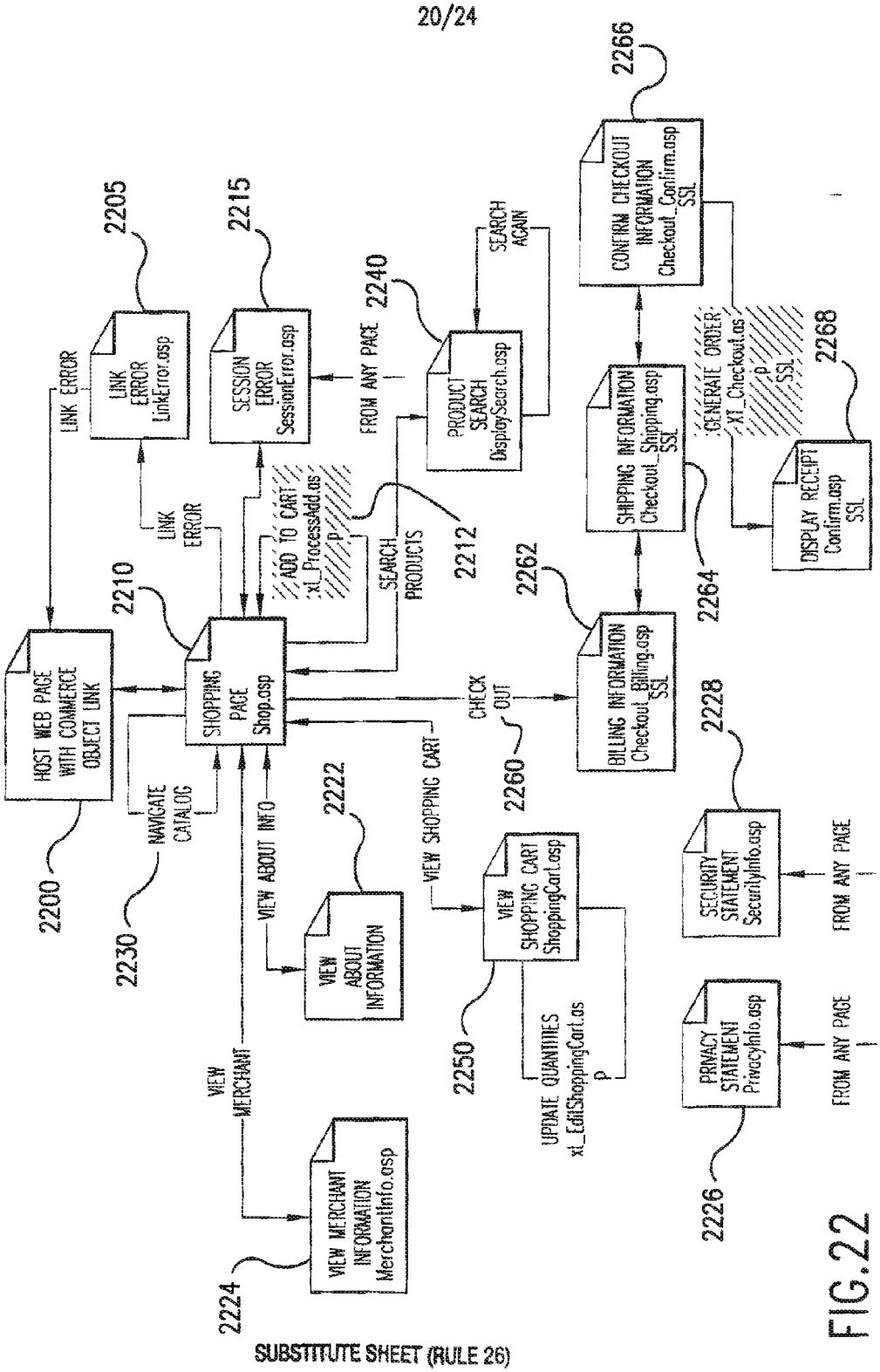



FIG. 22



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 486 of 1793

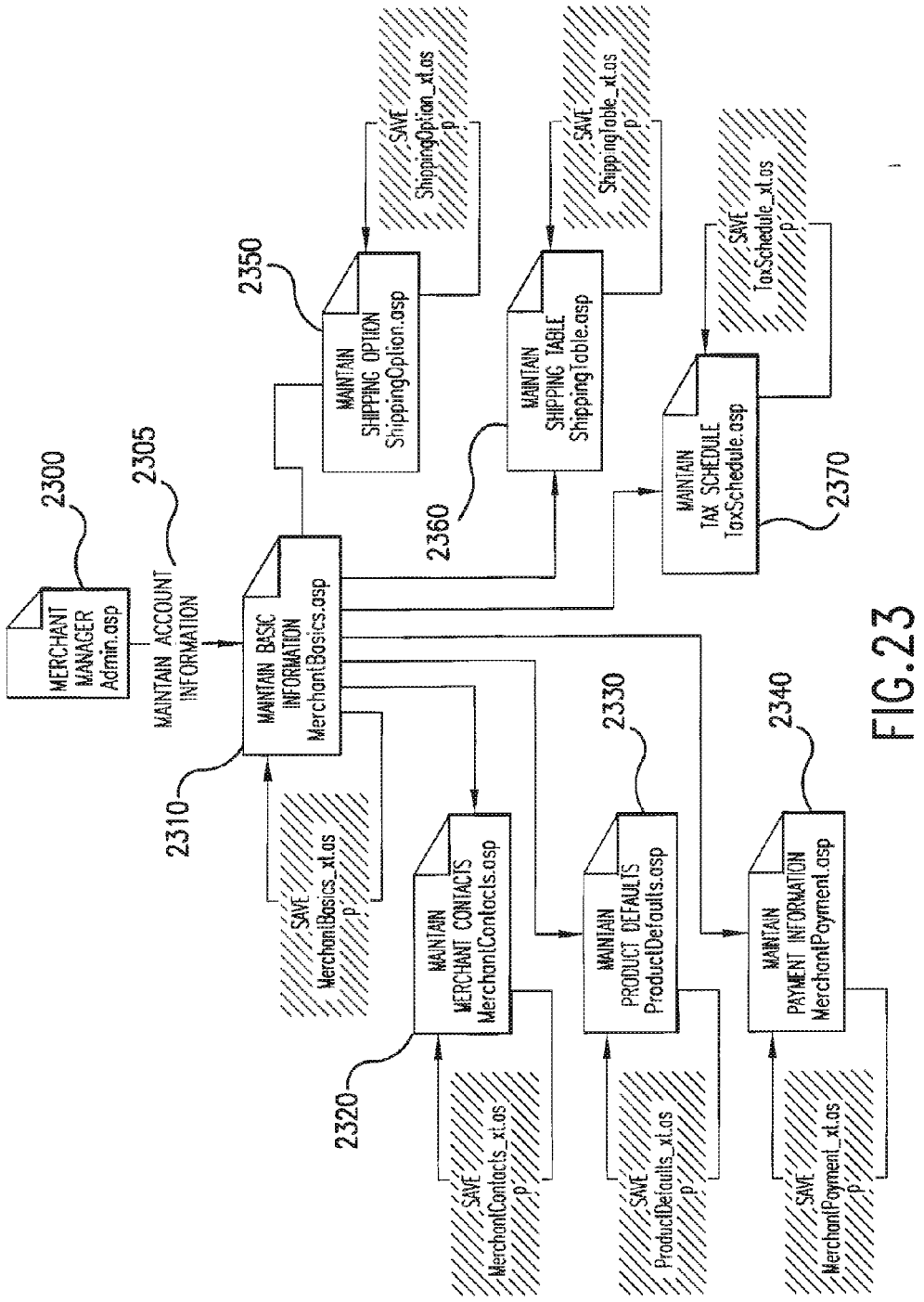



FIG.23



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 487 of 1793

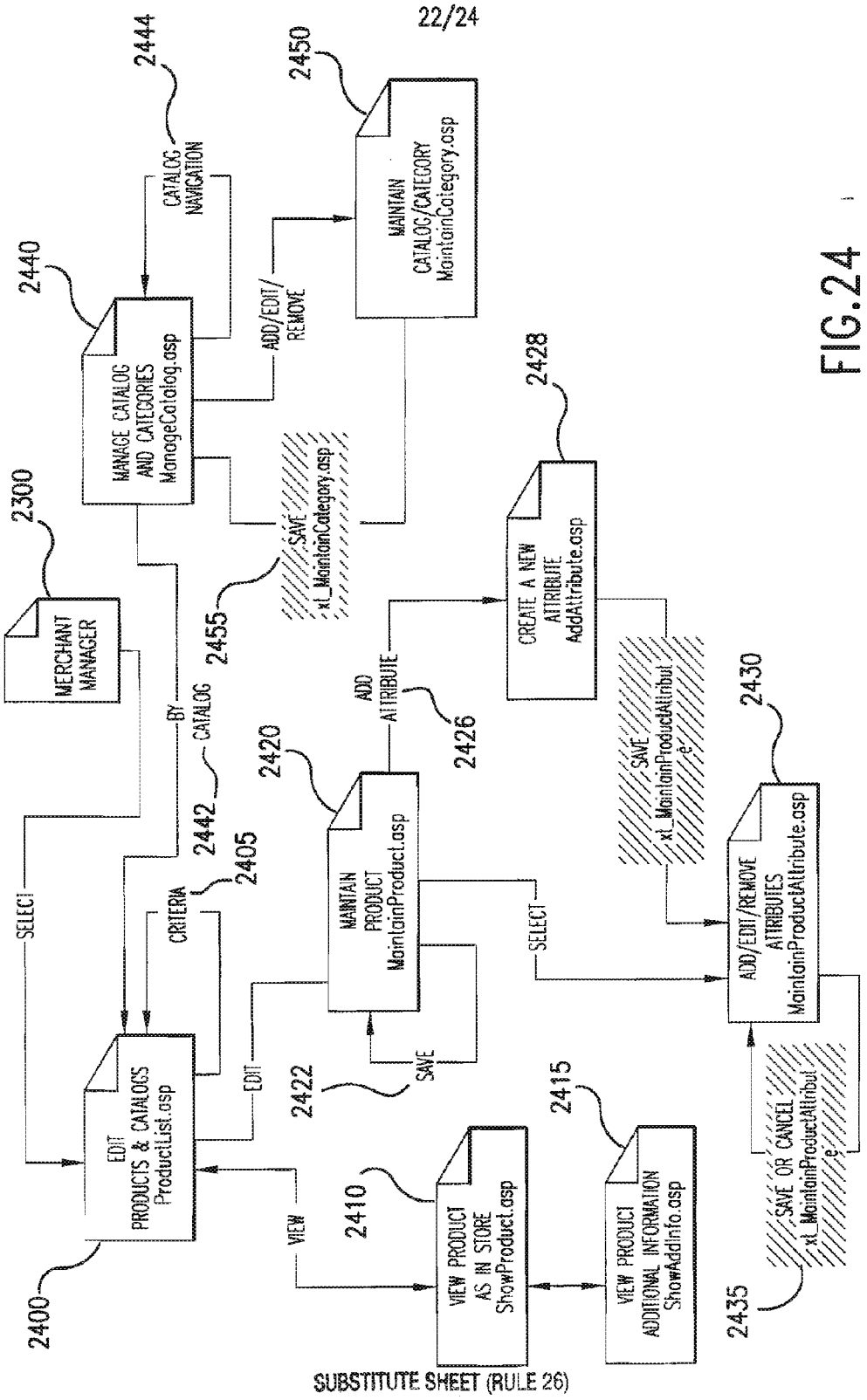



FIG.24



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 488 of 1793

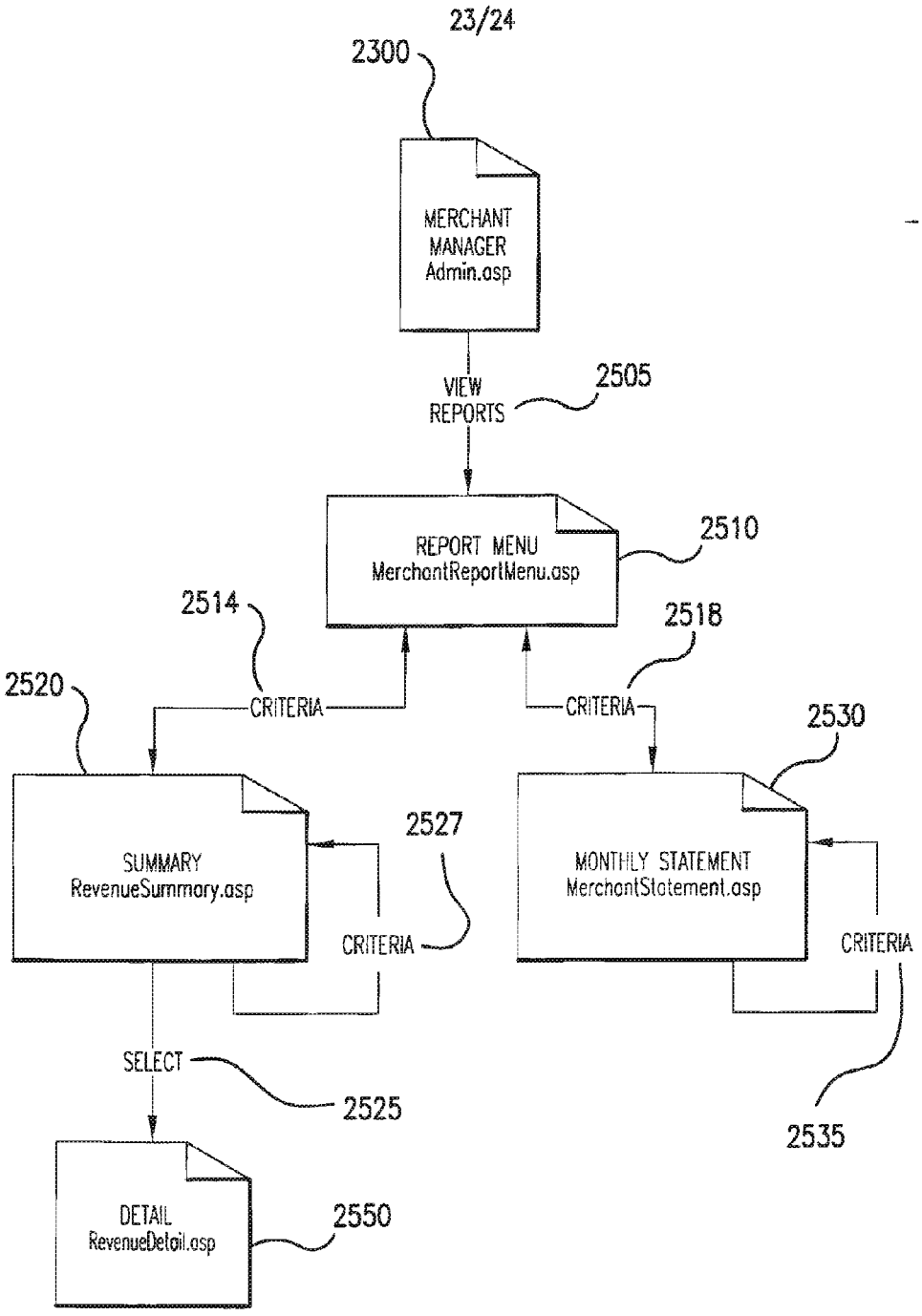



FIG.25



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 489 of 1793

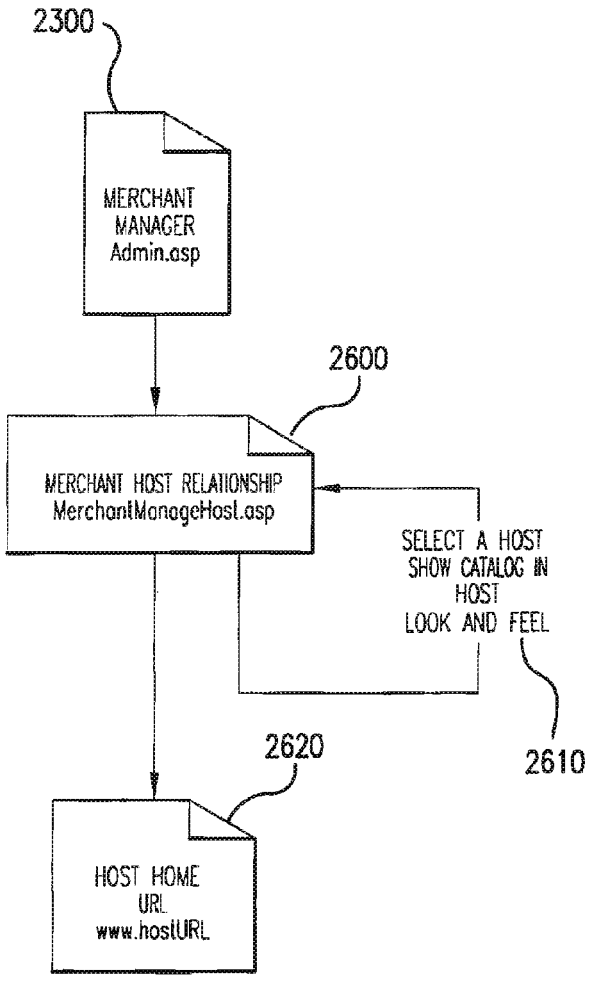



FIG.26



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 490 of 1793

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US99/21656

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC(6) :G06F 15/16, 15/167
US CL :709/212, 217, 218, 219
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
U.S. : 709/212, 217, 218, 219

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

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
EAST, STN
search terms: web layer, emulation, replication, proxy, GUI, Web page, ecommerce, ebusiness

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

| Category* | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
|---|---|---|
| A | US 5,596,702 A (STUCKA et al.) 21 January 1997, col. 5, lines 1-26 and col. 30, lines 32-67. | 1, 6, 11-14 |
| A | US 5,630,125 A (ZELLWEGER) 13 May 1997, col. 11, lines 10-52. | 1, 6, 11-14 |
| A | US 5,796,952 A (DAVIS et al.) 18 August 1998, col. 4, lines 1-64 and col. 9, lines 15-65. | 1 and 6 |
| A | US 5,727,159 A (KIKINIS) 10 March 1998, see entire document. | 1, 6, 11-14 |
| A | US 5,802,299 A (LOGAN et al.) 01 September 1998, col. 2, lines 5-45 and col. 10, lines 1-46. | 1, 6, 11-14 |

[X] Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. [ ] See patent family annex.

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|---|---|---|
| Y,P | US 5,897,622 A (BLINN et al.) 27 April 1999, col. 7, line 5 - col. 12, line 6. | 1-14 |
| Y,P | US 5,940,834 A (PINARD et al.) 17 August 1999, col. 1, line 52 - col. 2, line 67 and col. 8, lines 5-65. | 1-14 |

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061

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08/962,997 2 November 1997 (02.11.97) US

(71) Applicant *(for all designated States except US)*: SAGE ENTERPRISES, INC., doing business as PLANETALL [US/US]; 2nd floor, 17 Sellers Street, Cambridge, MA 02139 (US).

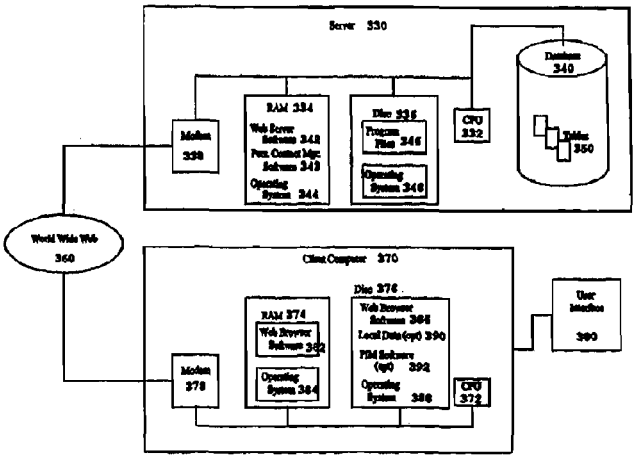
(72) Inventor; and
(75) Inventor/Applicant *(for US only)*: ROBERTSON, Brian, D. [CA/US]; Apartment 605, 10 Magazine Street, Cambridge, MA 02139 (US).

(74) Agents: CRISMAN, Douglas, J. et al.; Flehr, Hohbach, Test, Albritton & Herbert LLP, Suite 3400, 4 Embarcadero Center, San Francisco, CA 94111-4187 (US).

(81) Designated States: AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

**Published**
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(54) Title: NETWORKED PERSONAL CONTACT MANAGER




(57) Abstract

A network computer based personal contact manager system (343) is disclosed wherein users of networked clients (370) maintain and update a set of user information which is stored in a relational database (340) on a networked server (330). The personal contact manager system (343) allows each user to specify on an individual basis which of their contacts are permitted to access respective datums of their user information. When permission is granted, the system will issue notifications to a user's contacts. The system also allows users to find contacts based on group affiliations and notifies users when there are coincidences in their data. The system supports the retrieval of information on the contacts of contacts, if a permission has been granted by the contacts and their contacts, and can also be used to synchronize the server database with a PIM database of the user (390) and any of his contacts who have the appropriate permissions.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 493 of 1793

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# NETWORKED PERSONAL CONTACT MANAGER

The present invention relates generally to computer software used to manage contact information--such as mailing addresses, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and birthdays--and more specifically to a method of creating links between members over a network and providing information to each member based on levels of permission maintained by the other members to which they are linked.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Several types of prior art for managing contact information exist, including Personal Information Management software applications, Groupware Applications, and Internet-based "White Pages" and e-mail services.

**Personal Information Management Software.** As represented generally in FIG. 1, in a typical prior art Personal Information Management (PIM) software application (e.g., Lotus Organizer, Microsoft Outlook, or U.S. Robotics Palm Pilot), a PIM software application 120, 124 that stores contact information in a database resides on a workstation or handheld computer 100 having a central processing unit 102, a display 108, a keyboard and/or mouse 110, a primary memory 104 (e.g., random access memory) for program execution, a secondary memory 106 (e.g., a hard disc) for program storage, and peripheral devices 112. As is well known, programs, such as the PIM software 120, are executed in the RAM 104 by the CPU 102 under control of the operating system software 122, 126.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 495 of 1793

In the prior art, users themselves enter the contact information that they want to store in the PIM software. A variety of methods exist for entering this contact information. It may be entered manually using the keyboard, imported from an existing file on their computer, or imported via a peripheral device such as a business card scanner. The defining characteristic of this class of prior art is that the input of the contact information is performed by the user of the software and, when the information changes, the user must modify the information himself. What this class of prior art lacks is a means for information to be shared between multiple users and a means for a given user to post changes to his own information for the benefit of others.

**Groupware Applications.** As generally represented in FIG. 2, in a typical prior art Groupware application.(e.g., Lotus Notes), a user workstation 160 accesses information stored on a central server computer 130 over a computer network 150, such as a Local Area Network or Intranet. The server system consists of a central processing unit 132, a primary memory 134 (e.g., random access memory) for program execution, a secondary storage device 136 (e.g., a hard disc) for program storage, and a modem 138 or other device for connecting to the computer network. The user workstation 160 is the same as the user workstation 100 described in reference to FIG. 1 with the addition of a modem 162 or other device for connecting to the computer network. The file server or database contains data files 148 that can be accessed only by authorized users. The user uses client software 174, 176 running on the user workstation 160 to access the files 148 under the mediation of server software 140, 144 running on the server 130.

Typically, in such a system a central system administrator organizes users into classes and the creator of a file 148 determines what classes of users may view the file. The rules governing which individual users or classes of users have the authorization to view a particular file 148 may be stored as part of the file itself. Alternatively, these rules are based upon the hierarchical directory structure of the file server in which the file is stored. That is, a particular user may view files in one directory but not another.

FIG. 3 represents a common deployment of a contact management system based on Groupware. Each user enters information 202 about himself and specifies a set of permissions 204 that define what classes of users are able to view various pieces of the information 202. What this deployment of the prior art lacks is the ability to authorize viewing privileges on a user-by-user basis rather than on a class-by-class basis. For instance, a user would be able to grant access to his home phone number 206 to the Human Resources department of his employer (e.g., Class A) while denying access to the same information to his co-workers (e.g., Class C). The user would not be able to give access to his home phone number selectively to a first co-worker while denying it to a second co-worker if both co-workers were part of the same class of users as organized by the central system administrator. Furthermore, such a system would lack a practical notification methodology. There would be no way for a user to specify "notify me when the first co-worker changes his information but not when the second co-worker changes his information."

**Internet-Based "White Pages" and E-Mail Directory Services.** In a typical prior art "white pages" or e-mail service, client computers and a server computer are connected via the World Wide Web as depicted in FIG. 4. A user subscribes to a White Pages or E-Mail service via a client computer 270 operating a web browser 282 or other software application residing in memory 274 that allows it to display information downloaded from a server computer 230 over the World Wide Web 260. The server computer system accesses a database 240 containing contact information entered by registered users. The service enables users to view contact information entered by other users. The authorization scheme may allow all users to limit certain classes of users from viewing certain parts of their user record as represented in FIG. 3. However, there are no linkages between individual users and thus users cannot restrict the viewing of their information on a user-by-user basis. Furthermore, users cannot be notified when information for particular users has changed.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 497 of 1793

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a computer-network-based contact management system that allows members to create and maintain contact with other members and determine on a person-by-person basis what information to share or withhold. The system is based on a relational database scalable to millions of users that resides on a server computer.

The invention was developed shortly after the advent of the World Wide Web, which promoted millions of people worldwide to connect their computers with a standard protocol, a phenomenon which made the invention practical and beneficial.

When a user becomes a member of the system, the member associates himself with any number of affinity groups and creates a data record for himself by entering information in specific data fields. Based on the affinity groups with which the user has associated himself, the system then informs the user of other members in the same groups and allows the user to establish a link to any of those members on an individual basis.

For each second user to which a first user has established a link, the second user can specify which data fields in his data record can be viewed by the first user. Each second user to which the first user has established a link is informed that a link has been established. The second user can in turn decide whether or not to establish a link to the first user. If the second user chooses to establish a link to the first user, he can specify which data fields in his personal data record can be viewed by the first user. In addition, each time a new user associates himself with a group with which an existing user has associated himself, the present invention informs the existing user that the new user has joined that group and allows the existing member to establish a link to the new user.

For each first user, the present invention maintains a database of information about the second users to whom the first user has established a link. The personal address book of the first user contains the information in the data fields that the

second users have given the first user permission to view. Whenever a second user changes any information in any data field of his data record, the information in that field is automatically updated in the information database of each first user whom he has given permission to view the information in that data field.

In addition, if a first user has given a second user the proper form of data field permission for the personal data record of the first user, the present invention will inform the second user whenever first user's birthday or anniversary is approaching, whenever the first user will be travelling in the vicinity of the second user, and whenever the astrological sign of the first user is compatible with the astrological sign of the second user.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and form a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention and, together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the invention, wherein:

FIG. 1 depicts a computer loaded with Personal Information Management software;

FIG. 2 generally depicts the data schema of a category of prior art known as groupware applications;

FIG. 3 shows a common scheme for authorizing permission to view information in the prior art;

FIG. 4 depicts two computers interconnected via the Internet, one of which is a server connected to a database and the other of which represents a user's client workstation, both of which are configured according to the prior art;

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 499 of 1793

FIG. 5 depicts two computers interconnected via the Internet, one of which is a server connected to a database and the other of which represents a user's client workstation, both of which are configured according to the present invention;

FIG. 6 represents an object model of the key tables in the relational database maintained on the server computer in the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 7 represents a pseudo graphical user interface in which a user enters information in specific data fields to create a personal data record;

FIG. 8 represents a pseudo graphical user interface for listing other users with the same group affiliation as that specified by a first user;

FIG. 9 represents a pseudo graphical user interface for specifying what type of data fields from a first user's personal data record to which the first user wishes to grant a specific second user access;

FIG. 10 represents a pseudo graphical user interface that displays the information stored in a user's personal address book;

FIG. 11 represents a pseudo graphical user interface that provides a first user with specific information that has changed about the other users to which the first user is linked;

FIG. 12 represents a pseudo graphical user interface that allows a first user to enter travel information and find out which contacts have overlapping travel schedules

FIG. 13 represents a pseudo graphical user interface that allows a first user to gather information about the contacts of his contacts; and

FIG. 14 is a data flow diagram of an alternative embodiment of the present invention where a personal digital assistant is synchronized with a server database of user information.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Reference will now be made in detail to the preferred embodiments of the invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying figures. While the invention will be described in conjunction with the preferred embodiments, it will be understood that they are not intended to limit the invention to those embodiments. On the contrary, the invention is intended to cover alternatives, modifications and equivalents, which may be included within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

As represented in FIG. 5, the preferred embodiment follows a standard Internet architecture, in which client computers 370 and a server computer 330 are connected via the World Wide Web 360 and modems 338, 378 or other communications channels. A user accesses the server 360 via a client computer 370 operating a web browser 382 or other software application residing in memory 374 that allows it to display information downloaded from a server computer 330. The server computer system 330 runs server software 342, including the network-computer-based personal contact manager 343 of the present invention, which interacts with the client computers 370 and a user information database 340. In a commercial embodiment of the present invention, the personal contact manager 343 is the heart of a Web-based personal contact management service called PlanetAll. The database 340 contains contact information entered by registered users. The personal contact manager 343 in some situations will notify a set of users of updates made to the database 340 by another user to whom the notified set is related.

A distinction over the prior art is that the database 340 in the present invention is necessarily a relational database built from a set of relational tables 350. In the

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 501 of 1793

conventional manner, both the server 330 and the clients 370 include respective storage devices, such as hard disks 336 and 376 and operate under the control of operating systems 344, 384 executed in RAM 334, 374 by the CPUs 332, 372. The server storage device 336 stores program files 346 and the operating system 348. Similarly, the client storage devices 376 store the web browser software 386 and the operating systems 388. In an alternative configuration, in which the client is a personal information manager (PIM), such as the U.S. Robotics Palm Pilot, the disc 376 can also include a local PIM database 390 and PIM software, which performs data management and synchronization functions.

FIG. 6 outlines the data structure of the relational database 340 in the preferred embodiment, in which seven tables 350 are employed to enable most of the functionality of the present invention:

(1) Customer Table 440 ;
(2) Friend Table 460;
(3) Group Table 400;
(4) Affinity Table 420;
(5) Address Table 480;
(6) Phone Table 500; and
(7) Travel Event Table 520;

The Customer Table 440 contains one record for each unique user. The key field in this table is CustomerID 440-2. All information stored in the various database tables relating to a particular member is linked together by a unique number in this field. Other important fields in this table include information used by users to login to the system (Username 440-6 and Password 440-8), information which helps users identify each other (First Name 440-10, Last Name 440-12, and E-mail 440-20), information required to provide Birthday Notification (Birthday 440-16) and information required to provide Crossing Paths notification (CityID 440-14). Each record in the Customer Table 440 is time-stamped via the RecordDate field 440-4. Other fields 440-22 can also be included in the Customer Table 440 (and the other tables as well).

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 502 of 1793

The Friend Table 460 is a key to the present invention because it relates users to each other. Each record in the table represents a relationship between one user, identified by CustomerID 460-4, and another, identified by FriendID 460-6, with a certain level of permissions 460-10. The user interface of the present invention provides a multitude of ways for users to view information about other users, and every one of these ways relies on a database query of the Friend Table 460 to determine the list of other users whose information a particular user may see. Each record is time-stamped via the RecordDate field 460-8 so that users may be notified when their contacts' records change. Each record is uniquely identified by a RelationID 460-2.

The Group Table 400 contains one record for each unique group with which users may affiliate. Each group is identified by a GroupName 400-4 and GroupType 400-6. Examples of these groups would be GroupName 400-4 = "Massachusetts Institute of Technology" (GroupType = "University") and GroupName 400-4 = "Sigma Chi" (GroupType = "Fraternity"). Each record has a time-stamp 400-8 and a unique identifier 400-2.

Each record of the Affinity Table 420 relates a user, identified by CustomerID 420-4, to a group, identified by GroupID 420-6. If a user affiliates with six groups, there would be six records in the Affinity Table 420. This table stores information about the time period of a user's affiliation with a particular group in the FromYear and ToYear fields 420-8, 420-10 so that the system may help users find their contemporaries. Each record is time-stamped 420-12 so that the system may report to users when other users join the group, has a unique identifier 420-2 and can include additional fields 420-14.

The Address Table 480 stores information for any number and kind of addresses for a particular user, identified by CustomerID 480-4. For instance, if a user wants to make his home address, work address and summer home address available to his contacts, there would be three records for that user in the Address Table 480, each being identified in part by an appropriate AddressType 480-8 (e.g., home, work, summer home). Each record is time-stamped 480-16 so that the system can notify

users when their contacts have added or modified address information and has a unique identifier 480-2. Address information is conventional, including street Address 480-8, CityID 480-10, Postal code 480-12, and military Base 480-14 fields.

The Phone Table 500 is directly analogous to the Address Table 480, but it stores telephone and fax number information instead of address information. Each record is identified by a unique PhoneRecordID 500-2 and includes the CustomerID 500-4 of the user whose phone information is contained in the record, a phone type ID 500-6 indicating, e.g., whether the record is for a telephone or fax, the phone number 500-8 and a time-stamp 500-10.

The Travel Event Table 520 stores information about users' travel plans. This table is required to notify users when their travel plans intersect with the travel plans of their contacts. A record in the Travel Event Table 520 includes the CustomerID 520-4 of the user whose travel information is contained in the record, arrival and departure dates 520-6, 520-8 and a CityID 520-10 identifying the travel destination. Each record is uniquely identified by a Travel_EventID 520-2 and is time-stamped with a RecordDate 520-14.

In the preferred embodiment, a multitude of other tables 540 are used to enable a variety of user services. The Permission Type Table 542 contains one record for each of the varieties of permission levels the system allows members to assign to their contacts in the Friend Table 460. In the preferred embodiment, as illustrated in FIG. 9, permission information is grouped into five categories for the purpose of user interface simplicity (crossing paths notification permission 600-6, personal information 600-8, work information 600-10, birthday notification 600-12, and friends of friends information 600-14). However, the Permission Type table 542 could just as easily be structured to allow members to grant and deny access to information on a field by field basis.

The City Table 550 stores latitude and longitude information for two million cities to enable the system to notify users when their contacts travel within a defined geographical radius. The Zodiac Table 552 allows the system to associate

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 504 of 1793

birthdays with signs of the Zodiac and thereby notify which of their contacts have compatible astrological signs on a particular day. The AddressType, PhoneType and GroupType tables 544, 546, 548 define the types of address, phone and group that can be defined in the respective Address, Group and Phone tables 480, 400, 500. The advantage of this normalized relational database architecture is that it permits scaling and speed far in excess of any embodiment of the prior art.

FIGs. 7 through 12 display pseudo software graphical user interfaces (GUIs). In the preferred embodiment, the web server software 342 on the server computer 330 displays these GUIs via the computer communications interface 360 on the user interface 380 of the user workstation computer 370. The database and communications operations necessary to perform the described functions are controlled by the personal contact manager 343, which employs where necessary the services of the web server software 342. For example, the personal contact manager 343 updates the database tables 350 when a user submits a new home address and then determines whether any of that user's contacts need to be notified of the change. If so, the personal contact manager 343 will issue the notifications via the web server software 342. It should be assumed, unless a statement to the contrary is made, that all of the operations described herein which are aspects of the present invention are embodied by the personal contact manager 343.

Referring now to FIG. 7, a pseudo GUI 560 is shown that allows members to enter information about themselves in order to create a personal data record. Users can enter information in this GUI in various data fields. In the preferred embodiment, these fields include: Name 560-2, Home Address 560-4, Home Phone 560-6, Work Address 560-8, Work Phone 560-10, Birthday 560-12, High School 560-14, Year of High School Enrollment 560-16, High School Graduation Year 560-18, College 560-20, Year of College Enrollment 560-22, and College Graduation Year 560-24.

In certain of these data fields, the user can specify groups with which he wishes to affiliate himself, and the beginning and ending dates of the affiliation. In the preferred embodiment, the data fields High School 560-14 and College 560-20 represent categories of groups. In the data field Year of High School Enrollment

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 505 of 1793

560-16, the user enters the beginning date of the affiliation with the group specified in the data field High School 560-14. In the data field High School Graduation Year 560-18, the user enters the ending date of the affiliation with the group specified in the data field High School 560-14. In the data field Year of College Enrollment 560-22, the user enters the beginning date of the affiliation with the group specified in the data field College 560-20. In the data field College Graduation Year 560-24, the user enters the ending date of the affiliation with the group specified in the data field College 560-20. In both of these cases, the beginning date and ending date establish a date range during which time the user was affiliated with the group in question.

Once the user of the client computer 370 (FIG. 5) enters information in each data field in the GUI 560 shown in FIG. 7, he clicks the Submit button 560-26 (or performs some equivalent action) and the information entered is transferred via the computer communications network 360 (FIG. 5) to the server computer 330, where the server personal contact manager software 343 stores the information in the appropriate tables 350 of a database 340.

Referring now to FIG. 8, a pseudo GUI 580 is shown that allows a first user to select other users they wish to add to their personal address book. The list of contacts is created based on the group affiliation information the first user enters in the data fields College 560-20, Year of College Enrollment 560-22, and College Year of Graduation 560-24 in the Pseudo Registration GUI 560 shown in FIG. 7. A similar GUI 580 would exist for the group specified in the data field High School 560-14 in the pseudo 560 GUI shown in FIG. 7.

In each version of the GUI 580 shown in FIG. 8, a text description 580-2 at the top of the GUI explains to the first user that other members have been found who had the same affiliation as the first user during the same period of time as the first user. The name 580-6 of the group in which the first and second users share an affiliation is displayed and the date range 580-8 of the first user's affiliation with that group is displayed.

If a second user whose personal information is stored in the tables 350 of the database 340 on the server computer 330 has specified the same group affiliation as that specified by the first user in the College 560-20 data field, and that second user has specified a date range for that affiliation that intersects with the date range specified by the first user in the Year of College Enrollment 560-22 and College Graduation Year 560-24 data fields, the Name 580-10 of the second user and the ending date 580-12 of the second user's affiliation with that group are displayed.

A second text description 580-4 at the top of the GUI 580 instructs the first user to select any of the second users listed whom the first user wishes to add to his personal address book. If the first user wishes to add a second user to his personal address book, the first user clicks the checkbox 580-14 to the left of the Name 580-10 (e.g., "John Doe") for that second user. Once the first user has finished specifying the users he wants to add to his address book, he clicks the Submit button 580-16, and the information entered is transferred via the computer communications network 360 to the server computer 330 where it is stored in the appropriate tables 350 of the database 340.

A pseudocode description of the actions performed by the personal contact manager software 343 to display the group member list is shown in Appendix A. This pseudocode fragment (and the others that follow) is written in a structured English that is similar to computer languages such as Pascal, FORTRAN and C. The pseudocode fragments are not described herein as they are self-explanatory. The tables and fields referred to in the pseudocode fragments correspond to the tables and fields described in reference to FIG. 6.

Referring now to FIG. 9, a pseudo GUI 600 is shown allowing a first user to specify which types of data fields from the first user's personal data record to grant a specific second user permission to view. If a first user specifies a second user whom the first user would like to add to his personal address book, as explained in the description of FIG. 8, the second user will receive notification (issued by the contact manager program 343 - FIG. 5) that the first user has "linked" to him. If the second user chooses to return the link to the first user, the preferred embodiment of

the present invention will display the pseudo GUI 600 shown in FIG. 9 with the name of the first user 600-5, allowing the second user to set data field permissions for the first user. Unlike the prior art, which does not allow the first user to specify data field permissions for individual other users, the preferred embodiment of the present invention allows the first user to specify permissions separately for each individual other user in whose personal database the first user has chosen to be included.

A text description 600-2 at the top of the pseudo GUI in FIG. 9 instructs the first user to specify which types of data fields from the first user's personal data record to allow to appear in the personal address book of the second user, whose name 600-4 is shown below. Several types of data field permission are listed, each with a check box to the left enabling the first user to select or deselect the permission type. For example, to grant the second user 600-4 permission to view the information from the first user's personal data record indicated by the permission type denoted "Crossing Paths Notification Permission," the first user would check the box 600-7 to the left of the permission type Crossing Paths Notification Permission 600-6. To deny the second user 600-4 permission to view the information from the first user's personal data record indicated by the permission type denoted "Personal Information," the first user would uncheck the box 600-9 to the left of the permission type Personal Information 600-8.

In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the levels of permission are as follows: Crossing Paths Notification Permission 600-6, Personal Information 600-8, Work Information 600-10, Birthday Notification 600-12, and Friends of Friends Information 600-14. However, the present invention is not limited to the levels of permission shown in the preferred embodiment. The present invention is flexible to allow permission categories to be modified as needed.

Each permission type allows the second user to view information from the first user's personal data record in specific data fields, according to a specific set of rules. In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, these permission rules are as follows:

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 508 of 1793

If member A links to member B, member A can grant any of the permissions discussed below to member B.

Even if member B does not reciprocate the link to member A, an e-mail forwarding address for member B will be included in the Virtual Address Book for member A. For example, the e-mail address "memberB@planetall.com," which maps to the actual e-mail address that member B has entered into his/her own record, will appear in member A's Virtual Address Book, but nothing else.

When member A first links to member B, member B is notified on the Web site and in an e-mail.

If member B elects not to grant any permissions to member A, member A will not appear in member B's Virtual Address Book.

If member B grants any permissions to member A, a listing in member B's Virtual Address Book will be created for member A, and the listing will contain whatever information member A has given permission for member B to see.

If member B grants Personal Information 600-8 permission to member A, member B's home address and phone number (if available) will appear in member A's Virtual Address Book and member A will be informed when member B changes the relevant information in his/her own listing.

If member B grants Work Information 600-10 permission to member A, member B's work address and phone number (if available) will appear in member A's Virtual Address Book and member A will be informed when member B changes the relevant information in his/her own listing.

If member B grants Crossing Paths Notification Permission 600-6 to member A, member A will be able to be informed when member B will be in the same city as member A. If member A and member B are both based in the same city, member A will only be informed when member A and member B are traveling to the same destination.

If member B grants Birthday Notification 600-12 permission to member A, member B's birthday and anniversary (if available) will appear in member A's Virtual Address Book and member A will be notified when member B's birthday or anniversary are approaching.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 509 of 1793

If member B grants Friends of Friends Information 600-14 permission to member A, if member A searches for information about the contacts of his/her contacts, such as who lives in a particular city or is associated with a particular group, information from member B's circle of contacts will be included in the search results, if applicable.

Either member can modify permissions at any time. Either member can delete the other member as a contact at any time.

Pseudocode descriptions of the actions performed by the personal contact manager software 343 to display address information of contacts and to perform birthday and address change notifications are shown in Appendices B, C and D, respectively. Each of these operations depends on which permissions respective users have been granted by the owner of the information.

Once the first user has finished specifying the data field permissions for the second user 600-4, he clicks the Submit button 600-16 and the information entered is transferred via the computer communications network 360 to the server computer 330 where it is stored in the appropriate tables 350 of the database 340 (see FIG. 5). A pseudocode description of the actions performed by the personal contact manager software 343 to enable a user to change the permissions of contacts is shown in Appendix H.

Referring now to FIG. 10, a pseudo GUI 618 that displays the information stored in a user's personal address book is shown. The information in a user's personal address book is stored in the appropriate tables 350 of the database 340 on the server computer 330, to which the client computer 370 is connected via the world wide web 360 (see FIG. 5). The information in each user's personal address book is customized for that user, as described below. Each first user's personal address book contains information about each second user who has given the first user permission to view information in the second user's personal data record 636. Which categories of each second user's information are displayed in the first user's personal address book is controlled completely by the second user, as explained in the description of FIG. 9. In addition, each second user's information is entered and

maintained completely by the second user (e.g., "Donald Tully"), as explained in the description of FIG. 7.

FIG. 10 illustrates the Address Book pseudo GUI 620 at three levels, in which each next level allows the user to view progressively more detail about the contacts in his personal address book.

In level 1 620 of the pseudo address book GUI 618, each letter of the alphabet is shown 622. By clicking on any letter of the alphabet 622, a first user can display a listing of the contacts whose last names begin with the letter of the alphabet selected, and about whom information is stored in the first user's personal address book. This information is displayed in the level 2 626 of the pseudo address book GUI. For example, if the first user clicks on the letter "T" 624 in level 1 620 of the pseudo address book interface, all contacts whose last names begin with the letter T and about whom information is stored in the first user's personal address book will be displayed 628 in level 2 626 of the pseudo address book GUI.

In level 2 626 of the pseudo address book GUI, a listing of the second users whose last names begin with the letter of the alphabet selected in level 1 620 of the pseudo address book GUI, and about whom information is stored in the first user's personal address book, is shown. By clicking on any second user's name, the first user can display the information about that second user stored in the first user's personal address book. This information is displayed in level 3 632 of the pseudo personal address book GUI. For example, if the first user clicks on the second user name "Tully, Donald" 630, the information pertaining to Donald Tully stored in the first user's personal address book will be displayed in level 3 632 of the pseudo address book GUI.

In level 3 632 of the pseudo address book GUI, information 634 is shown about a specific second user that is stored in a first user's personal address book. Only the categories of information from the second user's personal data record that the second user gave the first user permission to view are displayed. The second user's information is entered and maintained completely by the second user.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 511 of 1793

In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the second user's e-mail address 634-2 is displayed if the second user gave the first user any type of data field permission. The second user's work address and phone number 634-4 are displayed only if the second user gave the first user Work Information permission. The second user's home address and phone number 634-6 are displayed only if the second user gave the first user Personal Information permission. The second user's birthday and birth year 634-8 are displayed only if the second user gave the first user Birthday Notification permission. These permission rules are simply examples from the preferred embodiment. The present invention is not limited to the permission rules used in the preferred embodiment.

A pseudocode description of the actions performed by the personal contact manager software 343 to display the address book listing is shown in Appendix B.

Referring now to FIG. 11, a member update pseudo GUI 650 is shown. This pseudo GUI 650 provides a first user with specific information that has changed about the other users to which the first user is linked, plus new information about contacts to whom the first user may wish to link. The information displayed in a user's member update is stored in the appropriate tables 350 of the database 340 on the server computer 330, to which the client computer 370 is connected via the world wide web 360. The member update pseudo GUI 650 is automatically displayed on the user interface 380 of the user workstation 370, at an interval preset by the user. For example, FIG. 11 displays a hypothetical member update 650-2 released on December 7, 1998. The information displayed in the data fields below is information that has changed between December 7, 1998 and the date of the previous update, the interval between which has been previously specified by the user. The information shown in each user's member update is customized for that user, as described below.

In a first portion of the member update pseudo GUI 650 shown in FIG. 11, if one or more of the second users who have linked to a first user and have provided Birthday Notification permission to the first user have upcoming birthdays, a text description 650-4 alerts the first user of the upcoming birthday(s). The names and birthdays

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 512 of 1793

650-6 for those second users are listed below. In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the first user will receive this notification 2 weeks, 1 week, 2 days, and 1 day in advance of a particular upcoming birthday, and on the actual date of the birthday. The first user does not need to collect and input the birthday dates for each second user who has linked to the first user. Each second user's birthday information is entered and maintained completely by the second user, as shown in the Birthday field 560-12 of FIG. 7, the registration form pseudo GUI 560.

In another portion of the member update pseudo GUI shown in FIG. 11, if one or more of the second users who have linked to the first user and have provided Personal Information permission or Work Information permission to the first user have changed their work or home address, a text description 650-8 alerts the first user. If a second user has changed his work address information and has given the first user Work Information permission, the second user's new work address information 650-10, 650-12 is displayed. If a second user has changed his home address information and has given the first user Personal Information permission, the second user's new home address information is displayed.

Each second user's address information is entered and maintained completely by the second user, as shown in the registration form pseudo GUI 560 of FIG. 7. After changing his address information in his personal data record, the second user does not need to specify that the new address information be provided to each first user to whom he has linked and given the proper form of data field permission. The new address information is provided to each first user quickly and automatically. In addition, the architecture of the present invention is scalable to include millions of users.

In another portion of the member update pseudo GUI 650 shown in FIG. 11, if one or more members has affiliated with a group with which the first user is also affiliated, a text description 650-14 will alert the first user. The name of the second user, the name of the group in which the first and second users share an affiliation, and the ending date of the second user's affiliation with that group are displayed 650-16.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 513 of 1793

This portion of the registration form pseudo GUI 650 functions similarly to the group list form pseudo GUI shown in FIG. 8. If a new second user who fills out a registration form such as the pseudo GUI in FIG. 7, and therefore whose personal information is stored in the tables 350 of the database 340 on the server computer 330 has specified the same group affiliation as that specified by the first user in the College 560-20 data field, and that second user has specified a date range for that affiliation that intersects with the date range specified by the first user in the Year of College Enrollment 560-22 and College Graduation Year 560-24 data fields, the Name of the second user and the ending date of the second user's affiliation with that group 650-16 are displayed. Similarly, if the first user and the new second user were affiliated during an intersecting period of time with the group specified in the data field High School 560-14 in the pseudo GUI 560 shown in FIG. 7, the Name of the second user and the ending date of the second user's affiliation with that group 650-16 are displayed.

A pseudocode description of the actions performed by the personal contact manager software 343 to display a list of service members who have recently joined a user's groups (i.e., members who are not current contacts of the user) is shown in Appendix E.

If the first user wishes to add contact information to his personal address book for any of the second users listed 650-16, the first user can do so in a GUI similar to the group list form pseudo GUI 580 shown in FIG. 8. Each second user to whom the first user has initiated a link will then be informed of the link, and can then return the link and specify data field permissions for the first user, if any, as explained in the description of FIG. 9.

A pseudocode description of the actions performed by the personal contact manager software 343 to identify people who have linked to a particular user are shown in Appendix F.

In another portion of the member update pseudo GUI 650 shown in FIG. 11, if a second user has initiated a link to a first user, the first user will be automatically

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 514 of 1793

notified 650-18 that a link has been made. For each second user that has initiated a link, the user's name 650-20 is shown. If the first user wishes, the first user can then return the link and specify data field permissions for the second user, if any, as explained in the description of FIG. 9.

Another section 650-22 of the member update pseudo GUI 650 shown in FIG. 11 is used to inform a first user when the travel plans he has entered into the system overlap with the travel plans that any of his contacts has entered into the system, as long as the contact has granted the first user Crossing Paths Notification permission.

This system, termed "Crossing Paths Notification" in the preferred embodiment of the present invention, operates as follows. The home city or "base city" for each user is determined from information entered by that user in the Home Address data field 560-4, as explained in the description of FIG. 7. The "City" table 550 (FIG. 6) stored on the server computer 330 includes 1.7 million names of cities around the world. Each of these cities is associated with a precise latitude and longitude. If the user's base city cannot be matched to a city in the "City" table, the user can add the new city to the "City" table by giving the name of another city that is already in the "City" table that is nearby the user's base city. The user's base city is assigned the same latitude and longitude as the existing city. This information is used to associate each user with a precise longitude and latitude, and determine all cities within a 29-mile radius of the user's base city.

Whenever a user is planning to travel, he can specify the dates during which he will be away and the city he will be visiting. If a second user has granted a first user Crossing Paths Notification permission, and the first user has entered a Travel Event to a city that is within a 29-mile radius of the base city of the second user, the first user will be notified 650-22 (FIG. 11) that he will be crossing paths with the second user 650-24 (e.g., "Andrew Kress"), as long as the second user has not also scheduled a travel event for the same time period. In another scenario, if a second user has granted a first user Crossing Paths Notification permission, and the first user has entered a travel event to a city that is within a 25-mile radius of a city to

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 515 of 1793

which the second user has scheduled a travel event during the same time period, the first user will be notified 650-22 that he will be crossing paths with the second user 650-24. Travel events are described more fully in reference to FIG. 12.

The Crossing Paths Notification system is able to handle multiple cities in a single day. For instance, if a first user lives in Boston but is traveling to New York on March 5, then the first user will be informed if any contacts will be crossing paths on that day in either city. In addition, this system is scalable to millions of users. A pseudocode description of the actions performed by the personal contact manager software 343 to enable a user to receive crossing paths notification is shown in Appendix I.

The final section 650-26 of the member update pseudo GUI 650 shown in FIG. 11 is used to inform a first user which of his contacts has an astrological sign compatible with that of the first user on the date of the member update. Each member is associated with one of the twelve astrological signs based on the information he entered in the Birthday data field 560-12 in the registration form pseudo GUI 560 shown in FIG. 7. Each day of the year is mapped to one of these twelve signs. This information is stored in the appropriate table 350 in the database 340 on the server computer 330. On a given day, all of a member's contacts who are associated with "sign of the day" are deemed to be compatible with the member. Only the names of contacts who have given the first user Birthday Notification permission will be shown in the member update pseudo GUI for the first user. A pseudocode description of the actions performed by the personal contact manager software 343 to enable a user to receive notification of compatible contacts is shown in Appendix J.

The permission rules used in reference to FIG. 11 are simply examples from the preferred embodiment. The present invention is not limited to the permission rules used in the preferred embodiment.

Referring now to FIG. 12, a pseudo Add Travel Form GUI 660 and a pseudo Crossing Paths List GUI 670 are shown. These two screens are used in the Crossing Paths Notification System. If a first member is planning a trip, the first

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 516 of 1793

member can use the pseudo Add Travel Form GUI 660 to add a Travel Event, in which he specifies the location 660-2, 660-4, 660-6, dates 660-8, 660-10, and contact information 660-20 for the intended trip. In the pseudo Crossing Paths List GUI 670, the first member is informed which of the second members to whom he is linked and who have granted him Crossing Paths Permission will be in the vicinity of the city to which the first user is travelling, during the time period of the specified Travel Event. The first user can then use the pseudo Crossing Paths List GUI 670 to select which of the displayed second users the first user would like to inform of the first user's specified Travel Event.

The pseudo Add Travel Form 660 is displayed on the user interface 380 (FIG. 5) of a user's client computer 370 when the user chooses to schedule a Travel Event. The user enters information about his scheduled trip in the data fields shown. In the Traveling To City field 660-2, the user enters the name of the city to which he is traveling. In the State field 660-4, the user enters the name of the state in which is located the city to which he is traveling. In the Country 660-6 field, the user enters the name of the country in which the city to which he is traveling is located. The information entered in these three fields 660-2, 660-4, 660-6 is used to locate the city for the Travel Event in the City table 550 on the server computer 330. The exact latitude and longitude of the Travel Event city is then determined and a list is created of all cities located within a 25-mile radius of the Travel Event city. In the Arrive in City on Date field 660-8, the user enters the first date on which he will be in the Travel Event city. In the Leave City on Date field 660-10, the user enters the date beginning on which he will no longer be in the Travel Event city. The information entered in these two fields 660-8, 660-10 is used to determine the date range for the Travel Event. Finally, in the How to Get in Touch While in This City data field 660-20, the user enters the method for contacting him during the Travel Event. After the user has finished entering information in the pseudo Add Travel Form GUI (12-1), the information entered is stored by the personal contact manager 343 in the Travel_Event table 520 on the server computer 330.

The pseudo Crossing Paths List 670 is displayed on the user interface 380 of the first user's client computer 370 after a first user has scheduled a Travel Event using

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 517 of 1793

the pseudo Add Travel Form 660. A text message 670-2 issued by the personal contact manager 330 informs the first user that one or more of his contacts will be in the same city as the first user during the first user's scheduled Travel Event. Those contacts (e.g., Scott Ulem, Taylor Pierce, Betsy Klein) who live in the city of the first user's scheduled Travel Event are listed 670-6, as well as those contacts (e.g., Tania Gutsche) who will be visiting the city of the first user's scheduled Travel Event 670-8. The contacts listed in the field 670-6 are those second users who have granted the first user Crossing Paths Permission, and who have listed in the Home Address field 560-4 (FIG. 7) of their Personal Data Record the city of the first user's scheduled Travel Event, or any city within a 25-mile radius of the first user's scheduled Travel Event. The contacts listed in the field 670-8 are those second users who have granted the first user Crossing Paths Permission, and who have scheduled a Travel Event to the city of the first user's scheduled Travel Event, or any city within a 25-mile radius of the first user's scheduled Travel Event, during the date range of the first user's scheduled Travel Event. For each contact name listed in both fields 670-6, 670-8, the first user can choose to inform that contact of the first user's scheduled Travel Event by clicking on the checkbox to the left of that contacts name. When the first user is finished selecting contacts, he then clicks the Submit button 670-10, which copies the information entered to the server computer (5-45) to be stored in the tables 350 by the networked personal contact manager 343. For each second user whom the first user selected, the second user is informed, in a screen similar to the pseudo Member Update GUI shown in FIG. 11, of the first user's Travel Event and the means of contacting the first user 660-20 during the Travel Event.

Referring now to FIG. 13, a diagram illustrating the Friends of Friends system is shown. The Friends of Friends system allows a first member to search for the names of contacts of their contacts who live in the same city as the first member or are affiliated with a group with which the first member is also affiliated. When a first user performs a Friends of Friends search, the personal contact manager 343 displays, via the web server software 342, the results of the search on the user interface 380 (FIG. 5) of the first user's client computer 370 in a GUI similar to the pseudo Friends of Friends report GUI 688. After locating a second member who is

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 518 of 1793

a friend of a friend, the first member can then link to that second member in order to add the second member to the first user's Personal Address Book, as explained in the descriptions of FIG. 8 and FIG. 9 above.

In the preferred embodiment of the personal contact manager 343, the Friends of Friends system operates as follows. If a Member A 680 is linked to a Member B 682 with any level of permissions 681 and the Member B 682 is linked to a Member C 684 with any level of permissions 685, then if Member C 684 grants to Member B 682 Friends of Friends permissions 687 and Member B 682 also grants to Member A 680 Friends of Friends permissions 683, then Member A is eligible to receive Friends of Friends notification about Member C. When a first user performs a Friends of Friends search, the results of the search will include all second users who have affiliated themselves with a group with which the first user is affiliated and all second users who live in the same city in which the first user lives, so long as the first user is eligible to receive Friends of Friends notification about those second users, as described above. For example, if Member A and Member C both belong to Group A 686, and Member A is eligible to receive Friends of Friends notification about Member C, then the result of Member A's Friends of Friends search 688 generated by the personal contact manager 343 will include Member C 690.

A pseudocode description of the actions performed by the personal contact manager software 343 to perform a search for friends and friends of friends in a specific city is shown in Appendix G.

The present invention is not limited to the search criteria or levels of separation in the preferred embodiment. The database architecture in the present invention is flexible to allow searches to be extended to more than one degree of separation. For instance, it would be possible to add a Friends of Friends of Friends search feature. The architecture is also flexible to allow new search criteria to be added.

Referring to FIG. 5, in each of the embodiments described above, the user information is stored on the server 330 and all user access to the user information is mediated by a client web browser 382, the web server software 342 and the server

personal contact manager software 343. In an alternative embodiment, which is configured for personal information managers (PIMs), such as the U.S. Robotics Palm Pilot, a user is able to synchronize their user information and their PIM database 390 through an importation/synchronization function performed by the personal contact manager software 343. The synchronization operation can be performed in either direction (i.e., client to server or server to client). The server personal contact manager software 343 will then use the web server software 342 to communicate with the PIM software 392 of the user's contacts, if applicable, and, in accordance with the permission scheme already described, synchronize the databases 390 in the contacts' PIMs. All database, personal contact management and linking operations already described are operable in the altenative embodiment, except the GUIs might be different, depending on the graphical capabilities of the client 370 running the PIM program 392. Thus, the alternative embodiment allows full synchronization of PIMs and the server database 340.

A data flow diagram illustrating the operation of the alternative embodiment is shown in FIG. 14. In the illustrated situation a user A submits an address change from their client computer 370A. In response to the update, the personal contact manager 343 running on the server 330 updates user A's address information in the server database 340 (not shown) and issues an update notification to the client computer 370B used by user B, who is a contact of user A. This alternative embodiment assumes that user B has a PIM (also referred to as a personal digital assistant or PDA) that they would like to synchronize with the server database 340. In such a case PIM Software 392 running on the client 370B performs the synchronization operation based on the user A address update information provided by the server 330. Following the synchronization operation, the PDA database 390 has the same information for user A as the server database 340. Alternatively, the PDA 750 can be coupled directly to the Internet (indicated by the dashed line), in which case it operates substantially as a typical client computer 370 described in reference to FIG. 5. However, one difference is that the PDA 750 maintains its own database 390 instead of relying solely on the server database 340.

While the present invention has been described with reference to a few specific embodiments, the description is illustrative of the invention and is not to be construed as limiting the invention. Various modifications may occur to those skilled in the art without departing from the true spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 521 of 1793

## Appendix A
## Display Group Member List

Submit group name.

Match group name to GroupID in Group table.

Join Affinity table to Customer table and CustomerPrefs table based on CustomerID.

Show contact information from Customer and CustomerPrefs tables when the the Affinity table contains a record matching the CustomerID to the specified GroupID.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 522 of 1793

**Appendix B**
**Display Address Book Listing**

```
if MemberFriend AND a Reciprocated Link then
    If have Personal or Professional Permissions then
        Show person's real email address.
    else
        Show person's PlanetAll address.
    end if

    If have Personal Permission and Biography Exists then
        Show Biography.
    end if

    If (have Personal or Professional Permissions) AND universal resource
locator (URL) exists then
        Show URL.
    end if

    If (Person is visible in group and Group Perms > 0) AND you have Common
Groups then
        Show the groups you have in common.
    end if

    If Person is in one of more of your personal email lists then
        Show the lists the person belongs to.
    end if

    If have Personal Permissions and Phone Type is one of personal phone
types then
        Show phone.
    end if

    If have Professional Permissions and phone type is one of professional
phone types then
        Show phone.
    end if

    If have Personal Permissions and address Type is one of personal address
types then
        Show address.
```

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 523 of 1793

```
                if address is in USA then
                    Show map link.
                end if
            end if

        If have Professional Permissions and address type is one of professional
    address types then
                Show address.
                if address is in USA then
                    Show map link.
                end if
            end if

            If have Professional Permissions and Professional Info Exists then
                Show the professional info the person has entered.
            end if

            If have Occasions Permissions and Birthday exists then
                Show the contact's birthday.
            end if

            If have Occasions Permissions and Anniversary exists then
                Show the contact's Anniversary.
            end if

            If contact has entered spouse's name then
                Show spouse's name.
            end if

            If contact has entered self description then
                Show self description.
            end if

    else if MemberFriend AND a Non-Reciprocated Link then
            Show message person has not linked back and give link so person can
            email the unlinked person to tell them they have linked to them. (after
            com/ASP rewrite will not show email so spammers can't make lists).
    end if
```

**Appendix C**
**Birthday Notification**

Birthdays are determined by the DayOfYear field in the customers table.

Create a list of all my contacts:

Go to the Friend table and select all Customers where FriendID = my CustomerID.

For each of my contacts, check to see if the DayOfYear is within seven days of the current DayOfYear.

Select the DayOfYear from the Customers table for all of the customers in my list of contacts.

If the DayOfYear is within seven days of the current DayOfYear, then select the name of the customer.

Display the names of all my contacts who have birthdays in the next seven days.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 525 of 1793

**Appendix D**
**Address Change Notification**

To determine which of a member's contacts' addresses have changed:

Create a list of all my contacts:

Go to the Friend table and select all Customers where FriendID = my CustomerID.

Find out which of these contacts have changed their addresses:

Link the Customers table and find records for my contacts where AddressID is greater than the lowest Address ID having a date greater than the date on which my last email update was sent.

Find out which of these contacts have given me permission to see the address information that has changed:

Make sure that the appropriate permission appears in the record in the friend table linking me to the contact.

Display information for these contacts.

## Appendix E
## Show New Group Members

Create a list of all my groups:

Go to the affinity table and select all the records for my CustomerID

Select the GroupID for each of the records.

Do not include other customers' private groups to which I have been added

For each of my affinity records, check to see that Group Perms are > 0.

Create a list of all my contacts:

Go to the Friend table and select all Customers where FriendID = my CustomerID.

Create a list of people who joined my groups:

Go to the affinity table and select all the affinity records for my groups.

Select only affinity records for customers who joined the group after I joined.

Select affinity records where the date of the record is after the date for my affinity record in the same group.

Select only affinity records for people who joined the groups after my last email was sent.

Select affinity records where the date of the record is after my Sent date in the Email table.

Do not include people that are in my list of contacts:

Select only affinity records where the CustomerID is not included in the list of all my contacts.

Select the CustomerID from each affinity record in the list of people who joined my groups.

Go to the Customers table to find the name of each customer who joined my groups.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 527 of 1793

## Appendix F
## People Who Have Linked To You

Linking the Friends table and the Customers table based on the CustomerID field, select the following information from the two tables:

CustomerID from the Friends table.
First Name from the Customers table.
Last Name from the Customers table.
Record Date from the Friends table.
Permission level from the Friends table.

Where my CustomerID is not among the CustomerIDs found in the following search:
CustomerID in the Friends Table is my CustomerID
AND the Record Date from the Friends table is within the last 30 days
AND I haven't already linked to the person

## Appendix G
## Search for Friends of Friends in a Particular City

Specify City. Match to CityID in City table.

Create a list of all my contacts
Go to the Friend table and select all Customers where FriendID = my CustomerID

Make a temporary table linking the Friends table to itself called Friend_1 and establish the following relationships:
CustomerIDs for the contacts of my contacts appear in the Customer field of the Friends table
CustomerIDs for my contacts appear in the Friend field of the Friends table
CustomerIDs for my contacts also appear in the Customer field of the Friends_1 table (this is how the tables are joined)
My Customer ID appears in the Friend field of the Friend_1 table
The Friend and Friend_1 tables are joined on t

Show information for the contacts of my contacts (i.e. the Customers from the Friends table) where the following conditions are true:
The Friends of Friends permission was granted from the contacts of my contacts to my contacts.
The Friends of Friends permission was granted from my contacts to me.
The contact does not already appear in the list of all my contact created above.
The city for the contact of my contact matches the specified city.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 529 of 1793

## Appendix H
## Change Permissions

Join the Customer table to the Friend table based on CustomerID.

Create a list of all my contacts:

Go to the Friend table and select all Customers where FriendID = my CustomerID.

Show First Name and Last Name for my contacts from the Customer table.

Allow me to pick a name from this list as the contact whose permissions I would like to change.

Display the permission level that I have given this contact. It is stored as the PermissionType field in the Friend table.

Allow access to the PermissionType for this record in the Friend table.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 530 of 1793

## Appendix I
## Crossing Paths Notification

Create a list of all my contacts:

Go to the Friend table and select all Customers where FriendID = my CustomerID.

Create a list of all my contacts' travel events:

Go to the Queue Travel Event table and select all QueueIds where the CustomerID is in my list of contacts.

Do not include trips for people who linked to me but did not give me crossing paths permission:

Check the permissions field in the Friend table for each of my contacts to see if I have crossing paths permissions.

Do not include trips if my contact specified that I should not be informed:

For each of my contacts' trips, check the Travel Exception table to see if my CustomerID is included in the list of people who should not be informed of the trip.

Create a list of my location for the next seven days:

Select the arrival date, departure date, and city for all my trips in Queue Travel Event for the next seven days.

For days when I am not travelling, select my city from the customers table.

Select from the list of my friends' trips, all the trips to cities that are within 3000 latitude and 3000 longitude to my location for each of the next seven days.

Go to the Customers table and find the names of all the people with whom I will be crossing paths.

Select first name and last name from the customers table for all the CustomerIDs in the list of my contacts trips

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 531 of 1793

## Appendix J
## Compatible Contacts

Create a list of all my contacts:
Go to the Friend table and select all Customers where FriendID = my CustomerID.

Determine my Zodiac sign:
Select my DayOfYear from the Customers table.
Select the Zodiac sign from the Zodiac table where my DayOfYear is between the DayFrom and DayTo fields.

Determine my compatible Zodiac sign for today:
Go to the Horoscope table and select the Compatible field from the row for my Zodiac sign and today's date.

Find my compatible contacts for today:
Select the DayFrom and DayTo fields from the Zodiac table for my compatible zodiac sign.
Select my contacts from the list of all my contacts whose DayOfYear is between the DayFrom and DayTo fields for my compatible sign.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 532 of 1793

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computer-network-based contact management system, comprising:

a computer network;

a server computer coupled to the computer network;

a client computer coupled to the computer network configured to interact with the server computer; and

a set of user information stored by and only accessible via the server computer, the set of user information including respective information for each of a plurality of users of the contact management system, the respective information including a plurality of datums, each of which is associated with a respective permission granted by a first user indicating on an individual basis a second set of users who are permitted to access the associated datum;

wherein the server computer is configured to permit access by the plurality of users to respective ones of the first user's datums solely in accordance with associated permissions granted by the first user.

2. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 1, wherein the server computer comprises:

a relational database configured to store the set of user information; and

a server computer program configured to:

interact with the client computer,

maintain and update the set of user information in the relational database in response to inputs of the first user entered from the client computer, and

control access by the plurality of users to respective ones of the first user's datums solely in accordance with the associated permissions granted by the first user.

3. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 2, wherein the client computer comprises a client computer program configured to enable the first user to interact with the server computer program.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 533 of 1793

4. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 3, wherein:

the computer network is the World-Wide Web; and

the client computer program is a web browser.

5. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 2, wherein:

the respective information for the first user includes an address book listing at least a subset of the respective information for a set of contacts selected by the first user from the plurality of users;

the server computer program is configured to update automatically the datums in the address book for a particular contact when the particular contact updates their own user information in the relational database as long as the first user has been granted such permission by the particular contact.

6. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 5, wherein the server computer program is further configured to notify the first user whenever selected datums of any of the contacts of the first user come into a defined coincidence with the datums of the first user.

7. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 6, wherein the defined coincidence includes at least one of the following:

hometown;

group affiliation;

travel plans; and

astrological compatibility.

8. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 5, wherein the set of user information includes a groups datum that lists for each respective user their group affiliations.

9. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 8, wherein each member of a particular group is notified when other users have joined the particular group.

10. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 5, wherein the computer server program is configured to notify the first user when they have been added to the address book of another of the plurality of users.

11. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 5, wherein the computer server program is configured to notify the first user when important dates of respective contacts are approaching based on the respective user information entered by the contacts into the relational database as long as the first user has been granted such permission by the contacts.

12. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 11, wherein the important dates include:

birth date; and

wedding anniversary.

13. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 5, wherein the set of user information includes a travel plans datum that lists for each respective user their travel plans.

14. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 13, wherein the computer server program is configured to notify the first user when the travel plans of the first user overlap with the travel plans of respective contacts based on the respective user information entered by the contacts into the relational database as long as the first user has been granted such permission by the contacts.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 535 of 1793

15. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 8, wherein:

the set of user information includes a city datum for each respective user; and

the computer server program is configured to enable the first user to search for contacts of their contacts who belong to the particular group or live in a particular city based on the respective group and city information entered by the contacts of the contacts into the relational database as long as the first user has been granted such permission by the contacts and the contacts have been granted such permission by the contacts of the contacts.

16. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 5, wherein:

the set of user information includes an astrological sign datum for each respective user; and

the computer server program is configured to notify the first user of those of their contacts who have compatible astrological signs on a given date based on the respective astrological sign information contacts into the relational database as long as the first user has been granted such permission by the contacts.

17. The computer-network-based contact management system of claim 5, further comprising:

a personal digital assistant (PDA) coupled to the client computer that is employed by the first user;

wherein:

the server computer program is configured to issue notifications to the to the client computer when the contacts of the first user have updated their own user information in the relational database or when an event/situation associated with the contacts of the first user is about to occur; and

the client computer is configured to update a PDA database maintained in the PDA in response to the notifications;

such that the PDA database and the server relational database are maintained in a synchronized state in accordance with the permissions granted to the first user.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 536 of 1793

Figure 1
PRIOR ART



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 537 of 1793

Figure 2
PRIOR ART



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 538 of 1793

Figure 3
PRIOR ART



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 539 of 1793

Figure 4
PRIOR ART



WO 99/23591
PCT/US98/22926

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 540 of 1793

Figure 5



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 541 of 1793

Figure 6



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 542 of 1793

Figure 7



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 543 of 1793

Figure 8





TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 544 of 1793

Figure 9



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 545 of 1793

Figure 10



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 546 of 1793

Figure 11

PSEUDO MEMBER UPDATE

650

Member Update
December 7, 1998 650-2

The following of your contacts have upcoming birthdays: 650-4
- Avery Rogers (Dec. 11)
- Jane Bigelow (Dec. 14) 650-6

Your contacts have registered the following address changes: 650-8
- Tom Kohn
  New work address:
  1000 Wilson Boulevard 650-10
  Arlington, VA 22229

  New work phone:
  703-558-3312 650-12

The following new members have affiliated with the same groups as you: 650-14
- Gary Clayton (State College, 1985) 650-16

The following members have linked to you and have requested that 650-18 you reciprocate:
- Jun Ohama 650-20
- Lee Rogers

You have scheduled a trip to Phoenix on December 14. The following of your contacts live in Phoenix or will be in Phoenix on that date: 650-22
- Andrew Kress 650-24
- Taylor Pierce

According to Astrology, the following of your contacts are compatible with you today (Libras) 650-26
- Bryan Jamieson
- Anne Thierry 650-28

SUBSTITUTE SHEET (RULE 26)

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 547 of 1793

Figure 12



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 548 of 1793

Figure 13



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 549 of 1793

Figure 14



WO 99/23591 PCT/US98/22926

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 550 of 1793

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US98/22926

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC(6) : G06F 17/60; H04M 3/42
US CL : 704/1; 705/7,14; 707/104; 379/202
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 704/1; 705/7, 14 ; 707/104; 379/202

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

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

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

| Category* | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
|---|---|---|
| Y,P | US 5,794,210 A (GOLDHABER et al) 11 August 1998, col. 2, lines 1-68. | 1-17 |
| Y | US 5,539,813 A (JONSSON et al) 23 July 1996, abstract, col. 5, lines 1-68. | 1-17 |
| Y | US 5,737,726 A (CAMERON et al) 07 April 1998, abstract, col. 1-col. 4, lines 1-68. | 1-17 |
| Y,P | US 5,831,611 A (KENNEDY et al) 03 November 1998, abstract. | 1-17 |
| Y | RANDALL A. TAMURA et al. Lotus Notes 4, pages 32-34, 39, 64-65, 176, 1996. | 1-17 |

[X] Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. [ ] See patent family annex.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| * | Special categories of cited documents: | "T" | later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention |
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| | |
|---|---|
| Date of the actual completion of the international search<br>23 DECEMBER 1998 | Date of mailing of the international search report<br>12 APR 1999 |
| Name and mailing address of the ISA/US<br>Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks<br>Box PCT<br>Washington, D.C. 20231<br>Facsimile No. (703) 305-3230 | Authorized officer<br>HIEU C. LE<br>Telephone No. (703) 306-3101 |

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 551 of 1793

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

| Category* | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
|---|---|---|
| Y | GS Lotus Organizer 1997 Edition/Exploring Organizer/Windows 95 edition, pages iii-vii and chapter 8/1-8/6. | 1-17 |
| Y | Lotus "Domino 4.6 Features Overview", July 1997, 2 pages. | 1-17 |

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 552 of 1793

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(54) **Title:** ELECTRONIC CATALOG AND SHARED ELECTRONIC TRANSACTION SYSTEM

(57) **Abstract**

An electronic catalog and shared electronic systems which can be accessed over a computer network. Various items of the catalog are stored in a database and can be selected by a user in accordance with user determined parameters.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 553 of 1793

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# ELECTRONIC CATALOG AND SHARED ELECTRONIC TRANSACTION SYSTEM

## PRIORITY TO PRIOR APPLICATION

This application claims priority to Provisional Application Serial No. 60/102,967 filed October 2, 1998.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention generally relates to the field of electronic databases and, more particularly, is directed to an electronic catalog and shared electronic transaction system which enables users of the system to retrieve requested data conveniently and economically.

The present invention will be described in the context of a government order processing system, but the novel and unobvious features of the invention have application in a wide variety of government and commercial (business-to-business) environments where large amounts of information must be cataloged and made available to users in an expeditious manner. The invention is described for its use on the World Wide Web part of the Internet. It should be understood, however, that the benefits of the invention may be



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 555 of 1793

realized with any computer network (LAN, etc.) that supports multiple users.

One of the most important requirements of an economy is to bring buyer's wishing to buy products into contact with sellers [having products to sell]. In an economy driven by competition, there are often many competing products from which a buyer can choose. Moreover, as modern day communications make the world smaller and greatly expand market territories, a buyer is often confronted with a confusing array of considerations when making a purchasing decision. Price, quality, suitability, and delivery time are but a few of the many factors a purchaser must consider when making a purchasing decision. Thus, an informed purchasing decision often requires the purchaser evaluate the offerings of several vendors. Doing so can be time consuming and a busy purchaser may simply opt to make a purchase without doing any real comparison shopping. While making purchasing decisions in this manner may not be detrimental for a small number of purchases, the potential savings that result from a more careful purchasing decision can mount substantially when large numbers of purchases are involved. For example, federal, state and local governments routinely make purchasing decisions involving large numbers of items and large sums of money. The ability to make purchasing decisions quickly



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 556 of 1793

while simultaneously ensuring the proper item is purchased at the lowest cost is critical to maintaining the effectiveness of a procurement system.

In addition, vendors also require an efficient and cost-effective way of informing potential customers of their wares. Traditionally, paper catalogs, advertisements and personal sales calls have served this purpose. Each of these methods has its inherent drawbacks. For example, paper catalogs are expensive to print and distribute and usually do not remain current for any significant length of time. Advertising and personal sales calls also are expensive and tradeoffs must be made over which products will be promoted to which potential customers.

Accordingly, there is a great need for a system which can effectively catalog large amounts of information such as product description, prices and the like, make it available to those in need of such information in the form of multiple comparative shopping listings, and allow for real-time purchase transactions, including credit facility use, all in a secure electronic environment.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In order to meet this need, Applicant has invented an electronic catalog and shared electronic transaction system. The



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 557 of 1793

novel features of the invention will be understood more fully and clearly from the following description of the invention as set forth in the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is an illustration of the system architecture of the present invention;

Figure 2 is an illustration of a product mapping process in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 3 is an illustration of a 3-step catalog search in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 4 is an illustration of how transactions may be shared in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 5 is an illustration of a process for printing completed PDF forms using data entered into HTML forms in accordance with the present invention; and

Figure 6 is a data flow of the interaction between a buyer and a seller in accordance with the present invention.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

As mentioned above, the present invention and processes will be described in the context of a government order processing system as implemented on the World Wide Web and will be referred to as an "Electronic Catalog Service." Figure 1 illustrates the system architecture. The invention and processes can also be applied in



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 558 of 1793

the commercial setting.

Electronic Catalog Service

The Electronic Catalog Service is the common entry point for all buyers and sellers. The supplier catalogs with MSRP prices can be searched by anyone. Private contract catalogs are only searched and used to create RFQs (Request for Proposal) and purchase orders by authorized buyers.

The Electronic Catalog Service provides the ability for a governmental entity to post its term contracts, schedule contracts, surplus property and other buying vehicles that are available to multiple buying jurisdictions, on an on-line, Internet environment.

This selective "electronic catalog" capability also permits buyers to make their purchase selections on-line, and have them converted into EDI or FAX purchase/release orders for transmission to the catalog supplier. The buyer vehicles are in themselves small "catalogs" that contain items, part numbers, and previously negotiated or set prices. These mini contract "catalogs" are maintained in the private part of the catalog database where buyers can access them through the Internet. Only those buyers that have the authority to make purchases off of a particular contract can see items and prices. When a buyer has access to multiple



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 559 of 1793

contracts covering the same products or a buyer wants to check published MSRP prices from public catalogs, he or she is able to compare the prices for the different suppliers and manufacturers of similar items.

The backbone of the catalog holds three major types of items that make up the products and services that the buyers buy and the sellers sell, First there are the generic items -- 175,000 covered by the NIGP 11 digit code and over 6 million in the Federal Supply Catalog. Second, each generic item is replicated 5 to 10 times with each occurrence associated with a different manufacturer's part number - over 20 million in the Federal Supply Catalog. Third, these specific items can be replicated 10 to 20 times for the different contracts or catalogs that carry them. These items carry the additional supplier's stock or price list number.

Internet technology is rapidly evolving. As it continues to improve, the catalog will become more graphical and support multimedia presentations that will surpass the quality of the message that suppliers make now in their print catalogs. While links are routinely provided to supplier web-sites so that buyers can investigate a particular product or service, many small merchants will not want to build their own web site capable of sending out streaming audio, video and animation feeds.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 560 of 1793

An integral part of the Electronic Catalog Service is to work directly with site promotion services to ensure the maximum and most appropriate visibility of Web site facilities to Web search engines and other appropriate points of publicity, including placement of animated "tile" advertising on appropriate Web pages (e.g., the Netscape Net Search page) and active promotion of reciprocal hypertext linking with related Web sites.

Catalog Enhancements

A number of pre-existing databases make the service offered by the present invention unique and much easier to find items than services that just load contract items into a database. Even before any contracts items are loaded into the database, it is already filled with the following databases:

NIGP Code

The foundation of the procurement catalog data management system of the present invention is the NIGP Commodity code. Contract and open market catalog data is mapped to the NIGP code as the common delineator so familiar to public sector purchasing agents. The code is licensed from NIGP.

The NIGP coding scheme provides familiar, visible classifications that buyers will use to search for items to



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 561 of 1793

purchase. The unique capability of the central catalog is the neutral link and cross reference that it provides to other major catalogs. Multi-vendor catalogs such as those built by Granger, Sweets or Sears as well as those from single manufacturers like Caterpillar whose catalog, though proprietary, are completely replicated by independent catalog companies.

Another enhancement to the catalog is to add tools that assist the buyer in preparing RFQs for complex products and services and that assist the seller in working up their Bids. Using the latest Internet technology, these tools are being converted into Java applets that run at the user's PC and work on data files linked to the product or service being solicited.

Trade Services Catalogs

Trade Service Corporation is the recognized leader in providing Benchmark Pricing to agencies throughout the United States. As a neutral third party provider of data, Trade Service gathers information from thousands of manufacturers throughout the country. This information is compiled into industry standard databases. The information is massaged to ensure consistent output, and then disseminated in multiple formats depending on user



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 562 of 1793

requirements. The information is constantly updated to reflect the manufacturers' latest suggested resale price, as well as catalog number, UPC, unit of measure, etc.

Benchmark pricing, and electronic catalogs developed around live information, generally results in deeper discounts for agencies. This is due to the varied commodity structures against which vendors are able to bid. Rather than provide a single discount for commodities, the vendors can provide multiple discounts against commodities, sub commodities, manufacturer lines or single items. Bids can be received against a fair fixed price for the life of the contract, or allowed to float as economic changes occur. In this case, the negotiated discount is factored against the changing list price. The database always remains current reflecting negotiated contract pricing. Benchmark, or neutral third party pricing benefits public sector agencies throughout the solicitation, pre-and post-award processes.

Trade Service databases are used as a benchmark throughout the bid process. Because the information is neutral, containing Universal Product Codes (UPC's) and manufacturer catalog numbers, rather than vendor specific SKU numbers, all vendors can respond to solicitations with the assurance that they are bidding against a level playing field. Vendors provide discounts against the



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 563 of 1793

manufacturer's list price, rather than the vendors' list price. This streamlines the process for evaluating bids, comparing responses, and awarding contracts; and ultimately saves considerable time and taxpayer dollars.

The electronic catalog becomes a powerful tool for ordering materials and auditing vendor invoices. Because the database contains UPC's, it reflects the same schema as vendors' internal systems making ordering consistent.

A central data repository managed by a neutral third party data provider will improve the purchasing and materials management functions. Improvements are through the reduction in data errors inherent in manual input, accessibility to bar code and product identification information, current contract pricing, and material safety data sheets. Through the use of industry standard data that utilizes universal product codes cross referenced to manufacturer part/stock numbers, the jurisdiction can expect reduced transaction costs, increased buying power through aggregated purchasing, and streamlined contracting processes.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 564 of 1793

Federal Supply Catalog

This catalog, built and maintained by the Department of Defense over the last 50 years, provides over 6 million National Stock Number (NSN) items that have been identified as having unique form, fit and function and have been classified by three coding schemes that will link to the NIGP codes:

- Federal Supply Class (FSC)
- Federal Item Identification Guide (FIIG)
- Approved Items Name (AIN)

Once links have been made between the NIGP codes and the NSNs, other valuable information can be made available, such as:

- Specific Manufacturer Part Numbers
- Prices for Previously Awarded Contracts
- Searchable Technical Characteristics

Excess/Surplus Inventory Items

The service also has the capability for governmental entities to advertise excess and surplus property on the Internet. The advertisements are searchable by the NIGP Code (both class 998 and the class-item for the item when originally purchased; i.e. 070-06 for automobiles). Advertising jurisdictions will have several options:



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 565 of 1793

- Restrict sale of the item to other units of government; sale to be by electronic bid with a specified bid opening date.

- Permit the item to be sold to anyone, including the general public; sale to be by electronic bid with a specified bid opening date.

- Offer the item for sale at a pre-established price (restricted or unrestricted).

Agencies are able to advertise upcoming auctions of excess and surplus property. This information can be made available on the Internet to the general public who could search by commodity code or geographic location.

Currently there is no established marketplace for selling excess and surplus property that is unique to government; such as voting machines, police radios, etc. This capability provides a low cost method for creating an electronic marketplace.

**Product Mapping Process**

Figure 2 illustrates how the product mapping process occurs in accordance with the present invention. The system administrator receives computer files from buyers and vendors. These files contain lists of product names and contract or manufacturer



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 566 of 1793

suggested prices for various products. The contract prices are usually ones which have been the subject of negotiation between the buyer and the vendor and will remain in effect for some period of time. The manufacturer suggested prices, on the other hand, are prices which are available to the general public.

In addition to product prices, the computer files may also contain manufacturer model numbers for each of the products, products descriptions, the manufacturer's name, quantity price breaks and may even include a graphical representation of the product. In essence, the computer file is an electronic equivalent of a conventional paper catalog. The computer file, however, can be searched electronically based on key words and various other search parameters and relationships.

The objective of the mapping process is to take product catalog information from various buyers and vendors which is often not consistent between catalogs and map it to an existing reference catalog of product data (i.e., the proprietary data structure illustrated in Figure 2). The reference catalog is created from a number of sources, including industry codes such as the National Stock Number ("NSN"), the National Institute of Government Purchases (NIGP) and the Universal Product Code ("UPC"). These codes represent classifications for various products and are well



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 567 of 1793

understood by the purchasing industry. A classification for most products can be found in each of the codes. Many states and local governments also have product coding systems which the present invention may use as well.

In mapping the buyer and vendor catalog files, various key words such as product name and model number are used to find the proper classification in the reference catalog. The process is greatly aided if the buyer and/or vendor catalog files also include an NSN, NIGP or UPC code for each product. If the buyer and vendor catalog files do not include such a code, the file may be compared to a stored database of invoices, purchase orders, bills of lading and the like in search of an NSN, NIGP or UPC code which matches the product. Such purchasing records are available from the Federal Government as well as other sources. If an appropriate classification cannot be determined automatically, a human operator can make the determination.

Once a classification for the product has been determined, it is given a new reference code from the reference catalog. Using the techniques of the present invention, it has been found that a proper classification can automatically be determined 85 percent of the time.

**Product Catalog Search**



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 568 of 1793

Figure 3 is a flow chart of a 3-step catalog search in accordance with the present invention. For example, if an end-user wishes to retrieve information on a particular product, appropriate key words are used to find the product classification. Once the classification is found, the second step involves finding a particular sub-category for the product.

This sub-category may well include several similar products from different manufactures, thus enabling the user to do product comparisons. The user then completes the third step by making a product selection based on, for example, manufacture and model number.

The steps involved in preparing and using the catalog for a state or local government purchasing offices are described in the following sections:

**Verify Catalogs & Set Up Contracts**

Contract officers browse items in the Contract Catalogs they received after they have been loaded or updated by them or their suppliers. Contract officers also set-up, confirm or change the prices and terms for each contract they are administering. Larger suppliers can also perform these same functions. Smaller suppliers using the first level service cannot make changes to the catalog items.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 569 of 1793

Browse Contract Catalogs

Buyers can search through items in the catalogs limited to the catalogs from which they are authorized to purchase and their product profiles. Both of these filters can be easily modified for a particular session by turning on and off specific contract and/or product groups. There are two basic methods of locating an item. The keyword method is a two step process with the first search returning those product families that match the entered keywords. Then the user picks the lowest level product family to see the items available for purchase. The second method of browsing the catalog database is to navigate down a product family hierarchy that often has small pictures related to the type of product. When the lowest level product family is reached, the user picks those he or she wishes to purchase. The final list of actual items to purchase can be filtered by manufacturer, price and keyword in the product name.

Query Public Catalogs

If a buyer cannot find an item on the Contract Catalogs issued to them by their Contract Administrator, they can search the public Supplier Catalogs maintained at the Catalog Service. This can be done at the same time as the search of authorized contracts or separately by modifying the catalog profile for that session. The



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 570 of 1793

Buyer can do comparison shopping between the prices of items that may appear on multiple private contracts or public catalogs. The result is a list of similar items from different manufacturers and different suppliers.

**Electronic Procurement System**

Figure 4 illustrates a business model for conducting commerce in accordance with the present invention. The top portion of Figure 4 shows the conventional manner in which buyers and vendors interact. The arrows indicate the exchange of purchase information in the form of request for quotes, purchase orders, invoices, bill of sales, shipping notices and the like. The exchange of each piece of information is in many cases only for the purpose of creating a "paper trail" should reconciliation become necessary. Creating this "paper trail" is, however, expensive, time consuming, and is wasteful of resources. The need to dispose of these paper records when they are no longer needed poses additional concerns.

Applicant has discovered that a more efficient way of tracking commercial transactions is to maintain them in a shared database as illustrated in the bottom portion of Figure 4. When a buyer wishes to submit, for example, a purchase order, it is stored in the shared database and is immediately available for review by a vendor. Thus, there is no reconciliation necessary because only one



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 571 of 1793

copy of the transaction exists, i.e., the copy which is stored in the shared database.

The Electronic Procurement System is for those procurement offices that wish to maintain an electronic link with their suppliers, but do not want to undergo the time and expense to setup direct EDI links between themselves and all their suppliers under contract. Using a secure Internet browser, buyers can look at records of all intermediate revisions or cancellations of purchase orders, shipping notices and invoices that flow back on forth between them and the buyer. The electronic link on the supplier side can be either through the Internet if they are using the Bidder's Service or through their established EDI VAN.

The introduction of "Purchasing Cards" has helped to reduce overall administrative costs. The service accepts these purchasing cards, along with other general purpose credit cards.

**Administer Buyers & Suppliers**

Contract administrators set-up and assign Buyers who are authorized to make purchases off of each contract and/or if they can make purchases of public catalogs at suggested retail prices. Contract administrators or the Buyers themselves can also set up a product profile that will be used to limit the items in the public catalogs or private contract catalogs. Suppliers that do not have



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 572 of 1793

a contract or public catalog loaded at the Catalog Service can register themselves and maintain their own product profiles for filtering RFQs that they are interesting in bidding on.

Prepare RFQs or Purchase Orders

The Buyer selects the items they wish to purchase from the private contract or public supplier catalogs on their Internet Site. The Buyer has the following options as to how they would like to proceed when looking at a list of similar items:

Pick specific items to put on Request For Quotes to be sent to the appropriate suppliers. In this case the item is known and the supplier responds with their best price.

Pick generic items without a Manufacturer and Product Number to put on a Request for Quote that is sent to the appropriate Suppliers. In this case the Supplier selects the specific item in their response.

Pick generic items without indicating a Supplier. This is known as an un-addressed RFQ that is addressed each night by the Electronic Catalog Service according to Supplier profiles. These requests are also



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 573 of 1793

placed on the Electronic Bidder's Service for Suppliers to search if they do not received notice of the item due to their product Profile.

Pick specific items with a manufacturer and part number to put on purchase orders to be sent to the appropriate suppliers.

Buyer orders are immediately updated in the Electronic Procurement System databases and are immediately available for any Supplier that is a customer of the Bidder's Service. For those that are not, the order is transmitted through the EDI VAN service if the Supplier is registered as EDI-capable. If not the order is sent either via e-mail or fax depending on preference of the registered Suppliers.

**Authorize Payment for Orders**

If the user wants to pay for the order immediately with a credit card, digital certificate smart card or procurement card, the service takes control of the operations to perform the payment and order fulfillment processes. The exchanges between the browser and the server are encrypted to insure confidentiality and performed behind a firewall. The check-out procedure is as follows.

After establishing a secure link with the browser, the server



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 574 of 1793

receives the content of the shopping cart and presents an order form to the buyer for collection of secure personal information to complete the transaction. The client then enters the requested personal information (billing and shipping addresses, phone number, E-mail address, etc.); chooses among the payment options offered; then enters the requested payment information, e.g. credit card type, account number, etc.

All information that is captured in the above process is recorded in a secure transaction database for subsequent use in daily and monthly reports. The process also adds the applicable taxes and shipping costs.

**Review or Update Orders**

The Supplier receives its orders from the Buyers either immediately through the Catalog Service if the are a customer, or via an EDI transmission, Fax or E-mail depending on their level of service. The supplier then indicates if the order can be shipped in full, or if one or more line items must be back ordered.

When a supplier is an EDI customer or a Bidder's Service customer, the buyer will receive acknowledgments, adjusted purchase orders and intent to ship documents soon after the supplier releases them. For any item on an order that is not yet indicated as being shipped, the buyer can cancel or change and re-submit it to the



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 575 of 1793

supplier.

Receive Shipping Notices and Invoices

Suppliers that are customers of the Bidders Service can "turn-around" the Purchase Order into multiple Shipping Notices or Invoices when they are ready to ship. The Supplier can indicate that some items must be back-ordered and thus create partial Shipment Notices or Invoices by picking a subset of the line items or by splitting the quantity ordered into shipped and not-shipped quantities for individual line items.

EDI capable suppliers use their own internal system to process the order and send it back to the Buyer through their EDI VAN Service. Suppliers that received their orders either via Fax or E-mail notify the Buyer of the intention to ship via traditional means or via E-mail. In all cases, however, the status of the order will simply be "PO Sent" until the Buyer authorizes a payment for the purchase. Buyers will immediately see these shipping notices and invoices if they are a customer of the Order Management Service.

Update Order History

A copy of all sales invoices processed by the Catalog Service or received by the VAN service are recorded by the Order Management Service. These award notices can be kept as part of the Contract



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 576 of 1793

Catalogs. Copies of all transactions processed by the Catalog Service or sent through the VAN Service are kept in the Order Management database for daily and monthly reporting.

Billing and Payment Methods

In order to complete the purchase cycle and capture important data about the procurement process, an electronic payment must be made. It can be by credit card and the traditionally paper-based part of the transaction is over. But most business and governments would rather pay monthly bills and only pay after goods have been received and inspected to be in good condition. Converting this method of payment is a challenge for everyone involved, now including the buyer's and seller's bank. The service was the first to support a totally secure environment including credit cards, and bank independent Electronic Funds Transfer, in addition to providing a unique capability to connect with suppliers using Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) for managing and processing of orders and invoices.

This system has a comprehensive payment and order fulfillment capability. It includes a transaction server and many back-office functions: processing credit card payments (Visa, MasterCard, AMEX, Discover and all other popular cards); business purchase cards for business-to-business transactions; tax calculations; shipping method



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 577 of 1793

selection and billing; e-mail confirmations; inventory verification and complete order fulfillment including delivery of orders to multiple suppliers in any format of choice - EDI, fax, e-mail or computer file. These functions take place behind a "firewall" which prevents unauthorized access to the back-office functions. The system provides access to transactional and statistical information pertaining to a customer purchases either on-line or as report files.

The system has integrated payment and order-processing capabilities into its catalog web-site using Industry-standard security software that supports Microsoft and Netscape Internet browsers as well as the new Secure Electronic Transaction (SET) protocol developed by MasterCard and Visa International.

State and local government purchasers can securely market products and services, accept orders, process payments and fulfill orders on the Internet. Delivery can be immediate in the case of soft goods such as publication material, registrations and software. In the case of hard goods, a transaction will be transmitted to the suppliers and goods will be shipped in the normal fashion.

The moment that the customer commits to make a purchase by clicking on the prepare order button, the Catalog Service completes the payment and order fulfillment process in a secure back-office



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 578 of 1793

environment. The payment can be accompanied by a remittance notice if the supplier is capable of receiving EDI transactions.

Credit Card Transactions

An example illustrates the flow of information for a credit card transactions. An on-line credit check with the appropriate financial institution is made through the normal credit card authorization process if the credit is authorized, the required funds for order settlement is temporarily held until it is determined if the merchant is able to fulfill the order and the customer is notified on-line of the status; if the credit request is denied, the customer is notified on-line that his order can not be accepted the order is sent to the supplier via the Internet as an E-mail, fax or a computer file or in EDI format.

The supplier acknowledges receipt of order following an inventory verification, an invoice confirmation is returned to the Order Management Service by the supplier if the order can be fulfilled; if the order can not be fulfilled, notification to this effect is transmitted. The pending payment transaction is processed through the financial institutions. Where the order is fulfilled both the customer and the supplier are notified of the outcome of the purchase request (e.g. by E-mail, or Fax) and the customer receives a final invoice if the order is being fulfilled, or a



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 579 of 1793

notification that the order cannot be fulfilled in accordance with contract or delivery requirements.

Upon completion of the processing of an order, the Order Management Service provides confirmation on the acceptance/refusal of the order to the intervening parties. An important feature of the service is that the system can accept all popular credit cards for which the individual merchants have been accredited, including VISA, Mastercard and American Express, while the debiting of purchaser accounts and crediting of merchant accounts can take place with any financial institution. Furthermore, the system will also accept a large number of private credit cards, e.g. from retail organizations.

**On-Account Transactions**

In the case of a state and local jurisdiction, ordering from a supplier under some form of blanket purchase agreement or indefinite delivery contract, it is more common to pay on account as opposed to use of a credit card as per the previous examples. The supplier in this case will have established terms of payment with its clients, e.g. net 30 days.

The process for on-account payments is similar to the credit card process with the following differences. The first step is to confirm that the customer has a valid pre-established account with



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 580 of 1793

the merchant. The order processing proceeds in the same manner the order confirmation proceeds in the same manner with an invoice being sent to the customer; however, there is no immediate debiting of the customer account and crediting of the merchant account, as was the case with credit card payments, as payment will only be due at some future date as established between the merchant and the customer the invoice can be paid on-line through the Internet at any time after receipt, with the option of specifying the deferred date on which payment is to be made.

Procurement Card Transactions

These type of transactions are similar to the credit card transactions in that an on-line check with the appropriate financial institution is made.

Complete Transactions Reporting

A complete record of all buyer transactions is available, made through the Catalog Service. In addition to the standard transaction reporting, many other analysis type reports can be generated for improved management information.

An example of a report is an open purchase order journal produced on an ad-hoc basis including vendor order details and order fulfillment status. The Order Management Service can also provide information that helps to determine which products are being



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 581 of 1793

frequently ordered that might be better purchased in larger lot sizes.

Daily Transactions

This report gives a list of all transactions performed so far during the current day. The information contained in the report is:

Transaction number

Date and Time of transaction

Organization ID

Buyer ID

Seller ID

Session ID (recorded sequentially for each buyer )

Contract ID

Payment Type

Sales Total

Shipping cost charged

State or Provincial sales Tax

Federal Sales Tax

Transaction Total ( sum of sales amount + shipping + sales taxes )

Seller's Name

Seller's Address ( excluding City, State/Region, Zip and Country).



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 582 of 1793

Seller's City, State/Region, Zip and Country

Telephone number of Seller

E-mail Address of Seller

Shipping Name ( Name appearing in shipping address )

Shipping Address ( excluding City, State/Region, Zip and Country).

Shipping City, State/Region, Zip and Country

Billing Name ( Name appearing in the billing address )

Billing Address ( excluding City, State/Region Zip and Country).

Billing City, State/Region, Zip and Country

Telephone number of Buyer

E-mail address of Buyer

Status code indicating the completion status of the transaction.

Confirmation code ( this is the credit acceptance code ).

**Daily Transaction Detail**

This report gives the details on the products involved in a specific transaction. This report provides the information contained in the transactions of the day listed above plus the following product information (one line per product):

Transaction number



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 583 of 1793

Product number.

Quantity ordered.

Product description ( obtained from the catalog ).

Unit price of the product.

Monthly Transactions

This report will list all products and services for all transactions performed during a specified month. The information given in this report is:

Transaction number

Date and Time of transaction

Product number

Quantity

Product Description

Unit Price of product

Monthly Transaction Summary

The information provided in report summarizes the daily transactions with the following information:

Total number of transactions during the period.

Total State or Provincial sales tax for the period

Total Federal sales tax for the period

Total shipping charge for the period

Total transaction amounts for the period.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 584 of 1793

The information is grouped by:

Completed transactions

Rejected transactions

Canceled transactions

Problem transactions

Product and Services Purchased Summary

A monthly file which contains a list of all products sold during the month along with the class, name, supplier, purchase amount, manufacturer and quantity (if applicable) sold for each product and service.

HTML-PDF Forms

Figure 5 illustrates another concept in accordance with the present invention related to business forms. There are many situations known in the prior art wherein filling out a paper form is a prerequisite to obtaining a service or benefit. Insurance and medical forms readily come to mind. In most cases, the service or benefit will not be rendered unless the proper form is used and is completed in the proper way.

Applicant has discovered a novel way in which much of the tedium can be eliminated when completing complex and cumbersome forms. The invention builds on the advances in printing documents made possible by the Adobe PDF technology. Although PDF technology



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 585 of 1793

represents a major advance in printing complex documents, there remained deficiencies in how the printed information is compiled.

In accordance with the present invention, a process is provided in which data for a printed form can be entered into, for example, a user friendly HTML form. The data is then checked for accuracy and/or a determination is made whether the entries fall within predefined ranges. The user can then be alerted to any errors and given an opportunity to correct them before proceeding further. Once the HTML form is completed, the form data is transferred to the corresponding PDF form for printing by both the one filling out the form and also by the form recipient.

Because it is time consuming to convert a regular form to an HTML form, Applicant has also invented a process to generate automatically the HTML form, the CGI program that verifies and checks the user entries as well as automatically creates a database for the form data.

It should be obvious from the above-discussed apparatus embodiment that numerous other variations and modifications of the present invention are possible, and such will readily occur to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the scope of this invention is not to be limited to the embodiment disclosed, but is to include any such embodiments as may be encompassed within the scope of the



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 586 of 1793

claims.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 587 of 1793

WE CLAIM:

1. An electronic catalog system comprising:

memory means for storing a pcramater of catalog items;

selection means for selecting one of said catalog items;

user input means for making said selection in accordance with user determined peramaters; and

control means for controlling said selection process.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 588 of 1793

Figure 1

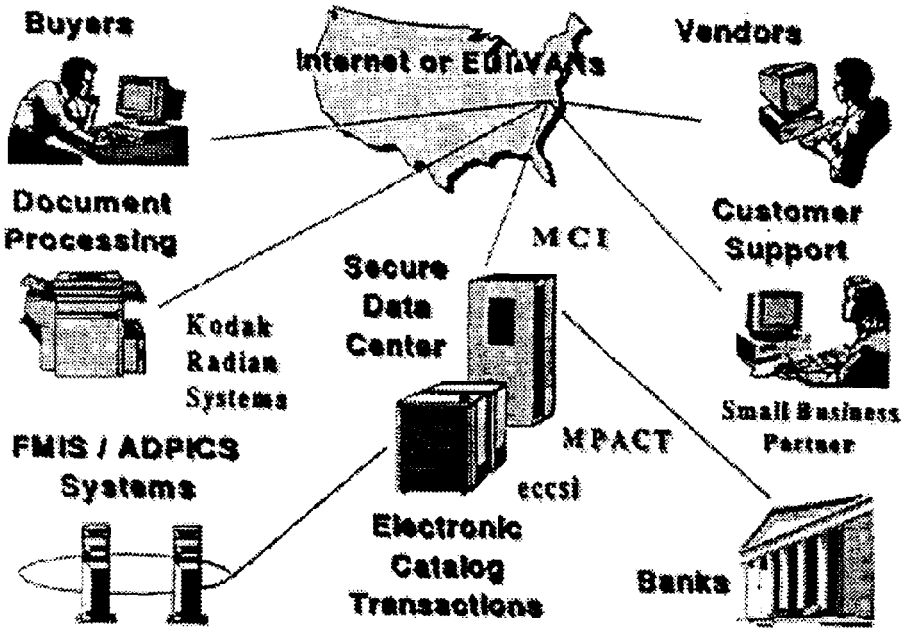

Buyers
Internet or EDI/VANs
Vendors
Document Processing
MCI
Customer Support
Secure Data Center
Kodak Radian Systems
Small Business Partner
FMIS / ADPICS Systems
MPACT
eccsi
Electronic Catalog Transactions
Banks

Figure 2

*Product Mapping process*

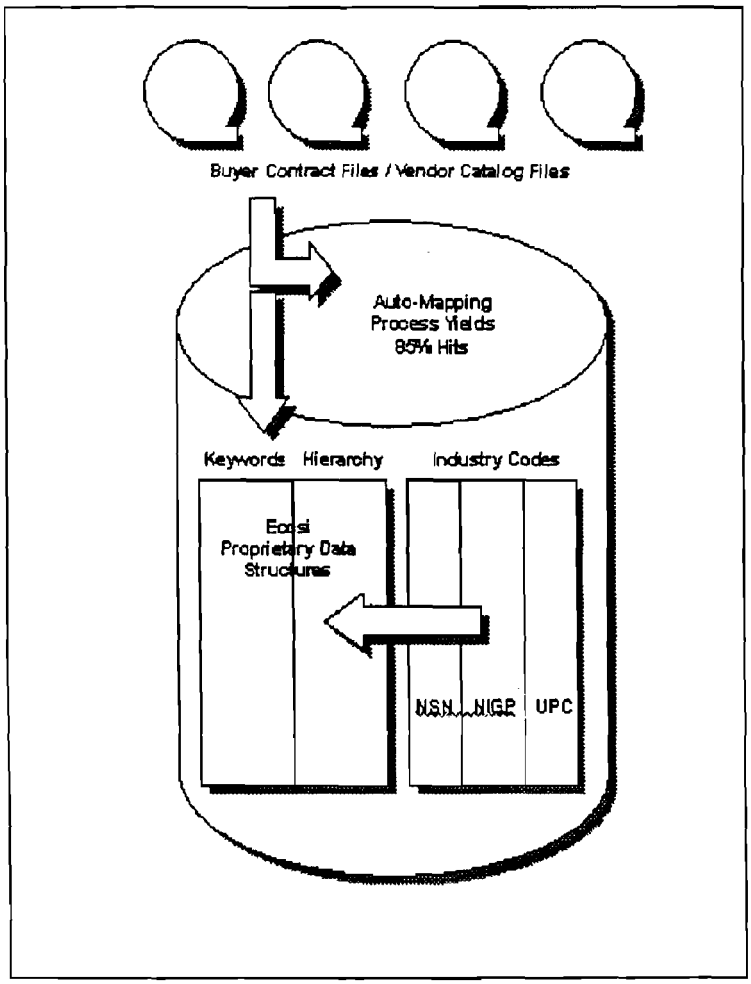
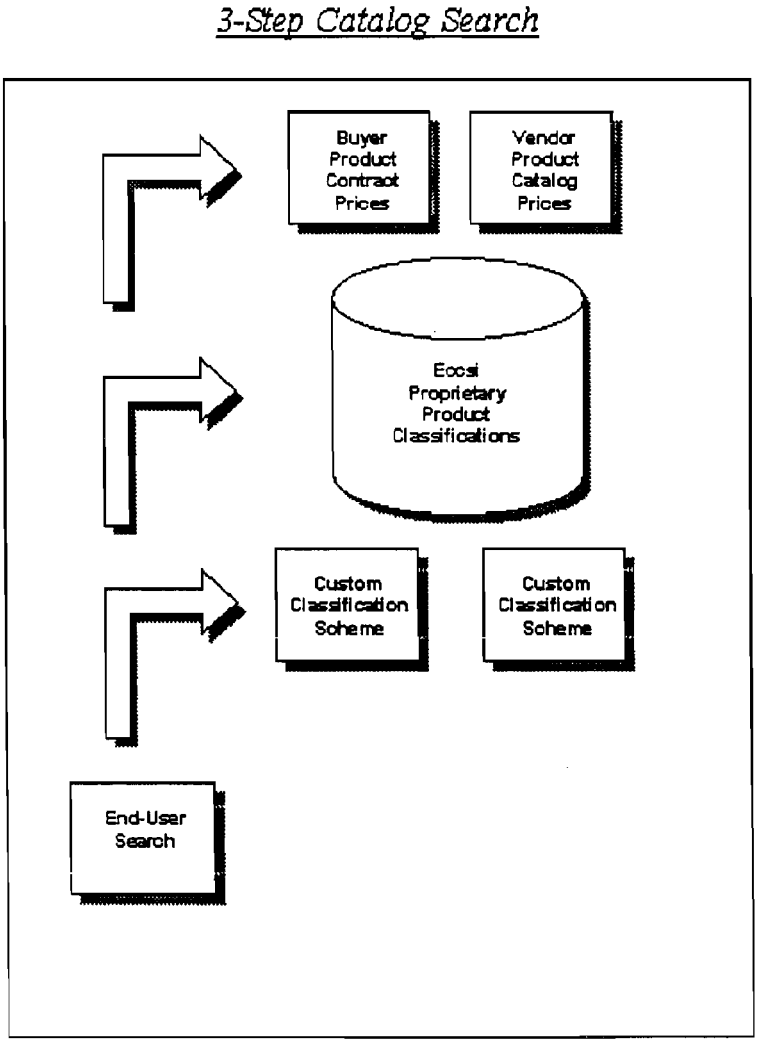


Figure 3




TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 591 of 1793

**Figure 4**

*Shared Electronic Transactions*

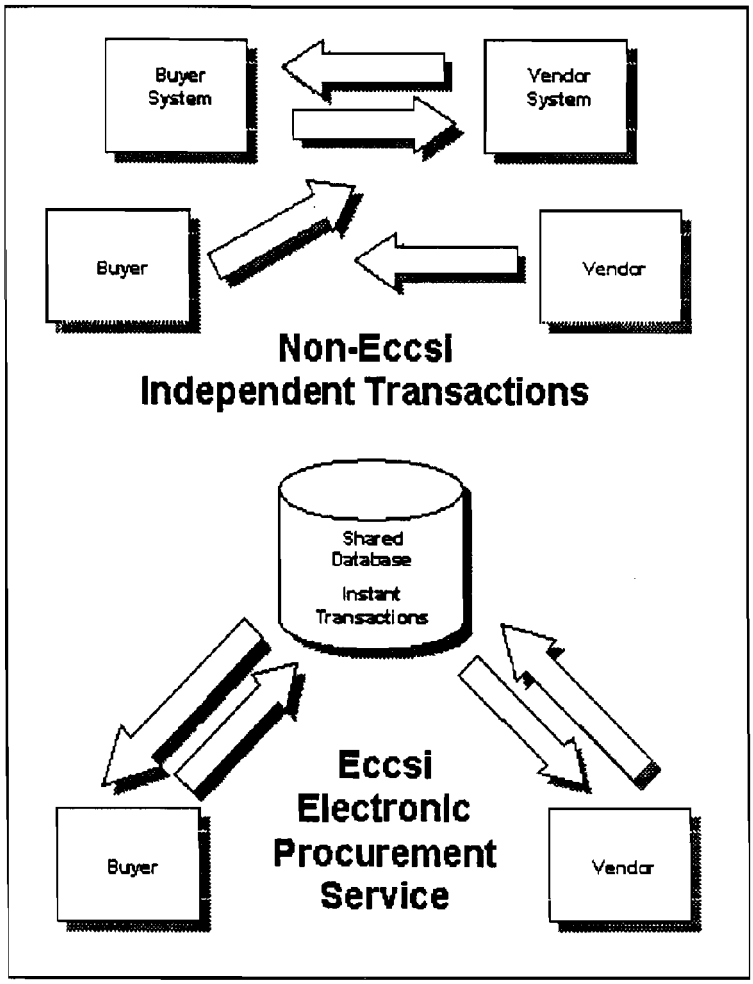


Figure 5

*HTML-PDF Forms*

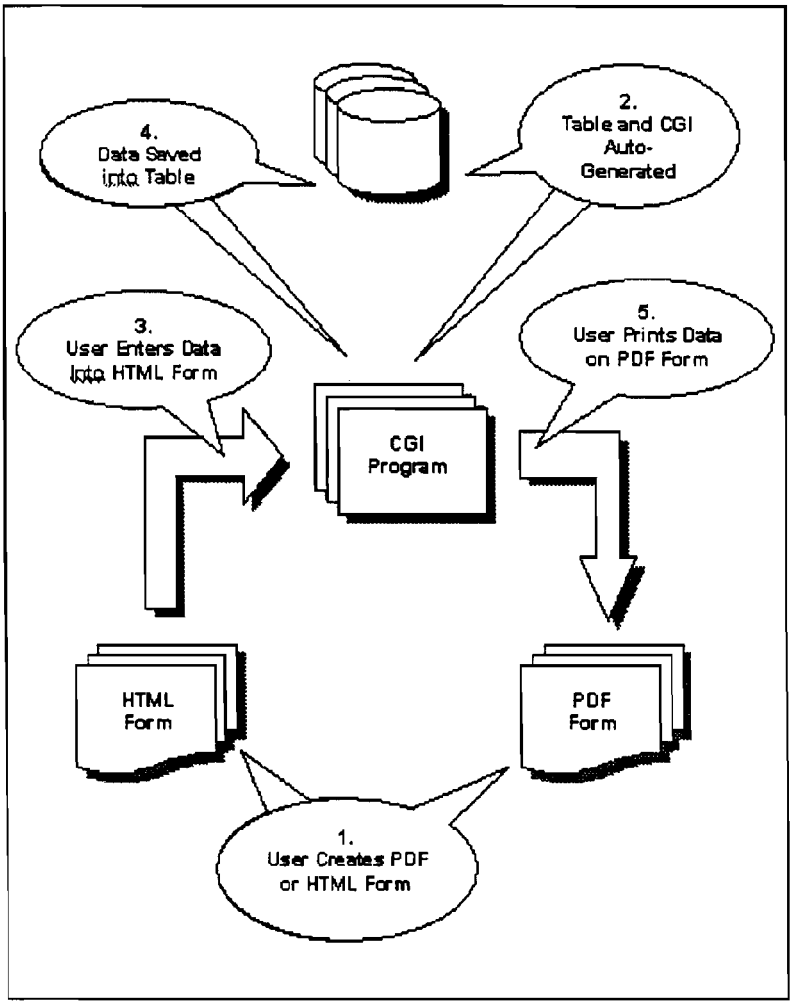
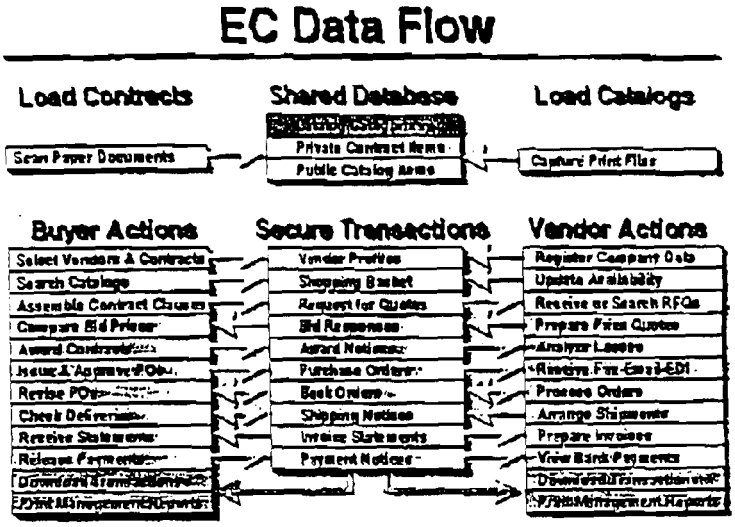


Figure 6

Purchasing reviews the requisition, checks whether or not the item is in user inventory and selects a vendor. Vendor selection generates an electronic purchase order that is sent directly to the supplier's electronic mailbox. A secure electronic confirmation is returned confirming receipt and acceptance of the order. Upon receipt of the confirmation, entries are automatically sent to the client's accounting and control systems. Orders can contain information that references a number of accounts including accounts that are funded by federal sources and often require extensive compliance reporting. There are various payment options, ranging from credit card authorization that is suitable for very small purchases, to more elaborate Electronic Funds Transfer mechanisms involving the overall financial management system.

Management reports are updated and status reports can be made available directly from the web site.

The following illustration represents the structure of the ECCSI system.




**Summary of Product Features**

- The system software is year 2000 compliant.
- Underlying detail information is accessible from the display location.
- The system is menu drive.
- There is an on line help function.
- There is an on line tutorial function.
- The system is optimized to present underlying and important information as efficiently and possible given the task. The number of screens that may be used to access information regarding a specific

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(54) Title: SEARCH SYSTEM AND METHODS

(57) Abstract: The invention relates to systems and methods for providing and accessing searchable information, particularly via the Internet, whereby the search for suitable service providers is based upon information specific to the service providers and information specific to the person carrying out the search, in particular to the geographical locations of the searcher and the service providers, to produce search results which are more useful and more appropriate to the user.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 595 of 1793

# SEARCH SYSTEM AND METHODS

The present invention relates to a system and methods for providing and accessing searchable information, particularly via the Internet.

The Internet has become increasingly important to business users, for providing information on the goods and services they offer. It has also become an important tool for users looking for specific information. However, the Internet now contains a vast amount of information and, because this information is so diverse and wide-ranging and formatted in many different ways, the information required is not always easily found.

This makes the Internet less efficient than it could be for advertisers and businesses, as there is no guarantee that their services will be found by users looking for something within their range of specialisation. The user looking for information may also find less information than is actually available.

Because of the increasing amount of information held on the Internet, there has become a need for efficient and reliable information retrieval and various search engines have evolved.

A Search Engine is essentially a large database of links to different documents on the Internet. The person looking for the information, a 'Web Browser Client', can enter one or more keywords. The Search Engine then searches for the occurrence of these words throughout the entire database of all documents indexed. Any article or document that contains the selected keyword(s) is presented to the user as a 'hit'. Hits in the list can be selected and the document to which the hit relates can then be called up from its address on the Internet.

There are a number of mainstream search engines, for example, Lycos, Yahoo, Alta Vista. These all

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 596 of 1793

provide links to information from the whole of the Internet which has been collected by 'Internet Spiders'. These 'Spiders', also known as 'Robots' or 'Crawlers' are automated programs which go from site to site recording and following links provided at the sites. The 'Spider' travels from URL (Uniform Resource Locator) to URL, recording the full text of every page, and then continues by following external links. The sites are periodically revisited to refresh the recorded information.

The sites are indexed on the basis of content, and particularly based on the html code. They work on the basis of algorithms, i. e. the number of times a keyword or text appears. The 'Spider' collects the information and returns it to the database for indexing. If this matches the search request, the database calls up the site located, usually listing the site in the list of hits based on the number of times or the relevance of occurrence of the selected keyword(s).

Because the mainstream search engines work using information collected by Internet Spiders, they essentially all report on the same data set.

The Search Engines all also basically use the same rules for searching or identifying the business that the user is looking for.

The Search Engines essentially operate on a keyword basis. They assign 'points' to web site where hits occur, based on the prominence of the keyword, i. e. how early the keywords appear; the frequency of appearance of the keywords in the document; the popularity of the site, i. e. the number of reciprocal links to the site; the number of keywords found at that site as a percentage of the total number of keywords found in the search; the proximity of the keywords in relation to the words with a similar meaning and the placement of the keywords on the site.

Although the Search Engines are useful in that the

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 597 of 1793

user can input keywords and have access to a wide range of information, several problems have been identified including:

The information held on the database is not always up to date. Indeed, the information may have even been removed, in which case the search engine might list it but the link to load the information will produce an error.

Because the system is keyword based, some companies which provide relevant information for the user, may not be found because they use different words to describe their products/services. This is disadvantageous to the businesses providing the information and also to the searcher.

Submitting information to search engines requires the users to follow set rules and restrictions as to the presentation of the information.

Because these mainstream search engines search for documents containing the keyword(s) on the entire Internet, as described above, the amount of information returned can, in many cases, be overwhelming. Furthermore, many 'hits' may not, in fact, be relevant and may have only been found because they incidentally include the selected keyword.

As mentioned above, the search systems search the entire Internet and the information is, therefore, global. The search engine will, therefore, find all items on the Internet containing the selected keyword(s), worldwide. Much of this information will, therefore, not be useful to the user, particularly in the situation where the user is looking for businesses or companies which provide goods or services locally.

Furthermore, the method used by search systems for sorting and refining the information found is very rigid which can lead to problems in locating the correct information.

Some of the problems identified with the search

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 598 of 1793

engines, particularly the problems of providing too much irrelevant information when, for example, the user is looking for local information, have been solved by another form of business indexing - Business Directories. Many of these Business Directories provide information on a local or regional basis.

To find a service provider listed in a business directory, the user searches through an alphabetical listing of business names or, first, selects a business classification and then selects a service provider or company from the list of companies advertised in the selected category.

The advantage of these systems is that they only hold information about businesses, and are generally restricted to a specific area, rather than being global. This is more useful for a searcher who is looking for a particular service provider within a particular geographical area.

Although these Business Directories again have proved very useful, they still suffer from a number of limitations:

Each directory is 'local' and, therefore, only contains information about businesses within a specified area. The usefulness of each directory, therefore, is limited to users in that locality or looking for business in that locality.

Furthermore, these business indexes only contain lists of businesses, generally sorted into different business classifications. They do not contain any further information about the activities of the businesses and, therefore, will only be found if the user actually selects the correct category. This can be difficult, for example, where a business perhaps provides goods or services in an unusual field or in several different fields and where the searcher perhaps selects a slightly different category.

As these directories are limited to specified

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 599 of 1793

geographical locations, generally based on towns, counties etc., they would not provide information on service providers outside of that town, even though, because of the particular location of the searcher, the service provider may, actually, be closer to the searcher.

One example of a business directory is the Yahoo Yellow Pages Directory, which does go some way to meeting the problems identified above. The directory is a business index list which is fairly complete. It gives a distance, in miles, of the location of the business or service provider from the geographical position of the location being searched. The results page gives the business name and address and also provides links to a new page which shows a local map, and provides links to the Service Provider's website.

This directory is, however, still restricted to geographic boundaries or locations and only lists businesses in business categories. No further information is provided on the various businesses listed.

Another example of a business directory is the Scoot Yellow Pages which is a directory with a conventional directory lookup mechanism. The user selects a business classification, a subclassification and the geographical area within which to search. This system, however, suffers from the same problems as above, relating to the geographical restrictions and still depends on the business being categorised correctly and the searcher selecting the same category.

Another local business directory is the Thomweb Directory in which the user selects a search area by town. This then accesses the local directory for that town and, again, searches are carried out according to business categories.

There is one business directory, 'AskAlex', which allows the user to search for information by inputting

keywords and selecting a search region, i. e. a town, county or national (UK). The results are not, however, ordered in any way and some of the service providers listed have not utilised the keyword facility. Thus, there is no guarantee that all appropriate service providers will be found by a keyword search.

The present invention aims to solve the problems identified with Search Engines and Business Directories by providing a powerful Business Search System in which the information found is information more targeted to the requirements of the searcher.

The searcher will not be presented with an overwhelming amount of information most of which is not useful to him. Furthermore, service providers providing information on the system will have a greater chance of being found by searchers who are likely to require their services.

According to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided an information search system comprising a database containing information on a plurality of service providers, the information including an indication of the geographical location of each of said service providers; means for inputting search criteria and means for inputting or obtaining information indicative of the geographical location of a user; the search system further comprising means for selecting one or more of said service providers based on the input search criteria, the geographical location of the service provider and the geographical location of the user.

According to a second aspect of the invention, there is provided an information search system comprising a database containing information on a plurality of service providers, the information including service provider specific parameters for each of said service providers; means for inputting search criteria and means for inputting a user-specific

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 601 of 1793

parameter; the search system further comprising means for selecting one or more of said service providers based on said search criteria, the service provider-specific parameter and the user-specific parameter.

Whilst the user-specific parameter is, preferably, an indication of the geographical location of the user, it may, instead, or also, include other information about the user used to restrict the search.

According to a third aspect, there is provided a method of identifying information stored in a database containing information on a plurality of service providers, the method comprising inputting search criteria and one or more user-specific parameters, comparing said search criteria and said user-specific parameter(s) with information stored for each of said business providers, and identifying those of said business providers for which information is stored corresponding to said search criteria and said user-specific parameter(s).

Again, preferably, the user-specific parameter is an indication of the geographical location of the user and the information for each of said service providers contains information on the geographical location of the service provider. The search criteria may include an indication of the search range with respect to the geographical location of the user such that only the service providers whose geographical location falls within said range are identified.

According to a fourth aspect, there is provided a method of providing searchable information on a database, comprising providing a database of service providers, the database comprising information on each of said service providers including a number of keywords defining the services provided by said service provider, and an indication of the geographical location of each of said service providers.

In all of the aspects of the invention, the

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 602 of 1793

information provided on the plurality of service providers preferably includes information on the services provided, in the form of a number of 'keywords', the search criteria may then include one or more keywords and those service providers having keywords corresponding to the keywords included in the input search criteria will then be identified. In the preferred systems, where key-words are used as search criteria, only those service providers whose information includes such keywords, and which also match the other criteria, e. g. have a geographical location falling within the specified range with respect to the user's geographical location, will be selected.

According to another aspect of the invention there is provided a system whereby a telephone connection can be made between a user and a service provider, wherein the user requests the connection by inputting a command to a computer, and wherein the computer uses information on the user's telephone number and the service provider's telephone number to make a telephone connection between the two parties.

In the preferred embodiment of this aspect of the invention, the user and the service provider both pay a percentage of the call cost, the total amount payable by the user and the service provider amounting to more than 100% of the actual call charge.

Preferred embodiments of the present invention will now be described, by way of example only.

Essentially, the business search system of the invention contains 'pages' of information about service providers, with all of the key words describing the services/goods provided by the service providers being indexable. Information is also stored about the geographical location of each service provider.

When a user wishes to search for a business for a particular purpose, the search system selects service providers based on the information stored about them and

also based on one or more parameters specific to the user. In particular, the 'hits' produced by the search may be selected based on the actual location of the user and on the geographical location of the service provider, in relation to the user (which may be defined by a number of different parameters, e. g. postcode, town, telephone number, distance away from the user's geographical location, etc.).

Other features specific to the user may also affect the search results and a user profile may be built up to focus the search hits even more to the requirements of the user.

The main advantage of the system of the present invention is that the information presented as 'hits' is more targeted to the user, based on the actual geographical location of the user and/or other user-specific parameters, i. e. the search system also uses information about the user in locating appropriate hits.

The database searched is made up of pages of information about the different service providers subscribing to the system. Each service provider provides their own page of information about their business or company, outlining their main services and products. This page can be in any format, and the service providers can use their own corporate style, typeface, colouring, images, etc. All of the textual information on the page can be indexed so that a searcher can carry out a search by a keyword and will find businesses or companies incorporating that keyword in the description of that company, services and products. When a service provider is located in a search, the searcher can then look at the 'page' of that service provider to get a better idea of the nature of the company.

A business which subscribes to or registers with the system may also be given a system address in the form of a URL or Sub-URL defined under the domain name

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 604 of 1793

of the system.

Each service provider may also be assigned a unique alphanumeric identification number which will allow the user to identify a business merely by entering that number, rather than having to type a long URL.

Also, or alternatively, businesses may be provided with a 'meaningful' or easy to remember or easy to guess URL.

The 'page' of information provided on the system also acts as a virtual 'single page Website' allowing the company to advertise its services and products to a wide audience.

Whilst most subscribers will submit a page having a number of keywords against which users can search, it is envisaged that there would also be a second group of users, perhaps being allowed a free listing. This will allow the business index to be complete, but it is envisaged that businesses requesting a 'free listing' will not be allowed to register keywords and will only be indicated as a hit if the business falls within a particular business classification searched by the user. Such businesses would also be 'low priority' and would be named at the end of any listing. With these listings, a logging system may be provided which indicates the number of times that such an entry is listed as a hit. This may encourage free listed business to register as fully paid-up subscribers.

It will be possible for service providers to have all words provided on the page indexed. Alternatively, they may specify keywords to be indexed.

Amongst other parameters, a service provider will be required to provide the following information:

company name, contact details and postcode,
company information for the creation of the information page,
keywords to be indexed,
opening hours

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 605 of 1793

availability of facilities for disabled people, etc.
accreditations held, e. g. hotel star classification,
business facilities, e. g. extra services or facilities which the business can provide, etc.

Electronic forms may be provided on the system to allow the service providers to obtain specific information from users e. g. when quoting for insurance, etc. These forms may be associated with a specific service provider and/or standard forms may be provided for use by a particular industry sector, e. g. insurance companies.

The service provider may link into the electronic form system at a later date. A business classification may hold an electronic form link-number. If a business classification has more than one electronic form, the various forms may be selectable from an advanced Search Page.

The system will have the ability to be extended to include further classifications. Furthermore, if, for example, a class of service providers are found later to have specific requirements, the database can be later enhanced by attaching new tables that record the information that those service providers wish the user to search on. Thus, the database will gradually build up by the addition of new tables to meet specific requirements of various business sectors. For an example, for car hire companies, a database extension could be added later to hold types of vehicles and hire rates, allowing users to find a car within their budget.

When a user wishes to carry out a search for service providers meeting his requirements, in addition to the keyword or business category information, the user would also define the 'local' area to be searched in relation to his own location. The search system of

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 606 of 1793

the invention gives information in a 'local' area where 'local' is defined by the user. The user can define the search area in terms of miles around his position, in a specific town, region, postcode area, telephone code area, a country, the world, etc. For example, the user may define the local parameter in terms of a telephone number. Then, all business meeting the specified search criteria (keywords etc.) that have the specified dialling code will be returned. This is useful, for example, if the user is looking for entries which can be called at a local call cost.

Alternatively, the user can define 'local' by naming a town, county or region. All businesses meeting the specified search criteria that are in the town etc. selected will then be returned. This is useful if the user wants to send post to local companies or to travel there easily.

Alternatively, the user may specify a radius around his location within which the search results are to be restricted.

Another parameter which may be used to define what is meant by 'local' is the postcode and only businesses having that specific postcode will be selected.

The user also needs, when using the system for the first time, to enter his own geographical location. A 'cookie' placed on the user's hard disc will allow the user's input to be saved in the database so that when the user carries out a search a second time or on subsequent occasions, the information does not need to be input again.

The user can then search for information or business listings meeting his requirements by entering one or more keywords either with or without a business classification.

The user will be required to enter various criteria to enable a search to be performed. It is envisaged that various types and levels of searching will be

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 607 of 1793

available.

The 'basic search' will require the minimum amount of data and will be the default search method. The user will enter a keyword and/or a business classification and may also define a search area. If not, the default search area of, e. g., a five mile radius around the user's location will be used.

Another type of search envisaged is a 'step-by-step' search which will allow users to perform a more advanced or 'power' search with the system. The system will structure queries by getting the user to answer simple questions and building up a complex search strategy.

There will also be an advanced or 'power' search mode in which the user can enter an optional number of items. The user can specify which server should be searched, e. g. a world server, a continent server, a country server or a town server and can specify the radius, in miles or kilometres, of a given location within which the search results should be found. The forms, for particular industry sectors or service providers may also be provided in this advanced search mode and will allow the service providers to have more customised searches. More advanced search pages may be available and may interact with the user for the transfer of information between the user and the service provider.

To further focus or target searches to the particular user, information about the user, e. g. from a user's profile and/or built up from previous searches, may be incorporated into the search parameters automatically from the user's 'cookie' or input later by the user.

In addition to the search results being more focused, special offers, schemes, etc. which may be useful to the user, based on the user's profile, may be displayed.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 608 of 1793

Where a user's profile has been established, previous searches can also be saved and presented to the user on returning to the site.

The search results are presented on a 'results page' which may be sortable in a number of various ways including:

by distance from the user,

by company name,

by business classification,

by the significance of the keyword in the service provider's page, e. g. its position, its frequency of occurrence, etc.,

by the significance of the service provided to the user based on the user's profile, e. g. if the user is a student and the service provider gives a student discount, this company could be listed higher.

The search results page may also indicate, for example, which companies currently have special offers available, which companies have, for example, facilities for disabled people, etc. The list may also allow users to select the service provider's information for printing, display or for linking directly to the service provider's page.

If a user selects a service provider listed and wishes to view their page, he may, for example, click on the name of the provider and the page will be displayed, providing more information about that particular service provider. This page may then provide links to forms, etc. to allow the user to provide required information, e. g. for quotation.

Each service provider may also have, associated with their postal address, an on-line map providing information to users as to how to locate the business, etc.

A facility may also be provided for service providers to indicate special offers, etc. The service

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 609 of 1793

provider may specify a limited time during which the special offer is to be available and the indication of the offer may be deleted automatically at the end of that time.

Another facility which may be provided is a button on the service provider's page which automatically sends the service provider's business card as an e-mail to the user.

Other facilities allow the user to be put on a mailing list of the service provider or to link to the service provider's main website or to recommend the company to somebody else, etc.

A search may be further enhanced by the use of by so-called 'Activity Assistants'. A service provider can submit information to be listed by an 'Activity Assistant', which can then be searched by a user. Essentially, an Activity Assistant will identify service providers according to an activity carried out by the user. For example, a user wishing to organise an outdoor birthday party for a child may locate details of service providers providing children's entertainment, equipment for events, e. g. marquees, caterers, toy shops, etc.

A similar 'Business Assistant' facility may also be provided in searching for service providers that can assist a business type. For example, a business owner can use a Business Assistant to locate all service providers that have listed themselves as being potentially useful to that business.

One of the main features of the system of the present invention is that the search results are presented and controlled to some extent by a parameter or parameters specific to the user, for example a user's geographical location. The search may be even more targeted by building up a 'user profile' containing more information about the user to be used in carrying out the search. The more data that the user provides, the

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 610 of 1793

better and more suitable will be the results provided by the search system. For example, the user may specify his marital status, age group, religion, disabilities, hobbies etc. These profiles may be stored against the 'cookie' on the user's hard disc and accessed and incorporated into the search criteria whenever a user revisits the search system site.

In addition to information on businesses appropriate to the user's requirements, further information may also be presented to the user based on the user's location, or other user-specific parameters. For example, community information pages may be presented to the user for the user's local area. This may include, amongst many other things, facilities provided in the region, local government information, radio stations, TV stations, useful information, useful contact numbers, weather, etc. Local jobs could also be advertised to the user, as well as local announcements on events, etc., advertisement, etc., functions, etc. Which things are displayed may be controlled partly or fully according to the user's profile, to ensure that only information relevant to the user is displayed.

Service providers registered with this system may have their number of search hits logged, to allow the service providers to assess the effectiveness of the system as an advertising mechanism. Statistics may be provided on, for example, the number of hits on the user's classification, the number of hits on the business, the number of hits from an Activity Assistant and/or a Business Assistant and the total number of hits.

The system may also log the number of page visits, the number of times the service provider was automatically telephoned from the site, the number of times the information about the service provider was printed out, the number of times any e-mails were sent to or from the page (if appropriate), etc. The

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 611 of 1793

statistical information may be further broken down into, for example, the number of visitors to the page at different time bands, daily, per month, etc. This may also be tied up with user profile information so that the service provider can have some idea of the type of person visiting their site. Statistics on the geographical location of the visitors to sites may also be provided. In this way, service providers can plan their business and future advertising taking into account the current market requirements.

Feedback pages may also be provided for use by the user.

A facility may also be provided to Service Providers to control their inclusion on Search Results pages. For example, a search provider may choose to be listed only if the searcher is within a certain distance from the Service Provider's position, or in a certain telephone area code, or post code area, or town.

Another preferred feature provides a mechanism for users to set up a telephone call with the service provider merely by clicking a button on the screen. In connection with this service, various charging and call charge allocation structures can be provided.

The service providers may have, on their information page, a 'Connect to Service Provider' button. If the user wishes to make a call to the service provider he can merely click on this button. The system knows the user's telephone number and also knows the service provider's telephone number and uses this information to set up a telephone connection between the two parties. The information is preferably provided to a third party who will establish the telephone link and ensure that both parties are billed for the same call.

Usually with such systems, the user or calling party is charged for the call. In the preferred system, however, the search system provider or a third party can

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 612 of 1793

provide the connection and the call charges can be allocated between the user and the service provider.

For example, in one preferred system, when a user wishes to call a service provider, he clicks on the 'Connect to Service Provider' button on the service provider's page. The user is then warned, by a message, that he will be charged for the call at a specified discount, e. g. 20%, and, if he accepts this, he should press or click on a continue button. When the user accepts, a message is generated by the system and sent to a third party to connect the user's telephone number with the service provider's telephone number at a particular time, as chosen by the user.

This information can be used by a third party to connect the two parties and, at the same time, to charge both parties at a rate which is lower than they would be charged if they would call conventionally. This allows the overall call costs to be increased, whilst reducing the costs to the individual parties.

The advantage of this arrangement to the user is that his call will be discounted by 20% and also that the call could be made via the computer without the user having to physically pick up the telephone and dial.

Although the service provider will have to meet part of the call costs, this will usually be acceptable as he will be calling a potential customer.

A third party can collect, from the two connecting parties, over 100% of the call cost. The call cost would then be paid to the telephone company, leaving a profit to be split between the search system provider and the third party company providing the call connection and inter-carrier-billing.

The system could be used on an international basis, using the principles described above. A service provider may indicate whether or not they do wish to be listed for international business. To allow this, the

address field of the search system will need to be internationalised. One possible way is to include a 'Country Address Format' table as shown below (table 1). For each country, the field labels should be taken from the table and information entered according to the field.

The location should be determined from the postcode.

Each server may use different rules for addresses/postcodes.

| Country Code | Field 1 Label | Field 2 Label | Field 3 Label | Field 4 Label | Field 5 Label | Field 6 Label | Field 7 Label | Field 8 Label |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| USA | Name | Company Name | Address 1 | Address 2 | | | Zip Code | |
| UK | Name | Company Name | Address 1 | Address 2 | Town | County | Post Code | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |

TABLE 1

As discussed above, using the search system of the present invention, the search results are not restricted to already-defined boundaries such as known towns, counties, etc. but can still give the searcher true 'local' results set. The definition of 'local' is controlled by the user.

As mentioned above, when a user first visits the search system site and requests a search within a given radius, the system will ask for the user's location. This location can be specified as a postcode, town name, etc. and the system may then convert this to a map grid reference.

When this information is known, the system can start to query the database for the search results and the query will be built with e. g. the following parameters:

user specified search parameters,

optimized for the user's profile, depending on what is being searched, and

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 614 of 1793

such data to fall in the region of x and y grid limits as shown below.

Assume that

the user's position is given by $(x_u, y_u)$ and known because the system will determine it on day 1;

the area to search is a radius (R) in miles/km, round the user's position.

We can perform a data query to determine all service providers that satisfy the other requirement of the user and have an x coordinate that lies between $(x_u-R)$ and $(x_u+R)$, and have a y coordinate that lies between $(y_u-R)$ and $(y_u+R)$.

The information that is returned is all service providers within a square area whose side is 2R, centered on the user's position at $(x_u, y_u)$. To refine this information to the required data set, we need to do a calculation on all the point found thus far.

By calculating the linear distance between the service provider's grid location and the user's grid location, we can immediately produce a list of service providers ordered 'in distance from the user'.

$$\text{Straight Line Distance} = \sqrt{((x_{sp}-x_u)^2+(y_{sp}-y_u)^2)} \quad \text{(km)}$$

The system will be able to give the results in the user's preferred units simply by multiplying the results with the appropriate factor.

Depending on the accuracy of Post Codes/grid references data and specified radius R, the system will round up or down the calculated value by an appropriate value.

The system of the present invention is particularly advantageous over the prior art in that businesses are searched according to user-specified criteria and can be ordered according to the distance from the user and, if desired, according to other user-specific criteria.

The user can be given some indication of the significance of the search result, e. g. how close the search system believes that the company has matched the user's

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 615 of 1793

criteria. Furthermore, where a user's profile has been set up, a 'significance value' can be attached to the appropriateness of the company to the user's profile.

The system is, therefore, an efficient and powerful search system for putting suppliers of products and services in touch with customers and allowing searchers to locate targeted suppliers.

Users will be able to search for businesses using keywords, rather than being restricted to searching in specified business categories and will also be able to specify the 'local' area within which the search is to be carried out. The search is, therefore, much more focused and accurate both for the user and for the service provider.

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 616 of 1793

CLAIMS

1. An information search system comprising a database containing information on a plurality of service providers, the information including an indication of the geographical location of each of said service providers; means for inputting search criteria and means for inputting or obtaining information indicative of the geographical location of the user; the search system further comprising means for selecting one or more of said service providers based on the input search criteria, the geographical location of the service provider and the geographical location of the user.

2. An information search system comprising a database containing information on a plurality of service providers, the information including service provider-specific parameters for each of said service providers; means for inputting search criteria and means for inputting or obtaining a user-specific parameter; the search system further comprising means for selecting one or more of said service providers based on said search criteria, the service provider-specific parameter and the user-specific parameter.

3. A system according to claim 2, wherein said user-specific parameter is an indication of the geographical location of the user.

4. A method of identifying information stored in a database containing information on a plurality of service providers, the method comprising inputting search criteria and one or more user-specific parameters, comparing said search criteria and said user-specific parameter(s) with information stored for each of said business providers, and identifying those of said business providers for which information is

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 617 of 1793

stored corresponding to said search criteria and said user-specific parameter(s).

5. A method according to claim 4, wherein the user-specific parameter is an indication of the geographical location of the user, and wherein the information on said plurality of service providers includes information on the geographical location of said service providers.

6. A method according to claims 4 or 5, wherein said search criteria includes an indication of the search range with respect to the geographical location of the user such that only the service provider whose geographical location falls within said range are identified.

7. A method of providing searchable information on a database, comprising providing a database of service providers, the database comprising information on each of said service providers including a number of keywords defining the services provided by said service provider, and an indication of the geographical location of each of said service providers.

# FACTORS DISTINGUISHING HIGH TRAFFIC ON-LINE STORES FROM LOW TRAFFIC ON-LINE STORES

by

Sangeeta Iyer, M.Comm.

**M.M.S. THESIS**

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 619 of 1793

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*Dedicated to my father Shri. P.V. Iyer....*

TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 621 of 1793

# FACTORS DISTINGUISHING HIGH TRAFFIC ON-LINE STORES FROM LOW TRAFFIC ON-LINE STORES

by

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to identify the factors that distinguish high traffic from low traffic on-line stores. Data was collected from 200 on-line stores. High traffic on-line stores were identified from the website 100hot.com. The 100 low traffic on-line stores were selected at random from shopguide.com.

Twelve variables (security, privacy, affiliate networks, reciprocal links, banner advertising, breadth of products, chat, customer participation, e-mail marketing, newsletter, on-line distribution and order tracking) were considered as distinguishing factors. These variables were hypothesized and tested using Multiple Logistic Regression Analysis. The analysis reveals security, privacy, reciprocal links, chat, customer participation, and order tracking as distinguishing factors between high traffic and low traffic on-line stores.

The results of the study suggest that high traffic in on-line stores is due to the interactivity and connectivity that the on-line stores establish with their customers. The features of interactivity and connectivity have been highlighted in the Marketspace model developed by Dutta et al (1997). The Marketspace model analyzes how organizations can transform their business models in the electronic marketplace created by the Internet and the World Wide Web. The model has been used in this research to recognize the key features of on-line stores that attract high traffic.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 622 of 1793

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 623 of 1793

# Table of Contents


**ABSTRACT** ..... i

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ..... ii

**LIST OF FIGURES** ..... vi

**LIST OF TABLES** ..... vii

**CHAPTER 1** ..... 1

*INTRODUCTION* ..... *1*

*1.1 Research Question* ..... *3*

*1.2 Contribution of Research* ..... *3*

*1.2.1 To Academic Literature* ..... 3

*1.2.2 To Management Practice* ..... 3

*1.3 Organization of the Thesis* ..... *4*

**CHAPTER 2** ..... 5

*LITERATURE REVIEW* ..... *5*

*2.1 Types of products sold on the Internet* ..... *5*

*2.2 Benefits of on-line stores* ..... *8*

*2.3 The Business Model for On-line Stores* ..... *12*

*2.3.1 The variables derived from the Marketspace Model* ..... 14

**CHAPTER 3** ..... 19

*TESTABLE HYPOTHESES* ..... *19*

*3.1 Security* ..... *19*

*3.2 Privacy* ..... *20*

*3.3 Affiliate Networks* ..... *21*

*3.4 Reciprocal Links* ..... *22*

*3.5 Banner Advertising* ..... *22*

*3.6 Customer Participation* ..... *23*

*3.7 Chat* ..... *24*

*3.8 E-mail Marketing* ..... *24*

*3.9 Newsletter* ..... *25*

*3.10 On-line Distribution of Products* ..... *26*

*3.11 Breadth of products* ..... *27*

*3.12 Order Tracking* ..... *28*

*3.13 Summary of Hypotheses* ..... *29*

**CHAPTER 4** ..... 31

*RESEARCH DESIGN* ..... *31*




TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 624 of 1793

*4.1 Unit of Analysis* ..... 31
*4.2 Sample* ..... 31
*4.3 On-line Store Selection* ..... 31
*4.4 Time of Data Collection* ..... 32
*4.5 Research Sources* ..... 32
*4.6 Measures* ..... 32
*4.6.1 Security* ..... 32
*4.6.2 Privacy* ..... 33
*4.6.3 Affiliate Networks* ..... 33
*4.6.4 Reciprocal Links* ..... 33
*4.6.5 Banner Advertising* ..... 34
*4.6.6 Customer Participation* ..... 34
*4.6.7 Chat* ..... 34
*4.6.8 E-mail Marketing* ..... 34
*4.6.9 Newsletter* ..... 34
*4.6.10 On-line Distribution of products* ..... 35
*4.6.11 Breadth of products* ..... 35
*4.6.12 Order Tracking* ..... 35
*4.7 Data Analysis* ..... 36
**CHAPTER 5** ..... 37
*RESULTS* ..... 37
*5.1 Data Collected* ..... 37
*5.1.1 Frequency Table* ..... 38
*5.2 Model Fit* ..... 39
*5.3 Research Model* ..... 41
*5.3.1 Variables in the Equation* ..... 41
*5.3.2 Variables not in the equation* ..... 48
**CHAPTER 6** ..... 49
*6.1 Discussion of Results* ..... 49
*6.2 Limitations of the Study* ..... 51
**REFERENCES** ..... 52
**APPENDICES** ..... 55
*Appendix A - Customer Participation* ..... 55
*Appendix B - Banner Advertising* ..... 56
*Appendix C - Reciprocal Links (a)* ..... 57
*Appendix D - Reciprocal Links (b)* ..... 58
*Appendix E - Security* ..... 59
*Appendix F - On-line Distribution of Products* ..... 60
*Appendix G - Affiliate Networks* ..... 61
*Appendix H - Privacy* ..... 62



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 625 of 1793

*Appendix I - E-mail Marketing* ..... 63
*Appendix J - Newsletter* ..... 64
*Appendix K - Chat* ..... 65
*Appendix L - Breadth of Products* ..... 66
*Appendix M - Order Tracking* ..... 67
*Appendix N - Checklist of Variables Measured* ..... 68
*Appendix O - List of 100 hot On-line Stores* ..... 70
*Appendix P - List of Non-100 hot On-line Stores* ..... 73
*Appendix Q - Verification of data collected* ..... 76
*Appendix R - Frequency Tables for Continuous Data* ..... 80



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 626 of 1793

## LIST OF FIGURES

*Figure 1 - Marketspace Model* ..... 12



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 627 of 1793

## LIST OF TABLES

*Table 1 - Projected On-line Shopping Revenue (In Million Dollars) by Category, 1996-2000* ..... 5
*Table 2(a) - Frequency Table for binary data* ..... 38
*Table 2(b) - Frequency Table for continuous data* ..... 38
*Table 3 - Hosmer and Lemeshow Goodness-of-Fit Test* ..... 39
*Table 4(a) - Variables in the Equation* ..... 41
*Table 4(b) - Variables in the equation with the odds ratio* ..... 46
*Table 5 - Variables not in the equation* ..... 48



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 628 of 1793

# CHAPTER 1

## *INTRODUCTION*

On-line stores are stores that sell products and services over the Internet. On-line stores operate directly with customers without layers of middle men, and have the ability to reach a global audience, operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and provide customers with a broad selection of products and services. The products and services being sold by on-line stores range from consumer products like appliances and apparel to services like banking and trading services.

The need to attract, acquire, leverage and retain customers is of primary concern to most on-line stores. Revenue growth through customer acquisition and retention remains a major competitive requirement. Each time a customer visits an on-line store, an opportunity to provide the customer with the respective products or services arises. In the event of planning for success, an on-line store must possess certain features and perform certain activities in order to attract traffic to their website (Shikar Ghosh, 1997). Traffic is defined as the number of first time and repeat visitors to an on-line store. High traffic increases the likelihood of profits for on-line stores (http://www.cyberm.com/ecsd.htm).

Successful on-line stores understand that traditional business designs and organizational models are insufficient to meet the challenges of doing business on-line. On-line stores with high traffic, like Dell, Cisco and Amazon, have adopted a new business design, one that emphasizes a finely tuned integration of business technology and process that lays stress on interactivity and connectivity with the customers. Many



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 629 of 1793

traditionally successful companies that have opened on-line stores without adopting the new paradigm have not been attracting high traffic.

Research in the field of on-line stores, especially with respect to traffic, is scarce due to its recent nature. The features required for a successful, high traffic on-line store have been mentioned by a number of people, but not much has been proved with empirical research. This research seeks to bring out the factors that will lead to high traffic, and thus to more successful on-line stores.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 630 of 1793

### *1.1 Research Question*

What are the factors that distinguish high traffic from low traffic on-line stores ?

### *1.2 Contribution of Research*

#### *1.2.1 To Academic Literature*

This research is the first empirical study on the distinguishing factors between high traffic and low traffic on-line stores.

#### *1.2.2 To Management Practice*

New entrants to on-line business and low traffic on-line stores can identify important features to be possessed and functions to be performed in order to attract traffic. They can also prioritize their budgets, by concentrating on the important features proved to attract traffic, develop business skills to design an on-line store, and establish partnerships with other on-line stores by means of affiliate networks and reciprocal links.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 631 of 1793

### *1.3 Organization of the Thesis*

There are six chapters. The Introduction is included in chapter 1. Chapter 2 comprises the Literature Review, where all the concepts pertaining to this research are explained. In chapter 3, the various factors responsible for attracting on-line traffic are explained, and the relevant hypotheses are developed. Chapter 4 describes the research design employed in the thesis. This chapter includes the sample selected, the method of data collection, the measures of the hypotheses developed, and the data analysis. Chapter 5 explains the results obtained from the analysis performed. Chapter 6 discusses the results obtained from the research, and the limitations of the research.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 632 of 1793

# CHAPTER 2

## *LITERATURE REVIEW*

This chapter comprises :

Section 2.1 reviews types of products sold on the Internet. Section 2.2 describes the benefits of on-line stores. Section 2.3 introduces a business model for on-line stores developed by Dutta et al., and evaluates the application of the model with this research.

### *2.1 Types of products sold on the Internet*

As more consumers go on-line, growth will be explosive for many product areas and companies. In general, the more difficult and time-consuming a purchase category is, the more likely consumers will prefer to use the Internet versus standard physical means. The most popular selling categories according to e-marketer (http://www.emarketer.com/estats/ec_sell_3.html) are given in the following table :

**Table 1 - Projected On-line Shopping Revenue (in Million Dollars) by Category,1996-2000**

| Category | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Computer Products | 140 | 323 | 701 | 1,228 | 2,105 |
| Travel | 126 | 276 | 572 | 961 | 1,579 |
| Entertainment | 85 | 194 | 420 | 733 | 1,250 |
| Apparel | 46 | 89 | 163 | 234 | 322 |
| Gifts and Flowers | 45 | 103 | 222 | 386 | 658 |
| Food and Drink | 39 | 78 | 149 | 227 | 336 |
| Other | 37 | 75 | 144 | 221 | 329 |
| **TOTAL** | **518** | **1,138** | **2,371** | **3,990** | **6,579** |

Source : Forrester Research



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 633 of 1793

a. Computer Products - Computer products include hardware and software. Some on-line stores like Dell offer computer products where the configuration is entirely left to the customer to chose. The customer can chose the memory, speed etc. Software is offered to customers by regular mail and electronically. When delivered electronically, customers can download the software soon after payment. Delivery of such products is instantaneous. Lately, customers can also rent software, where they use the software for the job required, and return the software with a particular fee.

b. Travel - More than in any other area of electronic commerce, consumers and business travelers feel totally comfortable placing orders on-line to purchase airline tickets, hotel reservations, and other travel-related services. According to surveys conducted by Forrester Research, travel services are among the most popular activities on the Internet. Travel services have always been popular on the commercial on-line services. Many travel agencies offer free information and pictures of exotic destinations. Hotel chains, too, have gone on-line to post information and pictures about their rooms and rates.

c. Entertainment - Entertainment, which includes music, and activities such as adult entertainment, on-line games, on-line gambling, and video is the largest on-line business. Many areas of the music world are gaining or serving clients on-line. Sellers of CDs, records, tapes and musical equipment, and publishers of musical magazines are on-line.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 634 of 1793

d. Apparel - This is a popular product sold on-line. On-line apparel stores offer clothing for any age group, and present the colors and sizes available. On-line stores like Lands' end also offer measuring instructions to assist their customers chose the right size.

e. Gifts and Flowers - Gifts and flowers sold on-line are probably the most useful when customer wish to send gifts or flowers to someone living in another city. Customers can chose from a variety of gifts, and the same is delivered to the person receiving the gift. Flowers can be sent in a similar fashion. These days, people can even send electronic flowers like an electronic greeting card.

f. Food and Dining - on-line food vendors sell almost any kind of food. Caterers, consultants, cooking schools, and cookbooks are racking up sales on-line. Restaurants are a natural business for the Internet. They market on the Web because travelers and vacationers always ask for recommendations, while making travel plans.

g. Other - The other categories include :

- Books - On-line bookstores do not necessarily have a physical bookstore. They can function as a front end for a drop-shipping business. In other words, they place information on-line about the book, such as title, topic, overview, and price, and then wait for the orders. When a customer is interested, they process the order information and then call their supplier, who ships the book(s) directly to the customer. In either case, an on-line bookstore can offer collections of books that appeal to specialized audiences, such as business books, comic books, romance novels, art books, or any form of literature.
- Housing and Real Estate - Realtors can show property without leaving the office by listing properties on Web sites. Customers can select properties by location, price



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 635 of 1793

and amenities. Consumers can see traditional house pictures; new software programs allow views from specific locations, such as the view of the master bedroom from the hallway. Mortgage brokers are available on-line as well. Customers are given the option of analyzing the competitive bids from different lending sources.

- Job Seeking On-line - The Internet is becoming a resource center for employers seeking new workers and employees seeking jobs. Businesses that match the employers and employees are successful. The various services provided are career counseling, job banks, newsletters, newspapers, and resume services.

### *2.2 Benefits of on-line stores*

The following are some of the main reasons for businesses to conduct transactions on-line:

a. Communication - On-line communications offer merchants benefits of interacting with consumers that cannot exist in one-way print or television communications. Using e-mail, infobots (automated e-mail, similar to fax-back system), and other on-line tools, merchants can create a dialog with consumers that leads to long-term relationships and sales (Ellsworth, J & M : 1996; Janal : 1997).

b. Reach a Worldwide Audience in an " *any time, any place, no matter economy*" - People in virtually every country have access to the Internet and can place orders for products across the globe. *Reach*, as defined by Evans and Wurster (1997), is one of the dimensions of navigation used by on-line stores to offer products and compete with one another. It means the number of customers a business can access or how



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 636 of 1793

many products it can offer. On-line stores can access millions of people, unconstrained by physical limitations.

In 1987, Davis introduced the concept of "*any time, any place, no matter economy*". With respect to *any time*, he said that, consumers can order products and services at any time. They are not restricted by store hours. The concept of real time was also brought out. Producers deliver their products and services in *real time*, which means no lag-time between identification and fulfillment of the need. Banking services, for example, can be utilized by customers any time, and in real time. With respect to *any place*, according to Davis, making products and services less fixed in space increases their competitive edge. This means that products and services can be accessed from any place.

With respect to *no matter*, Davis emphasized the importance of 'intangibles' in the economy. Money, for example, is a medium of exchange, that is changing its tangible paper form into an intangible form, as in electronic funds transfer and Smart Cards. For traditional retailers, the industry is based on physical aspects like location, buildings, physical logistics involving warehouses and trucks. Such assets become largely redundant in the electronic world. Intangibles like knowledge capture, information management and brand equities become new core competencies and drivers of value (de Kare-Silver, 1999).

c. Cost Containment - Many businesses are using the Internet to contain telephone and mailing costs. With first-class letters costing $0.45 each, a mailing of 1,000 pieces to customers would cost $450 for postage alone, whereas the same information sent by e-mail would cost $2 to $3 and the messages would arrive in seconds as opposed to



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 637 of 1793

days or weeks. Overnight mail (which typically costs $8 to $12 for each delivery) cannot compete with e-mail for speed or cost (Ellsworth, J & M : 1996; Janal : 1997).

d. Reduce or eliminate inventory, warehouse, and money costs - Internet-based businesses can rely on drop-shipping their products to meet their customers' orders. They don't have to stock large supplies or products in expensive warehouses. Instead, they can offer the product for sale in their on-line catalog and order the products from their suppliers only when they receive payment from their on-line customers. Because the product is not bought until required, the on-line merchant doesn't have to tie up money in goods or pay interest on that money. Instead, the money earned can generate interest or be invested on other profitable ventures (Ellsworth, J & M : 1996; Janal : 1997).

e. Information Retrieval and Utilization - The key aspect of the Internet is information. Businesses can offer information ( like a newsletter, report, or on-line research) about their products. According to Evans and Wurster (1997), *richness*, is another dimension of navigation, and it is defined by three aspects of information itself. The first is *bandwith*, or the amount of information that can be moved from sender to receiver in a given time. The second aspect is the degree to which the information can be *customized*. For example, an advertisement on television is far less customized than a personal sales pitch. The third aspect is *interactivity*. Richness holds enormous potential for building close relationships with customers in a future dominated by e-commerce. Traditional businesses have always had to make a trade-off between richness and reach. Getting highly detailed, customized information to and from a large number of consumers is extremely expensive. On-line stores can exploit the



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 638 of 1793

displacement of the trade-off permitted by electronic connectivity and information standards.

f. Affiliation - According to Evans and Wurster (1997), *affiliation*, which is the third dimension of navigation, is directed towards the customer. Affiliation is about whose interest the business represents. Customers become 'prosumers' according to Alvin Toffler (1990). The *Prosumer*, has been defined to describe the breakdown of the distinction between producer and consumer. According to Toffler, the consumer not only buys the product or service, but also participates in its production and delivery. By allowing customers to take part in the transaction process, affiliation is directed to the customer and on-line stores are able to enhance customer relationships.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 639 of 1793

### *2.3 The Business Model for On-line Stores*

A business model, known as the Marketspace model, has been developed by Dutta et al.(1997) for on-line stores, and is referred to as the *Theory of Cyber Transformation.*

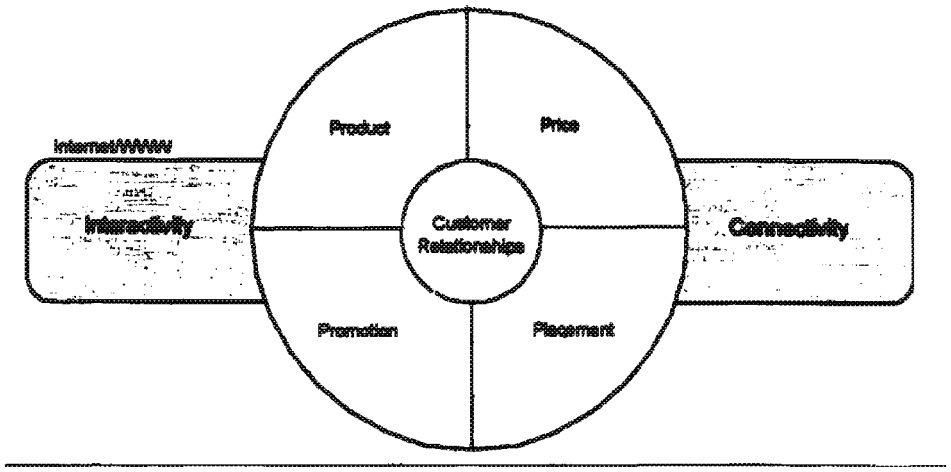



Figure 1 The Marketspace Model

The Marketspace model is built on two dimensions, namely, a technological capability dimension, and, a strategic business dimension. The **technological capability** dimension comprises of the following :

a. *Interactivity* : due to the real-time, on-line nature of the Internet, relationships between organizations and customers are becoming more interactive in the Marketspace. This is enhancing the richness of customer relationships and creating new paradigms of product design and customer service.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 640 of 1793

b. *Connectivity* : the open and global nature of the Internet is fostering the creation of a shared global Marketspace. The radical increase in connectivity enabled by the Internet is giving rise to new communication and co-ordination mechanisms both across organizations and customers, and also within groups of customers themselves.

The **strategic business** dimension comprises of the classical strategic marketing model of 4Ps - Product (refers to tangible and intangible products and services), Price, Promotion and Placement (or Distribution). This model has the dual advantages of simplicity and time-tested acceptance. The authors have augmented the 4Ps with one C - the additional dimension of Customer relationships, as this aspect is not captured adequately by the 4Ps.

The Marketspace model was used to design a questionnaire that probed into the following question : "to what degree are the '4Ps+C' getting transformed due to the real time interactivity and global connectivity of the Internet ?" The overall evaluation for each dimension was obtained by aggregating a number of items related to the degree and extent to which specific features/aspects have been transformed/achieved. The transformations of the "4Ps+C" are as follows :

**Technological Sophistication**

- The ease of navigation of the site;
- The degree of customization possible of the web interface;
- Speed and ease of access to site features; and
- Advanced capabilities (such as video)

**Transformation of Products**

- The availability of product related information on-line;
- The customization of products for individual or groups of customers; and



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 641 of 1793

- The participation of customers in the specification and design of products.

**Transformation of Promotion**

- The use of on-line advertising;
- The use of on-line promotions such as sales and discounts;
- The customization of on-line promotions;
- The participation of customers in on-line promotions; and
- Links with other organizations in organizing on-line promotions.

**Transformation of Pricing**

- The availability of pricing information on-line;
- The dynamic customization of prices;
- The availability of on-line price negotiation; and
- The possibility to charge customers for only proportions of products consumed.

**Transformation of Place**

- The availability of on-line ordering;
- The availability of secured on-line payment;
- Distribution of products on-line; and
- The involvement of partner organizations in on-line distribution.

**Transformation of Customer Relationships**

- The on-line identification and tracking of customers to provide customized services;
- The provision of on-line communications to customers;
- The creation of on-line communities for customers; and
- The solicitation of on-line feedback from customers.

### *2.3.1 The variables derived from the Marketspace Model*

Given that on-line stores are a recent method of doing business in the market, there is no specific model developed to attract or increase traffic to these on-line stores. The field of electronic commerce is relatively new, and as such little statistical data or empirical research is available. Therefore, we formulate the framework presented in



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 642 of 1793

chapter 3, as a set of propositions, which are based on examples from pioneers in the field and our intuition. The Marketspace model explained above has been analyzed, and recognized as the closest fit to the current research.

The Marketspace Model indicates clearly, the features of on-line stores, and the functions that can be performed with the help of on-line stores, and this research attempts to identify the important functions and features of on-line stores in order to distinguish the high traffic from low traffic on-line stores. It is however, in the capacity of this research to choose only those features and activities that are available on the website of the on-line store and those that can be measurable.

The features (variables) derived from the Marketspace Model are given below, and the hypotheses developed with the respective rationale are explained in chapter 3.

**Technological Sophistication**

- The ease of navigation of the site
- The degree of customization possible of the web interface
- Speed and ease of access to site features
- Advanced capabilities (such as video)

The aspect of technological sophistication has not been taken into consideration because it is not explicitly stated in the marketspace model. Also, most of the dimensions of technological sophistication depend on the hardware and software used by the customer. Since the focus of this research is from the store point of view, these dimensions are not being measured.

**Transformation of Products**

- The availability of product related information on-line : This variable has not been



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 643 of 1793

taken due to non-measurability. It is not measurable, because there are various levels of product related information, and these are not clearly defined. In other words, what is adequate information for one on-line store might not be adequate for another on-line store.

- The participation of customers in the specification and design of products : Customer participation (Appendix A).
- The customization of products for individual or groups of customers : Customer participation. This dimension is included in the same variable (customer participation), because customization can take place only if the customers participate in the specification and design of products.

**Transformation of Promotion**

- The use of on-line advertising : Banner advertising (Appendix B).
- The use of on-line promotions such as sales and discounts : This dimension is not being measured because sales and discounts are not consistently present in any on-line store.
- The customization of on-line promotions : This dimension is not being measured because sales and discounts are not consistent in any on-line store, and hence even the customization might not be consistent.
- The participation of customers in on-line promotions : If customization might not be consistent, participation will not be possible.
- Links with other organizations in organizing on-line promotions : Reciprocal Links (Appendices C and D).

**Transformation of Pricing**

- The availability of pricing information on-line : This dimension is not being considered as a distinguishing factor. Price availability is necessary for any store, and is a common factor for all on-line stores.
- The dynamic customization of prices : It has been found from the data, that this dimension and the following two dimensions of the pricing aspect are not available in the on-line stores analyzed, and hence are considered redundant for this research.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 644 of 1793

- The availability of on-line price negotiation; and
- The possibility to charge customers for only proportions of products consumed.

**Transformation of Place**

- The availability of on-line ordering : This dimension is not being considered as a distinguishing factor. On-line ordering is necessary for any store, and is a common factor for all on-line stores.
- The availability of secured on-line payment : Security (Appendix E).
- Distribution of products on-line : On-line distribution of products (Appendix F).
- The involvement of partner organizations in on-line distribution : Affiliate Networks (Appendix G).

**Transformation of Customer Relationships**

- The on-line identification and tracking of customers to provide customized services : Privacy (Appendix H);
- The solicitation of on-line feedback from customers : Privacy (Appendix H).
- The provision of on-line communications to customers : E-mail marketing, Newsletter (Appendices I and J).
- The creation of on-line communities for customers : Chat (Appendix K).

Two factors (variables) that have been hypothesized in this research, but not present in the Marketspace Model are *breadth of products*, and *order tracking*. These features are based on examples from pioneers in the field of electronic commerce, and intuition.

**Breadth of products** (Appendix L) - When an on-line store offers products or services related to their core offering, process integration is said to take place. This typically answers the question : "What other things do customers need or do when they buy from us ( E-Commerce Guide : http://www.quidnunc.com/banner/ecommerce.asp) ?" Customers can shop conveniently at one stop, rather than spend more time and visit other websites.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 645 of 1793

**Order Tracking** (Appendix M) - On-line stores also allow customers to keep track of their products while in transit, and when an item is being transferred from one place to another, customers can make sure that the item has reached its destination.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 646 of 1793

# CHAPTER 3

## *TESTABLE HYPOTHESES*

### *3.1 Security*

A robust security scheme is an absolute requirement and the leading barrier to widespread commerce on the Internet (C.Agres et al., 1998). A security threat is defined as " a circumstance, condition, or event with the potential to cause economic hardship to data or network resources in the form of destruction, disclosure, modification of data, denial of service, and/or fraud, waste and abuse" ( R.Nath et al.,1998).

Secure Socket Layer, or SSL, is an Internet standard developed to ensure private and authenticated communication by encrypting all data between two parties (customer and Web site). SSL also provides the added benefit for customers on the Internet to be assured by a Third Party (The Certificate Issuing Authority) that the website they are purchasing from is indeed a real company (http://www.infodial.net/features/secureserver/index.htm).

Encryption is the process of transforming information so it can't be decrypted or read by anyone except the intended recipient. This encrypted information is called ciphertext. It is the ciphertext that is sent across the network. For example, if a financial report is stored at a particular web site and SSL is enabled on that server, the server encrypts the report and sends the ciphertext to a client, who then decrypts the ciphertext back into the financial report. Decryption reverses the process, turning the ciphertext back into the original message. The recipient is the only one who can do this because only the recipient has a key to "unlock" a message.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 647 of 1793

SSL provides:

- server authentication, which allows any SSL-compatible client to verify the identity of the server using a certificate and a digital signature;
- data encryption, which ensures the privacy of client-server communications by encrypting the data stream between the two entities; and
- data integrity, which verifies that the contents of a message arrive at their destination in the same form as they were sent.

**H1** *SSL encryption is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

### *3.2 Privacy*

Information privacy refers to the claims of individuals that data about themselves should generally not be available to other individuals and organizations, and that, where data is possessed by another party, the individual must be able to exercise a substantial degree of control over that data and its use (www.anu.edu.au/people/Roger.Clarke/DV/Intro.html) Internet users are concerned about the privacy of information they supply to websites, not only in terms of personal data, but information that websites may derive by tracking their on-line activities (Wang et al., 1998). Information privacy is regulated by agencies such as the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) of the United States that proposed a legislative model, which is built around *four* basic fair information practices: Give consumers notice of what information is collected and how it is used; let consumers choose whether to allow secondary uses of information (for example, to decide whether their name can be used for follow-up marketing from the company or be sold to a third party); give



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 648 of 1793

consumers "reasonable access" to their information and let them correct any errors; and ensure the information's security (Source : October 1, 1998 CIO Web Business Magazine titled " Saving Private Data" by Sari Kalin).

**H2** *The privacy of customers is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

### *3.3 Affiliate Networks*

Affiliate programs (also known as affiliate networks) are emerging as a major force in Internet retail economics, with most major Internet stores offering them and participants numbering in the tens of thousands ("Partners in Affiliate Marketing Struggle With Branding Issues" by Whit Andrews April 13, 1998; Internet World). Using an Affiliate Network is a practice that combines the principal of direct marketing and franchising with the Internet technologies. The resulting business model has been drawing significant attention among large and small Internet commerce entities (CanadaOne Technologies, *by Jeff Molander* at www.canadaone.com/technology/estrat070198.html ).

Affiliate networks allow commerce sites to embed their product offerings into other Websites on the Internet that have specific content related to the products. From a pre-existing on-line business or any set of products or services that have a price, description, and a picture, an affiliate program is created. Affiliate programs usually allow website owners to integrate a product or link with other websites to drive traffic back through their store generating sales and earning the affiliate site a commission based upon a percentage of the sale. For example, www.art.com possesses affiliate programs on the Internet at art.com&trade. Some of the linking options offered to other on-line retailers



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 649 of 1793

are: Linking to their home page or specific galleries, utilizing their banners which will automatically update the affiliate's website.

**H3** *Affiliate Networks are more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

### *3.4 Reciprocal Links*

A reciprocal link means that an on-line store agrees to list another site, and gets listed in the other site in return. These simple links can lead to new customers. Links with related sites are likely to attract more customers than links with non-related sites. Related links reflect the free and open nature of the Internet. They are a goodwill gesture, a user-oriented public service ("Why Having a Large Set of Related Links Makes Sense" by Andrew Marlatt, Internet World, August 18, 1997 at http://www.internetworld.com/print/1997/08/18/undercon/19970818-links.html). The more link exchanges an on-line business acquires, the better are the chances to win more customers ("Creating Stores on the Web" by Sawyer et al., 1998).

**H4** *Reciprocal links are more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

### *3.5 Banner Advertising*

Banner ads are the most popular form of advertising on the Internet ("Creating Stores on the Web" by Sawyer et al., 1998). A banner ad can basically be described as a piece of visual communication (either animated or still image, with no "set" size standards) that is placed within a web site. Its goal is to attract the netizen (citizen on the Net) long enough to compel a "click-through." The term click-through comes from the



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 650 of 1793

act of clicking on a link, thereby taking the user "through" to another location (in the case of banner ads, to the advertiser's site). Banner advertising serves two major purposes:

- Promoting a positive brand image, reinforced through repetition.
- Compelling users to click in order to take them away to the sponsor's site.

(Banner Secrets: How to Run a Successful Campaign *by Raymond Pirouz* in http://www.searchz.com/clickz/011398.shtml )

**H5** *Banner advertising is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

### *3.6 Customer Participation*

In order to give customers the feeling of power and convenience, on-line stores are allowing them to participate in the specification and design of products. Products are designed according to the customers' demands. For example, Dell Computers configures computers according to the customers' preferences, which include some specifications like memory and speed of a computer required. Other examples include customized PC banking, and customized travel bookings where customers can book the required flight, rent a car, and make a reservation for accommodation for the travel period. Although this might seem like an impersonal way to do business, a growing number of companies are coming to realize that self-service provides for the highest level of customer comfort ("Webonomics: Nine Essential Principles for Growing Your Business on The World Wide Web" by Schwartz, Evan I; 1997).

**H6** *Customer participation is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 651 of 1793

### *3.7 Chat*

Chat has long been a popular recreational activity on the Internet. Chat is considered a valuable communication and collaboration tool. Two areas where chat can be particularly useful are customer service and group communication (internet.com). Chat is a text-based, real-time conversation between two or more people typing into a window on computer screens. Other people can see what is being typed, and responses can be seen instantly. While real-time chat on the web is estimated to generate between 30% and 70% of total revenue for commercial on-line services, the category is just starting to take off. By the year 2000, chat is expected to generate about 7.9 billion hours of on-line use, leading to $1 billion in advertising revenues, according to Montgomery Securities (http://www.emarketer.com/estats/ec_hot_10.html , March 1999).

**H7** *Chat is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

### *3.8 E-mail Marketing*

On-line retailers are increasingly using e-mail to build customer relationships ( More sites use E-mail for marketing" by Roberta Fusaro, Computer World, 1998). Stamford, Conn.-based Meta Group Inc. predicts that in the next two years, e-mail list management will become more sophisticated and a core part of sales and marketing campaigns for companies that sell over the Internet. That's because direct e-mail based on Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), the Web programming language, provides a more dynamic way to present marketing information, is infinitely cheaper than printing and delivering marketing materials and is easier to mine for customer data and response rates, according to the research firm. "Instead of spending $3 to $4 per call by a tele-marketer, companies



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 652 of 1793

are realizing they can send e-mail messages at a penny a piece and eliminate the likelihood of a hang-up," said Forrester analyst David Cooperstein. And marketers are waking up to the value of having one-on-one, continuous relations with customers via personalized e-mail, a user said ("E-mail marketing goes mainstream Expected to be $1B business in 2002" by Roberta Fusaro, ComputerWorld, 1999).

**H8** *E-mail marketing is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

### *3.9 Newsletter*

On-line newsletters allow marketers to "push" information to prospects and customers who want to receive it. By establishing a periodic electronic newsletter and distributing it to an "approved e-mail list" (individuals who ask for it), a real need can be fulfilled —especially if the newsletter contains helpful, objective information. E-mail newsletters and "e-zines" are also ideal for keeping in periodic touch with customers, partners and others who are important. They can build loyalty and promote products and services on an on-going basis (http://www.emergemarketing.com/newslet.htm). Businesses are finding that increase in on-line traffic is from on-line newsletters. Many newsletters include briefs on the latest news in the field. 'How-to' articles are also popular. As the newsletter is published regularly, stronger ties can be established with customers, which will in turn build the on-line business substantially over a period of time (http://www.webmarketingtoday.com/articles/newsletter.htm ).

**H9** *Newsletters are more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 653 of 1793

### *3.10 On-line Distribution of Products*

In the case of "soft" products, the electronic commerce medium actually becomes the delivery medium. In some cases (for instance, ZDNet at www.zdnet.com, a service reporting on the computer industry), there is actually no paper version of the service. By sharing a digital infrastructure such as the Internet compared to owning a physical one, marketing, distribution and customer service costs can be drastically reduced. This is especially important in service industries, where the cost of customer service usually exceeds the product costs (e.g. for banks, credit card or telecommunications companies). In some markets or for some products, the ability to distribute or receive a product as soon as it's been created is of primary importance. This is obviously the case of information distribution. A company such as Newspage (http://www.newspage.com/), for instance, distributes information on hundreds of topics using electronic mail or the Web, to make sure it reaches its targets as soon as it is available.

Electronic commerce has also had a profound impact on the traditional retail securities brokerage industry as the rapid growth of the Internet has taken personal investing to the next level via on-line broker dealers. Investors can use the vast amount of information available on-line to make investment decisions and actually enter into transactions without traditional broker assistance. The increase of on-line trading is phenomenal as evidenced by 27% of all individual investor trades being completed on-line during 1998, indicating a 65% increase over the previous year. Another staggering number is the 250,000 trades that occur each day through on-line trading. This growth is expected to continue as can be seen by the number of on-line accounts estimated to be over 10 million in 1999. Electronic commerce has acted as a catalyst to expedite the



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 654 of 1793

efficiency of this process and has become a serious threat to the traditional and discount brokerage firms, as the consumer now possesses greater power (http://www2.cob.ohio-state.edu/~mimnaugh/838.html). Increasingly, software buyers also are turning to the Internet as the most efficient way to evaluate and purchase software products. According to IDC (International Data Corporation), estimated worldwide revenue from Electronic Software Distribution (ESD), defined as software that is both purchased and transmitted on-line, will reach $5.9 billion by 2001 (http://www.comtexnews.com/siia2/indnews.htm).

**H10** *On-line distribution of products and services is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

### *3.11 Breadth of products*

Selling similar products is referred to as bundling : a combination of products that are needed for a common task or related in the way we consume. These products may be vertically related. Products combined in this manner are often personalized and constitute a distinct product or service that takes on an enhanced value from the sum of its components. A combination may be a collection of goods and services. For example, airline tickets, hotel rooms, a rental car, meals, and amusement park admission tickets can be bundled as a packaged leisure product. In physical markets, finding, assembling, and personalizing various products for an individual customer would be extremely costly and pose an enormous challenge in pricing and management. On the other hand, computing and networking technologies make bundling and integrating different products and services much easier (Choi and Whinston, 1999).

**H11** *A larger variety of products is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 655 of 1793

### *3.12 Order Tracking*

One of the most popular strategies with customers, is outsourcing to them. WISMO or 'Where Is My Order?' is considered one of the best features offered by an on-line store or service. At any point in time, customers can find out where their order is (E-Commerce Guide : http://www.quidnunc.com/banner/ecommerce.asp). Customers are comfortable doing things themselves because it provides them with control and convenience. They don't have to rely on someone else to enter and read the correct information. The first company to offer this service, FedEx, claims to save millions of dollars by allowing customers to find out information by themselves. Surveys have shown that it actually enhances customer satisfaction.

**H12** *Order tracking is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 656 of 1793

### *3.13 Summary of Hypotheses*

The following hypotheses have been examined to distinguish between high traffic and low traffic on-line stores :

1. SSL encryption is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.
2. The privacy of customers is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.
3. Affiliate Networks are more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.
4. Reciprocal links are more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.
5. Banner advertising is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.
6. Customer participation is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.
7. Chat is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.
8. E-mail marketing is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.
9. Newsletters are more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.
10. On-line distribution of products and services is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 657 of 1793

11. A larger variety of products is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.

12. Order tracking is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.

13. All the twelve factors mentioned above, namely, security, privacy, affiliate networks, reciprocal links, banners, customer participation, chat, e-mail marketing, newsletter, on-line distribution of products, breadth of products and order tracking are more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 658 of 1793

# CHAPTER 4

## *RESEARCH DESIGN*

### *4.1 Unit of Analysis*

The unit of analysis is the on-line store.

### *4.2 Sample*

The sample comprises of two groups: 100 on-line stores ranked in the 'shop' category of the website 100hot.com and 100 on-line stores present in the website shopguide.com.

### *4.3 On-line Store Selection*

Two types of on-line stores were selected. High traffic on-line stores and low traffic on-line stores. High traffic on-line stores are those that are ranked in the website 100hot.com.The website 100hot.com is a directory that ranks websites objectively by web traffic, providing consumers with a listing of the top websites in a variety of categories. The high traffic on-line stores were selected directly from the website 100hot.com. Low traffic on-line stores are those that are not listed in the website 100hot.com and were selected from the website shopguide.com. Shopguide.com is a directory that lists, but not ranks on-line stores. The low traffic on-line stores were selected by matching the types of products sold in 100hot.com. For example, if a book store was present in 100hot.com, a book store was chosen from shopguide.com. Among these stores selected, random sampling was implemented to chose the stores for the research.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 659 of 1793

### *4.4 Time of Data Collection*

Data was collected between July - October 1999.

### *4.5 Research Sources*

The research for this study utilized the following sources :

a. The website of each on-line business selected for the sample - All the features will be tested according to the hypotheses mentioned in Chapter 3, and the measures mentioned in sub section 4.6 of this chapter.

b. A review of the existing literature, e-magazines and on-line resources like Internet.com's E-Commerce Guide at http://e-comm.internet.com/

### *4.6 Measures*

The data was collected with the help of the following measures (Appendix N) :

#### *4.6.1 Security*

An on-line store is considered to have adequate security measures only if it uses SSL encryption. The security measures implemented by the on-line stores are mentioned in their websites. A score of 1 is given to indicate the usage of SSL and a score of 0 is given to indicate the absence of SSL.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 660 of 1793

### *4.6.2 Privacy*

The model proposed by the FTC comprises of four measures[1]. If any one of the measures are complied with, a score of 1 is given. If any two of the measures are complied with, a score of 2 is given. Similarly, if any three conditions are complied with, a score of 3 is given. If all four measures are complied with, a score of 4 is given. If none of the measures are complied with, a score of 0 is given.

### *4.6.3 Affiliate Networks*

This will be measured by giving a score of 1 if the on-line store is connected to an affiliate network, and a score of 0 is given if the on-line store is not connected to an affiliate network. If on-line stores are connected to affiliate networks, they mention the same in their websites.

### *4.6.4 Reciprocal Links*

This will be measured by counting the number of other websites the current website is linked to, and vice-versa. The links in the website of each on-line store are analyzed and if they take the user to another on-line store, and the second on-line store has a similar link to the current on-line store, a reciprocal link exists.

[1] The FTC measures are : (a) Give consumers notice of what information is collected and how it is used; (b) let consumers choose whether to allow secondary uses of information (for example, to decide whether their name can be used for follow-up marketing from the company or be sold to a third party); (c) give consumers "reasonable access" to their information and let them correct any errors; and (d) ensure the information's security.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 661 of 1793

#### *4.6.5 Banner Advertising*

This will be measured by counting the number of banners in the home page of the website of the on-line store.

#### *4.6.6 Customer Participation*

On-line stores inform customers that they can participate in the specification and design of products and services in their websites. Any form of customer participation in the transaction is given a score of 1, and the absence of any form of participation is given a score of 0.

#### *4.6.7 Chat*

A score of 1 is given if the facility of chat is available in the on-line store, and a score of 0 is given if it is not available. The availability of chat is mentioned in the websites of the on-line stores.

#### *4.6.8 E-mail Marketing*

If the on-line store performs e-mail marketing, a score of 1 is given. If the on-line store does not perform e-mail marketing, a score of 0 is given. When on-line stores ask for the customer's e-mail address and offer to send customers information on products, special offers etc., this is considered as e-mail marketing.

#### *4.6.9 Newsletter*

If a newsletter is provided, a score of 1 is given, and if the same is not offered, a score of 0 is given. On-line stores mention the offer of a newsletter in their websites.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 662 of 1793

#### *4.6.10 On-line Distribution of products*

If any product or service offered by the on-line store can be delivered electronically, a score of 1 will be given. If the product or service cannot be delivered electronically, a score of 0 will be given. When on-line stores offer products or services electronically, they inform the customer of the same. For example, when software can be transmitted electronically, on-line stores mention " downloadable".

#### *4.6.11 Breadth of products*

This will be measured by counting the categories of products offered by the on-line store. The categories were counted as per those classified by Yahoo. Yahoo is ranked #1 search engine by 100hot.com.

#### *4.6.12 Order Tracking*

If on-line stores allows customers to track the purchased goods or services, a score of 1 is given. If the same is not offered, a score of 0 is given. When on-line stores allow their customers to track their products, the same is mentioned in their websites.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 663 of 1793

### *4.7 Data Analysis*

**Statistical Technique** : Multiple Logistic Regression

**Method** : Stepwise Logistic Regression

**Model :** $E(Y) = \dfrac{1}{1 + \exp[ - ( \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + .....+ \beta_{12} X_{12}) ]}$

The above model describes the relationship of several predictor variables $X_1$ , $X_1$,... $X_{12}$ to a dichotomous dependent variable Y, where Y is typically coded as 1 or 0 for its two possible categories.

In the above model :

**E(Y)** - is the expected value of Y, which is analogous to the probability that Y = 1.

$X_j$ - represents the independent variables, where X is the independent variable, and j is the variable number. The independent variables are : Security ($X_1$) , Privacy ($X_2$), Affiliate Networks ($X_3$), Reciprocal Links ($X_4$), Breadth of products ($X_5$), Banner advertising ($X_6$), E-mail marketing ($X_7$), Newsletter ($X_8$), Chat ($X_9$), Customer Participation ($X_{10}$), Tracking ($X_{11}$), On-line distribution of products ($X_{12}$).

$\beta_0$ - is the constant term

$\beta_1$ **to** $\beta_{12}$ - are the regression coefficients associated with $X_1$,..... $X_{12}$



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 664 of 1793

# CHAPTER 5

## *RESULTS*

Section 5.1 provides the breakdown of the data collected. Section 5.2 describes the procedure followed in order to choose the best model, and also explains how well the model represents the data. Section 5.3 explains the Research model with the coefficients and the respective hypotheses. Section 5.4 explains the variables not in the model.

### *5.1 Data Collected*

The data was collected directly from each of the 200 on-line stores. 100 on-line stores (Appendix O) were analyzed from the website 100hot.com. These represent the high traffic on-line stores. The other sample of 100 on-line stores (Appendix P) was analyzed from the website shopguide.com. These represent the low traffic on-line stores. Each on-line store was visited by the researcher, and the proposed distinguishing factors (security, privacy, affiliate networks, reciprocal links, banner advertising, breadth of products, chat, e-mail marketing, newsletter, on-line distribution of products and order tracking) were examined in each on-line store. After a thorough examination, the factors were measured according to the procedures mentioned in section 4.6.

Since the data was collected by the researcher, a third party was requested to verify the data. 25% of the sample (i.e. 200 on-line stores), or 50 on-line stores were verified, and the verification results are indicated in Appendix Q.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 665 of 1793

*5.1.1 Frequency Table*

Table 2(a) - Frequency Table for binary data

| VARIABLE | HIGH TRAFFIC | | | LOW TRAFFIC | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 0 | Total | 1 | 0 | Total |
| Security | 82 | 17 | 99 | 42 | 55 | 97 |
| Affiliate Networks | 61 | 38 | 99 | 29 | 68 | 97 |
| Customer Participation | 78 | 21 | 99 | 16 | 81 | 97 |
| Chat | 40 | 59 | 99 | 7 | 90 | 97 |
| E-mail marketing | 83 | 16 | 99 | 44 | 53 | 97 |
| Newsletter | 52 | 47 | 99 | 21 | 76 | 97 |
| Order Tracking | 73 | 26 | 99 | 20 | 77 | 97 |
| On-line Distribution | 50 | 49 | 99 | 13 | 84 | 97 |

In the frequency table above :

**1** - indicates the presence of the respective variable in the on-line store.

**0** - indicates the absence of the respective variable in the on-line store.

**Total** - indicates the number of valid cases in each group.

The above frequency table comprises of only those variables that have a binary measure. It can be seen that for all the variables, high traffic on-line stores have a greater frequency than the low traffic on-line stores.

Table 2(b) - Frequency Table for continuous data

| VARIABLE | HIGH TRAFFIC - AVERAGE | LOW TRAFFIC - AVERAGE |
|---|---|---|
| Privacy | 3.3333 | 1.1340 |
| Reciprocal Links | 1.1313 | 0.0909 |
| Breadth of Products | 5.1111 | 2.8041 |
| Banner Advertising | 18.8081 | 10.8557 |

The above frequency table comprises of those variables that are measured by counting. It can be seen that for all the variables, high traffic on-line stores have a greater average



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 666 of 1793

than low traffic on-line stores. For a more detailed description of the frequencies, please refer to Appendix R.

### *5.2 Model Fit*

*Selecting predictor variables* - In logistic regression, as in other multivariate statistical techniques, it would be necessary to identify those independent variables that are good predictors of the dependent variable. There are six methods of model selection : Forward Conditional, Forward LR (likelihood ratio), Forward Wald, Backward LR, Backward Wald, and Backward conditional.

All the six methods of model selection were implemented, and the model with the Forward conditional method was chosen. Also, it was found that the other methods of model selection provided results that were not very different from those provided by the Forward conditional method.The model fit was determined by the Hosmer and Lemeshow Goodness-of-fit test, the classification table and the significance (p value) of the variables in the model.

Table 3 - Hosmer and Lemeshow Goodness-of-Fit Test

| | GROUP = 0.00 | | GROUP = 1.00 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | Observed | Expected | Observed | Expected | Total |
| 1. | 23.000 | 22.955 | .000 | .045 | 23.000 |
| 2. | 21.000 | 20.690 | .000 | .310 | 21.000 |
| 3. | 20.000 | 20.739 | 2.000 | 1.261 | 22.000 |
| 4. | 17.000 | 16.302 | 3.000 | 3.698 | 20.000 |
| 5. | 11.000 | 11.694 | 9.000 | 8.306 | 20.000 |
| 6. | 3.000 | 3.427 | 17.000 | 16.573 | 20.000 |
| 7. | 2.000 | .764 | 12.000 | 13.236 | 14.000 |
| 8. | .000 | .362 | 19.000 | 18.638 | 19.000 |
| 9. | .000 | .062 | 20.000 | 19.938 | 20.000 |
| 10. | .000 | .005 | 17.000 | 16.995 | 17.000 |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 667 of 1793

The Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of-fit index is useful for assessing overall model fit. This test utilizes a grouping strategy based on the percentiles of the estimated probabilities. The methods of Hosmer and Lemeshow (1980, 1982), according to Ryan (1997) , specify that 10 groups (g) be used to indicate the probabilities. A comparison of the observed and expected frequencies in each of the cells in the above table shows that the model fits the data well.

**Table 3 contd.**

| | Chi-Square | df | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Goodness-of-fit test** | 3.6981 | 8 | .8833 |

The Hosmer and Lemeshow Goodness-of-fit statistic C, is obtained by calculating the Pearson chi-square statistic from the table of observed and estimated expected frequencies. As can be seen, the significance level of the goodness-of-fit statistic is quite high, thus indicating that the model fits the data well.

**Classification Table for GROUP**

| | | Predicted .00 (0) | Predicted 1.00 (1) | Percent Correct |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Observed .00 | 0 | 90 | 7 | 92.78% |
| 1.00 | 1 | 13 | 86 | 86.87% |
| | | | Overall | 89.80% |

The classification table indicates that 90 low traffic on-line stores have been correctly predicted by the model as low traffic on-line stores. Similarly, 86 high traffic on-line stores have been correctly predicted by the model as high traffic on-line stores. A total of 20 on-line stores have been misclassified. Overall, 89.90% of the 196 on-line stores have been correctly classified.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 668 of 1793

### *5.3 Research Model*

#### *5.3.1 Variables in the Equation*

Table 4(a) - Variables in the Equation

| Variable | B | S.E. | Wald | df | Sig | R |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SECURITY | 2.0583 | .6864 | 8.9917 | 1 | .0027 | .1604 |
| PRIVACY | .9082 | .2041 | 19.8051 | 1 | .0000 | .2560 |
| RECLNK | 1.0898 | .5171 | 4.4408 | 1 | .0351 | .0948 |
| CUSTPN | 2.4925 | .6018 | 17.1527 | 1 | .0000 | .2362 |
| CHAT | 2.4113 | .8778 | 7.5453 | 1 | .0060 | .1429 |
| TRACK | 1.8972 | .5779 | 10.7772 | 1 | .0010 | .1797 |
| CONSTANT | -6.2380 | 1.0161 | 37.6863 | 1 | .0000 | -- |

**Sig p < 0.05**

Table 4(a) shown above comprises of those variables that have been selected with the Forward conditional method of model selection. For each variable in the equation: coefficient (B), standard error of B, Wald statistic, the significance of the Wald statistic (Sig) and the value of *R* are given. The significance of the Wald statistic indicates that all the variables are significant at the significance value of $p < 0.05$. The *R* statistic is used to look at the partial correlation between the dependent variable and each of the independent variables. A positive value indicates that as the variable increases in value, so does the likelihood of the event occurring.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 669 of 1793

The probability of being high traffic is calculated as follows :

$\frac{\hat{p}_{new}}{\hat{p}_{old}}$ : The relative change in pold that is caused by a one unit increase in the variable under study.

$\hat{p}_{new}$ : the new probability, given a one unit increase in the variable under study.

$\hat{p}_{old}$ : the original probability.

$$\frac{\hat{p}_{new}}{\hat{p}_{old}} = \frac{1 / 1 + e^{-(b0 + b1X1 + \ldots\ldots bk(Xk+1)}}{1 / 1 + e^{-(b0 + b1X1 + \ldots\ldots bkXk)}}$$

In the above equation, the variable $X_k$ is the variable that is being increased by one unit, while other variables are held constant.

The probability of being high traffic, calculated with the regression co-efficient of each independent variable is given below :

1. **SECURITY**

**Hypotheses :** *SSL encryption is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

$$\frac{\hat{p}_{new}}{\hat{p}_{old}} = \frac{1 / 1 + e^{-(-6.2380 + 2.0583(1)}}{1 / 1 + e^{-(-6.2380)}}$$

$$= \frac{1 + e^{-(-6.2380)}}{1 + e^{-(-6.2380 + 2.0583(1)}}$$

$$= 7.7297$$

***Hence, it can be concluded that, the probability of being high traffic increases by approx. 7.7 times when Security exists.***



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 670 of 1793

2. **PRIVACY**

**Hypotheses :** *The privacy of customers is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

$$\frac{\hat{p}_{new}}{\hat{p}_{old}} = \frac{1 / 1 + e^{-(-6.2380 + 0.9082(1)}}{1 / 1 + e^{-(-6.2380)}}$$

$$= \frac{1 + e^{-(-6.2380)}}{1 + e^{-(-6.2380 + 0.9082(1)}}$$

$$= 2.4727$$

*Hence, it can be concluded that, the probability of being high traffic increases by approx. 2.4 times when* ***Privacy*** *increases by one unit.*

3. **RECLNK**

**Hypotheses :** *Reciprocal links are more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

$$\frac{\hat{p}_{new}}{\hat{p}_{old}} = \frac{1 / 1 + e^{-(-6.2380 + 1.0898(1)}}{1 / 1 + e^{-(-6.2380)}}$$

$$= \frac{1 + e^{-(-6.2380)}}{1 + e^{-(-6.2380 + 1.0898(1)}}$$

$$= 2.9623$$

*Hence, it can be concluded that, the probability of being high traffic increases by approx. 2.9 times when* ***Reciprocal Links*** *increases by one unit.*



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 671 of 1793

4. **CUSTPN**

**Hypotheses :** *Customer participation is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

$$\frac{\hat{p}_{new}}{\hat{p}_{old}} = \frac{1 / 1 + e^{-(-6.2380 + 2.4925(1)}}{1 / 1 + e^{-(-6.2380)}}$$

$$= \frac{1 + e^{-(-6.2380)}}{1 + e^{-(-6.2380 + 2.4925(1)}}$$

$$= 11.8355$$

*Hence, it can be concluded that, the probability of being high traffic increases by approx. 11.8 times when* ***Customer Prticipation*** *exists.*

5. **CHAT**

**Hypotheses :** *Chat is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

$$\frac{\hat{p}_{new}}{\hat{p}_{old}} = \frac{1 / 1 + e^{-(-6.2380 + 2.4113(1)}}{1 / 1 + e^{-(-6.2380)}}$$

$$= \frac{1 + e^{-(-6.2380)}}{1 + e^{-(-6.2380 + 2.4113(1)}}$$

$$= 10.9321$$

*Hence, it can be concluded that, the probability of being high traffic increases by approx. 10.9321 times when* ***Chat*** *exists.*



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 672 of 1793

## 6. TRACK

**Hypotheses :** *Order tracking is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.*

$$\frac{\hat{p}_{new}}{\hat{p}_{old}} = \frac{1 / 1 + e^{-(-6.2380 + 1.8972(1)}}{1 / 1 + e^{-(-6.2380)}}$$

$$= \frac{1 + e^{-(-6.2380)}}{1 + e^{-(-6.2380 + 1.8972(1)}}$$

$$= 6.5943$$

*Hence, it can be concluded that, the probability of being high traffic increases by approx. 6.5 times when* ***Order Tracking*** *exists.*



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 673 of 1793

Table 4(b) - Variables in the equation with the odds ratio

| Variable | Exp(B) | 95% CI Exp(B) Lower | Upper |
|---|---|---|---|
| SECURITY | 7.8327 | 2.0400 | 30.0739 |
| PRIVACY | 2.4798 | 1.6623 | 3.6993 |
| RECLNK | 2.9737 | 1.0792 | 8.1938 |
| CUSTPN | 12.0911 | 3.7171 | 39.3306 |
| CHAT | 11.1482 | 1.9953 | 62.2891 |
| TRACK | 6.6671 | 2.1479 | 20.6944 |

Table 4(b) comprises of the variables in the equation, and for each variable in the equation : estimated odds ratio (exp(B)), confidence interval for exp(B). Exp(B) is the value by which the odds of the event change when the *i*th independent variable increases by one unit. If the value is greater than 1, the odds are increased; if the value is less than 1, the odds are decreased. A value of 1 leaves the odds unchanged. The confidence interval at 95% for exp(B) indicates the range in which the average estimated odds ratio can exist.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 674 of 1793

**Other Statistics**

**Correlation Matrix**

| | SECURITY | PRIVACY | RECLNK | CUSTPN | CHAT | TRACK |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SECURITY | *1.00000* | .08601 | .22965 | .28357 | .28502 | .04573 |
| PRIVACY | .08601 | 1.00000 | .16577 | .16663 | .23123 | .16067 |
| RECLNK | .22965 | .16577 | 1.00000 | -.03286 | -.19453 | -.03537 |
| CUSTPN | .28357 | .16663 | -.03286 | 1.00000 | .13794 | .08603 |
| CHAT | .28502 | .23123 | -.19453 | .13794 | 1.00000 | .25418 |
| TRACK | .04573 | .16067 | -.03537 | .08603 | .25418 | 1.00000 |

From the correlation matrix above, it can be seen that correlation among the independent variables is very low, thus confirming the absence of multicollinearity in the current model.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 675 of 1793

### *5.3.2 Variables not in the equation*

Table 5 - Variables not in the equation

| Variable | Score | df | Sig | R |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| AFFNET | .0738 | 1 | .7858 | .0000 |
| BRPR | .1110 | 1 | .7390 | .0000 |
| BANAD | 2.9379 | 1 | .0865 | .0588 |
| EMMK | 1.3203 | 1 | .2505 | .0000 |
| NEWSL | .6986 | 1 | .4032 | .0000 |
| ONDISTR | 1.7318 | 1 | .1882 | .0000 |

Table 5 comprises of those variables that were removed from the model during the model selection process. This means that these independent variables are not significant in this research. Even though the variables are not significant, the *R* statistic is positive for all the variables. The *R* statistic is used to look at the partial correlation between the dependent variable and each of the independent variables. A positive value indicates that as the variable increases in value, so does the likelihood of the event occurring.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 676 of 1793

# CHAPTER 6

Section 6.1 discusses the results obtained in this research. Section 6.2 expresses the limitations of this research.

## *6.1 Discussion of Results*

The results of the analysis indicate six distinguishing factors (customer participation, chat, security, order tracking, reciprocal links and privacy) between high traffic and low traffic on-line stores. The results also convey the role and importance of the interactivity and connectivity features of the Internet and the World Wide Web, developed in the Marketspace model.

From the results obtained, it is observed that Customer Participation is the most significant distinguishing factor. This brings out the importance of customers in the transaction process. The 'prosumer' has emerged as a successful element of high traffic on-line stores. By allowing their customers to participate in the specification and design of their products and services, on-line stores develop a good interaction with the customers. On-line stores are not only able to interact with their customers, but also able to connect with them, thus enhancing customer relationships and customer service.

The next significant distinguishing factor is Chat. By providing a forum for customers to *Chat* with one another, on-line stores develop a community's interactive space. Customers tend to attract and retain others like themselves to participate in conversations, whether for entertainment or education, thus enhancing connectivity. Since the conversations are inclined to revolve around a particular interest, common task



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 677 of 1793

or hobby, they can be sources for sharing information, and become deep reservoirs of information.

Security and Privacy are also significant factors that distinguish high traffic and low traffic on-line stores. When on-line stores provide security and privacy in the transactions, connectivity is enhanced by attracting more people to confidently use the on-line stores and provide information like credit card numbers and other confidential information. Statement of privacy in on-line stores gives customers the confidence to give their information which enhances interactivity and thus customer relationship is enriched.

Order Tracking stems partially from customer participation, in the sense that the customer has the capacity and convenience to find out where the purchased product is while in transit, at any desired time. The customer does not have to entirely depend on, and wait for a third party to provide the required information. This is another way for on-line stores to connect with their customers.

Having Reciprocal Links is another distinguishing factor, and is advantageous to on-line stores. They provide their customers with the opportunity to shop for more products and services with ease. Reciprocal links help on-line stores to develop connectivity not only with their customers, but also amongst themselves.

On-line stores must introduce the factors proven to be responsible for high traffic in order to gain a competitive edge over their counterparts.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 678 of 1793

### *6.2 Limitations of the Study*

The following are the limitations of this study:

- The sample of high traffic on-line stores is selected from an existing database. While it is unlikely, there may be a few high traffic on-line stores that are not included in the selected list. It is not in the capacity of this research to measure traffic in on-line stores.
- Differentiating factors are only those that can be seen on the website of the on-line store. The distinguishing factors identified are mainly external features. There are probably internal distinguishing features as well. The scope of this research is limited to the external features.
- Since the variables have been measured by the researcher, there is a possibility of error in the analysis of the variables.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 679 of 1793

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 680 of 1793

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 681 of 1793

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http://www.emarketer.com/estats/ec_hot_10.html

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http://www.webmarketingtoday.com/articles/newsletter.htm

http://www.cyberm.com/ecsd.htm

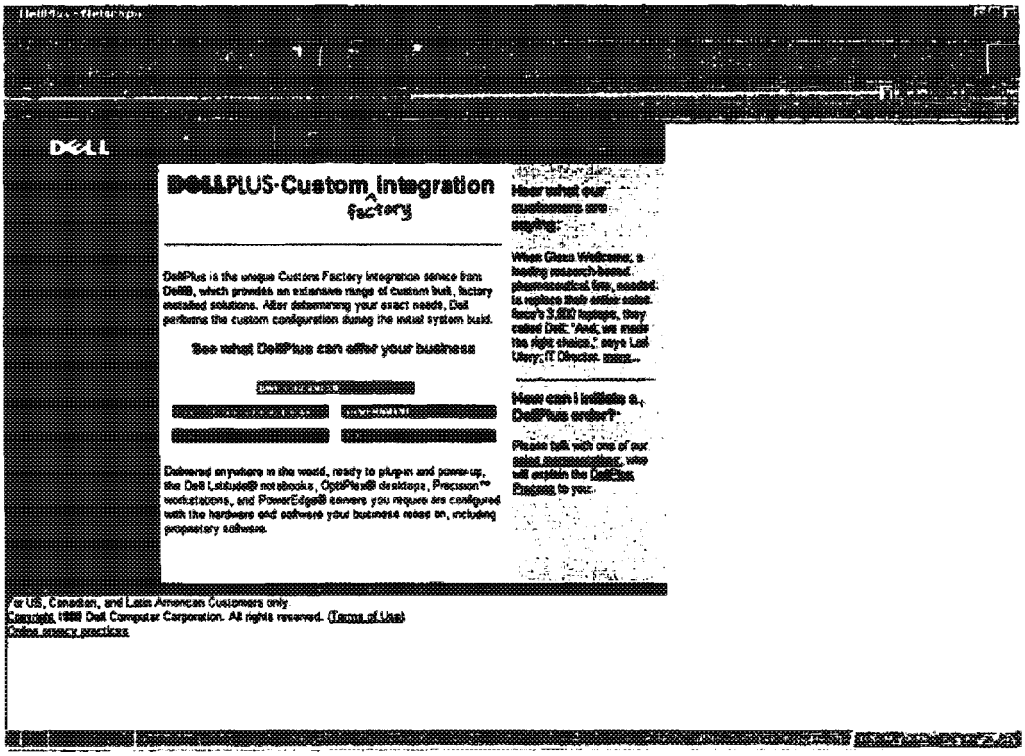


TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 682 of 1793

# APPENDICES

## *Appendix A - Customer Participation*

http://www.dell.com/dellplus/index.htm

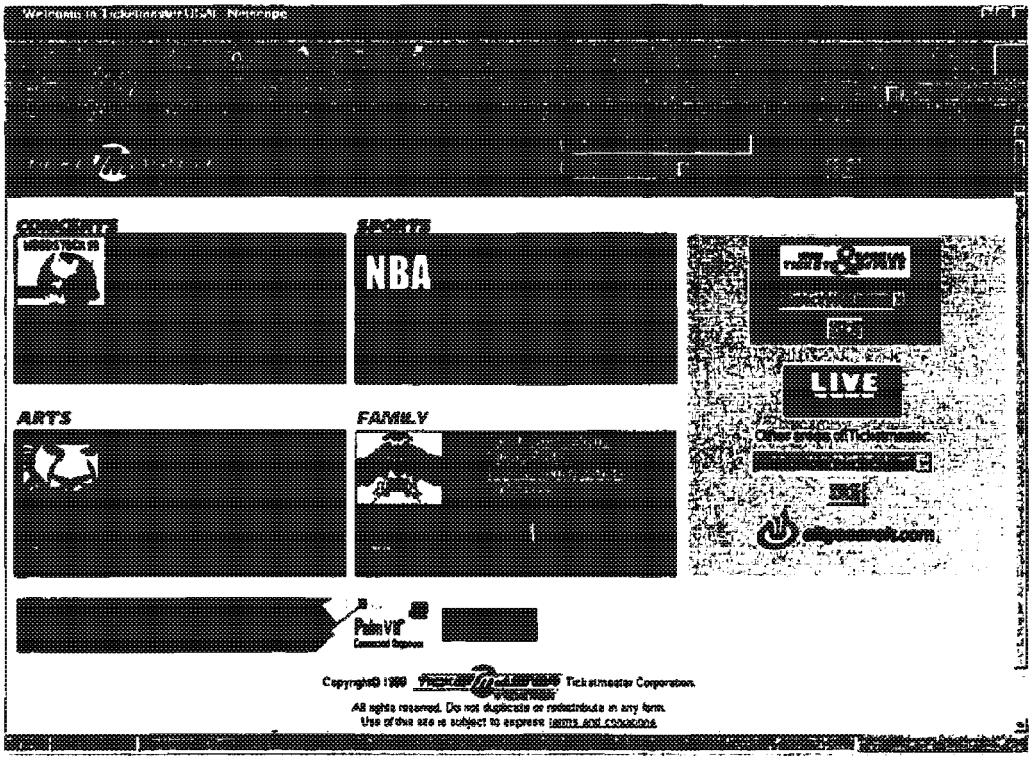





TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 683 of 1793

## *Appendix B - Banner Advertising*

http://www.ticketmaster.com/

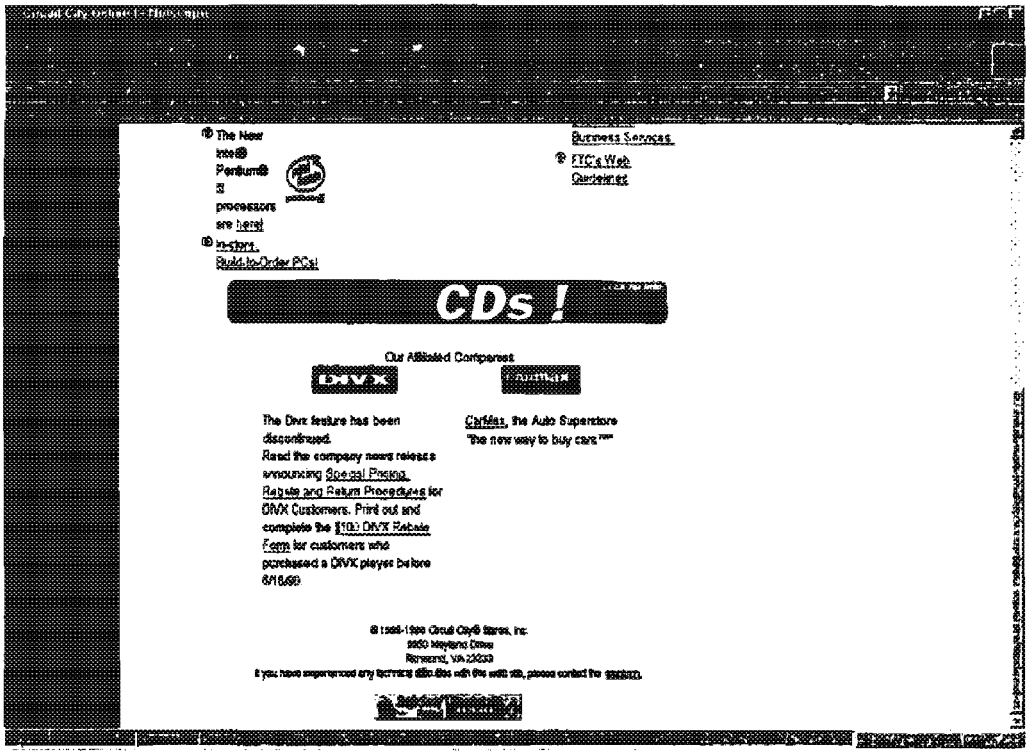





TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 684 of 1793

## *Appendix C - Reciprocal Links (a)*

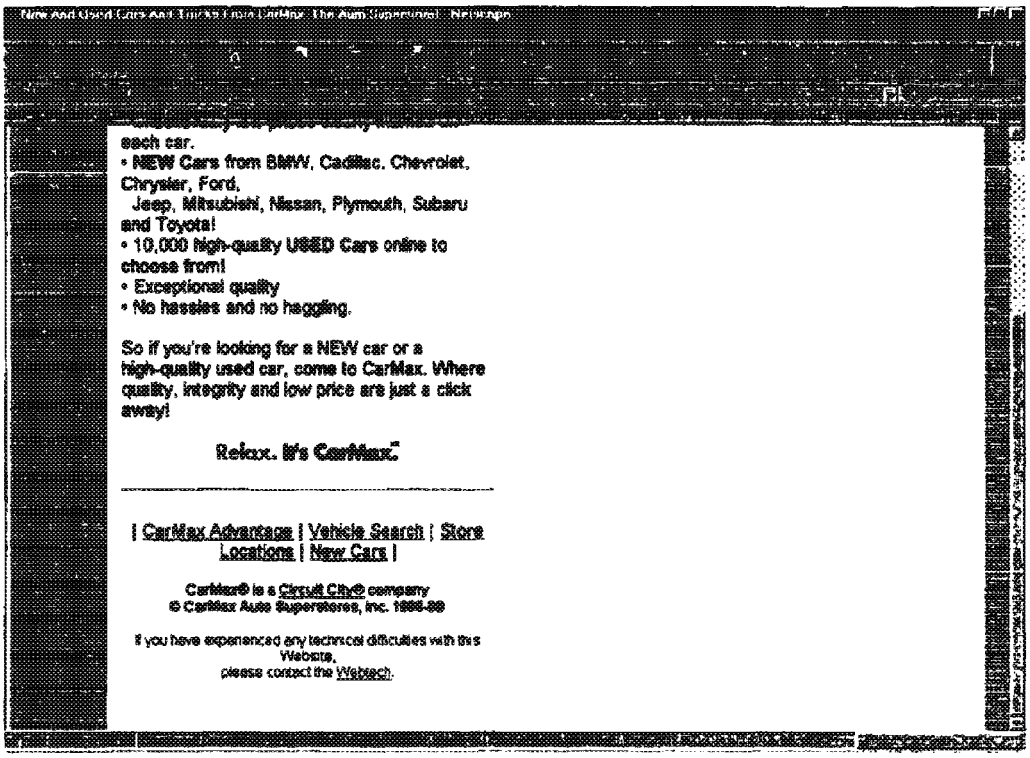
http://www.circuitcity.com/ and www.carmax.com






TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 685 of 1793

## *Appendix D - Reciprocal Links (b)*



each car.
• NEW Cars from BMW, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Ford,
Jeep, Mitsubishi, Nissan, Plymouth, Subaru and Toyota!
• 10,000 high-quality USED Cars online to choose from!
• Exceptional quality
• No hassles and no haggling.

So if you're looking for a NEW car or a high-quality used car, come to CarMax. Where quality, integrity and low price are just a click away!

Relax. It's CarMax.™

| CarMax Advantage | Vehicle Search | Store Locations | New Cars |

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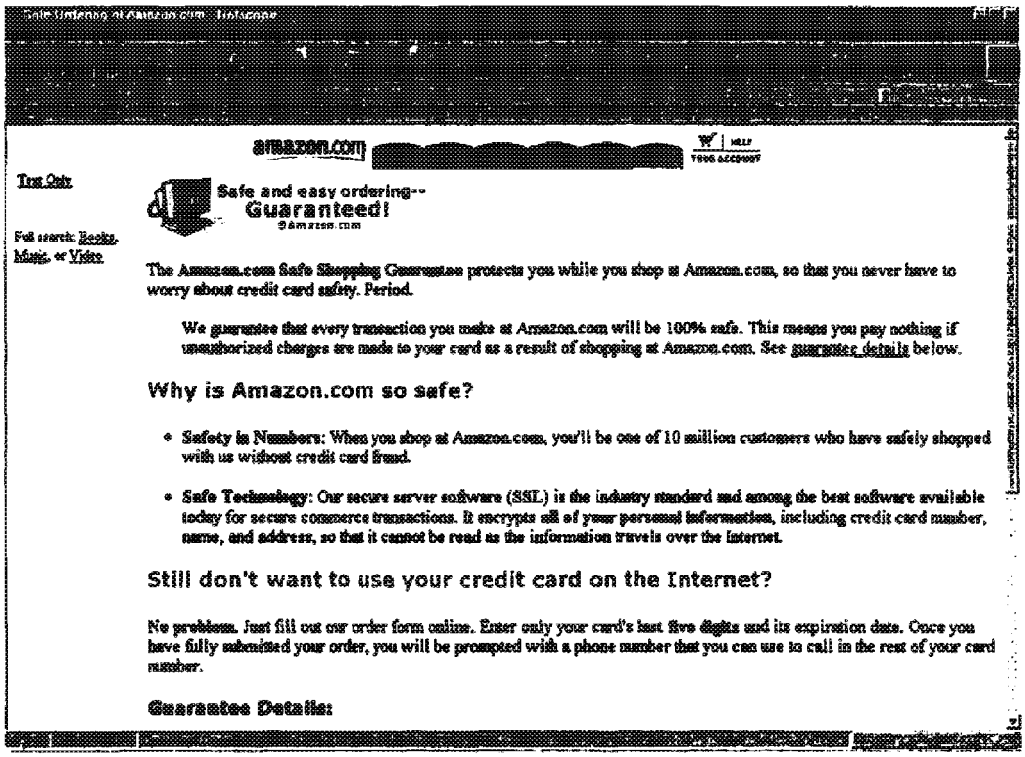
If you have experienced any technical difficulties with this Website,
please contact the Webtech.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 686 of 1793

## *Appendix E - Security*

http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/subst/help/security-guarantee.html/002-1423508-1139019



amazon.com

Text Only

Full search: Books, Music, or Video

Safe and easy ordering--
Guaranteed!
@amazon.com

The Amazon.com Safe Shopping Guarantee protects you while you shop at Amazon.com, so that you never have to worry about credit card safety. Period.

We guarantee that every transaction you make at Amazon.com will be 100% safe. This means you pay nothing if unauthorized charges are made to your card as a result of shopping at Amazon.com. See guarantee details below.

### Why is Amazon.com so safe?

- **Safety in Numbers:** When you shop at Amazon.com, you'll be one of 10 million customers who have safely shopped with us without credit card fraud.
- **Safe Technology:** Our secure server software (SSL) is the industry standard and among the best software available today for secure commerce transactions. It encrypts all of your personal information, including credit card number, name, and address, so that it cannot be read as the information travels over the Internet.

### Still don't want to use your credit card on the Internet?

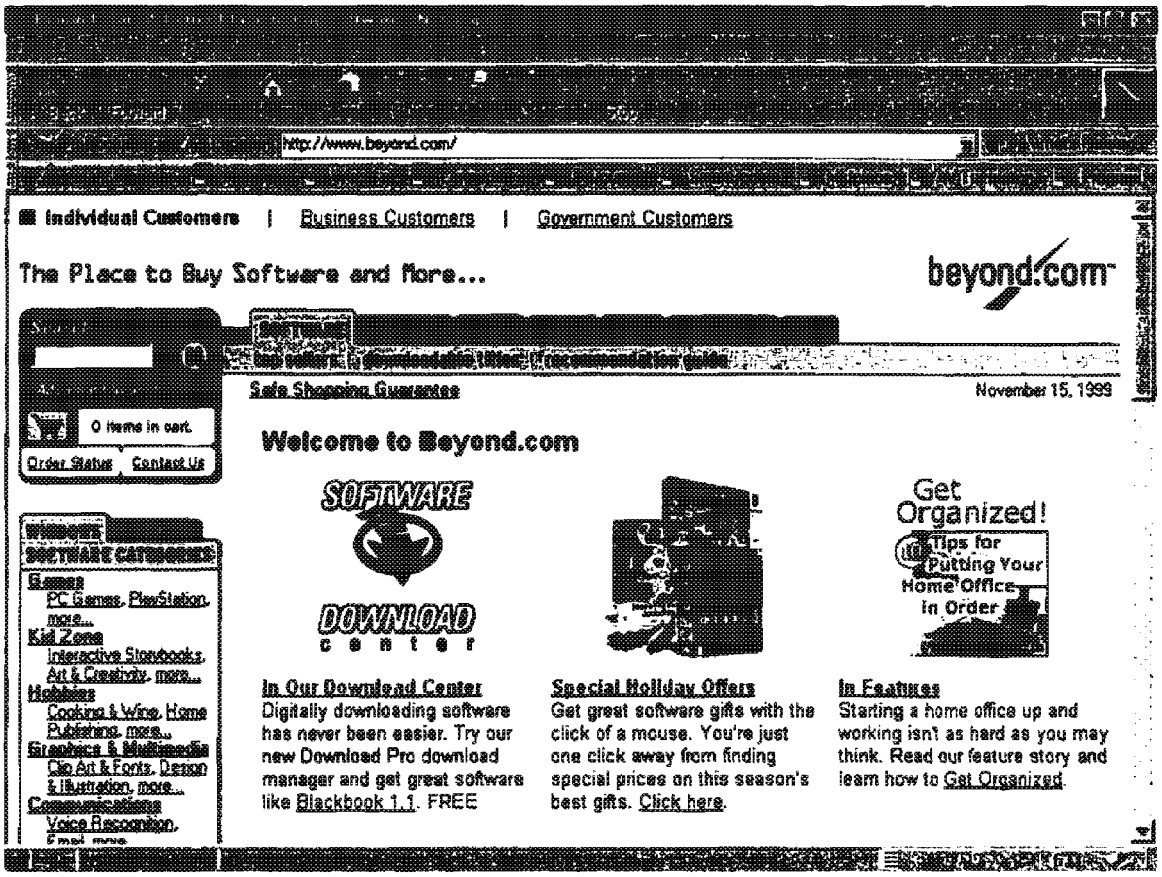
No problem. Just fill out our order form online. Enter only your card's last five digits and its expiration date. Once you have fully submitted your order, you will be prompted with a phone number that you can use to call in the rest of your card number.

### Guarantee Details:



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 687 of 1793

## *Appendix F - On-line Distribution of Products*

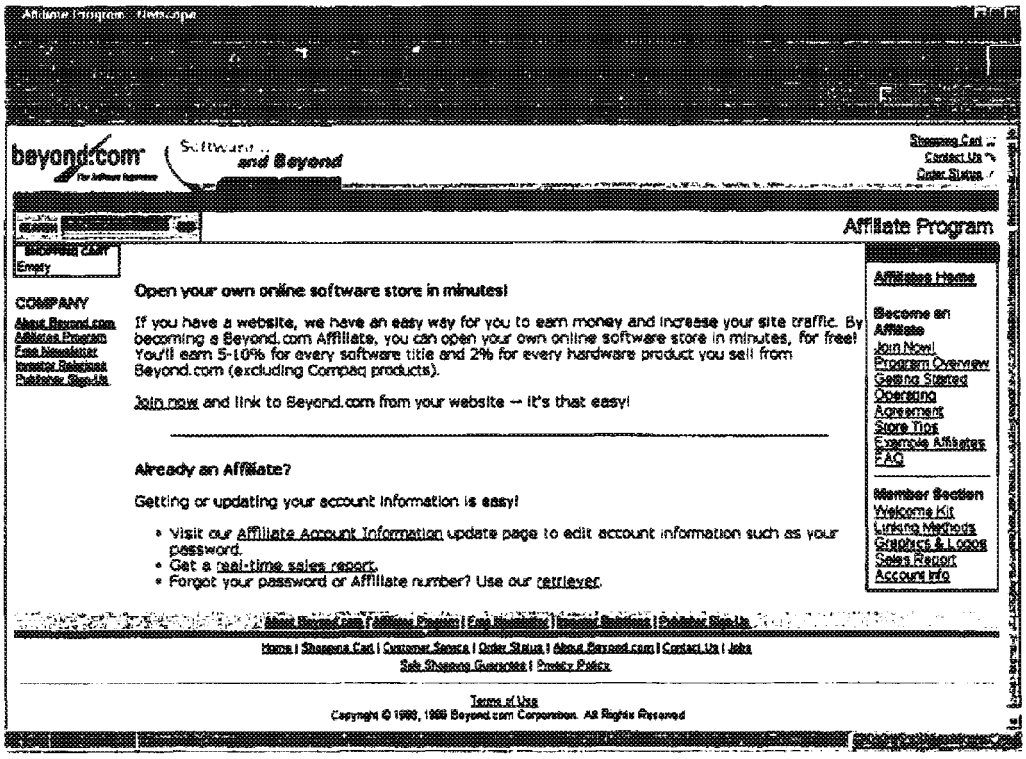





TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 688 of 1793

## *Appendix G - Affiliate Networks*

http://www.beyond.com/affiliates/

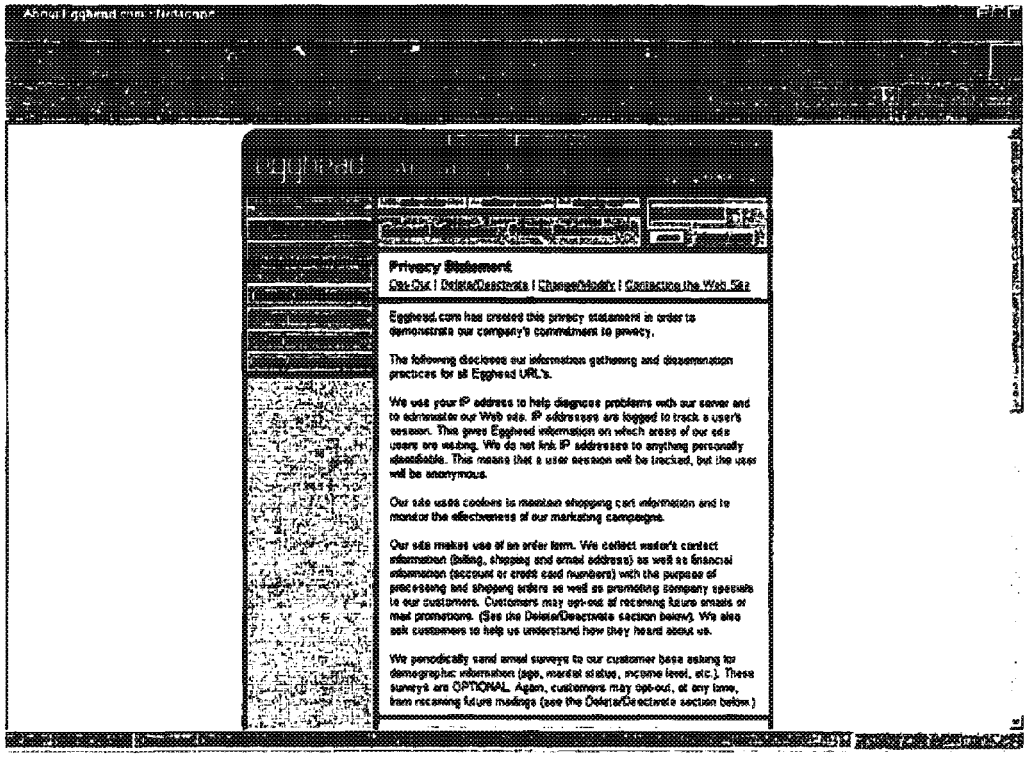





TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 689 of 1793

## *Appendix H - Privacy*

http://www.egghead.com/about/corp_privacy.html



**Privacy Statement**

Opt-Out | Delete/Deactivate | Change/Modify | Contacting the Web Site

Egghead.com has created this privacy statement in order to demonstrate our company's commitment to privacy.

The following discloses our information gathering and dissemination practices for all Egghead URL's.

We use your IP address to help diagnose problems with our server and to administer our Web site. IP addresses are logged to track a user's session. This gives Egghead information on which areas of our site users are visiting. We do not link IP addresses to anything personally identifiable. This means that a user session will be tracked, but the user will be anonymous.

Our site uses cookies to maintain shopping cart information and to monitor the effectiveness of our marketing campaigns.

Our site makes use of an order form. We collect visitor's contact information (billing, shipping and email address) as well as financial information (account or credit card numbers) with the purpose of processing and shipping orders as well as promoting company specials to our customers. Customers may opt-out of receiving future emails or mail promotions. (See the Delete/Deactivate section below). We also ask customers to help us understand how they heard about us.

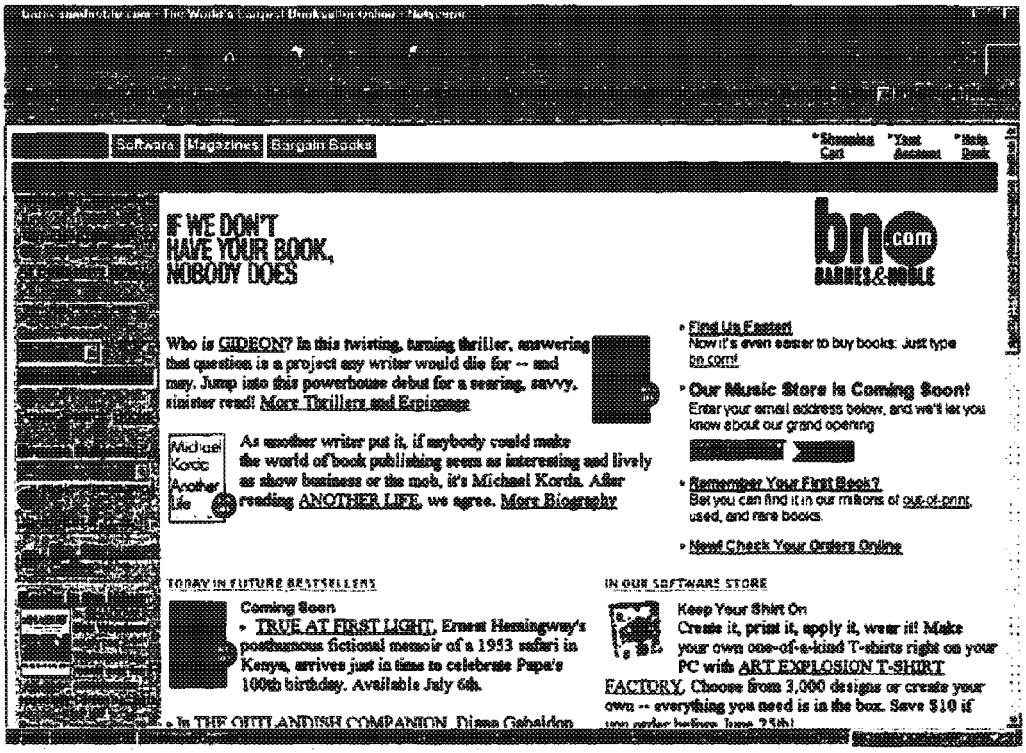
We periodically send email surveys to our customer base asking for demographic information (age, marital status, income level, etc.). These surveys are OPTIONAL. Again, customers may opt-out, at any time, from receiving future mailings (see the Delete/Deactivate section below.)



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 690 of 1793

## *Appendix I - E-mail Marketing*

http://www.barnesandnoble.com/

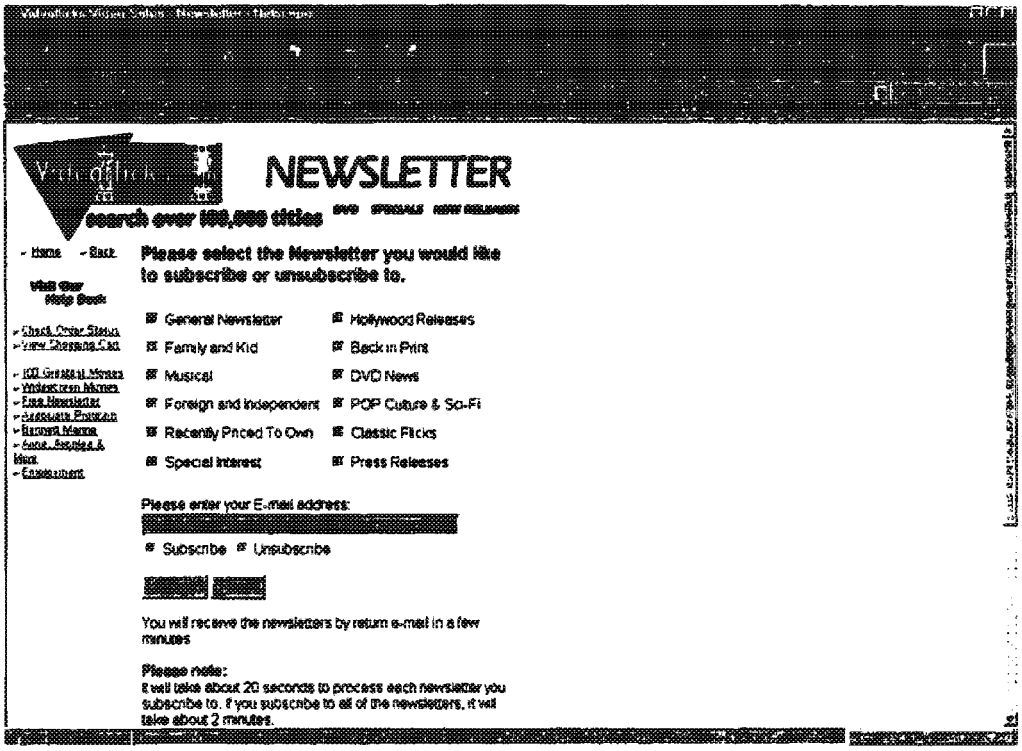





TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 691 of 1793

## *Appendix J - Newsletter*

http://www.videoflicks.com/join.html

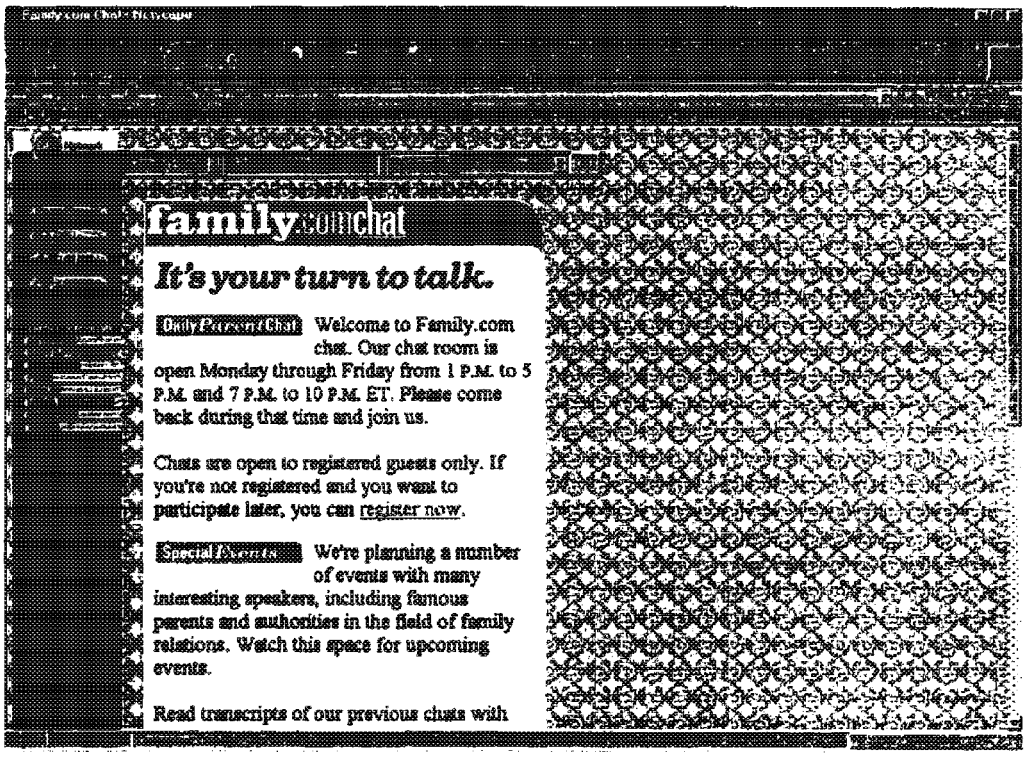





TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 692 of 1793

## *Appendix K - Chat*

http://family.go.com/Chat/

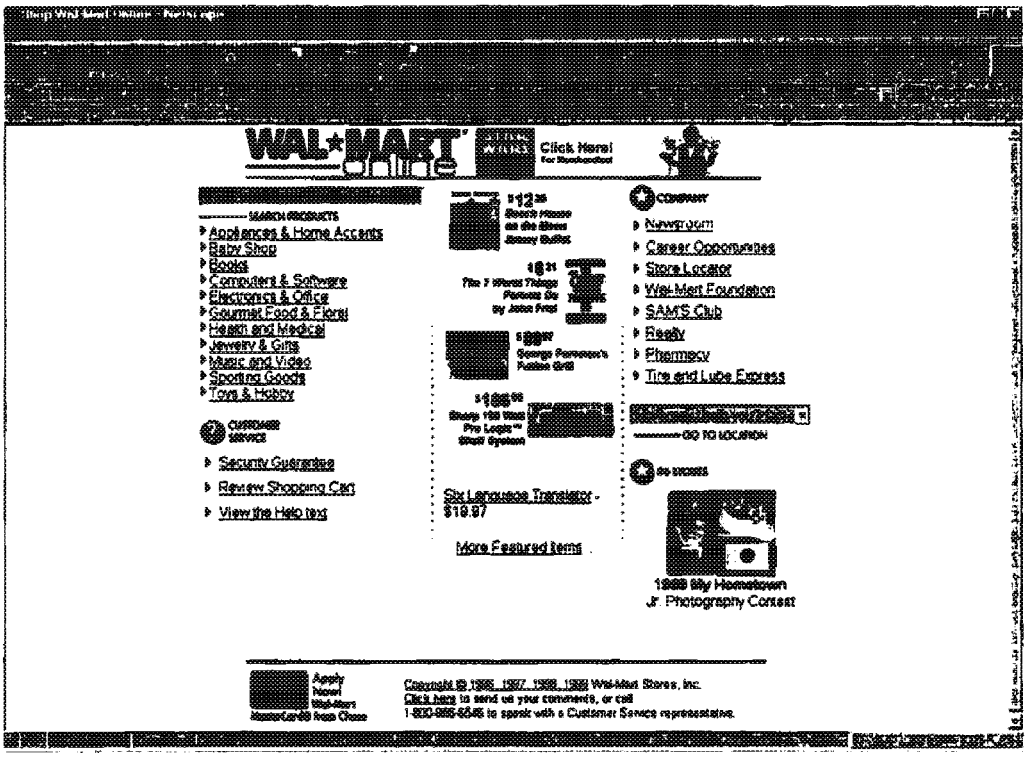





TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 693 of 1793

## *Appendix L - Breadth of Products*

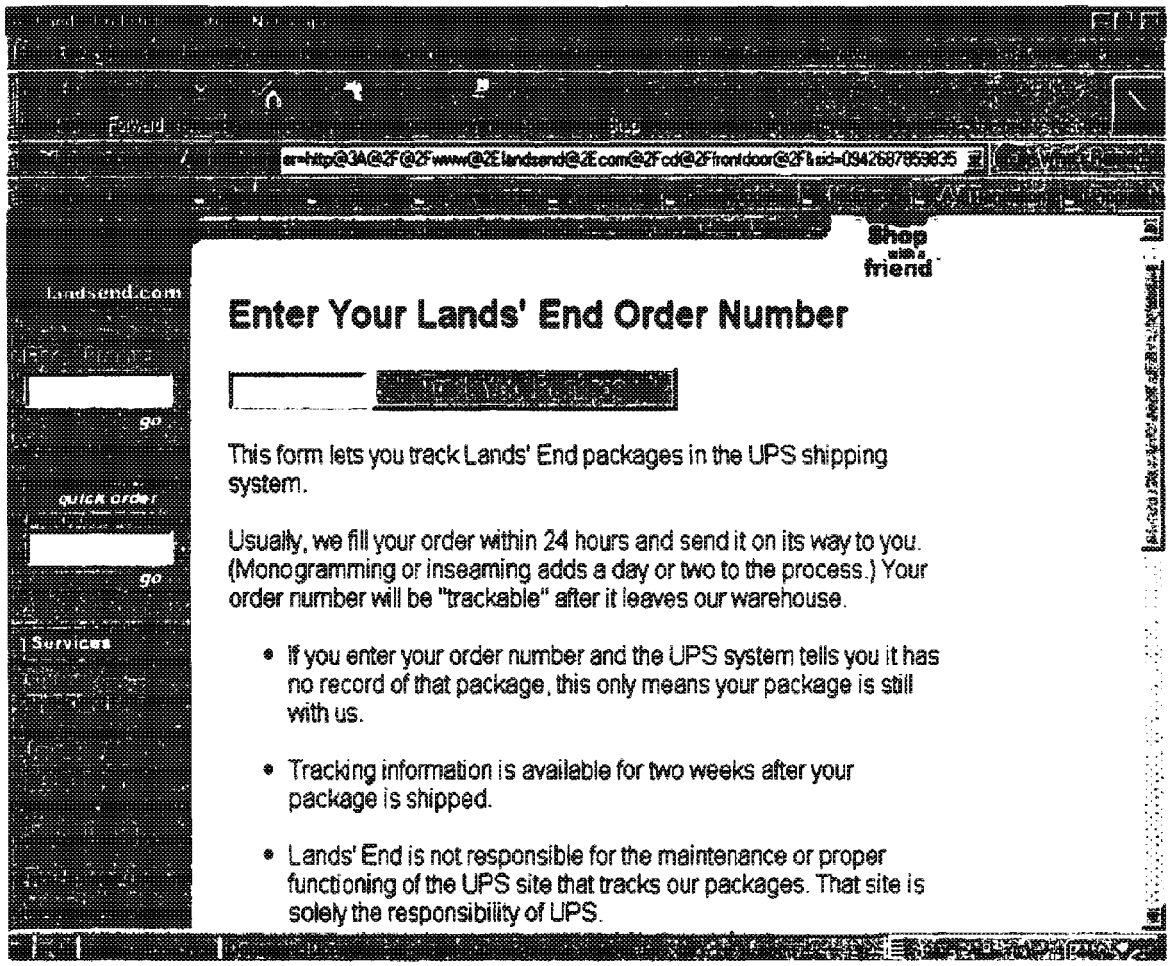
http://www.wal-mart.com/






TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 694 of 1793

## *Appendix M - Order Tracking*






TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 695 of 1793

## *Appendix N - Checklist of Variables Measured*

| S.No | Variable | Hypotheses | Measure |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Security | *SSL encryption is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.* | SSL present - 1<br>SSL not present - 0 |
| 2. | Privacy | *The privacy of customers is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.* | One FTC [2] measure - 1<br>Two FTC measures - 2<br>Three FTC measures - 3<br>Four FTC measures - 4<br>No FTC measures - 0 |
| 3. | Affiliate Networks | *Affiliate Networks are more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.* | Connected to Affiliate Network - 1<br>Not connected to Affiliate Network - 0 |
| 4. | Reciprocal Links | *Reciprocal links are more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.* | Count the number of links to other on-line stores that are linked back to the evaluated on-line store. |
| 5. | Banner Advertising | *Banner advertising is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.* | Count the number of banners in the home page of the on-line store. |
| 6. | Customer Participation | *Customer participation is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.* | Customized products and services offered : 1<br>Customized products and services not offered : 0 |
| 7. | Chat | *Chat is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.* | Chat is available : 1<br>Chat is not available : 0 |
| 8. | E-mail Marketing | *E-mail marketing is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.* | E-mail marketing present : 1<br>E-mail marketing not present : 0 |
| 9. | Newsletters | *Newsletters are more likely to be* | Newsletter offered : 1 |

[2] The FTC measures are : (a) Give consumers notice of what information is collected and how it is used; (b) let consumers choose whether to allow secondary uses of information (for example, to decide whether their name can be used for follow-up marketing from the company or be sold to a third party); (c) give consumers "reasonable access" to their information and let them correct any errors; and (d) ensure the information's security.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 696 of 1793

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.* | Newsletter not offered : 0 |
| 10. | On-line distribution of products | *On-line distribution of products and services is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.* | If product or service can be transferred to the customer via the electronic medium : 1<br>If product or service cannot be transferred to the customer via the electronic medium : 0 |
| 11. | Breadth of products | *A larger variety of products is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.* | Count the number of categories of products available in the on-line store. |
| 12. | Order Tracking | *Order tracking is more likely to be associated with high traffic on-line stores than with low traffic on-line stores.* | Order tracking allowed : 1<br>Order tracking not allowed : 0 |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 697 of 1793

## *Appendix O - List of 100 hot On-line Stores*

| S.No. | Name of On-line Store |
|---|---|
| 1. | Amazon.com |
| 2. | Blue Mountain |
| 3. | eBay |
| 4. | Onsale.com |
| 5. | TicketMaster |
| 6. | Macy |
| 7. | 3D Animated Greeting Cards |
| 8. | Levi Strauss |
| 9. | Egghead Computers |
| 10. | Autobytel |
| 11. | Beyond.com |
| 12. | Tower Records |
| 13. | BarnesandNoble |
| 14. | Virtual Flowers |
| 15. | MicroWarehouse Inc. |
| 16. | Jcrew |
| 17. | Classifieds 2000 |
| 18. | Outpost.com |
| 19. | QVC |
| 20. | IUMA |
| 21. | REI |
| 22. | CDW (Computer Discount Warehouse) |
| 23. | NECX |
| 24. | Tiger Direct.com |
| 25. | Access Micro |
| 26. | Creative Computers |
| 27. | CompUSA |
| 28. | iMall |
| 29. | RandomHouse Inc. |
| 30. | Reel.com |
| 31. | FreeShop |
| 32. | The Sharper Image |
| 33. | Fashion Mall |
| 34. | GORP |
| 35. | Wal-Mart |
| 36. | Trip.com |
| 37. | Airwalk |
| 38. | Circuitcity.com |
| 39. | Auction Universe |
| 40. | Garden Escape |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 698 of 1793

| | |
|---|---|
| 41. | Brooks Brothers |
| 42. | Schwinn Cycling and Fitness |
| 43. | JamTV |
| 44. | VideoFlicks.com |
| 45. | Campmor.com |
| 46. | Swords'n'Stuff |
| 47. | e-greetings |
| 48. | CDNow |
| 49. | Homearts |
| 50. | DVD Express |
| 51. | GoNetwork |
| 52. | e-toys |
| 53. | Shopping.com |
| 54. | LL Bean |
| 55. | Peapod |
| 56. | ColumbiaHouse |
| 57. | Gateway 2000 |
| 58. | Electronics Boutique |
| 59. | e-music |
| 60. | Cool Savings.com |
| 61. | Kenneth Cole |
| 62. | CD Universe |
| 63. | Improvenet |
| 64. | DAMARK |
| 65. | Office Max |
| 66. | JC Penney |
| 67. | Access Galaxy Mall |
| 68. | CatalogLink |
| 69. | Avon.com |
| 70. | Shades.com |
| 71. | Kmart |
| 72. | KCWeb |
| 73. | 1-800-Flowers |
| 74. | BigDeal.com |
| 75. | Internet Shopping Outlet |
| 76. | Dooney.com |
| 77. | Official Fossil |
| 78. | FTD |
| 79. | Sony Music Store |
| 80. | Lands' End |
| 81. | NetGrocer |
| 82. | www.vr-mall.com |
| 83. | Specialized Systems Consultants Inc. |
| 84. | Choice World |
| 85. | Wig Outlet |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 699 of 1793

| | |
|---|---|
| 86. | The OS/2 Supersite |
| 87. | bloomingdales.com |
| 88. | www.dealdeal.com |
| 89. | iBaby.com |
| 90. | Fingerhut On-line |
| 91. | Classifieds and Auctions |
| 92. | Powell's Bookstore-used |
| 93. | www.juara.com |
| 94. | Cliffs.com |
| 95. | auctions.lycos.com |
| 96. | www.wwcd.com |
| 97. | www.20-20consumer.com |
| 98. | tias.com |
| 99. | ViaMall |
| 100. | Tower Records-@Tower.JP |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 700 of 1793

## *Appendix P - List of Non-100 hot On-line Stores*

| S.No. | Name of on-line store |
|---|---|
| | |
| 1. | Coldwater Creek |
| 2. | Hanna Anderson |
| 3. | Medsite |
| 4. | BoxLot.com |
| 5. | DVD Empire |
| 6. | ccmusic.com |
| 7. | Kingdom Computers |
| 8. | Decor-accessories.com |
| 9. | Stuff.com |
| 10. | a1books.com |
| 11. | Advanced Electronics |
| 12. | 21store.com |
| 13. | Flower Stop |
| 14. | flowerfarm.com |
| 15. | Zirh |
| 16. | 1Bookstreet.com |
| 17. | Your Grocer |
| 18. | 2Bid.com |
| 19. | Esco |
| 20. | abeam.com |
| 21. | Sierra Trading Post |
| 22. | Braun's.com |
| 23. | Grass Roots |
| 24. | auction-sales.com |
| 25. | World Traveller |
| 26. | Auctionscape.com |
| 27. | BorrowORrob |
| 28. | CDSource.com |
| 29. | Shopping-Hawaii.com |
| 30. | Lind Electronics |
| 31. | WinAuction |
| 32. | Blowout Video |
| 33. | Executive Greeting cards |
| 34. | BigE.Hollywood.com |
| 35. | The Clothes Store |
| 36. | Travelocity.com |
| 37. | Bigwords.com |
| 38. | GetMusic |
| 39. | Cybershop.com |
| 40. | eCost.com |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 701 of 1793

| | |
|---|---|
| 41. | First Auction |
| 42. | Boomiso.com |
| 43. | Marketplaza |
| 44. | Ally Office Furniture |
| 45. | Aadvark Cycles |
| 46. | Enchantments |
| 47. | Bluefly |
| 48. | C.Dickens |
| 49. | MusicMachine |
| 50. | DCG Computers |
| 51. | Crate and Barrel |
| 52. | Dynamic Sound Systems |
| 53. | Rafaelloties |
| 54. | Buyiton-line |
| 55. | 800.com |
| 56. | Behome.com |
| 57. | Office Base |
| 58. | Pearsall's Garden |
| 59. | Rainbow Ink Jet |
| 60. | Zootsports |
| 61. | Handmade Paradise |
| 62. | Anymountain gear |
| 63. | Bookscloseouts.com |
| 64. | C and D Merchants |
| 65. | Charityville |
| 66. | In Touch Travel |
| 67. | Alphabetstreet Books |
| 68. | Discount CD's |
| 69. | CyberWarehouse |
| 70. | Sutter Tel.Com |
| 71. | Mercata |
| 72. | Gifts Galore |
| 73. | Homeatrium |
| 74. | Efootwear |
| 75. | Anime World |
| 76. | Uauction.com |
| 77. | eoffprice.com |
| 78. | BestFares.com |
| 79. | Top 5.com |
| 80. | Coast to Coast Memory |
| 81. | Nordstorm |
| 82. | Digital and Video.com |
| 83. | 1 Click Flowers |
| 84. | Cosmetics.com |
| 85. | Household Products |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 702 of 1793

| | |
|---|---|
| 86. | Ni3D.com |
| 87. | MountainZone.com |
| 88. | World Wide Auctions |
| 89. | Tech Jungle.com |
| 90. | Books.com |
| 91. | CDWorld.com |
| 92. | Computer-Show.com |
| 93. | Ezbid online auction |
| 94. | electronics4sale |
| 95. | Van Ness Water Gardens |
| 96. | Bruder Toys |
| 97. | 123greetings.com |
| 98. | Bonus Books |
| 99. | CactusFlower |
| 100. | Buy Music |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 703 of 1793

## *Appendix Q - Verification of data collected*

The sample size in this research is a total of 200 on-line stores. 25% of the data collected was verified, and since there are 200 on-line stores in total, 50 on-line stores were verified. 25 on-line stores were analyzed from the 100hot.com list of on-line stores, and 25 on-line stores were analyzed from the shopguide.com list of on-line stores.

The data collected by the researcher has been verified, and the following has been observed :

1. SECURITY - The presence or absence of SSL has been identified correctly in all the on-line stores.
2. PRIVACY - There are four FTC measures given to measure this variable, namely, (a) Give consumers notice of what information is collected and how it is used; (b) Let consumers choose whether to allow secondary uses of information (for example, to decide whether their name can be used for follow-up marketing from the company or be sold to a third party); (c) Give consumers "reasonable access" to their information and let them correct any errors; and (d) Ensure the information's security.

   The data collected with the help of these measures is precise and accurate.
3. AFFILIATE NETWORKS - Whether or not the on-line stores belonged to an affiliate network, was identified easily and accurately.
4. RECIPROCAL LINKS - The number of links from and to the on-line stores have been counted, and have been found to be the same when compared to the number of links counted by the researcher.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 704 of 1793

5. BREADTH OF PRODUCTS - The Yahoo listing has been chosen to categorize the products offered by the on-line stores, thus providing a standard for easy classification and counting.
6. BANNER ADVERTISING - The number of banners in the home page of each on-line store was counted, and there was no variance in the data that was collected and the data that was verified.
7. CHAT - The chat facility provided by the on-line stores has been identified with ease and accuracy. On-line stores either have chat, or they do not.
8. CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION - The participation of customers in the transaction process was analyzed, and it was found that the results obtained by the researcher were the same as those found on verification.
9. E-MAIL MARKETING - On-line stores offer to provide their customers with discounts and product information via e-mail. This variable like CHAT, has been easy and accurately identified.
10. NEWSLETTER - The provision of a newsletter is similar to that of chat, or being part of an affiliate network. The newsletter is either offered, or it is not. This variable has also been identified and measured accurately.
11. TRACKING - On-line stores allow customers to track their products while in transit. This procedure has been analyzed and it has been ascertained that the researcher has analyzed the data with precision.
12. ON-LINE DISTRIBUTION - The on-line distribution of products and services includes those products and services that can be transmitted electronically. The data collected on this variable is precise in all the on-line stores that were verified.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 705 of 1793

**List of on-line stores verified from the 100hot.com list.**

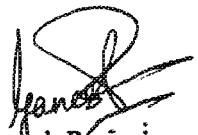
| S.No. | Name of on-line store |
|---|---|
| 1. | Amazon.com |
| 2. | Jcrew |
| 3. | eBay |
| 4. | Onsale.com |
| 5. | TicketMaster |
| 6. | Macy |
| 7. | iBaby.com |
| 8. | Levi Strauss |
| 9. | Egghead Computers |
| 10. | Autobytel |
| 11. | Reel.com |
| 12. | Lands' End |
| 13. | The Sharper Image |
| 14. | Fashion Mall |
| 15. | GORP |
| 16. | Wal-Mart |
| 17. | DVD Express |
| 18. | Powell's Bookstore-used |
| 19. | e-toys |
| 20. | bloomingdales.com |
| 21. | LL Bean |
| 22. | Peapod |
| 23. | Sony Music Store |
| 24. | Dooney.com |
| 25. | VideoFlicks.com |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 706 of 1793

**List of on-line stores verified from the shopguide.com list.**

| S.No. | Name of On-line Store |
|---|---|
| 1. | Coldwater Creek |
| 2. | Hanna Anderson |
| 3. | Medsite |
| 4. | BoxLot.com |
| 5. | DVD Empire |
| 6. | ccmusic.com |
| 7. | Kingdom Computers |
| 8. | Decor-accessories.com |
| 9. | CDSource.com |
| 10. | a1books.com |
| 11. | Lind Electronics |
| 12. | WinAuction |
| 13. | Blowout Video |
| 14. | Office Base |
| 15. | BigE.Hollywood.com |
| 16. | The Clothes Store |
| 17. | Zootsports |
| 18. | Handmade Paradise |
| 19. | Anymountain gear |
| 20. | Bookscloseouts.com |
| 21. | C and D Merchants |
| 22. | Bonus Books |
| 23. | CactusFlower |
| 24. | Buy Music |
| 25. | MountainZone.com |



Verified by : Ganesh Ramasivan



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 707 of 1793

## *Appendix R - Frequency Tables for Continuous Data*

### 1. PRIVACY

| GROUP | | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.00 | Valid | .00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | | 1.00 | 12 | 12.0 | 12.1 | 13.1 |
| | | 2.00 | 9 | 9.0 | 9.1 | 22.2 |
| | | 3.00 | 8 | 8.0 | 8.1 | 30.3 |
| | | 4.00 | 69 | 69.0 | 69.7 | 100.0 |
| | | Total | 99 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| | Total | | 100 | 100.0 | | |
| .00 | Valid | .00 | 50 | 50.0 | 51.5 | 51.5 |
| | | 1.00 | 15 | 15.0 | 15.5 | 67.0 |
| | | 2.00 | 13 | 13.0 | 13.4 | 80.4 |
| | | 3.00 | 7 | 7.0 | 7.2 | 87.6 |
| | | 4.00 | 12 | 12.0 | 12.4 | 100.0 |
| | | Total | 97 | 97.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Missing | System | 3 | 3.0 | | |
| | Total | | 100 | 100.0 | | |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 708 of 1793

## 2. RECIPROCAL LINKS

| GROUP | | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.00 | Valid | .00 | 58 | 58.0 | 58.6 | 58.6 |
| | | 1.00 | 12 | 12.0 | 12.1 | 70.7 |
| | | 2.00 | 12 | 12.0 | 12.1 | 82.8 |
| | | 3.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 86.9 |
| | | 4.00 | 5 | 5.0 | 5.1 | 91.9 |
| | | 5.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 96.0 |
| | | 6.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 100.0 |
| | | Total | 99 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| | Total | | 100 | 100.0 | | |
| .00 | Valid | .00 | 89 | 89.0 | 91.8 | 91.8 |
| | | 1.00 | 7 | 7.0 | 7.2 | 99.0 |
| | | 2.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| | | Total | 97 | 97.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Missing | System | 3 | 3.0 | | |
| | Total | | 100 | 100.0 | | |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 709 of 1793

## 3. BREADTH OF PRODUCTS

| GROUP | | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.00 | Valid | 1.00 | 25 | 25.0 | 25.3 | 25.3 |
| | | 2.00 | 14 | 14.0 | 14.1 | 39.4 |
| | | 3.00 | 12 | 12.0 | 12.1 | 51.5 |
| | | 4.00 | 5 | 5.0 | 5.1 | 56.6 |
| | | 5.00 | 7 | 7.0 | 7.1 | 63.6 |
| | | 6.00 | 10 | 10.0 | 10.1 | 73.7 |
| | | 8.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 77.8 |
| | | 9.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 79.8 |
| | | 10.00 | 5 | 5.0 | 5.1 | 84.8 |
| | | 11.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 85.9 |
| | | 12.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 86.9 |
| | | 13.00 | 3 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 89.9 |
| | | 14.00 | 10 | 10.0 | 10.1 | 100.0 |
| | | Total | 99 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| | Total | | 100 | 100.0 | | |
| .00 | Valid | .00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | | 1.00 | 48 | 48.0 | 49.5 | 50.5 |
| | | 2.00 | 16 | 16.0 | 16.5 | 67.0 |
| | | 3.00 | 9 | 9.0 | 9.3 | 76.3 |
| | | 4.00 | 7 | 7.0 | 7.2 | 83.5 |
| | | 5.00 | 3 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 86.6 |
| | | 6.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 88.7 |
| | | 7.00 | 3 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 91.8 |
| | | 8.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 93.8 |
| | | 9.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 94.8 |
| | | 10.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 95.9 |
| | | 12.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 96.9 |
| | | 14.00 | 3 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 100.0 |
| | | Total | 97 | 97.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Missing | System | 3 | 3.0 | | |
| | Total | | 100 | 100.0 | | |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 710 of 1793

## 4. BANNER ADVERTISING

| GROUP | | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.00 | Valid | 3.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | | 5.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 |
| | | 7.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 |
| | | 8.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 6.1 |
| | | 9.00 | 3 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 9.1 |
| | | 10.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 11.1 |
| | | 11.00 | 3 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 14.1 |
| | | 12.00 | 5 | 5.0 | 5.1 | 19.2 |
| | | 13.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 23.2 |
| | | 14.00 | 5 | 5.0 | 5.1 | 28.3 |
| | | 15.00 | 5 | 5.0 | 5.1 | 33.3 |
| | | 16.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 37.4 |
| | | 17.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 41.4 |
| | | 18.00 | 9 | 9.0 | 9.1 | 50.5 |
| | | 19.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 52.5 |
| | | 20.00 | 5 | 5.0 | 5.1 | 57.6 |
| | | 21.00 | 10 | 10.0 | 10.1 | 67.7 |
| | | 22.00 | 7 | 7.0 | 7.1 | 74.7 |
| | | 23.00 | 3 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 77.8 |
| | | 24.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 79.8 |
| | | 25.00 | 5 | 5.0 | 5.1 | 84.8 |
| | | 26.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 88.9 |
| | | 27.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 89.9 |
| | | 28.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 91.9 |
| | | 31.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 93.9 |
| | | 32.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 98.0 |
| | | 36.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 100.0 |
| | | Total | 99 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| | Total | | 100 | 100.0 | | |
| .00 | Valid | 2.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | | 3.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 4.1 |
| | | 4.00 | 6 | 6.0 | 6.2 | 10.3 |
| | | 5.00 | 6 | 6.0 | 6.2 | 16.5 |
| | | 6.00 | 12 | 12.0 | 12.4 | 28.9 |
| | | 7.00 | 9 | 9.0 | 9.3 | 38.1 |
| | | 8.00 | 7 | 7.0 | 7.2 | 45.4 |
| | | 9.00 | 8 | 8.0 | 8.2 | 53.6 |
| | | 10.00 | 3 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 56.7 |
| | | 11.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.1 | 60.8 |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 711 of 1793

**BANNER ADVERTISING (...Continued)**

| GROUP | | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 12.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.1 | 64.9 |
| | | 13.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.1 | 69.1 |
| | | 14.00 | 6 | 6.0 | 6.2 | 75.3 |
| | | 15.00 | 3 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 78.4 |
| | | 16.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 79.4 |
| | | 17.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 81.4 |
| | | 18.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.1 | 85.6 |
| | | 19.00 | 4 | 4.0 | 4.1 | 89.7 |
| | | 20.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 91.8 |
| | | 21.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 92.8 |
| | | 22.00 | 2 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 94.8 |
| | | 23.00 | 3 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 97.9 |
| | | 25.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 99.0 |
| | | 26.00 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| | | Total | 97 | 97.0 | 100.0 | |
| | Missing | System | 3 | 3.0 | | |
| | Total | | 100 | 100.0 | | |



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 712 of 1793

**Title: Intellectual Property: A Reference Handbook**

Contemporary world issues

Editor Aaron Schwabach

Publisher ABC-CLIO, 2007

ISBN 1598840452, 9781598840452

Length 318 pages

Subjects

Law / General

Political Science / General

Reference / General

Excerpt: In 1983 ARPANET, now connecting hundreds of computers, switched to the TCP /IP networking protocols still in use today. In 1990 ARPANET ceased to exist, but the computers remained connected. New networks had grown up using those connections, including NSFNet, another government sponsored project. These various networks were connected to each other, making it possible, in theory, for a computer connected to any one network to communicate with computers connected to one of the other networks. In the 1980s the Internet moved from universities and government research facilities to private homes, with the appearance of for-profit, proprietary networks like America Online, CompuServe, and Prodigy. The World Wide Web, however, can be traced to a specific event. In the late1980s Tim Berners-Lee and Robert Cailliau, working at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), created a hypertext to find documents on CERN's computers. The system differed from previous hypertext systems in using unidirectional, rather than bidirectional, links; this made it possible for a person creating a hypertext document to link to another document without having to alter that second document to include a reciprocal link. This made it possible to create a constantly expanding network of linked pages. Berners-Lee had created his first Web page and the first Web browser by 1991 (CERN no date).

ProQuest

# SELLING ONLINE: MORE THAN HITTING A FEW KEYS

**Interactive Daily** (Sep 5, 1995): 1.

## Abstract (summary)

None available.

## Full Text

It's hard enough to come up with a dynamite entertainment property or an innovative new online offering. But it's quite another thing to actually sell it (and, perhaps, even make money at it), especially in a developing cyber-market no one fully understands yet. The challenge to media companies, marketers, and their agents is to bring traffic to the well, but without offending the many sensibilities that make marketing and promoting on the Internet such a minefield.

The first thing to remember is that, since cyberspace is still just a technological frontier, there really aren't many rules yet. There's nothing carved in stone saying there's a "right" way (or, for that matter, a "wrong" way) to promote a given property. But there are plenty of things to consider, many of which come from traditional marketing, sales promotion, and even public relations.

"As with other forms of selling, online marketing demands that you know what kind of audience you're looking for," advises Tony Winders, whose new company, InterActive Agency (Los Angeles) represents the marketing interests of new media companies. "Naturally, you need to determine what Web sites are drawing their attention now, and then figure how best to bring them to your site." Reciprocal Links Boost Traffic One effective way of building traffic is through reciprocal links with other Web sites, whereby both parties benefit from some common component of the audiences they draw. Basically, these are similar to other "win-win" arrangements marketing partners team up on. In cyberspace, Winders says, the key is finding other sites that lure the same kind of people in your target market and reach an agreement about mutual links.

But there are a few things to watch for, Winders warns. "It's important to know the policies of individual sites you'd like to link with," he says. "Not all will want a link. And some will charge you for it. With Time Inc. 's Pathfinder, for example, you get a lot of consumer traffic, but you also pay the price." (That arrangement isn't for everyone, especially new developers short on capital.) Moreover, many sites will be discriminating about what kinds of material they link up with. Make sure yours is a good fit.

Needless to say, you won't build much online traffic without a compelling draw. This is important everywhere, but critical when marketing computer games or movies.

One of IAA's current projects is cultivating interest in a new Web site for the Twentieth Century Fox film Strange Days. The ultimate goal, of course, is to sell plenty of tickets when the movie opens October 13. Winders tells us the site gets users involved, introduces key characters, and recaps the story line --but without giving the store away. As part of its promotion, IAA is making movie posters available as giveaways for sites where it has reciprocal links.

"Movie marketing is hitting a whole new plateau," Winders says. "Many print film ads now include a URL for the Web site. These days, the best Web sites are more than just a promotional vehicle or electronic press kit. They're

becoming a form of entertainment in their own right, without just re-dumping the film."

Obviously, interactive games are a necessary component in many online marketing efforts. IAA client Hollywood Online, for instance, always has a game as part of its entertainment news service. Winders believes games are an effective way of capturing ongoing consumer interest, especially for a commercial service like Hollywood Online (which is paid a fee by movie studios) where material is changing constantly.

"There are plenty of surfers, but lots of online users actually go to the best sites over and over," Winders says. "Part of our job is getting them to come to our clients." Hard Work & Shoe Leather Of course, online marketing is much more than just playing around on a computer. In fact, it requires lots of hard work and old- fashioned shoe leather. A lot of IAA's activity involves using conventional marketing and PR to build traffic for new media.

For instance, last week Winders faxed news releases to 700 sports writers touting a new online sports book service. Comspan's Monday Night Madness site (designed by Animaniacs writer Nicholas Hollander), debuting yesterday, offers simulated wagering on pro football, using real odds culled from Vegas desks but without money changing hands. The goal, of course, is to drive sports junkies to the site (and, probably, to give bettors a way to test their skills without losing the deed to the house). Winders also hopes to sell subscriptions to the client's electronic service, The Expert's Newsletter.

Winders believes new media, properly used, can accommodate almost any marketing task. Even product placement, a specialty IAA hopes to develop soon. "If you've already got thousands of people hitting a site every day, why not put a product there, too?" he muses. "It can work, if you do it in the right context of the site.

Copyright Phillips Business Information Corporation Sep 5, 1995

THE 10 BIGGEST BLUNDERS THAT BUSINESSES MAKE ON THE WEB
By Jerry Lazar

In the mad rush to set up shop on the Web, businesses tend to make some common blunders. Here are the top 10:

1) Rushing in without a master plan.

Companies are so dazzled by the prospect of establishing a Web presence, that they lose sight of the original reasons for being there: Promoting product and/or service? Point-of-purchase sales transactions? Building a customer database? Soliciting customer feedback? Even though it's still difficult to assemble meaningful projections, it's still important to make a list of short- and long-term goals.
But don't go to the other extreme. It's better to experiment with a test site now, and make your mistakes while the medium is young and the audience still limited to a few million. Too many Websites are bottlenecked in committee meetings or stillborn while awaiting budget approval. A site can be established for a relatively small expenditure, and then tweaked and cultivated as needed. And thanks to the interactive nature of the medium, you'll know quickly what is and isn't working.
"You don't need to spend $100,000 to put up a homepage," says David Scott Lewis, president of Presence.
"You can get established and then build incrementally."

2) Appointing the wrong person to the task.

In too many corporate boardrooms, this week's VP of New Media is last week's marketing director who has never ventured past e-mail, if he's ever used a modem at all!
"Invariably, when people from the Old School get handed this job, they try to fit this new technology into the same old pigeon holes," says Ryan Bernard, founder of Wordmark Associates, a Web consultancy in Houston.
"They want to deliver their brochure over the Internet. What they really need to do is give customers a complete on-line transaction, from first peek to showroom tour to final handshake."
The solution: save money in the long run and subcontract Webdesign to the pros. "People who do not understand the mechanics of Web construction end up redoing their site endlessly until they finally get it right," says Bernard.
"They end up paying for it a dozen times. Why not just hire someone who knows what they're doing, and do it right the first time?"

3) Failing to research the competition.

Chances are, whatever you're promoting or selling, there are already hundreds of sites devoted to the identical product or service. "See what the standard is, and who's the pacesetter," advises Jim Wray, VP of WebNet Services.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 716 of 1793

But don't be discouraged. "Most Web sites going up now are really as a result of people trying to catch up," speculates Bernard. "They wake up one morning to discover that their strongest rivals are up on the Internet. Then they make the mistake of trying to ape the competition, rather than figuring out how they could do a better job." Presence's Lewis was approached by a computer company that requested a site that looked like IBM's. "We told them we'd rather kick butt than give them a clone site," he says, citing 3D data visualization and Video User Interface (VUI) as examples of impending technologies that can give new Websites a critical edge.

4) Not appreciating the unique interactive aspect of the medium.
"Many of the biggest companies still don't understand that it is not just a matter of slapping information up there with pretty pictures," says Wordmark's Bernard. "And just putting up a form does not really work unless the customer has some impetus to fill it out." But even those who comprehend that a Web page is not a display ad or a brochure still don't fully understand that interactivity is a two-way street. Soliciting customer feedback is only the first step. "Be prepared to respond to e-mail," warns Digital Planet CEO Paul Grand. "The first goal is to get the audience to respond to you, but then it's a big mistake if you don't follow through and respond to them." Or, as Jim Griffin, Geffen Records' director of information technology, advises: "Get your content on the Net, but also get the people in your company on the Net."

5) Being too commercial.

Internet protocol dictates that you supply free information and entertainment first, and then ask for the sale. "The clients I have that offer something free -- a sample of some software, a book chapter, a collection of recipes, a cut off an album -- have 2 to 3 times the hit level that [other] clients have," reports Eric Ward of NetPost. "The trick is to lure customers by providing non-commercial hooks: information and services that they vitally need," agrees Bernard. "A company selling industrial solvents might provide a generic solvent selection guide.
Also, use the proper tone of voice and personality. Be mindful of the fact that you're talking to a single individual. The best sites simulate a one-on-one conversation. Save the slick marketing hype for another medium. Don't be afraid to let down your corporate hair.

6) Disorganization.

You're competing with hundreds of thousands of webpages for a customer's attention. If he gets lost or confused, he's gone. Snazzy graphics will make your home page memorable, but the only sites that entice customers past the front door are those that obey the first commandment of webdesign: Content is King. And it better be easy to find. Make sure that the sale is never more than a click away. "If a



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 717 of 1793

customer can't navigate easily," notes Lewis, "he won't stick around." Most importantly, says Bob Novick of Impulse Research, "Your product or service should be the 'hero' of your site; you should be promoting and enhancing what you have to offer, not detracting from it."

7) Using unnecessarily large graphics.

The single most frequently heard complaint is that those hefty GIFs take way too long to download, forcing visitors to beat a hasty retreat. "Simple, crisp, attractive icons are the way to go," instructs Stuart Halperin, Hollywood Online's executive vp of marketing. Webmedia director Steve Bowbrick blames designers whose oversized egos belie an insensitivity to the medium. "It is quite possible to create compelling, graphically-rich pages without squeezing monolithic, square graphics down ill-suited channels," he says.

8) Not supplying sufficient reason to return.

Sites that fail to constantly update and revise their material run the risk of quickly becoming flame bait. "Spotlight 'What's New' and 'Coming Attractions' with special icons," advises Mark Kelly, marketing director of DirectNet, a Los Angeles Web provider and server. "The most successful Web sites are like magazines," adds Bernard. "People go there to get the latest news about a particular set of products or a particular market. The customers will know they can always learn something new." Paul Grand says that he strives to freshen his sites "at least every three weeks."

9) Forgetting to promote your Website, on and off the Net.

Negotiate reciprocal links with compatible sites, submit your site to Web directories, judiciously post notices in appropriate Usenet Groups, alert the trade and consumer press. And tout your site in all your corporate literature, and on your packaging. "There are so many ways to build awareness" says Eric Ward. "There are at least 100 sites that will give you a free link, from Yahoo or Infoseek to BizWeb. I find new ones everyday. Then there are magazines, both e-zines and print, all over the world. Every one of them needs stuff to write about. Why not about you?" Jim Wray offers one caveat: "You don't want to get press too soon, so make sure your site's ready before you publicize it."

10) Overlooking the fact that it's a global medium.

"There are Web pages now in French, Italian, Mandarin, and Czechoslovakian," observes Bernard. Accordingly, counsels DirectNet's Mark Kelly, "Offer translations of your contents in several languages. Make it possible for the remote user to click on a choice in their native tongue." Ross Veitch, of the Australian Tourist Commission, says he perceives "a need to provide a certain amount of content targeted at specific nationalities." He foresees accomplishing this by



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 718 of 1793

having users select customized mirror sites that "carry a certain amount of local content on top of a core of global content that would be [universally] replicated."

The biggest mistake of all, of course, is not to establish a Web presence. There's too much potential reward for such small risk. "We're not talking $50,000 in print costs," scoffs Jim Wray. "Corporations can gain from this technology if they are willing to look at it as more than just a simple marketing tool," says Bernard. "They need to think of it as an environment that can enhance communications both externally and internally between employees, customers, suppliers, and dealers."
If you build it, customers will come. "It's like putting a piece of cake on the balcony of a fourteenth-floor highrise," jokes Jim Griffin. "You'll be saying, 'How did all these ants get here?' " "It's raining, and you want to get water in your bucket," notes Wray, employing another metaphor. "Where do you put the bucket? It doesn't matter! Just put it somewhere... I haven't heard a bad idea for the Web yet."

Jerry Lazar, a veteran magazine editor and TV producer, is president of Lazar Productions, a Los Angeles-based Web consulting company.

Adapted from Interactive Age, May 22, 1995. Copyright 1995, Lazar Productions.

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Original article loacted at:
http://www.gigaplex.com/10top/10blund.htm
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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 719 of 1793

Jump to Navigation | Jump to Content

- Home
- Calendar
- Committees
- Contact the Division
- Sponsors
- Periodicals
- Publications
- Resources

General Practice, Solo & Small Firm DivisionMagazine

**Volume 17, Number 6**
**September 2000**

**PRACTICE MANAGEMENT**

## SITE PLAN 12 STEPS TO PROMOTING YOUR WEBSITE

*By Dennis M. Kennedy*

Even the greatest website in the world does you no good if no one visits it. It's what you do after you publish the site that will determine its ultimate success. Follow these 12 steps to create a strategic plan for promoting you law firm's website.

*1. Determine Your Purpose.* Your plan to promote your website begins with a basic question: Why do you have the site? Your answer will help you define your target audience and suggest the level of promotional efforts needed.

*2. Set Goals.* Your goals should be specific, well defined, and attainable. Websites can be used to market services or products directly. Other valuable uses include streamlining client intake and support, providing technical legal information, and reducing the costs of printing and postage for brochures and other marketing information. Goals can change over time, but they will help you create a framework for your promotional efforts. Goal number one will be finding the best ways to reach your target audience.

*3. Put the Plan in Writing.* Promoting your website is a continuing process that will



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 720 of 1793

evolve after a number of false starts. You will need to develop some checklists and logs of what you have done and plan to do to promote the site. Take notes on how well each strategy has worked. A written record of this information will help you avoid duplicating your efforts and will give you a road map for promoting new sites you may develop.

*4. Choose Your Domain Name Wisely.* Web searchers typically will try the most obvious domain name (www.yourlawfirm .com.) to find your site before they resort to search engines or other finding techniques. If you do not choose a good domain name, you will make it unnecessarily difficult for people to find your site. Don't use non-intuitive names such as initials familiar only to insiders in your firm. Try to get a first-level domain name (www.yourlawfirm .com), and avoid long, unwieldy Web addresses with second- or third-level names. Many law firms today use the common name of the firm or the common name with "law" added. There is also a bit of a trend toward more creative domain names, like www.visalaw.com for an immigration law firm.

*5. List Your Site Effectively in Search Engines.* The highest-quality traffic probably will not come from search engines, but being findable with a search engine is nonetheless important. Many visitors will find your website by using a search engine such as AltaVista, Hotbot, Excite or Google-but sometimes for unexpected reasons. Your website will not appear magically in a search engine index. As a general rule, you must affirmatively add your site to an index. Usually, you can do this simply by clicking an "Add URL" button at the bottom of most search engine home sites and submitting the requested information. You also need to design your site and promote it so that someone performing a keyword search on a topic will be directed to your site. Keep your target audience in mind. There are many ways to enhance your findability with search engines. Visit www. searchenginewatch.com for an eye-opening lesson in how search engines operate.

*6.* List Your Site in Direc-tories and Finding Lists. There are other, better ways to reach your target audience. These include directories such as FindLaw (www.findlaw.com) and Catalaw (www.catalaw.com). You can get your site included on a specialized list of sites relating to a given legal topic or practice area. This technique narrows the scope of your promotion and helps you attract Web users specifically interested in your topic.

*7. Consider Reciprocal Links and Targeted Web Advertising.* If you do your homework before you publish your site, you will find several excellent websites and lists of resources that can be linked with your site. The real utility of the Web comes from these lists of hyperlinked sites. The easiest way to get your site linked from a site you like is simply to ask the site's webmaster to add a link (generally, they will



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 721 of 1793

ask you to add a reciprocal link on your site).

*8. Use Offline Tools.* Excellent, focused promotions of your site can come from both Web and non-Web efforts. Telling existing clients about your website is an important first step. Put the address of your site on your business card and stationery and in telephone directories. Announce the debut of your site with a special mailing, including e-mail. Even on the Internet, nothing works better than word of mouth. Tell your clients, employees, colleagues, and friends about your site. Press releases and biographies in articles and seminar materials can also publicize your site.

*9. Obtain Favorable Mentions.* People are eight times more likely to believe a recommendation from an independent source than they are to believe an advertisement. An excellent way to promote your website is to secure favorable mentions from independent sources. This requires that you have good content, design, or something else that will earn favorable reviews. Enhance your prospects of favorable publicity by sending e-mail to columnists and other journalists who write on Internet topics.

10. Continue Your Promotional Efforts. Law firms often put a lot of effort into promoting the rollout of a website, but then neglect to follow up with other promotional efforts. A key aspect of promotion is achieving and sustaining good momentum. Monitor what's happening. You might get a great placement in a search engine and then find a few months later that your website has fallen in priority. If you are adding content regularly and updating the graphic design of your site, it makes good sense to focus on promotional efforts at the same time. Promotion is as important as updating content.

*11. Evaluate Your Results Regularly.* Simple hit counters are inadequate to help with promotional efforts and indicate a certain lack of Web sophistication to many Internet users. Sophisticated Web traffic reports can be supplied as part of your website hosting arrangement. You can learn fascinating things about the flow of traffic into and through your site and study the success of different promotion techniques. The number of subscribers to e-mail newsletters available at your site is an excellent indicator of the number of quality visits. Use this information to reinforce existing sources of traffic and to help find new locations for reciprocal links or advertising.

*12. Go Back to Item No. 1.* Do you still have the same reason for maintaining a website? Like content and design, your promotional efforts will evolve as you learn and as new techniques become available. A written plan will help you focus your marketing efforts and improve them on an ongoing basis. Checklists can be especially helpful. A promotional plan can put you well ahead of many other law firms that have websites. It can give you an important competitive advantage and help you



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 722 of 1793

connect with the audience you want to find.

*Dennis M. Kennedy practices computer and Internet law at Thompson Coburn LLP in St. Louis, Missouri.*

*This article is an abridged and edited version of one that originally appeared on page 40 of Law Practice Management, March 2000 (26:2).*

Back to Top

< /



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 723 of 1793

Espacenet

# Bibliographic data: KR20000012595 (A) — 2000-03-06

## METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DIRECTLY FORWARDING SERVICE

No documents available for this priority number.


**Inventor(s):** LEE MAN KYUN [KR] ± (LEE, MAN KYUN)

**Applicant(s):** WEBEASY CORP [KR] ± (WEBEASY CORPORATION)



**Classification:** **- international:** ***G06F15/00;*** (IPC1-7): G06F15/00
**- cooperative:**

**Application number:** KR19990057368 19991214

**Priority number(s):** KR19990057368 19991214


### Abstract of KR20000012595 (A)


PURPOSE: A method and apparatus for directly forwarding service are provided, which directly inputs a sub item, a home page of a special web site, a special page, or service name and connects a service which provides an information desired by a user. CONSTITUTION: An apparatus for directly forwarding service comprises: a plurality of client machines (11, 12); object units (21) to be linked with a home page of a special web site for providing various information or a service to client machines (11, 12); and link server units (40,50) for connecting client machines (11, 12) with the object unit (21), including a web server (30) for receiving a web address including a domain name and a link name, a link name database server (51) for storing registering information, a request blocker (41) for judging whether the domain name and the link name are suitable to a defined format, and an application server (42) for detecting an object from the link name database server (51) to directly link a corresponding web address. Thereby, corresponding information is instantly provided to a internet user.


Last updated: 11.12.2013 Worldwide Database 5.8.16.10; 93p



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 724 of 1793

Espacenet

## Bibliographic data: JPH10162029 (A) — 1998-06-19

# AUTOMATIC LINKING METHOD FOR INDEX DATA AND VIDEO DATA IN RETRIEVAL SYSTEM

No documents available for this priority number.

**Inventor(s):** RI BINSAI ± (RI BINSAI)

**Applicant(s):** DAEWOO ELECTRON CO LTD ± (DAEWOO ELECTRON CO LTD)

**Classification:** **- international:** ***G06F12/00; G06F17/30;*** (IPC1-7): G06F12/00; G06F17/30

**- cooperative:**

**Application number:** JP19970140033 19970529

**Priority number(s):** KR19960059818 19961129

**Also published as:** KR100355458 (B1)

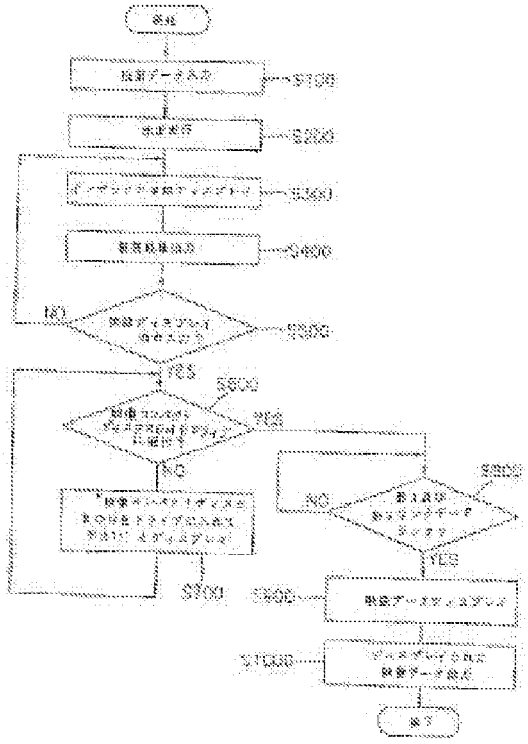
## Abstract of JPH10162029 (A)

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To obtain an automatic linking method for index data and video data in a retrieval system by constituting linked video data of drawings, etc., recorded on a 2nd recording medium at a stage of output when 1st and 2nd link data are linked to each other. SOLUTION: Retrieval data is inputted and a control part excuter a retrieval procedure (S100, S200). An index catalogue included in a retrieval result is displayed, and when one is selected, a corresponding retrieval result is recorded (S300, S400). A control part judges whether or not a video display instruction has been inputted (S500) and when it has been inputted, the control part judges whether or not a video compact disk ROM has been loaded in a drive (S600). When it has been loaded, the control part judges whether or not 1st link data on a 1st recording medium is linked with 2nd link data on a 2nd recording medium (S800) and when it is linked, the linked video data on the 2nd recording medium is displayed (S900).

Last updated: 11.12.2013 Worldwide Database 5.8.15.10; 93p



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 725 of 1793





TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 726 of 1793

Espacenet

# Bibliographic data: JPH10301911 (A) — 1998-11-13

## NETWORK COMPUTER SYSTEM LED BY CLIENT AND ITS METHOD

No documents available for this priority number.

**Inventor(s):** HARA HIROTAKA; MATSUZUKA TAKAHIDE; KANETANI NOBUYUKI; OKUBO TAKAO; UEHARA SANPACHI ± (HARA HIROTAKA, ; MATSUZUKA TAKAHIDE, ; KANETANI NOBUYUKI, ; OKUBO TAKAO, ; UEHARA SANPACHI)

**Applicant(s):** FUJITSU LTD ± (FUJITSU LTD)

**Classification:** **- international:** ***G06F13/00; G06F15/00; G06F9/46; G06F9/48; H04L29/06; H04L29/08;*** (IPC1-7): G06F13/00; G06F15/163
**- cooperative:** **G06F9/465**; **H04L29/06**; **H04L67/1002**; H04L67/42

**Application number:** JP19970112781 19970430

**Priority number(s):** JP19970112781 19970430

**Also published as:** JP3652834 (B2) US6199111 (B1) EP0856790 (A2) EP0856790 (A3) EP0856790 (B1)

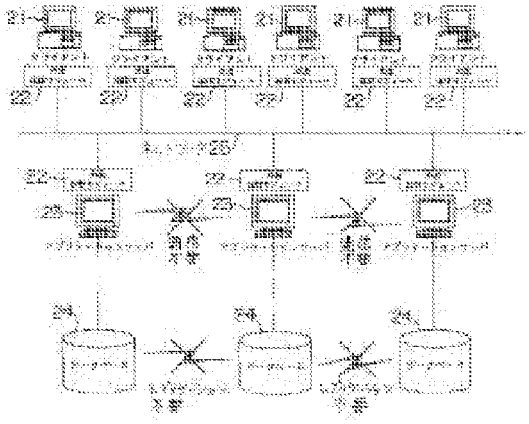
## Abstract of JPH10301911 (A)

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To easily execute the updating and addition of information in a distributed client-server system. SOLUTION: Each client 21 can be connected to an optional server 23 by using a common communication module 22 and is allowed to utilize the functions of respective servers 23 and access the information of respective data bases 24 by switching its connection. Thereby it is basically unnecessary to execute communication between servers 23 and replication between data bases 24.

Last updated: 11.12.2013 Worldwide Database 5.8.15.10; 93p

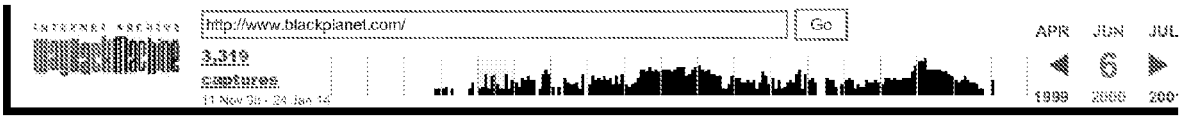


TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 727 of 1793





TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 728 of 1793





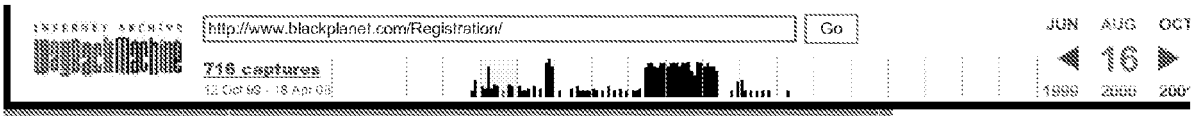


For the best viewing experience and use of all functionality, we recommend using Netscape 4.0

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 729 of 1793




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# membership profile

WELCOME TO THE HOME FOR BLACK AMERICA'S ONLINE COMMUNITY

**Username and Password Rules**

A USERNAME is your online persona. Use your own name, or create something that expresses another side of you. Your PASSWORD is your personal key to BlackPlanet.com.

Use only letters, numbers, dashes(-), or underscores(_). Do not use blank spaces. You must use at least three characters. You cannot change your username, so choose carefully.

**Age Restriction**

BlackPlanet.com is not directed to children under the age of 13. BlackPlanet.com will prohibit registration by and will not knowingly collect personally identifiable information from anyone under 13.

**Personal Information Display**

Please check the items you WANT SHOWN on your personal page.

- [x] Age
- [x] Zodiac Sign
- [ ] Real Name
- [ ] Income
- [x] Gender
- [ ] Sexual Orientation

**Fill out the information below to become a member and create your Personal Page on BlackPlanet.com.**

We will not provide your personal information to third parties. Check out our Terms of Service and Privacy Policy for more info.

## Member Account Information

Accounts created under sexually explicit or profane user names will be closed.

**Username**

**Password** (Max: 8 Characters)

**Retype Password**

## General Account Information

**First Name**

**Last Name**

**E-mail**

**For U.S. & Canada Residents**

**State/Province** Select One

**Zip Code**

**For Non-U.S. & Canada Residents**

**Province**

**Country** Select One

**Postal Code**

## Profile Information

**Gender** Select One

**Date of Birth** Month Day 19 Ex: 1975

**Relationship Status** Select One

**Sexual Orientation** Select One

**Household Income** Select One

**Number of Children** Select One

**Highest Education Level Completed** (This will not be displayed) Select One

**College** Select One

**Other**

**Year of Graduation** 19 Ex:1975

**Job Industry** Select One

**Occupation** Select One

## Referral

You will get 5 Member Points every time someone you refer visits BlackPlanet.com. You can trade in Member Points for prizes, and more! Enter the e-mail addresses of friends below:

**BlackPlanet.com Community Standards**

We endorse freedom of expression on BlackPlanet.com, and make it our duty to create an experience everyone can participate in and enjoy, including parents and children. In order to serve all our members, our community standards require that BlackPlanet.com remain free of profanity, pornography and derogatory material.

We encourage members to engage in friendly, positive interaction. To learn more about the BlackPlanet.com community standards, please read our Terms of Service.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061

## Interests and Background

Check all that apply.

**Race**
- Black
- Asian
- Latino
- Native American
- White

**Recreation/Hobbies**
- Activism
- Cars/Motorcycles
- Computers
- Eating Out
- Musical Instruments
- Pet Owner
- Shopping
- Travel
- Video Games
- Web Surfing
- Writing

**Sports**
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Cricket
- Football
- Golf
- Hockey
- Martial Arts
- Skiing
- Soccer
- Tennis
- Volleyball

**Music Tastes**
- Alternative
- Caribbean/Reggae
- Classical
- Country Western
- Dance
- Hip Hop/Rap
- Jazz/Blues
- Latin
- Pop
- R&B
- Rock
- World Music

**Arts**
- Architecture
- Fashion
- Film/Movies
- Fine Arts
- Literature
- Performing Arts
- Photography
- Urban Arts

**News**
- Beauty/Fashion
- Business
- Culture
- Current Events
- Entertainment
- Health
- Investing
- Politics
- Technology

**Other Interests**
(Please separate multiple interests with commas.)

Submit All Entries



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 731 of 1793

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# BlackPlanet.com

THE WORLD IS YOURS

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Community Connect Inc. ("CCI") encourages and promotes BlackPlanet.com as an environment that fosters interaction and participation among its members. Members should thus feel free to express themselves. However, members should keep comments and contributions within the community values of the Service and must comply with applicable laws and the terms of service of BlackPlanet.com. BlackPlanet.com is a private service, provided by CCI to you ("Member"), subject to the terms of service, and other terms that may be published from time to time on BlackPlanet.com. BlackPlanet.com currently is provided as a free service to any member who agrees to abide by the terms of service. CCI reserves the right to change the nature of this relationship at any time. CCI may change, suspend or discontinue the Service or any other aspect of the Service, at any time without prior notice to members. CCI may also impose limits on certain features or services contained in the Service without prior notice.

**MEMBERS WHO VIOLATE THE TERMS OF SERVICE MAY PERMANENTLY BE BANNED FROM USING BLACKPLANET.COM.COM.**

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**[Content and Conduct]**

Software files, text, sounds or otherwise transmitted, posted, linked or uploaded on or through BlackPlanet.com ("Content") by members should not be abusive, defamatory, obscene, fraudulent, in violation of applicable laws, or otherwise offensive to other Members.

You may transmit, post, link or upload software files, text, sounds or otherwise on or through BlackPlanet.com that is not subject to any patent, trademark, copyright or other proprietary rights ("Rights"), or Content in which any holder of Rights has given you express authorization for distribution on BlackPlanet.com. By submitting Content to any part of BlackPlanet.com you automatically grant, or warrant that the owner of such Content has expressly granted, BlackPlanet.com a royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, worldwide, non-exclusive right and license to use, reproduce, modify, adapt, publish, translate, create derivative works from, distribute, perform, transmit and display such Content (in whole or part) and/or to incorporate it in other works in any form, media, or technology now known or later developed for the full term of any Rights that may exist in such Content.

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061

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You and any person who have access to the Service must evaluate, and bear the risk associated with, the accuracy, completeness or usefulness of any Content. CCI does not pre-screen Content as a matter of policy, but CCI reserves the right, but not the responsibility, to remove Content which is deemed in CCI's sole discretion harmful, offensive, inaccurate or otherwise in violation of the terms of service or any rules or policies CCI has in place at the time.

You or CCI may terminate the Service at any time for any reason. Once your access to the Service is terminated, you cannot engage in the Service in any manner or for any reason without the express written consent of CCI, and you cannot assist in enabling a terminated member access to BlackPlanet.com via your Account.

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CCI respects the intellectual property of others, and we ask you to do the same. CCI is in compliance with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. In order to protect the intellectual property of people from misuse we ask you to help us. If you believe that your work has been copied in a way that constitutes copyright infringement and is accessible on BlackPlanet.com, please provide CCI's Copyright Agent the following information:

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**2.** A description of the copyrighted work that you claim has been infringed including the URL (i.e., Internet address) or other specific location on the BlackPlanet.com where the material that you claim is infringing is located, including enough information to allow us to locate the material and why you believe an infringement has taken place.

**3.** A description of the location where the original or an authorized copy of the copyrighted work exists, for example the URL (i.e., Internet address) where it is posted or the name of the book in which it has been published.

**4.** Your address, telephone number, and email address.

**5.** A statement by you that you have a good faith belief that the disputed use is not authorized by the copyright owner, its agent, or the law.

**6.** A statement by you made under penalty of perjury, that the information in your Notice is accurate and that you are the copyright



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 733 of 1793

owner or authorized to act on the copyright owner's behalf.

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General Counsel and Copyright Agent
c/o BlackPlanet.com
494 Broadway, 4th floor
New York, NY 10012
By fax: 212.431.3254
By email: copyright@mail.communityconnect.com

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061

**1.** Post, transmit, promote, or distribute content that is illegal.

**2.** Transmit or facilitate distribution of content that is libelous, harmful, threatening, harassing, abusive, racially or ethnically offensive, vulgar, sexually explicit, obscene, defamatory, or objectionable in a reasonable person's view.

**3.** Pretend to be anyone whom you are not. You may not impersonate another member, a CCI staff member, or anyone else.

**4.** Attempt to get a password, other account information, or other private information from a member, or harvest email addresses or other information.

**5.** Post any unsolicited advertising, promotional materials, or any other forms of solicitation.

Pornography, obscenities, and defamatory postings are not allowed anywhere on BlackPlanet.com. Postings of this kind will be removed immediately, and a violation will be issued to the Member responsible for the posting (several violations will result in the termination of your account). If you see any pornographic, obscene or defamatory postings, please Alert Us immediately.

Usernames that contain obscene words, derogatory or racist remarks, or references to sexual acts or sexual anatomy are not allowed on BlackPlanet.com. Usernames of this kind will be deleted immediately upon discovery. If you see a Username that contains obscene, racist or derogatory references, please Alert Us immediately.

In the Forums area, please try to keep your postings relevant to the discussion. Postings that are irrelevant to Forum discussions, or that are designed to promote personal pages, voting polls, or third parties may be removed. If you see postings that contain foul language or that are intended to harass other Members, please Alert Us immediately.

Intentional disruption of the flow of content or discussion by repeatedly posting the same message or image or posting excessively large images is not permitted. Members who cause disruption of this kind will be issued a violation that can result in the termination of their account. If you see another Member disrupting a chat room or forum discussion, please Alert Us immediately.

Harassment of another BlackPlanet.com member via Notes, Email, Pages, or postings is not permitted. Harassment means: saying bad things about them; sending them unwanted messages; attacking their race, heritage, etc. Unsolicited "spam" messages are also not permitted unless expressly authorized by the recipient. While we encourage you to introduce yourself to other Members, please respect their wishes if they do not want you to send them mail. If you feel that another Member is harassing you, please Alert Us by filling out a member violation report.

Please remember that not everyone likes being put on a Friend's list. Please comply with a Member's wishes if they request to be removed from your Friend's list. As a Member, you have the right to refuse being saved to someone else's Friend's list. If another Member refuses to remove you from their Friend's list, please Alert Us and we will remove your name for you.

We can, whenever we want, edit or delete any content displayed, uploaded to, distributed, or otherwise published through the Service.

We reserve the right to remove content at any time, including any content that violates these standards. We are not responsible for any objectionable material you may encounter while using the Service.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 735 of 1793

## PRIVACY POLICY

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CCI wants all members to have the freedom to express themselves, however at the same time, CCI wants all members to feel secure.

The following BlackPlanet.com Policy demonstrates our intent and commitment to protect member's rights online.

**A.** Profile information will be used to create personalized content, service, and advertise on BlackPlanet.com. CCI may also use your profile to generate aggregate reports and market research.

**B.** All profile data stored by BlackPlanet.com has been entered solely by the respective member.

**C.** Members can modify registration data associated with their account, and can control selected private information from being disclosed on their member page.

**D.** Communication transcripts of online chats are not retained except for scheduled chat sessions.

**E.** BlackPlanet.com mail communications are only accessible by the designated recipients, except that CCI personnel involved in maintenance of the system may have access to BlackPlanet.com mail communications.

Personally identifying information, or personal information, includes your name, home or other address (like the school you attend), email address, or any other information that tells another person who you are. When you register as an BlackPlanet.com Member, we ask for some personal information such as your email address.

Our policy regarding this information is simple: Except as provided in this statement, CCI will not disclose, sell nor rent any of the registration information you provide without giving you notice and an opportunity to refuse disclosure. We make an effort to include a link to this Privacy Policy wherever we ask you for personal information.

We also collect other information at registration such as your birthday, city where you live, hobbies, and interests. This information cannot be used to identify you. We place this information in your BlackPlanet.com profile, which is publicly available so that other Members who share your interests can connect with you.

Some of our services, such as BlackPlanet.com email and LiveTalk are offered in conjunction with partner companies. In order to provide these services, we must disclose certain information to our partners including your BlackPlanet.com username and email address. Our content partners may also ask you for some additional personal information. Our partners are all upstanding companies that will treat your personal information responsibly. But, since we don't own these companies, we can't speak for them on privacy issues.

Other companies also may sponsor promotions, contests and sweepstakes running on BlackPlanet.com. These companies may choose to collect personal information from you. If you don't want your information collected by these sponsors, you can decide not to participate in the promotion, contest or sweepstakes. You should be aware that our advertisers or Web sites that have links on BlackPlanet.com may collect personally identifiable information about



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 736 of 1793

you. This privacy statement does not address the information practices of those Web sites or advertisers.

One last thing to keep in mind: Whenever you voluntarily disclose personal information on forums, through email, or in chat areas, that information can be collected and used by others. If you post personal information in public places, others may send you unsolicited email messages.

Always be smart about the information you provide online.

Finally, we may disclose Member information when we are required to by law, or when have reason to believe that someone is causing injury to or interference with our rights or property, other BlackPlanet.com Members, or anyone else that could be harmed by such activities.

Your BlackPlanet.com profile is password-protected so that you and only you have access to this information. In order to maintain this protection, do not give your password to anyone. Also, we recommend that, if you share your computer with other people, you sign out of your BlackPlanet.com Account and close your browser window when you are done. Signing off will protect your information if you share a computer with someone else or are using a computer in a public place like a library.

We make every effort to ensure that your information is secure on our system. Unfortunately, no data transmission over the Internet can be guaranteed to be 100% secure. As a result, we cannot guarantee the security of any information you transmit to us, and you do so at your own risk.

**[Cookies]**

In our effort to provide you services customized to your interests, we use cookies to keep and sometimes track information about you. A cookie is a small piece of data that is sent to your browser from a Web server and stored on your computer's hard drive. We use cookies to: access your account information (stored on our computers) in order to deliver better and more personalized services; estimate our audience size for our advertisers; track the number of entries in our promotions, sweepstakes and contests; identify which areas of BlackPlanet.com you have visited. You should also be aware that companies that advertise on BlackPlanet.com might use their own cookies. This privacy policy does not cover how these companies use their cookies.

**[Age Restriction]**

BlackPlanet.com is not directed to children under the age of 13. After April 20, 2000, BlackPlanet.com will prohibit registration by and will not knowingly collect personally identifiable information from anyone under 13.

This restriction will be posted at points of data collection within BlackPlanet.com, such as registration for services.

Note to Parents: If you have any concerns about BlackPlanet.com or its related services, wish to find out if your child is a member of one of our services, or wish to cancel your child's membership, please contact us at memberservices@mail.blackplanet.com.

**BlackPlanet.com is your black community online. The BlackPlanet.com Terms of Service is our "social contract" of member interaction.**

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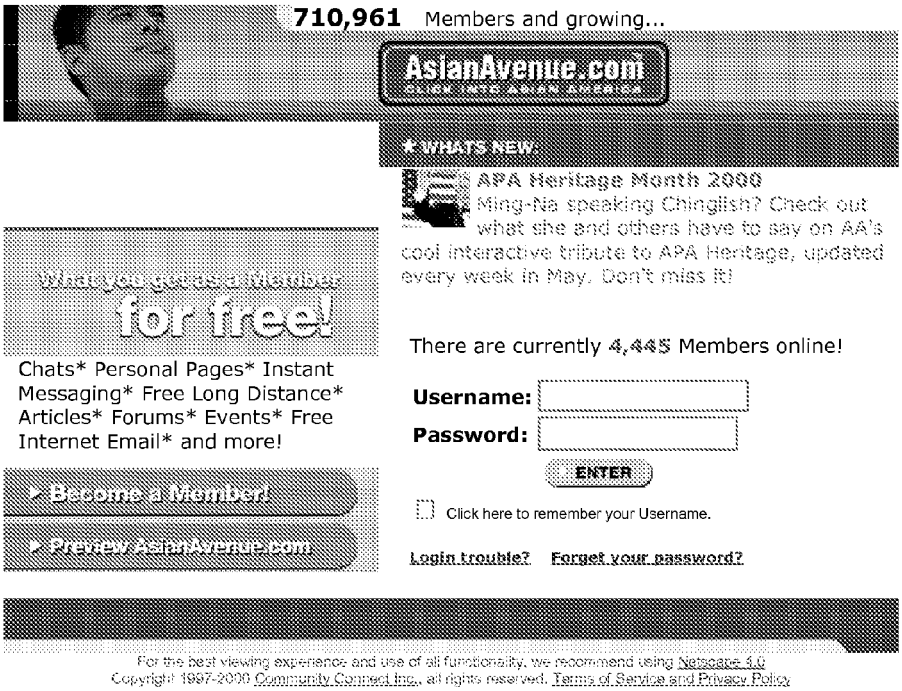
TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 737 of 1793





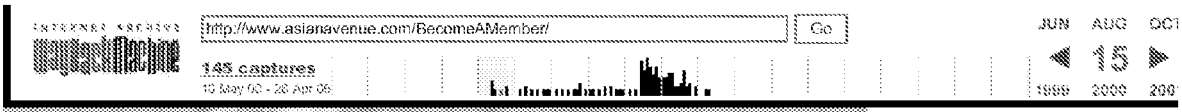
TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 738 of 1793

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061




AsianAvenue.com

# My Profile

IT'S FREE AND EASY.

Just fill this out and you're ready to go!

We will not provide your personal information to third parties. Check out our Terms of Service and Privacy Policy for more info.

## MEMBER ACCOUNT INFORMATION

Accounts created under sexually explicit or profane user names will be closed.

**Username**

**Password** (Max: 8 Characters)

**Retype Password**

## GENERAL ACCOUNT INFORMATION

**First Name**

**Last Name**

**Email**

***For U.S. & Canada Residents***

**State/Province** Select One

**Zip Code**

***For Non-U.S. & Canada Residents***

**Province**

**Country** Select One

**Postal Code**

## PROFILE INFORMATION

**Gender** Select One

**Date of Birth** Month Day 19 Ex: 1975

**Relationship Status** Select One

**Household Income** Select One (This will not be displayed)

**Highest Education Level Completed** Select One

**College** Never attended

**Year of Graduation** 19 Ex:1975

**Job Industry** Select One

**Occupation** Select One

## REFERRAL

You will get 5 Member Points every time someone you refer visits AsianAvenue.com. You can trade in Member Points for prizes, and more! Enter the Email addresses of friends below:

## INTERESTS AND BACKGROUND (Check all that apply.)

Username and Password Rules

A **USERNAME** is your online persona. Use your own name, or create something that expresses another side of you. Your **PASSWORD** is your personal key to AsianAvenue.com.

Use only letters, numbers, dashes(-), or underscores(_). Do not use blank spaces. You must use at least three characters. You cannot change your username, so choose carefully.

Age Restriction

AsianAvenue.com is not directed to children under the age of 13. AsianAvenue.com will prohibit registration by and will not knowingly collect personally identifiable information from anyone under 13.

Personal Information Display

Please check the items you WANT SHOWN on your personal page:

- [x] Age
- [ ] Real Name



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061

**Ethnicity**
- Burmese
- Cambodian
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Hmong
- Indian
- Indonesian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Laotian
- Malay
- Pacific Islander
- Pakistani
- Singaporean
- Taiwanese
- Thai
- Vietnamese
- Other

**Lifestyle**
- Kid
- Teen
- College
- Graduate Student
- Young Professional
- Parent
- Senior
- Gay/Bisexual

**Music Tastes**
- Alternative
- Asian Pop
- Classical
- Country Western
- Dance
- Hip Hop/Rap
- Jazz/Blues
- Reggae
- Rock & Roll

**Arts**
- Architecture
- Fashion
- Film/Movies
- Fine Arts
- Literature
- Performing Arts
- Photography

**News**
- Business
- Culture
- Current Events
- Entertainment
- Health
- Investing
- Politics
- Technology

**Sports**
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Football
- Golf
- Hockey
- Martial Arts
- Soccer
- Tennis
- Volleyball

**Recreation/Hobbies**
- Cars/Motorcycles
- Computers
- Eating Out
- Musical Instruments
- Shopping
- Travel
- Video Games
- Web Surfing
- Writing

**OTHER INTERESTS** (Please separate multiple interests with commas.)

**ORGANIZATIONS YOU BELONG TO** (to multiple select press Control or Shift key)

None/Not Listed
AAA Berkeley
AAA-Columbia University
ACT-TUFTS
APALSA-Cardozo

Submit All Entries



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 741 of 1793

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- Content and Conduct
- Copyright Regulations
- General
- NETIQUETTE

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 742 of 1793

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AsianAvenue.com may terminate your access to the Service at any time for any reason. Once your access to the Service is terminated, you cannot engage in the Service in any manner or for any reason without the express written consent of AsianAvenue.com, and you cannot assist in enabling a terminated member access to the Service via your Account.

[ back to top ]

**Copyright Regulations**

Everything you see or read on the Service is owned by us or used with permission. You may not copy, use, or retransmit anything for the Service without our express written permission. Furthermore, you are not allowed to post or distribute any material you do not own or which you do not have permission to use. Violation of this policy may result in copyright, trademark, or other intellectual property rights violation and subject you to civil or criminal penalties.

AsianAvenue.com respects the intellectual property of others, and we ask you to do the same. AsianAvenue.com is in compliance with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. In order to protect the intellectual property of people from misuse we ask you to help us. If you believe that your work has been copied in a way that constitutes copyright infringement and is accessible on the Service, please provide AsianAvenue.com's Copyright Agent the following information:

**1.** An electronic or physical signature of the owner of the copyright or of the person authorized to act on behalf of the owner of the copyright interest.

**2.** A description of the copyrighted work that you claim has been infringed including the URL (i.e., Internet address) or other specific location on the Service where the material that you claim is infringing is


TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 743 of 1793

located, including enough information to allow us to locate the material and why you believe an infringement has taken place.

**3.** A description of the location where the original or an authorized copy of the copyrighted work exists, for example the URL (i.e., Internet address) where it is posted or the name of the book in which it has been published.

**4.** Your address, telephone number, and email address.

**5.** A statement by you that you have a good faith belief that the disputed use is not authorized by the copyright owner, its agent, or the law.

**6.** A statement by you made under penalty of perjury, that the information in your Notice is accurate and that you are the copyright owner or authorized to act on the copyright owner's behalf.

AsianAvenue.com's Copyright Agent for Notice of claims of copyright infringement can be reached as follows:

**Copyright Agent**
**c/o AsianAvenue.com**
**494 Broadway, 4th floor**
**New York, NY 10012**
**By fax: 212.431.3254**
**By email: copyright@mail.asianavenue.com**

[ back to top ]

**General**

These Terms of Service constitute the entire understanding of you and AsianAvenue.com with respect to the subject matter hereof. There are no understandings, agreements, conditions or representations, oral or written, express or implied, with reference to the subject matter hereof that are not merged herein, expressly referenced herein, or superseded hereby.

Nothing contained in these Terms of Service shall be construed as creating any agency, partnership, joint venture or other form of joint enterprise between you and AsianAvenue.com.

The provisions of these Terms of Service are independent of each other and the invalidity of any provision or a portion thereof shall not affect the validity or enforceability of any other provision. In the event that any particular provision is found to be invalid or unenforceable, such provision shall be deemed to have been replaced with a valid and enforceable provision that approximates as closely as possible the intent of you and AsianAvenue.com as reflected in the original provision.

Any delay or failure on the part of AsianAvenue.com to enforce any rights hereunder to which it may be entitled shall not be construed as a waiver of the right and privilege to do so at any subsequent time.

You indemnify and hold harmless AsianAvenue.com, and the officers, directors, employees, partners, principals, agents and representatives of AsianAvenue.com, from, against and in respect of any and all demands, claims, actions or causes of action, liabilities, losses, and expenses, including reasonable attorneys' fees, arising out of or relating to any breach by you of any covenant, representation or warranty made pursuant to these Terms of Service.

All provisions which must survive in order to give effect to their meaning, shall survive any expiration or termination of these Terms of Service, including without limitation all of your representations, warranties and


TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 744 of 1793

indemnification obligations.

The Terms of Service shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of New York, without regard to conflict of laws principles. You and AsianAvenue.com consent to the exclusive jurisdiction and venue of the state and federal courts located in New York County for resolution of any and all disputes arising out of or related to the Terms of Service.

**Limitation of Liability**

To the full extent permissible under the applicable law, AsianAvenue.com shall not be liable for any direct, indirect, incidental, special or consequential damages resulting from the use or inability to use the Service.

In no event shall AsianAvenue.com have any liability for any incidental, consequential, or indirect damages (including, but not limited to, damages relating to loss of business, profits, goodwill, data, programs or information, and the like) arising out of the use of or inability to use the Service or any information, advice, or services provided on or downloaded from the Service or accessed on the Internet from the Service, even if advised of the possibility of such damages and regardless of the cause of action under which such damages are sought, including, without limitation, breach of contract, negligence or other tort. Because some states do not allow the exclusion of implied warranties or the limitation of liability for sequential or incidental damages, the above exclusions and limitations may not apply to you. In such states, AsianAvenue.com's liability is limited to the greatest extent permitted by law.

The Service contains links to third-party World Wide Web sites and other resources. AsianAvenue.com assumes no responsibility for the availability or content of these outside sites and resources. Therefore, any concerns a member may have regarding any other site should be directed to the relevant site administrator or Webmaster.

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 745 of 1793

convenience only.

**Privacy**

Community Connect Inc. ("AsianAvenue.com") believes that communities can only truly be built through interaction and participation among community Members based on trust, privacy and freedom of expression.

AsianAvenue.com wants all Members to have the freedom to express themselves, however at the same time, AsianAvenue.com wants all Members to feel secure.

The following Privacy Policy demonstrates our intent and commitment to protect Members' rights online.

**A.** Profile information will be used to create personalized content, service, and advertise on the Service. AsianAvenue.com may also use your profile to generate aggregate reports and market research.

**B.** All profile data stored by the Service has been entered solely by the respective member.

**C.** Members can modify registration data associated with their account, and can control selected private information from being disclosed on their member page.

**D.** Communication transcripts of online chats are not retained except for scheduled chat sessions.

**E.** E-mail communications are only accessible by the designated recipients, except that AsianAvenue.com personnel involved in maintenance of the system may have access to the Service mail communications.

Personally identifying information, or personal information, includes your name, home or other address (like the school you attend), email address, or any other information that tells another person who you are. When you register as a Member, we ask for some personal information such as your email address.

Our policy regarding this information is simple: Except as provided in this statement, AsianAvenue.com will not disclose, sell nor rent any of the registration information you provide without giving you notice and an opportunity to refuse disclosure. We make an effort to include a link to this Privacy Policy wherever we ask you for personal information.

We also collect other information at registration such as your birthday, city where you live, hobbies, and interests. This information cannot be used to identify you. We place this information in your Member profile, which is publicly available so that other Members who share your interests can connect with you.

Some of our services, such as email and LiveTalk are offered in conjunction with partner companies. In order to provide these services, we must disclose certain information to our partners including your Username and email address. Our content partners may also ask you for some additional personal information. Our partners are all upstanding companies that will treat your personal information responsibly. But, since we don't own these companies, we can't speak for them on privacy issues.

Other companies also may sponsor promotions, contests and sweepstakes running on the Service. These companies may choose to collect personal information from you. If you don't want your information collected by these sponsors, you can decide not to participate in the promotion, contest or sweepstakes. You should be aware that our advertisers or Web sites that have links on the Service may collect


TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 746 of 1793

personally identifiable information about you. This privacy statement does not address the information practices of those Web sites or advertisers.

One last thing to keep in mind: Whenever you voluntarily disclose personal information on forums, through email, or in chat areas, that information can be collected and used by others. If you post personal information in public places, others may send you unsolicited email messages. Always be smart about the information you provide online.

Finally, we may disclose Member information when we are required to by law, or when have reason to believe that someone is causing injury to or interference with our rights or property, other Service Members, or anyone else that could be harmed by such activities.

Your Member profile is password-protected so that you and only you have access to this information. In order to maintain this protection, do not give your password to anyone. Also, we recommend that, if you share your computer with other people, you sign out of your Account and close your browser window when you are done. Signing off will protect your information if you share a computer with someone else or are using a computer in a public place like a library.

We make every effort to ensure that your information is secure on our system. Unfortunately, no data transmission over the Internet can be guaranteed to be 100% secure. As a result, we cannot guarantee the security of any information you transmit to us, and you do so at your own risk.

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The Service is not directed to children under the age of 13. After April 20, 2000, the Service will prohibit registration by and will not knowingly collect personally identifiable information from anyone under 13.

This restriction will be posted at points of data collection within the Service, such as registration for services.

Note to Parents: If you have any concerns about the Service or its related services, wish to find out if your child is a member of one of our services, or wish to cancel your child's membership, please contact us at memberservices@mail.communityconnect.com.

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You are responsible for paying any applicable taxes and for all hardware, software, service and other costs you may incur in connection with the Service, including costs incurred in connecting to the Service via the Internet. AsianAvenue.com reserves the right, at any time, to charge fees for access to the Service, and will notify you of any such fees by posting information regarding such fees on the Service.

[ back to top ]



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 747 of 1793

**NETIQUETTE**

You are entirely responsible and liable for all of your activities on AsianAvenue.com. Listed below are some, but not all, violations that may result in termination of your access to AsianAvenue.com. By using AsianAvenue.com, you agree NOT to do any of the following:

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**2.** Transmit or facilitate distribution of content that is libelous, harmful, threatening, harassing, abusive, racially or ethnically offensive, vulgar, sexually explicit, pornographic, obscene, defamatory, or objectionable in a reasonable person's view.

**3.** Pretend to be anyone whom you are not. You may not impersonate another member, a CCI staff member, or anyone else.

**4.** Attempt to get a password, other account information, or other private information from a member, or harvest email addresses or other information.

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In the Forums area, please try to keep your postings relevant to the discussion. Postings that are irrelevant to Forum discussions, or that are designed to promote personal pages, voting polls, or third parties may be removed. If you see postings that contain foul language or that are intended to harass other Members, please Alert Us immediately.

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 748 of 1793

race, heritage, etc. Unsolicited "spam" messages are also not permitted unless expressly authorized by the recipient. While we encourage you to introduce yourself to other Members, please respect their wishes if they do not want you to send them mail. If you feel that another Member is harassing you, please Alert Us by filling out a member violation report.

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[ back to top ]

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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 749 of 1793

# Electronic Acknowledgement Receipt

| | |
|---|---|
| **EFS ID:** | 18880215 |
| **Application Number:** | 13946461 |
| **International Application Number:** | |
| **Confirmation Number:** | 9140 |
| **Title of Invention:** | RECIPROCAL INSERTION OF IDENTIFICATION ELEMENTS FOR WEB PAGES |
| **First Named Inventor/Applicant Name:** | THOMAS L. DISTEFANO |
| **Customer Number:** | 55246 |
| **Filer:** | Scott David Paul/Alaine Allison |
| **Filer Authorized By:** | Scott David Paul |
| **Attorney Docket Number:** | 8201-0013 |
| **Receipt Date:** | 28-APR-2014 |
| **Filing Date:** | 19-JUL-2013 |
| **Time Stamp:** | 17:01:28 |
| **Application Type:** | Utility under 35 USC 111(a) |

## Payment information:

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## File Listing:

| Document Number | Document Description | File Name | File Size(Bytes)/ Message Digest | Multi Part /.zip | Pages (if appl.) |
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| 1 | Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) Form (SB08) | 8201-0013_IDS_04-28-14.pdf | 614227<br>f9801f69a4b9711f0713cc9ddeb35cc7dd6098ca | no | 6 |
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| 2 | Non Patent Literature | 8201-0013_LiveJournal_PA_04-28-14.pdf | 1288964<br>67c4df370df027f2bd93a1af22bfd883e333c94a | no | 15 |
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| 3 | Non Patent Literature | 8201-0013_PALMER_PA_04-24-14.pdf | 247949<br>cacade6139cd25eccf58df28fb7d516d1100b5c | no | 7 |
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| 4 | Non Patent Literature | 8201-0013_KUMAR_PA_04-28-14.pdf | 474108<br>ca30d26436e31fd58f4e20210abac6c56b95f5ee | no | 4 |
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| 5 | Foreign Reference | 8201-0013_WO0016210A1_PA_04-25-14.pdf | 816678<br>82aa854f6c7ab2718f8712348c1076aedf3041a2 | no | 77 |
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| 9 | Non Patent Literature | 8201-0013_IYER_PA_04-24-14.pdf | 2084136<br>856cd474fd9b1afa9cff32c3c86b8acf97acc331 | no | 94 |
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| 11 | Non Patent Literature | 8201-0013_SellingOnline_PA_04-24-14.pdf | 37812<br>1bcd2af1b148f82347a313b77d4fc90f7e97a62e | no | 2 |
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| 13 | Non Patent Literature | 8201-0013_GPSOLO_PRACTICE MANAGEMENT_04-24-14.pdf | 601289<br>cd9a288e5a3f43abc55b9c349870d5428b9bfbdc | no | 4 |
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| 14 | Fee Worksheet (SB06) | 8201-0013_KR20000012595_PA_04-24-14.pdf | 91408<br>c720e883d4ddba7c016b894baf5595f260e927d0 | no | 1 |
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| 17 | New or Additional Drawings | 8201-0013_BlackPlanet_PA_04-28-14.pdf | 498308<br>4e427d832bf91a92561ddb293956a4c545a15ca1 | no | 10 |
| **Warnings:** | | | | | |
| **Information:** | | | | | |
| 18 | New or Additional Drawings | 8201-0013_AsianAvenue_PA_04-28-14.pdf | 523398<br>bd073793db86744287d820f2b3058f96c9a99ea9 | no | 11 |
| **Warnings:** | | | | | |
| **Information:** | | | | | |
| | | **Total Files Size (in bytes):** | 10576782 | | |

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**National Stage of an International Application under 35 U.S.C. 371**
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**New International Application Filed with the USPTO as a Receiving Office**
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| APPLICATION NO. | FILING DATE | FIRST NAMED INVENTOR | ATTORNEY DOCKET NO. | CONFIRMATION NO. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13/946,461 | 07/19/2013 | THOMAS L. DISTEFANO III | 8201-0013 | 9140 |

55246 7590 03/24/2016

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12161 KEN ADAMS WAY
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WELLINGTON, FL 33414

| EXAMINER | |
|---|---|
| LASTRA, DANIEL | |

| ART UNIT | PAPER NUMBER |
|---|---|
| 3622 | |

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|---|---|
| 03/24/2016 | ELECTRONIC |

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ptomail@iplawpro.com
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TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 754 of 1793

| Office Action Summary | Application No. 13/946,461 | Applicant(s) DISTEFANO, THOMAS L. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Examiner DANIEL LASTRA | Art Unit 3622 | AIA (First Inventor to File) Status No |

*-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --*

**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE *3* MONTHS FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on *4/28/14*.

☐ A declaration(s)/affidavit(s) under **37 CFR 1.130(b)** was/were filed on _____.

2a)☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b)☒ This action is non-final.

3)☐ An election was made by the applicant in response to a restriction requirement set forth during the interview on _____; the restriction requirement and election have been incorporated into this action.

4)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims***

5)☒ Claim(s) *22-41* is/are pending in the application.

5a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

6)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

7)☒ Claim(s) *22-41* is/are rejected.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

9)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

* If any claims have been determined allowable, you may be eligible to benefit from the **Patent Prosecution Highway** program at a participating intellectual property office for the corresponding application. For more information, please see http://www.uspto.gov/patents/init_events/pph/index.jsp or send an inquiry to PPHfeedback@uspto.gov.

**Application Papers**

10)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

11)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

**Certified copies:**

a)☐ All b)☐ Some** c)☐ None of the:

1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

** See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)

2) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08a and/or PTO/SB/08b) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.

3) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ .

4) ☐ Other: _____.



TikTok Inc. EX1002
TikTok Inc. v. Distefano Website Innovations, LLC
IPR2025-01061
Page 755 of 1793