US006016504A

# United States Patent [19]

**Arnold et al.**

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[45] **Date of Patent: Jan. 18, 2000**

[54] **METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR TRACKING THE PURCHASE OF A PRODUCT AND SERVICES OVER THE INTERNET**

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[73] Assignee: **InfoSpace.com, Inc.**, Redmond, Wash.

[21] Appl. No.: **08/704,143**

[22] Filed: **Aug. 28, 1996**

[51] **Int. Cl.**[7] ..... **G06F 17/60**; G06F 17/30

[52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... **709/200**; 709/202; 709/203; 709/204; 709/217; 709/219; 709/227; 709/228; 709/229; 705/26; 705/27

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 395/200.3–200.36, 395/200.47–200.5, 200.57–200.6; 707/10; 705/26–27, 39–40; 345/335; 709/200–206, 217–219, 227–229, 245–246

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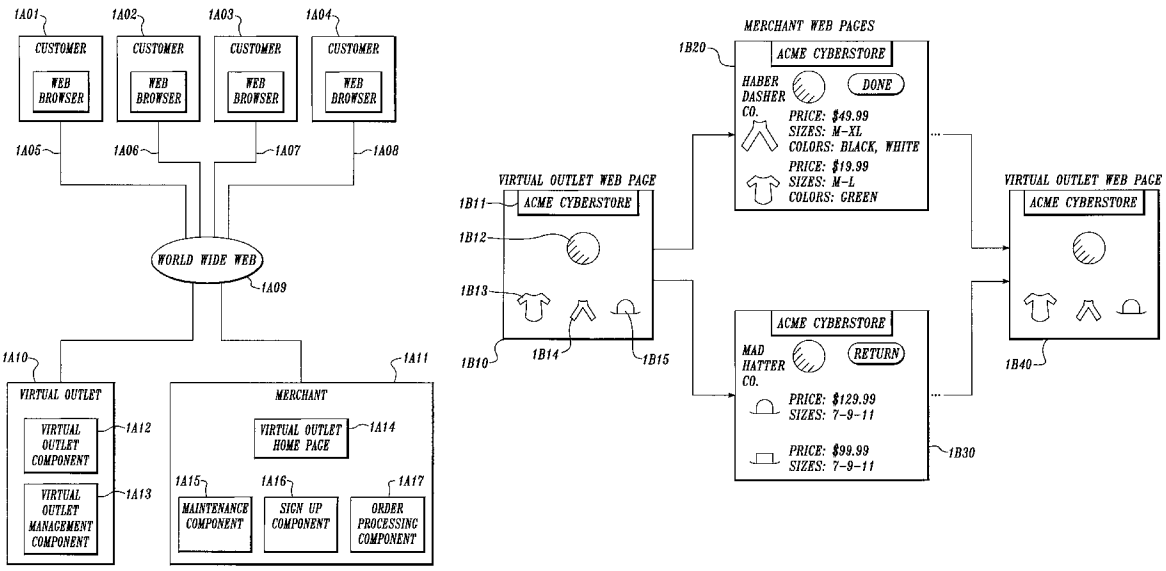
[57] **ABSTRACT**

A method for establishing and maintaining a virtual outlet ("VO") relationship on the Internet between an entity that controls and manages a Web site constituting a VO and a merchant that controls and manages a different Web site. The VO presents a series of VO Web pages to customers that contain descriptive information about products from one or more merchants. Customers can link through the VO Web pages directly to a merchant Web page provided to the customer computer by the merchant computer for the purpose of obtaining more detailed information about the product and for ordering the product. When the customer has finished ordering a product, the customer computer returns to a VO Web page. To the customer, it appears that the entire ordering process is conducted entirely within the VO Web pages. The merchant then credits the VO for the sale of the product to the customer, charges the purchase to the customer, and sends the ordered product to the customer.

**28 Claims, 28 Drawing Sheets**

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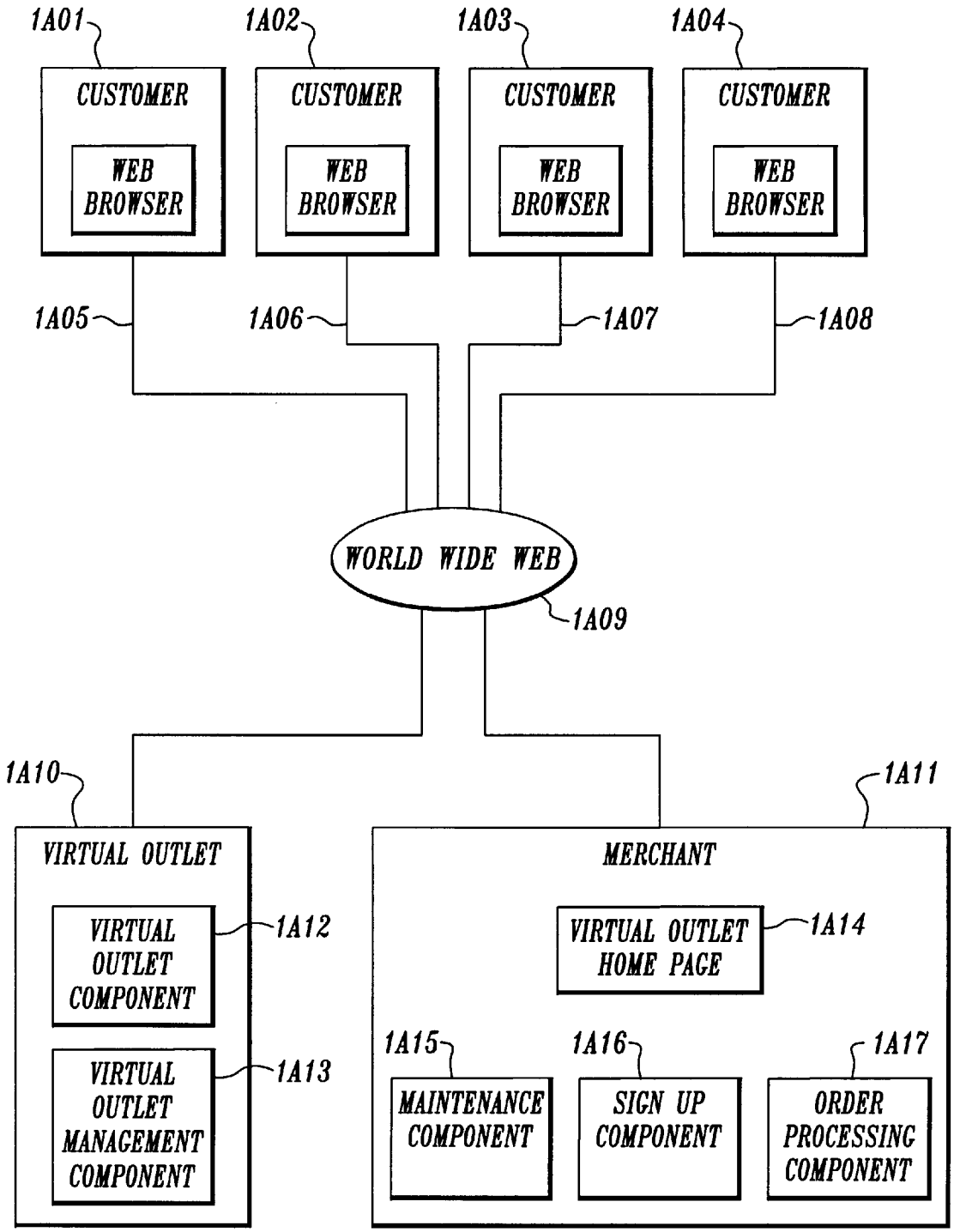


Fig. 1A

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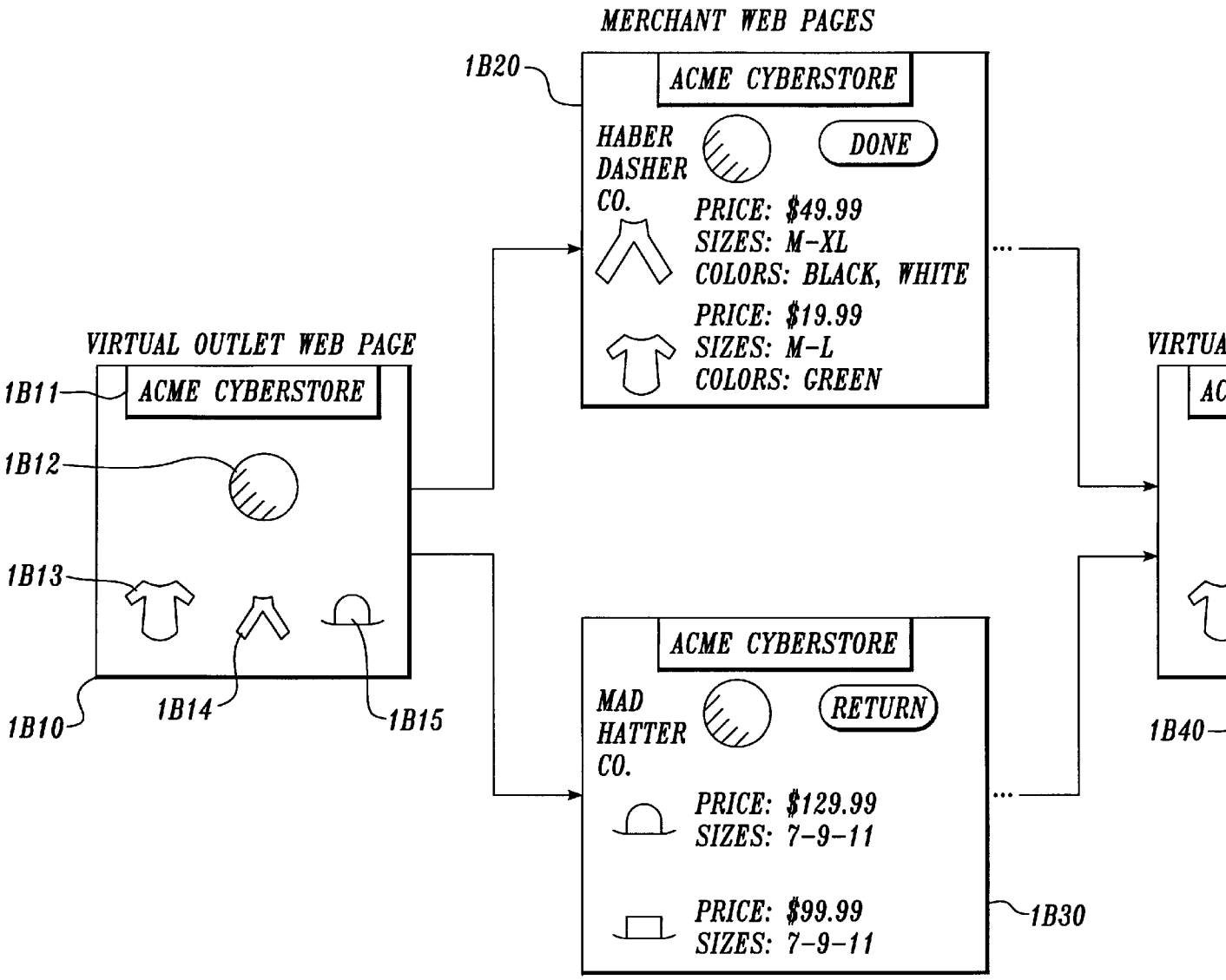


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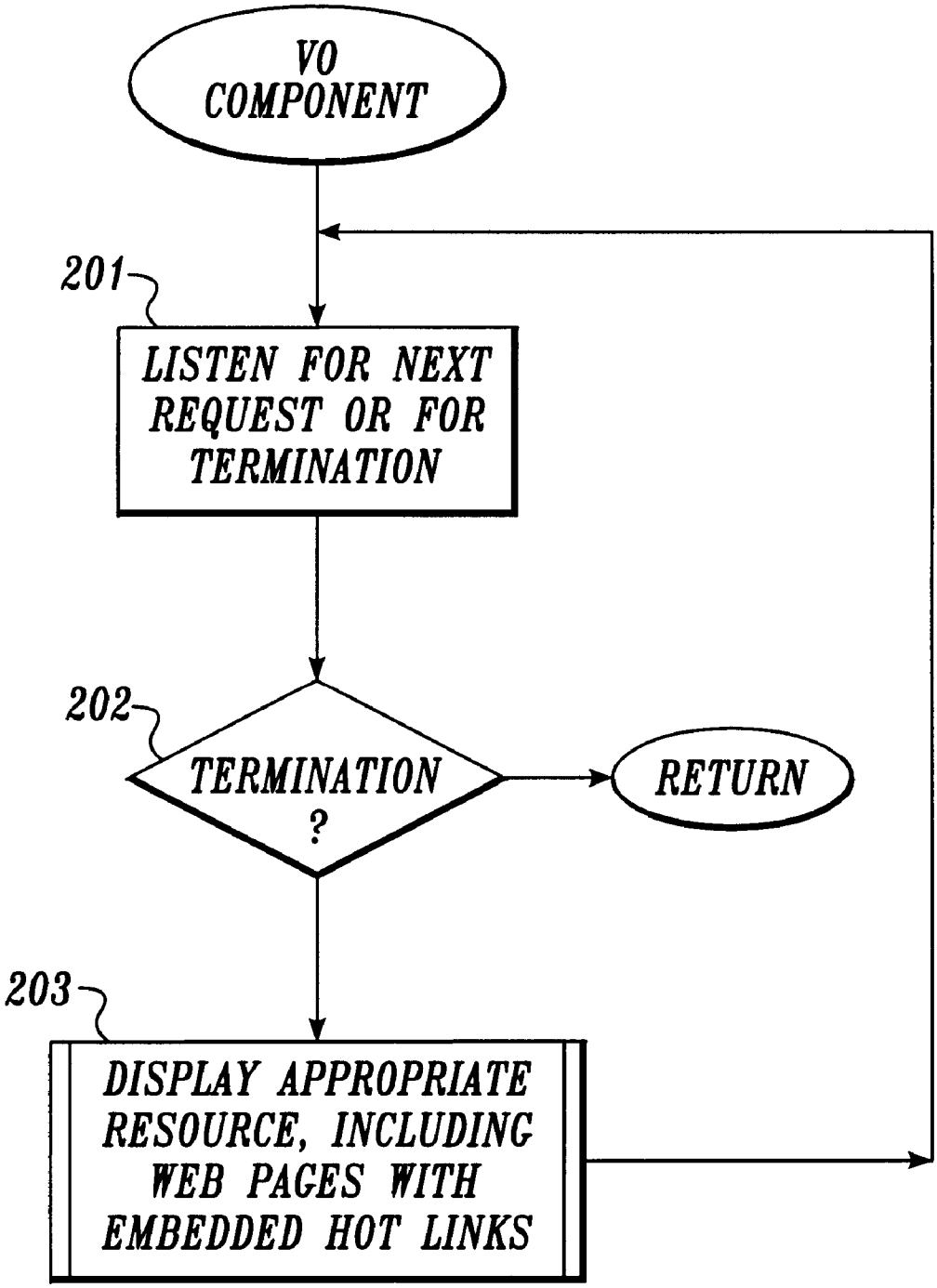


Fig. 2

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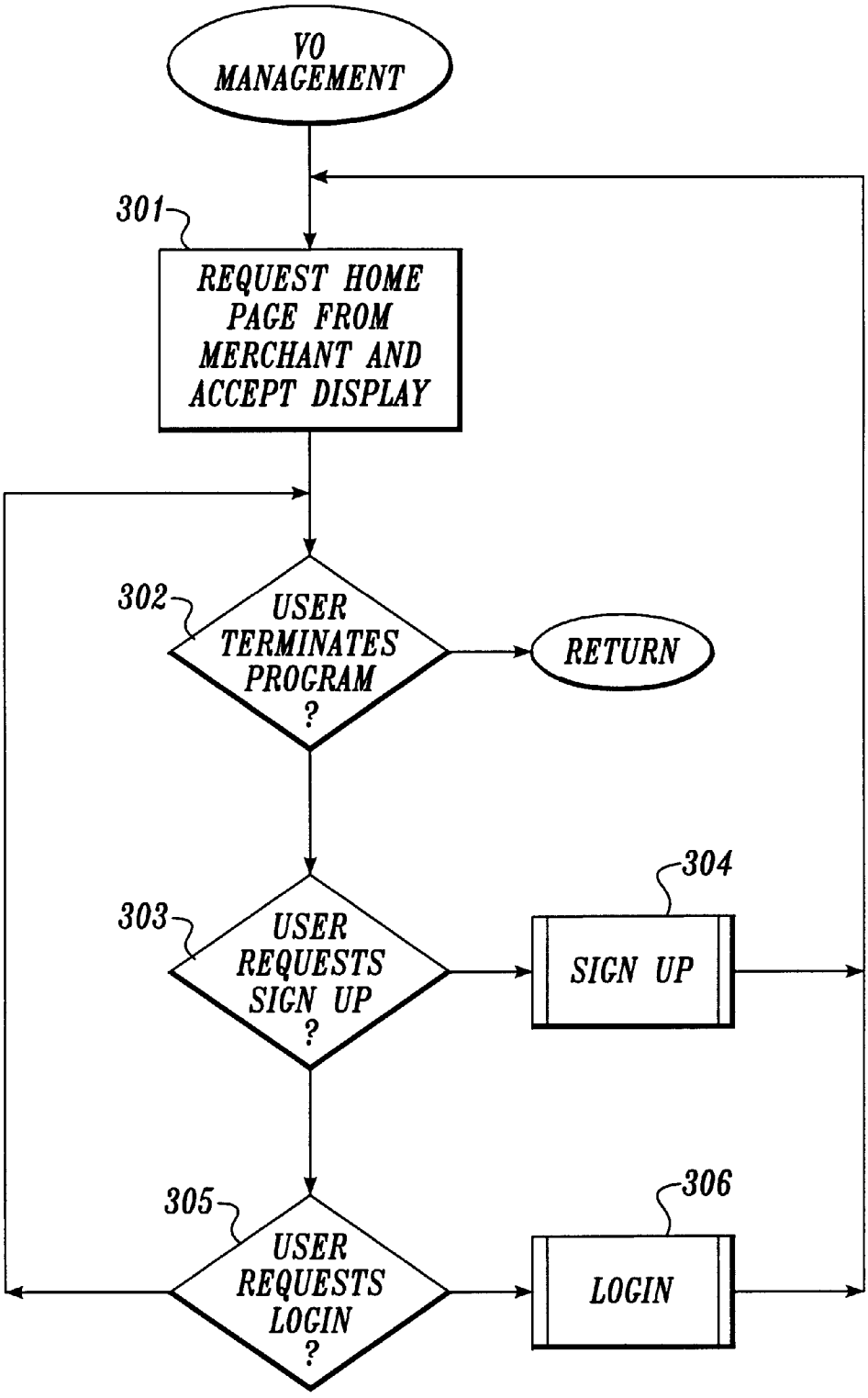


Fig. 3

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