



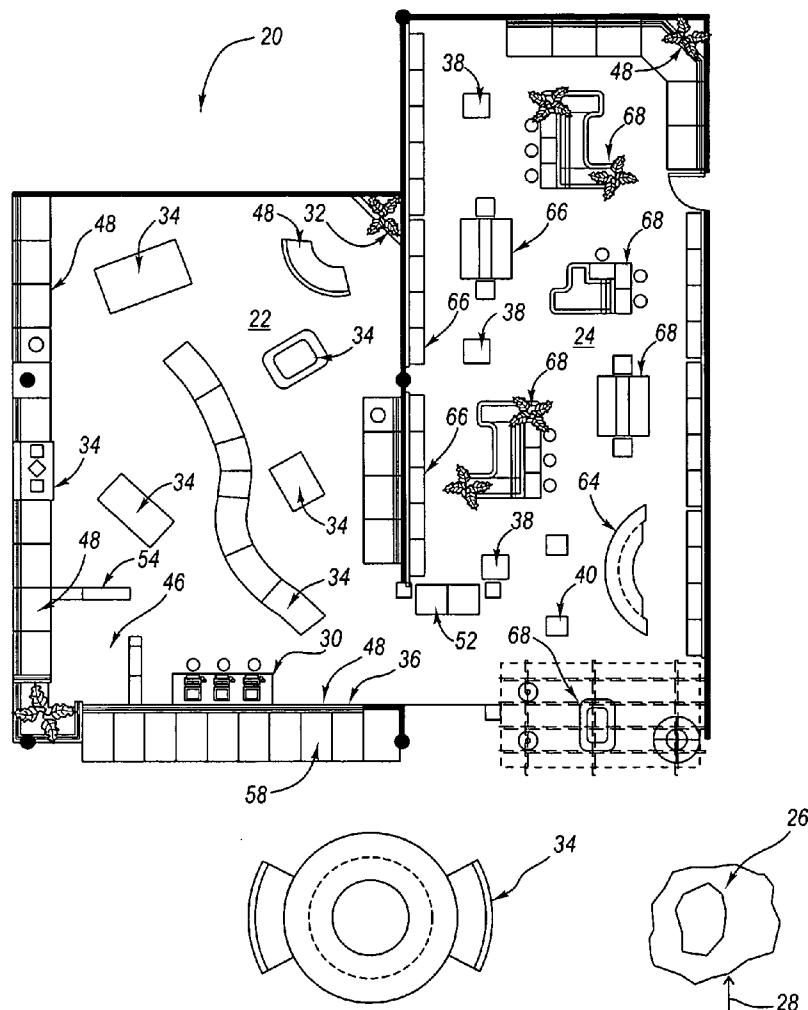
US 20070020606A1

(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Knight(10) **Pub. No.: US 2007/0020606 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Jan. 25, 2007**(54) **SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR RETAIL
SELLING THAT INTEGRATES CHILDREN'S
RECREATION, RETAIL SELLING, AND
COMPANY ADVERTISING AND
SPONSORSHIP****Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.**
A47B 39/00 (2006.01)
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **434/432**(57) **ABSTRACT**

A system for retail selling for inline stores in shopping complexes comprising: a children's play and educational area where children may play with equipment and toys that are related to the theme of an inline store's products and services; at least one space for advertising integrated through the children's play and educational area where sponsors and advertisers may promote their products and services to parents watching their children play; and a retail area further comprising interactive displays as well as places to purchase and sell products, which is proximately located to the children's play and educational area; wherein the foregoing are integrated within the inline store itself and not within a common area of the shopping complex.

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(21) **Appl. No.: 11/184,455**(22) **Filed: Jul. 19, 2005**

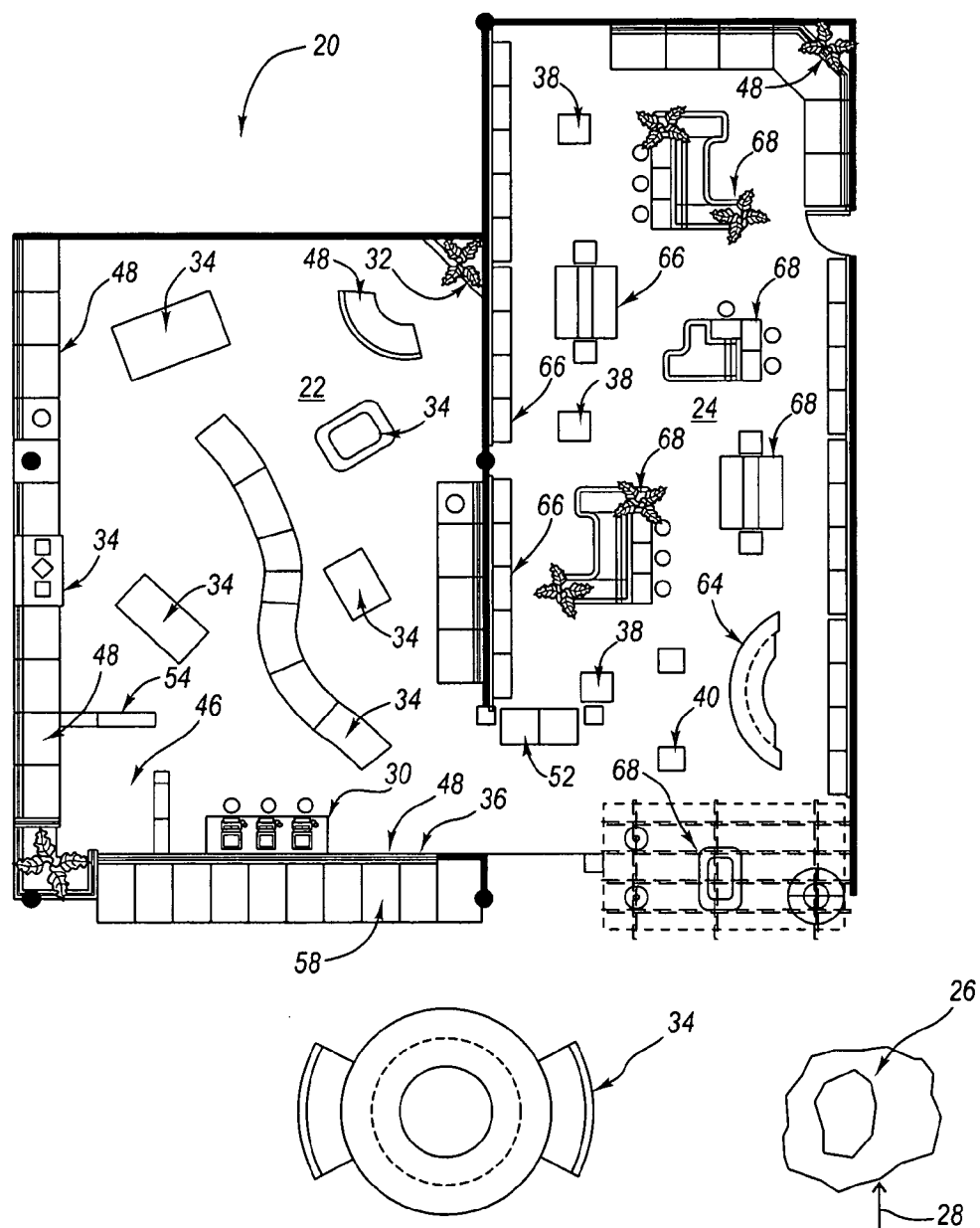


Fig. 1

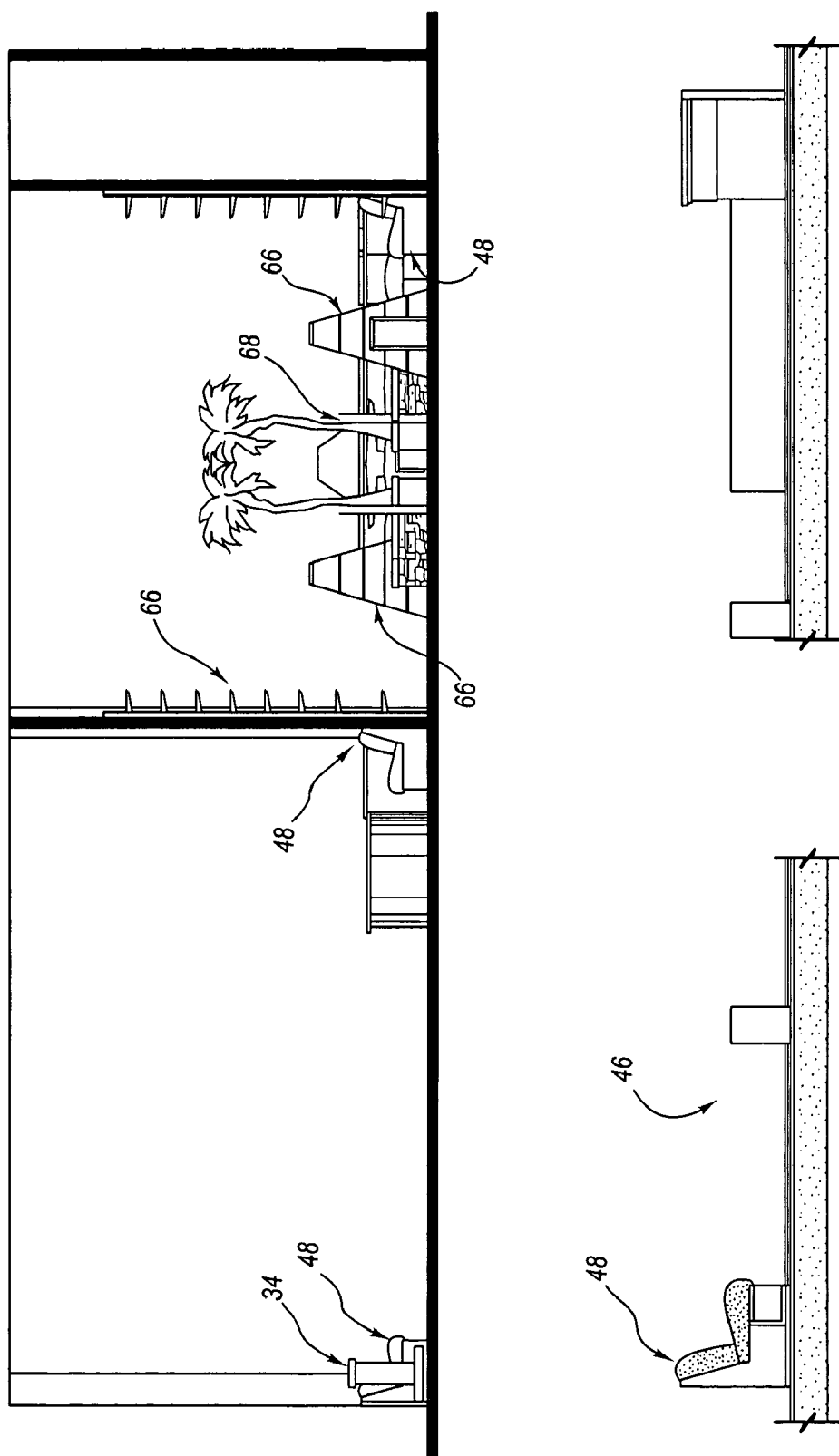


Fig. 2

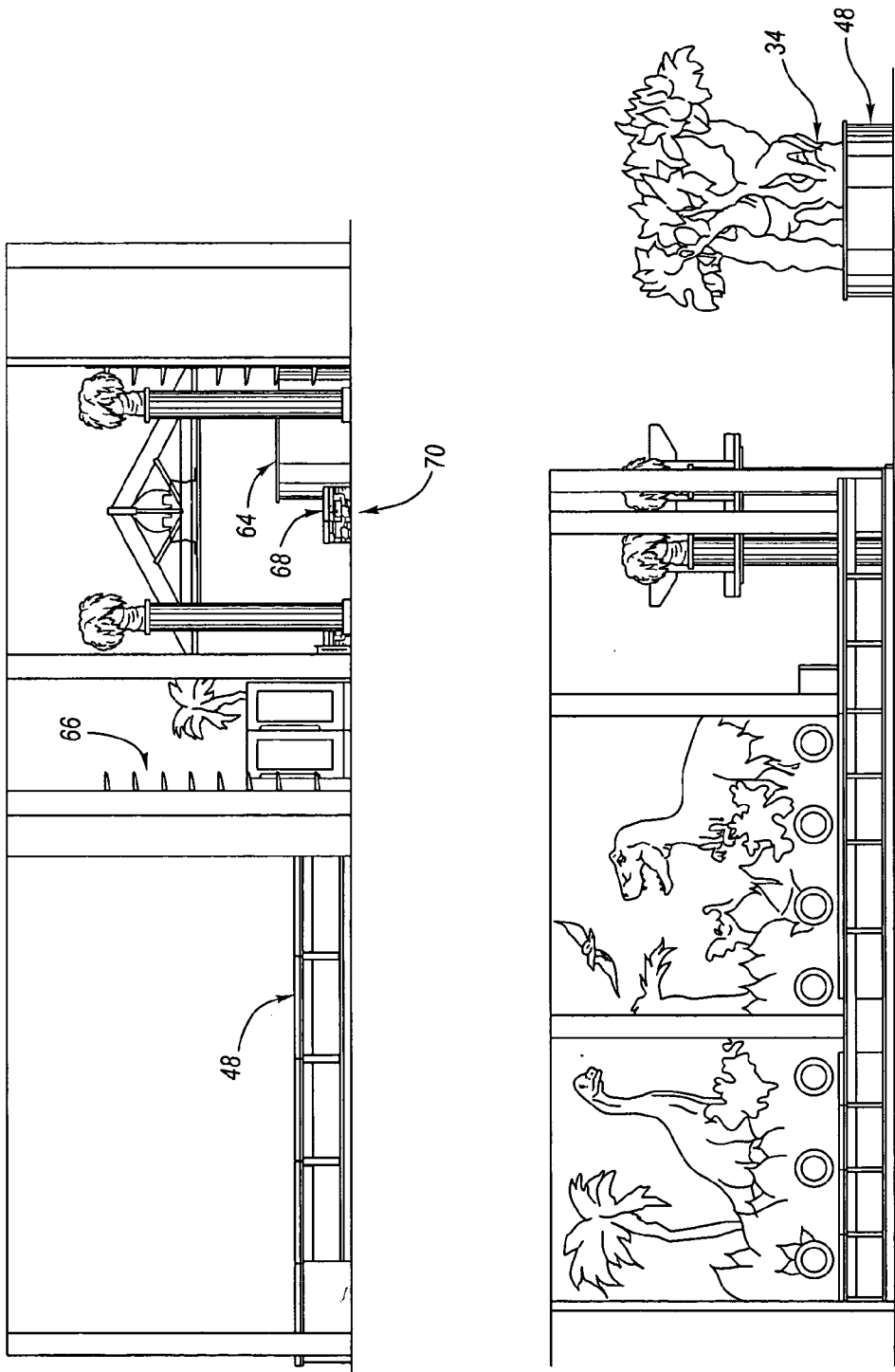
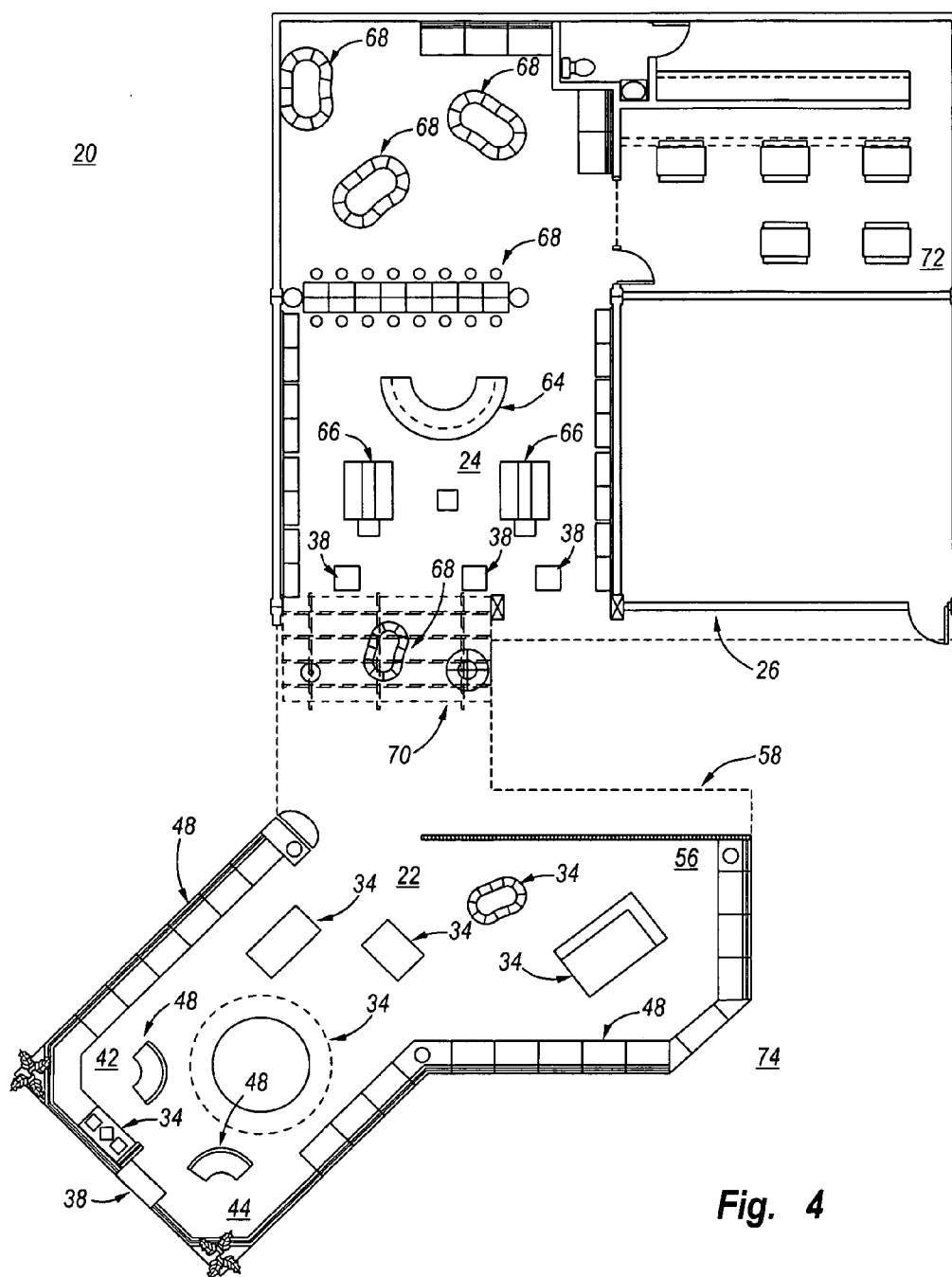


Fig. 3



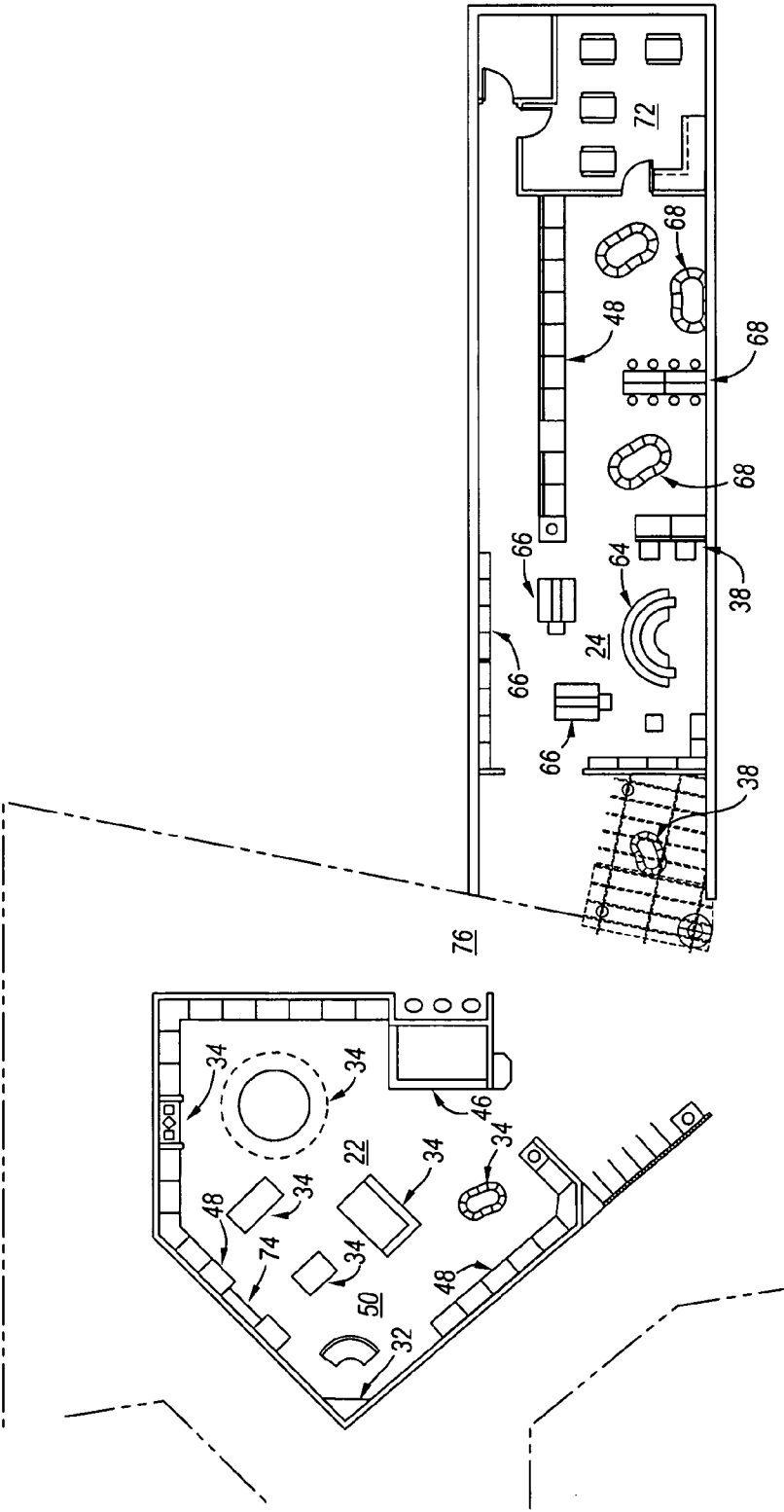


Fig. 5

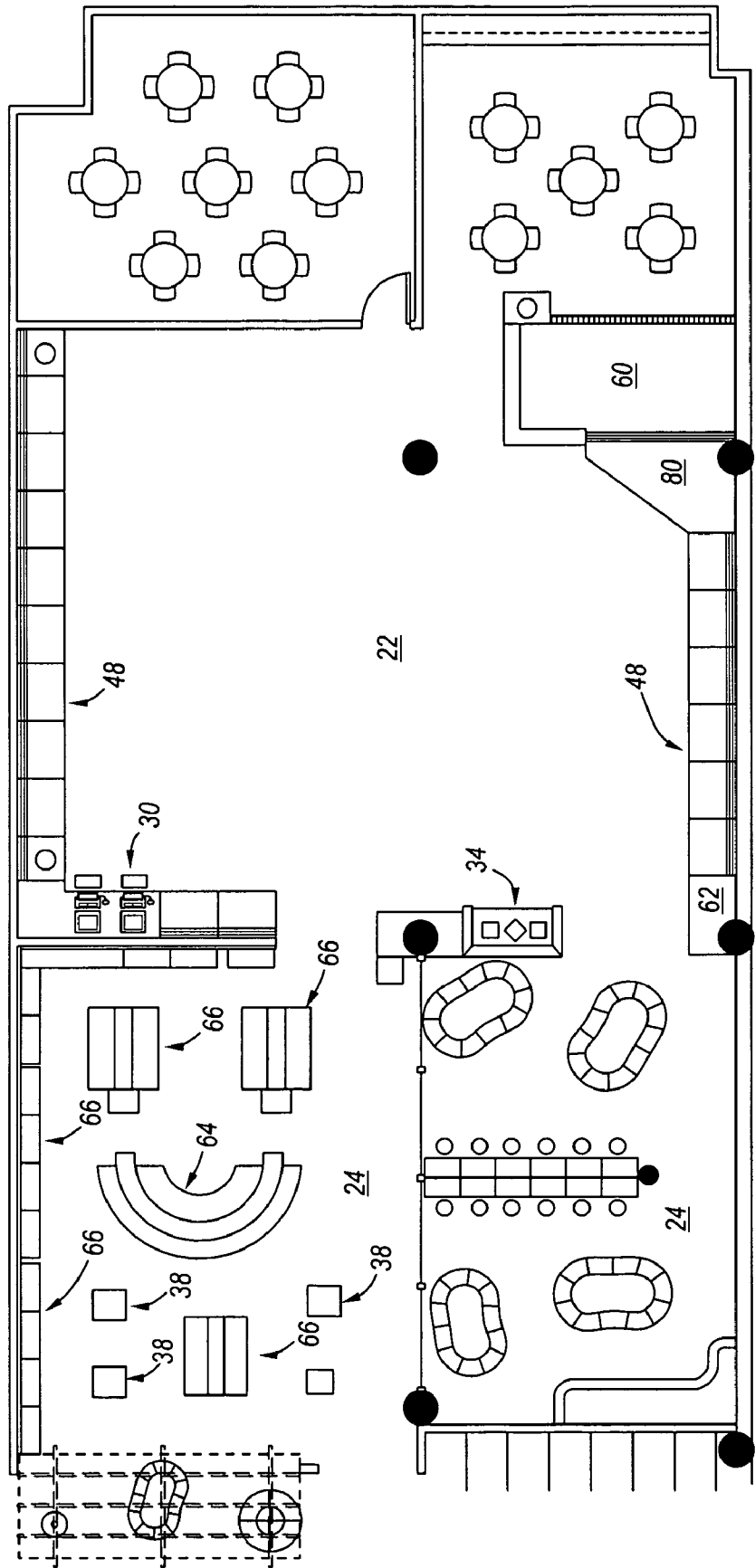


Fig. 6

SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR RETAIL SELLING THAT INTEGRATES CHILDREN'S RECREATION, RETAIL SELLING, AND COMPANY ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to a system for integrating retail selling, advertising and sponsorship, and children's recreation, with an inline store of a shopping complex, to provide inline store patrons the optimal retail and entertainment experience, while simultaneously providing businesses a premier forum for advertisement and sponsorship. More particularly, the present invention provides patrons of inline stores an enhanced retail venue comprising: a children's play and educational area, where children may engage in educational and developmentally-appropriate recreation and entertainment; spaces throughout the children's play and educational area where companies may advertise and sponsor play items found in the children's play and education area; and an area where parents may monitor and participate in activities with their children while at the same time examine advertisements and products of companies advertising and sponsoring in the children's play and educational area.

[0003] 2. Background

[0004] Malls today serve as good sources for family entertainment. In fact, many modern malls offer indoor play areas and interactive displays that make shopping for the entire family a more enjoyable experience. The concept of getting patrons to spend more time shopping by adding areas for entertainment within shopping complexes is becoming increasingly popular among malls today. This concept is commonly referred to as "shoppertainment." Parents especially enjoy malls offering "shoppertainment" features because children bore less quickly with the shopping trip, allowing parents to spend more time in the varied shopping environment of the various stores. Moreover, because shopping becomes fun and exciting, children may even encourage parents to patronize the mall just so they may play.

[0005] In addition, retail owners of stores within malls offering these play areas or, which themselves offer interactive displays and entertainment areas in their stores, also benefit. For instance, if a family is drawn to the mall because of the play area, or perhaps stays in the mall or store longer because of the play area, patron attendance increases along with the patron purchases.

[0006] In current mall settings, these play areas generally comprise play equipment, toys, and accessories, and are traditionally located in the common areas of the mall. Also, in typical mall configurations, retail merchandising areas are not connected with the play area, and the play area is located instead in the common areas of the mall. This means that parents are unable to fully combine shopping with entertainment, because they are limited to window shopping at nearby stores proximate to the play area. Thus, there is a slight disconnect between the maximal shopping, selling and children's entertainment experience.

[0007] Furthermore, in standard mall settings, companies also forego valuable opportunities to optimally advertise and promote products to mall patrons, because advertisements

usually only appear on way-finding directories located at random locations in the malls.

[0008] Thus, patrons of malls are still without an ideal venue where they may combine the activities of shopping and entertaining children, all within an inline store of a shopping mall. Moreover, businesses desiring maximum name recognition and product exposure have not yet realized their potential in capturing the full attention of mall patrons.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] Some embodiments of the present invention provide an in-store retailing system for stores located in shopping complexes. These shopping complexes are commonly known by several names, including shopping centers, malls, covered malls, and open-air or strip malls. Usually the stores making up shopping complexes reside in a unitary architectural structure that makes walking between stores convenient, and the stores are often known as inline stores.

[0010] Some embodiments of the present invention provide a system for retail selling in an inline store of a shopping complex that integrates a children's play and educational area with spaces for advertising and sponsorship, all within the inline store and located proximately to the retail area or areas of the inline store to provide an enhanced venue for shopping, selling, children's recreation, and advertising.

[0011] In a preferred embodiment, the system of retail selling comprises: a children's play and educational area where children may play with equipment and toys that are related to the theme of the inline store's products and services; at least one space for advertising integrated through the children's play and educational area where sponsors and advertisers may promote their products and services to parents watching their children play; and a retail area proximately connected to the children's play and educational area and the advertising space(s). The system further comprising interactive displays as well as places to purchase and sell products, which are proximately located to the children's play and educational area; wherein the foregoing are integrated within an inline store or a common area of a shopping complex.

[0012] Specifically, in the preferred embodiment, a children's play and educational area features toys, themed play items, equipment, activities and programs that allow children to learn and play. Children can run, jump, crawl, slide and learn on play items, accessories and products found in this area. All play items relate to the theme of the products or services offered in the inline store or are items offered for sale in the inline store. Computer workstations are available in this area for children old enough to play software games or to use educational programs. These programs also relate to the inline store's themes. A library area is also provided, and the children's play and educational area may be further divided into age-specific regions where children of different age groups, such as toddlers between infancy and two, may play on equipment or with accessories appropriate for their age. The play area is surrounded by external seating where parents may sit while their children play and may also include seating dispersed throughout the play area.

[0013] In addition, integrated throughout the children's play and educational area, in a preferred embodiment, are

spaces for advertising and sponsorship. In a preferred embodiment, the computer workstations located in the children's play and educational area may be accessed by inline store patrons for downloading coupons or brochures featuring products of advertisers or sponsors found within the play area. Furthermore, electronic or backlit advertising spaces may be located along the perimeter of the children's play and advertising area, where advertisers and sponsors may lease space to advertise and promote products or services tying into the themes of the inline store. Moreover, such electronic advertising spaces can serve as noise deflection systems that contain noise generated within the children's play and educational area or noise generated outside the children's play and educational area. In addition, sponsors may sponsor equipment, products or accessories within the children's play and educational area so that the name of the company appears integrated throughout the play area. Display cases are also located in various regions of the play area where companies may, for a fee, lease the space to display products or services. Catalog dispenser systems are available for parents to purchase so they may learn more about products and services of advertisers and sponsors featured in the children's play area. Additionally, overhead thematic elements may comprise some of the spaces available for advertisers and sponsors to display advertisements. These elements may be rotatable so as to accommodate multiple sponsors and advertisers. Large screen televisions are also located in this area. The televisions may not only show educational and developmentally-appropriate programs viewable by children in the area, but may also be utilized for advertisements and sponsorship promotion.

[0014] Other general features found in the preferred embodiment may include, but are not limited to: vending machines selling snacks or inline store theme-related products; stage and sound systems for events, product demonstrations and entertainment, all of which relate to the store's theme; diaper-changing areas; party rooms reservable by patrons of the store to host parties that relate to the store's theme; museum-oriented and other displays that may be rotated to keep the children's play and educational area new and interesting; and picture-taking booths.

[0015] Also in the preferred embodiment, a retail area is proximately connected to the children's play and educational area. And, the spaces for advertising and sponsorship available in the children's play and educational area, offer an additional source for revenue for the inline store. Moreover, in the preferred embodiment the retail area itself comprises interactive displays where patrons may also combine shopping and entertainment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] The foregoing and other objects of the present invention will become more fully apparent from the accompanying drawings when considered in conjunction with the following description and appended claims. Although the drawings depict only typical embodiments of the invention and are thus not deemed limiting of the invention's scope, the accompanying drawings help explain the invention in added detail, in which:

[0017] FIG. 1 provides a plan view of an embodiment of the system for retail selling within an inline store of a shopping complex.

[0018] FIG. 2 provides an elevation view of various features and elements found in one embodiment of the present invention.

[0019] FIG. 3 provides an elevation view of other features and elements found in an embodiment of the present invention.

[0020] FIG. 4 provides a plan view of another embodiment, having a configuration different than FIG. 1's configuration.

[0021] FIG. 5 provides a plan view of yet another embodiment of the system described herein.

[0022] FIG. 6 provides a plan view of another embodiment of the system described herein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0023] It is emphasized that the present invention, as illustrated in the figures and description herein, can be embodied in other forms. Thus, neither the drawings nor the following more detailed description of the various embodiments of the system and method of the present invention limit the scope of the invention. The drawings and detailed description are merely representative of the particular embodiments of the invention; the substantive scope of the present invention is limited only by the appended claims. The various embodiments of the invention will best be understood by reference to the drawings, wherein like elements are designated by like alphanumeric characters throughout.

[0024] With reference now to the accompanying drawings, FIGS. 1 through 9 depict embodiments, and features of those embodiments, of a system for retail selling. Specifically, FIG. 1 depicts a preferred embodiment for the system of retail selling. In FIG. 1, an inline store 20 of a shopping complex is provided. Within the inline store 20 is a children's play and educational area 22 and a retail area 24. Also, integrated throughout the inline store 20, the children's play and educational area 22, and throughout the retail area 24, are spaces for advertising and sponsorship 26. These spaces for advertising and sponsorship 26 vary in form, position, location and method. For instance, in FIG. 1, spaces for advertising are present on: a decorative themed rock 28 near the front of the store that displays a sign or advertisement of a sponsor, or serves as a display for a vehicle climbing the rock 28; on or through computer workstations 30, where sponsors may be displayed through advertisements on software programs, or on the computer workstations 30 themselves; on a television 32 screen, either via television advertisements or on the television 32 itself; on the children's play and educational area equipment 34; on electronic advertising spaces 36 found along the perimeter of the children's play and educational area 22, where they may be leased to advertisers and sponsors to advertise and promote products that relate to themes of the inline store 20; through display cases 38; on overhead thematic elements 40 that are rotatable so as to accommodate multiple sponsors and advertisers and are found at various location throughout the inline store 20; and on and throughout other appropriate areas of the inline store 20.

[0025] FIG. 1 also depicts elements, features, equipment and areas of the children's play and educational area 22.

Specifically, this area provides play area equipment **34** that follows the theme of the inline store's **20** products or services. For instance, if the inline store **20** sells items and entertainment related to dinosaurs, then the play area equipment **34** would be geared to dinosaur-related equipment. The children's play and educational area **22** can have slides, spin cubes, climb-upon toys, tunnels, crawl-through equipment, soft-foam equipment, water toys, puzzles, audiovisual items, blocks, and other things appropriate and fun for children. The children's play and educational area **22** may also feature children's rides, a picture-taking booth, vending machines, and other items of interest to children and their parents. Moreover, the children's play and educational area **22** may comprise a library area **42** as seen in FIG. 4; a retail display case **74** as seen in FIG. 5 for products sold in retail area **24** or advertised by sponsors throughout said inline store **20**; a massage or resting area **76** as seen in FIG. 5 for "themed massages," i.e., massages related to products/services of inline store **20**; a DVD wall area **44** as seen in FIG. 4, for containing DVD's to be viewed on the television screen **32**; a puzzle wall area **44**, for containing puzzles that relate to the inline store's **20** theme; a toddler play area **46** that offers programs, activities and toys appropriate for children ranging in ages from infancy to two years old; external seating **48** surrounding the children's play and educational area for parents to watch their children, or to review advertisements by sponsors advertising on spaces throughout the children's play and educational area **22**; a product testing area **50** as in FIG. 5, where parents and children may test products advertised in the children's play and educational area; a catalog dispenser system **52**, for parents to learn more about products and services of advertisers and sponsors advertising in the children's play and educational area; a party room **72** as in FIG. 5, for patrons of the inline store **20** to reserve to host theme-related parties; sound-dampening inserts **54**, which reduce the noise either coming from within or outside the children's play and educational area; other age-specific zones **56** as in FIG. 6, where children of different ages may play in areas that are suited for their particular age; a stroller parking area **58**, where parents may park their strollers within the inline store **20**, so they may have a place to store their personal items that is still viewable from within the store **20**; diaper-changing area **60** as in FIG. 6; and museum-oriented display cases **62** as in FIG. 6, which are rotatable and may feature topics of interest to parents and children to keep the children's play and educational area **22** new and exciting.

[0026] The children's play and educational area **22** may also enable a patron to obtain coupons and brochures for products advertised and sponsored in the children's play and educational area **22**. The area **22** also provides a stage and sound system **80** as in FIG. 6 for events, product demonstrations, and entertainment that also tie into the theme of the inline store's **20** products and services. Moreover, this area **22** may have an individualized website, posting educational content and schedules of activities. The website may have a twelve-month parent/child educational program, comprising an outbound phone, Internet, and direct mail marketing program to strategic business partners of the inline store, local clubs, organizations and church groups promoting the educational program and also listing upcoming events in said children's play and educational area **22**.

[0027] The retail area **24** is comprised of those features necessary to sell and purchase products, services and items.

Specifically, the retail area **24** may have a purchase counter **64**, shelves **66** for product display, and interactive displays **68**, where children may interact with a product or service prior to purchasing, either to experiment with a product, or to make the shopping experience interesting.

[0028] FIG. 2 depicts varying perspectives of various features and elements found in one embodiment of the children's play and educational area **22** and the retail area **24** and displays, among other things, the external seating **48** found surrounding and integrated throughout the children's play and educational area **22**, along with interactive displays **68** found in the retail area **24**. It also depicts the toddler play area **46** from a side perspective.

[0029] FIG. 3 provides other features and elements found in an embodiment of the present invention, including among other things, the themed entry way **70** to the inline store.

[0030] FIGS. 4, 5 and 6 provide alternative embodiments with different configurations than the configuration of FIG. 1. The features and layout of the children's play and educational area **22** and the retail area **24** vary in these figures and include some of the features discussed above.

What is claimed is:

1. An in-store retailing system comprising:

in an environment where a group of individual stores coexist wherein the stores are adjacently located within a large structure such that the stores exist as individual entities within the large structure but share common walls with the stores on either side and wherein each store has at least one face called a storefront facing a common area of the large structure;

wherein the common area so faced may optionally be contained within the large structure to shelter and enclose shoppers frequenting the various stores contained within the large structure;

thus providing a varied shopping experience to the shoppers and allowing the shoppers to peruse a variety of styles of stores in a single, convenient, walkable location;

one of the stores located within the large structure employing a retailing system to enhance the retail experience of a patron of the store, to provide a business advertising in the store with a premier venue for advertising, to increase the store's revenue, and to enhance the experience of children of the patrons of the store comprising:

a children's play and educational area;

at least one space for advertising and sponsorship; and

a retail area, wherein the children's play and educational area and the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship are integrated and proximately connected to the retail area, and wherein the retail area, the children's play and educational area, and the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship are all located within a single individual store located in the large structure and are not part of the common area of the large structure.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the merchandise for sale in the retail area, the advertising in the at least one space for

advertising and sponsorship, and the items in the children's play and educational area are linked through a common theme.

3. The system of claim 2 wherein the common theme is the theme of the store.

4. The system of claim 2, further comprising at least one of the following located within the children's play and educational area:

a library area;

a party room that shoppers at the store may reserve to host store theme-related parties;

a product testing area where children may test products for sale in the retail area or advertised in the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship;

age-specific zones wherein children of different ages may play in areas appropriate for and suited to their age-specific needs;

a toddler play area with play area equipment appropriate for children whose ages range from infancy to two years of age;

children's rides;

computer workstations wherein shoppers and their children may investigate programs and products advertised and sponsored in the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship and products offered for sale in the retail area;

a puzzle wall area; and

a picture taking booth.

5. The system of claim 2 wherein the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship further comprises at least one of the following:

electronic advertising spaces found along the perimeter of and integrated throughout the children's play and education area, which serve as a panelized noise deflection system, and which are viewable from both outside and inside the children's play and educational area, wherein advertisers and sponsors may lease space to advertise and promote products related to the common theme;

backlit panels;

display cases located at various regions in the children's play and education area and the retail area for displaying products advertised in the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship for a fee;

display cases located at various regions in the children's play and education area and the retail area for displaying products found in the retail area;

6. The system of claim 2, further comprising providing coupons and brochures featuring products and services advertised in the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship that are available to parents to review while in the store.

7. The system of claim 2 wherein a catalog dispenser system is available for shoppers to learn more about and purchase the products and services of advertisers and sponsors displaying products and services advertised in the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship.

8. The system of claim 2, further comprising at least one of:

sound-dampening inserts that reduce the noise coming from within or outside of the children's play and educational area;

at least one television, wherein the television may show programs geared toward children's education and development as well as advertisement programs from advertisers and sponsors utilizing the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship;

a stroller parking area;

external seating surrounding and integrated throughout the children's play and educational area, wherein shoppers or others may sit and observe their children play;

a stage and sound system for events, product demonstrations, and entertainment related to the common theme;

a massage area for themed massages;

vending machines selling snacks;

vending machines selling products related to the common theme; and

a catalog-display system providing shoppers with catalogs and reviews of products advertised and sponsored in the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship and products for sale in the retail area.

9. The system of claim 2 wherein displays are rotated in and out of the various areas, and wherein the rotation of the displays keeps the areas new and interesting.

10. The system of claim 9 wherein the rotated displays consist of at least one of the following:

museum-oriented displays featuring topics of interest to parents and children;

seasonal displays; and

advertiser or sponsor themed displays.

11. An in-store retailing system comprising:

in a mall selected from the group of:

a shopping center;

an open-air strip mall; and

an enclosed mall;

wherein a number of stores are contained within a single architectural structure such that the mall comprises at least one common area shared by the various stores and individual store areas occupied by individual stores, thus providing a varied shopping experience to the shoppers and allowing the shoppers to shop at a variety of styles of stores in a single, convenient, walkable location;

one of the stores located in the mall employing a retailing system that enhances the retail experience of shoppers at the store, enhances the experience of children of the shoppers, provides businesses advertising in the store with a premier venue for advertising, and increases the store's revenue comprising:

a children's play and educational area containing items allowing children to learn and play;

at least one space for advertising and sponsorship; and

a retail area, wherein:

the children's play and educational area and the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship are integrated and proximately connected to the retail area;

the retail area, the children's play and educational area, and the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship are all located within a single individual store located in the large structure and are not part of the common area of the large structure; and

the merchandise for sale in the retail area, the advertising in the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship, and the items in the children's play and educational area are linked through a common theme that is the theme of the store.

12. An in-store retailing system comprising:

an inline store of a shopping complex selected from the group of:

a shopping center;

a strip mall; and

an enclosed mall;

wherein the inline store is located within the architectural structure of the shopping complex and occupies its own unique area of the shopping complex; and

the shopping complex further comprises other unique areas for the other stores of the shopping complex and

at least one common area connected to the stores in the shopping complex that allows shoppers at the shopping complex to conveniently walk between stores at the shopping complex thus providing the shoppers with a convenient and varied shopping experience;

wherein the inline store employs a retailing system enhancing the retail experience of shoppers and their children at the inline store, provides a premium advertising venue to a business advertising and the inline store, and increasing the profits of the inline store comprising:

a children's play and educational area;

at least one space for advertising and sponsorship; and

and a retail area, wherein:

the children's play and educational areas and the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship are integrated and proximately connected to the retail area;

the retail area, the children's play and educational area, and the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship are all located within the inline store's unique area and are not located in the shopping center's at least one common area; and

the merchandise for sale in the retail area, the advertising in the at least one space for advertising and sponsorship and the items in the children's play and educational area are linked through a common theme.

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