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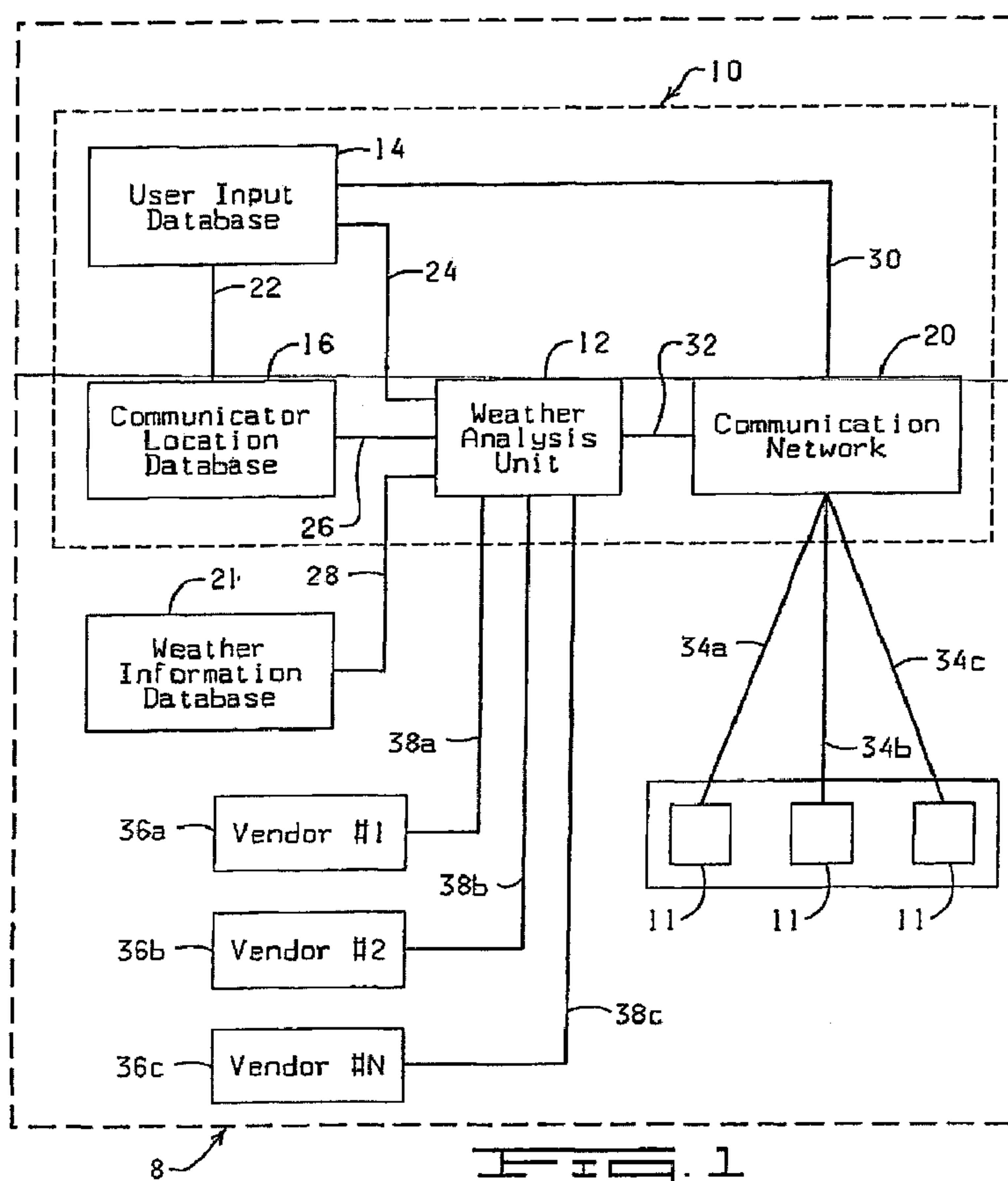
(71) Demandeur/Applicant:
WEATHERBANK, INC., US

(72) Inventeurs/Inventors:
ROOT, STEVEN A., US;
ROOT, MICHAEL R., US

(74) Agent: MARKS & CLERK

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(54) Title: INTERACTIVE ADVISORY SYSTEM



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A method for passing content to at least one communicator device. The user of a communicator device registers with at least one service provider for delivering a plurality of different types of content to be passed to the at least one communicator device. A user



(57) **Abrégé(suite)/Abstract(continued):**

defined priority is assigned to the at least one type of content. The user-defined priority is stored on a computer readable medium. The different types of content are passed to the at least one communicator device based on the user defined priority.

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ROOT, Michael, R. [US/US]; 1300 Fox Grove Court, Edmond, OK 73034 (US).

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(74) Agent: **BROCKHAUS, Marc, A.**; Dunlap, Coddling & Rogers, P.c., P.o. Box 16370, Oklahoma City, OK 73113-2370 (US).

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(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **SPATIAL CONTENT SERVICES, L.P.** [US/US]; 385 Science Road, State College, PA 16803 (US).

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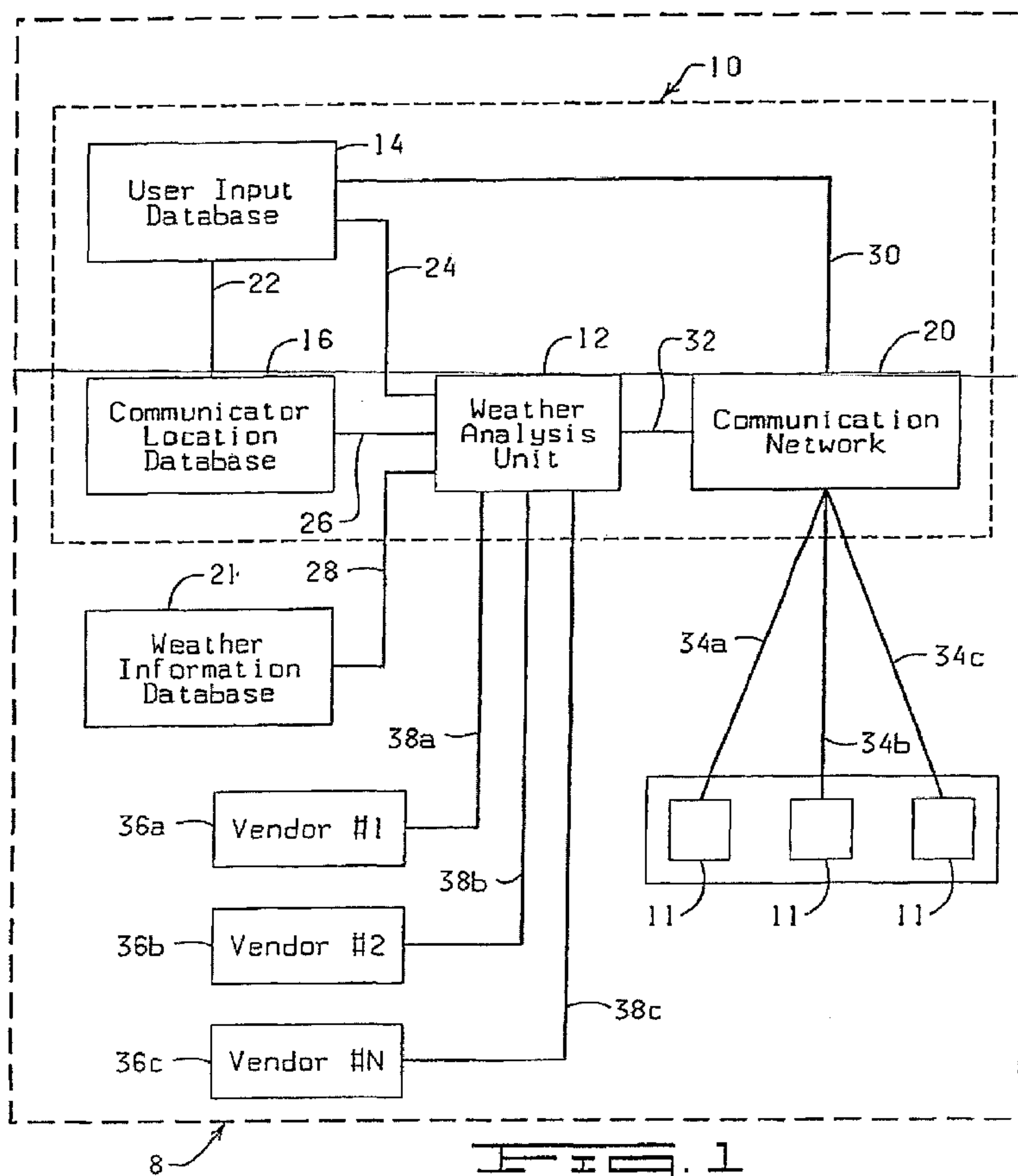
(72) Inventors; and

(75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): **ROOT, Steven, A.** [US/US]; 901 Olde Waterfront, Edmond, OK 73034 (US).

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(54) Title: INTERACTIVE ADVISORY SYSTEM



(57) Abstract: A method for passing content to at least one communicator device. The user of a communicator device registers with at least one service provider for delivering a plurality of different types of content to be passed to the at least one communicator device. A user defined priority is assigned to the at least one type of content. The user-defined priority is stored on a computer readable medium. The different types of content are passed to the at least one communicator device based on the user defined priority.

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INTERACTIVE ADVISORY SYSTEM

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] During recent years, the demand for detailed information, such as for example, weather information, has risen sharply. Personal computers and communication devices have increased the demand for more information because of their power to gather, manipulate, transmit and receive data. As a result, specialized information and value-added services are in great demand. End users no longer desire to gather, manipulate and evaluate raw data. For instance, nowhere is this condition more apparent than with weather services across North America.

[0002] Years ago, radio and television broadcasters recognized an increasing demand for weather information from their audience, and thus increased the number of on-air weather segments as a means for increasing market ranking. Today, the demand for specific content in weather information has exceeded the ability of broadcasters to meet this demand. Virtually every facet of business and personal activities are continually influenced by the weather, good or bad.

[0003] In the United States as in most countries, a governmental agency (the National Weather Service in the United States) has the primary responsibility of generating weather products for the general public. These products, such as advisories, statements, and forecasts are generated and made available to third parties, such as broadcasters, newspapers, Internet web sites, paging companies and others who, in turn, distribute them to the public. However, this chain of data custody is one way.

[0004] Today's lifestyles are fast-paced and sophisticated. Requests for detailed weather information for specific applications outnumber the governments' ability to process them. However, adhering to their mandated responsibility, the National Weather Service generates the general products for public consumption twice daily. This condition forces the public to interpret general and outdated advisories to meet their needs. Often, this interpretation is made erroneously. Even worse, these products are usually regional or national in scope, and may not apply to a particular location where various local activities are underway.

[0005] By way of example, weather warnings are broadcast by radio stations across the United States. These warnings identify certain weather impacts within a specified area. In most cases, the warning area includes one or more counties, covering dozens to hundreds of square miles. Most often, these threats (such as severe thunderstorms,

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 tornadoes, etc.), only impact a very small zone within the warning area. These threats also move rapidly. As impacts approach specific zones, they are in fact, moving away from other zones, inside the total warning area. Essentially, the existing reporting system is insufficient to specifically identify and adequately warn of personal risk. Furthermore, if the threat is imminent, the existing system cannot and does not provide preventive measures for each user near or at the threat. Thus, by default, distant or unaffected users are placed "on alert" unnecessarily when the threat may be moving away from their location.

[0006] Another common example further clarifies the problem. A family, excited to attend the championship softball game this upcoming weekend, closely monitors the local weather forecast. All week long the forecast has advised fair to partly cloudy weather for game day. Early on game day, the forecast changes to partly cloudy, with a thirty percent chance for late afternoon showers. The family decides to attend the game, believing that the chances for rain are below their perceived risk level. Unknown to the family at midday, some clusters of showers are intensifying and will place dangerous lightning over the game field. While the morning weather report was not completely inaccurate, the participants and spectators are exposed to risk. If later asked, it is likely the family members did not hear or remember the weather forecast. They also failed to link their limited knowledge of the weather to their own needs and risk exposure. They did not monitor changing weather events. Most likely, they had no ability to monitor developing risk at the game. Clearly, these people were forced to interpret outdated, limited information as applied to their specific application.

[0007] Therefore, a need exists for a system to automatically and continuously provide consumer customized reports, advisories, alerts, forecasts and warnings relevant to a consumer-defined level of need or dynamic spatial location. It is to such a system that the present invention is directed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] The present invention provides an interactive advisory system and method of delivering individualized, user-defined information based upon prioritization of the information typically assigned by the user or recipient of such information. More specifically, the present invention relates to a method for passing content to at least one communicator device. The method includes the step of selecting at least one service for delivering a plurality of different types of content to be passed to the at least one communicator device.

[0011] The method further includes the step of assigning a user-defined priority to at least one of the types of content and also assigning a user-defined priority to one or more communicator service providers. The method also includes the step of storing the user-

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 defined priority on a computer readable medium and passing the different types of content to the communicator device based on the user-defined priority.

[0012] Other advantages and features of the present invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art when the following detailed description is read in view of the attached drawings and appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of an interactive weather advisory system constructed in accordance with the present invention.

[0014] FIG. 2 is a coordinate system illustrating a spatial location identifier and a spatial range identifier utilized by versions of the present invention.

[0015] FIG. 3 is a block diagram of an interactive advisory system constructed in accordance with the present invention.

[0016] FIG. 4 is a block diagram of an interactive weather advisory system constructed in accordance with the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 5 is a block diagram of an interactive advisory system constructed in accordance with the present invention.

[0018] FIG. 6 is a block diagram of another version of an interactive advisory system constructed in accordance with the present invention.

[0019] FIG. 7 is a block diagram of yet another embodiment of an interactive advisory system constructed in accordance with the present invention.

[0020] FIG. 8 is a block diagram of another embodiment of an interactive advisory system constructed in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0020] Referring now to the drawings and more particularly to FIG. 1 shown therein in block diagram form is one embodiment of the invention in the form of an interactive weather advisory system constructed in accordance with the present invention. The weather advisory system 8 is provided with a broadcast network 10 for selectively transmitting individualized weather output signals to remote communicator devices 11. The broadcast network 10 includes a weather analysis unit 12, a user input database 14, a communicator location database 16, and a communication network 20. The weather analysis unit 12 receives real-time weather data from a weather information database 21. The weather information database 21 can be located at the broadcast network 10, or remotely from the broadcast network 10. The weather analysis unit 12, the user input database 14, the communicator location database 16, the weather information database

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21, and the communication network 20, interrelate and communicate via signal paths 22, 24, 26, 28, 30 and 32.

[0021] The user input database 14 permits a plurality of users to input data corresponding to the weather reports, advisories or forecasts such that individualized weather reports, advisories or prediction of events can be transmitted to each individual user. The user input database 14 contains data representative of at least one user-defined parameter correlated to each one of a plurality of users. In one version of the present invention, each of the user-defined parameters includes various information related to weather output signals, such as a spatial range identifier, a user profile, one or more weather content identifiers for identifying particular weather patterns, one or more time identifiers for identifying particular times or time intervals that a user may desire a weather product, a spatial location fixed or dynamic code, and a spatial location identifier for identifying particular spatial locations of interest to the user if the spatial location fixed or dynamic code indicates that the spatial location is to be fixed. The user profile in each of the user-defined parameters includes at least a user identifier code for identifying a particular communicator device 11 associated with a particular user.

[0022] For instance, the user identifier code could be a mobile telephone number identifying one of the communicator devices 11, which in this instance could be a mobile telephone or a pager, for example. The weather content identifier could be a computer code to identify one or a variety of weather conditions or events such as tornadoes, thunderstorms, hail storms, lightning storms, showers, snow storms, blizzards, high winds, winds aloft, rapidly rising or rapidly falling barometric pressure or other such weather patterns or conditions. The time identifier desirably could be a computer code for identifying the particular time, times, or time intervals the user desires the interactive weather advisory system 8 to communicate weather data to the user or to monitor the real-time weather data for a particular time and/or date. The spatial location identifier 26 could be a computer code identifying a particular predetermined spatial location such as, by way of example but not limitation, a longitude and latitude anywhere in the world, a town, a county, a township, address, zip code, altitude and combinations thereof.

[0023] As discussed above, the spatial location identifier identifies a particular spatial location anywhere in the world and/or altitude above sea level. The spatial range identifier identifies a particular spatial range surrounding the spatial location identifier. Each of the users can select the spatial location identifier and the spatial range identifier so as to receive weather forecasts and/or weather advisories or any other weather information for

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the spatial location identified by the spatial location identifier, and within the spatial range identified by the spatial range identifier.

[0024] For example, referring to FIG. 2, shown therein is a coordinate system illustrating four spatial location identifiers and four spatial range identifiers selected by different users of the present invention. That is, one of the users selects the spatial location identifier (X1, Y1, Z1), and the spatial range identifier (R1). Another one of the users selects the spatial location identifier (X2, Y2, Z2), and the spatial range identifier (R2).

[0025] The user who selected the spatial location identifier (X1, Y1, Z1) and the spatial range identifier R1 will receive weather products and advisories concerning the spatial range identified by the spatial location identifier (X1, Y1, Z1) and the spatial range identifier R1, as predefined in his user input database. The user who selected the spatial location identifier (X2, Y2, Z2) and the spatial range identifier R2 will receive weather products and advisories concerning the spatial range identified by the spatial location identifier (X2, Y2, Z2) and the spatial range identifier R2, and as predefined in the user input database 14. Likewise, the users who selected the spatial location identifiers (X3, Y3, Z3) and (X4, Y4, Z4) and the spatial range identifiers R3 and R4 will receive weather products and advisories concerning the spatial range identified by the spatial location identifiers (X3, Y3, Z3), (X4, Y4, Z4) and the spatial range identifier R3, R4, and as predefined in the user input database 14.

[0026] The magnitudes of the spatial range identifiers R1, R2, R3 and R4 can be different or the same. In addition, the magnitudes of the spatial range identifiers R1, R2, R3 and R4 can vary widely and are desirably selected by the users.

[0027] Particular users can input the user-defined parameters into the user input database 14 via any suitable method. For example, the user input database 14 is desirably configured to acquire its data from a variety of optional sources preferably chosen by the user, such as verbally through a telephone customer service network, a mobile phone network equipped with wireless application protocol technology, email, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, or an interactive web site. Furthermore, users could mail the user-defined parameters to the broadcast network 10, and an individual at the broadcast network 10 could input the user-defined parameters directly into the user input database 14 via a keyboard or other similar input device. In one embodiment, the user inputs the selected information into the user input database 14 via the user's communicator device 11.

[0028] The weather information database 21 contains real-time weather data for at least the spatial locations contained in the communicator location database 16 and the

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spatial locations identified by the spatial location identifier in the user input database 14.

The weather analysis unit 12 generates predictions of all weather events based on the real-time weather data. The weather information database 21 desirably receives its real-time weather data from at least one of a plurality of possible resources such as, by way of example but not limitation, government weather information resources, privately operated weather information resources, and other various meteorological resources. The real-time weather data could also be either input directly at the physical location of the weather information database 21 or input via a mobile phone network, a mobile phone network with wireless application protocol, the Internet, aircraft communication systems, email, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, regular computer, or other wireless devices.

[0029] Alternatively, the weather information database 21 may contain weather prediction data and/or weather forecast data for at least the spatial locations contained in the communicator location database 16 and the spatial locations identified by the spatial location identifier in the user input database 14. In this embodiment, the weather analysis unit 12 generates predictions of all weather events based on the real-time weather data.

[0030] The communicator location database 16 is an optional feature of the present invention, and is enabled via the signal path 22 when the user requests real-time weather advisories or prediction of events at the dynamic spatial location of the user's communicator device 11. The communicator location database 16 is continuously updated such that the communicator location database 16 contains real-time data indicative of the spatial locations of the communicator devices 11. In one embodiment, the user identifier code in the user's profile is transmitted to the communicator location database 16 via the signal path 22. The communicator location database 16 desirably receives data from the communicator devices 11 identified by the user identifier codes via at least one of a variety of possible resources such as a mobile phone network, a mobile phone network equipped with the wireless application protocol technology, global positioning satellite technology, the Internet, loran technology, radar technology, transponder technology or any other type of technology capable of tracking the spatial location of a communicator device 11 and communicating the location of such communicator device 11 to the communicator location database 16 of the broadcast network 10. Preferably, the communicator location database 16 is continuously and automatically updated as to the location of each of the communicator devices 11, such as by the wireless application protocol technology. Alternatively, the communicator location database 16 may be updated upon demand of a user as to the location of each of the communicator devices 11, such as by the wireless application protocol technology.

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The communication network 20 can be, by way of example but not limitation, a mobile phone network, a mobile phone network with wireless application protocol technology, the Internet, a facsimile network, a satellite network (one or two-way), a RF radio network, or any other means of transmitting information from a source to an end user.

[0032] The communicator devices 11 can be bidirectional or unidirectional communicator devices. The communicator devices 11 can be, by way of example but not limitation, a portable device, such as a mobile telephone, a smart phone, a pager, a laptop computer or a personal digital assistant, or any other electronic device capable of receiving weather information data. Furthermore, the communicator device 11 can be incorporated into an object that is utilized or accessible by the user, such as a helmet, an automobile, or an airplane, for example. While only three communicator devices 11 are represented in FIG. 1 for purposes of illustration, the interactive weather advisory system 8 contemplates the utilization of a large number of communicator devices 11.

[0033] The weather analysis unit 12 receives the data in the user input database 14, the communicator location database 16, and the weather information database 21 from the signal paths 24, 26, and 28. The weather analysis unit 12 can be, by way of example but not limitation, a computer desirably programmed to automatically and continuously compare the data in the user input database 14, communicator location database 16, and weather information database 21 so as to generate an individualized weather output signal including weather information within the spatial range identified by the spatial range identifier for each user-defined parameter in the user input database 14. The weather output signals are transmitted to the communication network 20 via the signal path 32.

[0034] The weather analysis unit 12 gathers the real-time weather data from the weather information database 21. The term "real-time weather data", as used herein, refers to weather data, which is continually updated so as to indicate current, or near current information. In some instances, the "real-time weather data" may be delayed by relatively small increments of five minutes, 15 minutes, or 30 minutes, for example. In other instances, the "real-time weather data" can be provided with substantially no delay. It is expected that the increments will become smaller as communication networks and weather related technology become faster. The weather analysis unit 12 generates predictions of all weather related events and compares past and current events contained in the weather information database 21 (such as future position, strength, trajectory, etc.), to construct a four-dimensional database. Three dimensions of the database define a physical location on or above the earth's surface (the spatial location identifier (X1, Y1, and Z1). The fourth

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 dimension is time - past, present or future (identified as T1, T2, T3, T4). By employing high speed computer processors in real-time, the weather analysis unit 12 compares all events (past, current and predicted), at specific positions (X1, Y1, Z1, T1) with identical user supplied data (the user input database - X1, Y1, Z1, R1, T1), and identifies any matches (weather output signals) to the user through the communication network 20 and communication devices 11.

[0035] The communication network 20 receives the weather output signals and the user identification codes via the signal paths 32 and 30. In response thereto, the communication network 20 transmits the individualized weather output signals to the communicator devices 11 associated with the user identification codes via the signal paths 34a, 34b and 34c, such that each user receives the individualized weather information that was requested.

[0036] The signal paths 34a, 34b and 34c refer to any suitable communication link, which permits electronic communications. For example, the signal paths 34a, 34b and 34c can be point-to-point shared and dedicated communications, infrared links, microwave links, telephone links, CATV links, satellite and radio links and fiber optic links.

[0037] Various combinations of weather information can be incorporated into the user input database 14 so as to provide the user with selected and specific weather information. For example, a user traveling in his automobile may wish to be informed by the interactive weather advisory system 8 concerning all hailstorms for an area within a 2.5-mile radius of his vehicle as he is traveling from his point of origin to his destination. The user, for example, through his smart phone (communicator device 11) in his vehicle working in conjunction with a mobile phone network (communication network 20) with wireless application protocol, inputs selected information into the user input database 14; namely, the user's smart phone number (user identifier code), hail (weather content identifier), 2.5 mile radius (spatial range identifier 24) and spatial location dynamic (spatial location of the user's smart phone is then automatically and continuously monitored), and the like.

[0038] The interactive weather advisory system 8 then monitors weather information and predictions of events in the weather analysis unit 12, and transmits the individualized weather output signal to the user's smart phone if a hailstorm is detected or is highly likely to form within a 2.5 mile radius of the vehicle along the vehicle's path of travel, for the duration of travel.

[0039] The individualized weather output signal can be an audio, video, textural and/or graphical data signal. For example, the individualized weather output signal can be

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a .WAV file or other suitable file containing an animated representation of a real or hypothetical individual speaking an individualized message to the user. In the example given above, the individualized message may be that the hailstorm is 2.5 miles ahead of the vehicle and thus, the user should consider stopping for a short period of time so as to avoid the hailstorm. Alternatively, the individualized message may be that the hailstorm is 2.5 miles ahead of the vehicle and thus, the user should consider stopping until further notified by another individualized weather output signal so as to avoid the hailstorm. In other words, the weather analysis unit 12 may transmit another individualized weather output signal to the user via the communication network 20 and the communicator devices 11 notifying the user that the weather condition identified by the weather content identifier has passed or is beyond the spatial location identified by the spatial range identifier.

[0040] As another example, a user may desire to be informed of all real-time weather data and predictions of events within a particular spatial range of a particular dynamic spatial location. For instance, the user may be interested in whether his aircraft is at risk of icing as he flies from Oklahoma City to Tulsa, Oklahoma. To provide a suitable level of comfort and safety, the user may wish to be informed of icing conditions within 10 miles of the dynamic spatial location of his aircraft. The user, for example, through his smart phone or other suitable avionic device (communicator device 11) in his aircraft working in conjunction with a mobile phone network (communication network 20) with wireless application protocol, inputs selected information into the user input database 14; namely, the user's smart phone number (user identifier code), icing (weather content identifier), 10 mile radius (spatial range identifier 24), and the spatial location dynamic. The spatial location of the user's smart phone or other suitable avionic device is then automatically and continuously monitored as the aircraft traverses through time and space from (X1, Y1, Z1, T1) to (X4, Y4, Z4, T4). The interactive weather analysis unit 12 then monitors the real-time weather data in the weather information database 21 and the predicted events in the weather analysis unit 12 so as to transmit the individualized weather output signal to the user's smart phone or other avionic device identifying, if icing is detected or is highly likely to form relevant to a 10 mile radius of the aircraft.

[0041] As yet another example, perhaps the user is only interested in a particular weather pattern at a particular fixed spatial location and within a particular spatial range irrespective of the immediate location of the communicator device 11. To accomplish this user's request, the broadcast network 10 does not utilize the communicator location database 16. The user inputs selected information into the user input database 14, namely the user's phone number (user identifier code), the code for the particular weather pattern

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 in which the user is interested (weather content identifier), the spatial range around the spatial location in which the user is interested (spatial range identifier), and the spatial location in which the user is interested (spatial location identifier). The weather analysis unit 12 then monitors the real-time weather data in the weather information database 21 and the predicted events in the weather analysis unit 12 so as to transmit the individualized weather information concerning the weather pattern in the spatial location and range requested by the user.

[0042] As a further example, perhaps the user is only interested in a particular weather condition at the spatial location and within a particular spatial range at a particular time. The user inputs selected information into the user input database 14, namely, the user's phone number (user identifier code), the code for the particular weather pattern in which the user is interested (weather content identifier), the spatial range around the spatial location in which the user is interested (spatial range identifier and the spatial location in which the user is interested spatial location identifier) and the time and date (time identifier) that the user wishes to be informed of the weather conditions at the spatial location of interest. In response thereto, the weather analysis unit 12 monitors the real time weather data from the weather information database 21 for the spatial location and range identified by the spatial range identifier and spatial location identifier to determine the probability of the particular weather pattern occurring at the time identified by the time identifier. The weather analysis unit 12 sends, via the signal path 32, the individualized weather output signal to the communication network 20. The communication network 20 receives the user identifier code, via signal path 30, from the user input database 14 and transmits the weather output signal received from the weather analysis unit 12 to the particular communicator device 11 identified by the user identifier code. Thus, the user receives the individualized weather information concerning the spatial location, spatial range and time requested by the user.

[0043] The signal paths 22, 24, 26, 28, 30 and 32 can be logical and/or physical links between various software and/or hardware utilized to implement the present invention. It should be understood that each of the signal paths 22, 24, 26, 28, 30 and 32 are shown and described separately herein for the sole purpose of clearly illustrating the information and logic being communicated between the individual components of the present invention. In operation, the signal paths may not be separate signal paths but may be a single signal path. In addition, the various information does not necessarily have to flow between the components of the present invention in the manner shown in FIG. 1. For example, although FIG. 1 illustrates the user identifier code being transmitted directly from the user input

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database 14 to the communication network 20 via the signal path 30, the user identifier code can be communicated to the weather analysis unit 12 via the signal path 24 and then communicated to the communication network 20 via the signal path 32.

[0044] It should be understood that although the user has been described as manually inputting the user identifier code into the user input database 14, the user identifier code could be automatically input into the user input database 14 by the communicator device 11.

[0045] Once the user-defined parameters have been input into the user input database 14, the user-defined parameters can be analyzed by the weather analysis unit 12 along with weather content identifiers for purposes of targeted marketing. A plurality of vendors 36 can be provided access to the weather analysis unit 12 of the broadcast network 10 via a plurality of signal paths 38a, 38b, and 38c. The vendors 36 can independently input search information into the weather analysis unit 12 for compiling a data set of information, which is useful to the vendors 36.

[0046] For example, a particular vendor 36a, who is in the business of selling snow blowers, may input a weather content identifier and time identifier into the weather analysis unit 12 so as to request a list of all spatial locations in the United States which are expected to receive at least 10 inches of snow in the next week. The weather analysis unit 12 would then compile the data set of all spatial locations in the United States which is expected to receive at least 10 inches of snow in the next week based on at least one weather content identifier, the time identifier, and the real-time weather data stored in the weather information database 21. The data set is then output to the vendor 36a. Based on the data set, the vendor 36a may send advertisements or additional snow blowers to the areas identified in the data set.

[0047] As another example, the particular vendor 36a, who is in the business of selling snow blowers, may input a weather content identifier and time identifier into the weather analysis unit 12 so as to request a list of all user profiles identifying users who resided in spatial locations in the United States which are expected to receive at least 10 inches of snow in the next week. The weather analysis unit 12 would then compile the data set of all spatial locations in United States which is expected to receive at least 10 inches of snow in the next week based on at least one weather content identifier, the time identifier, the user profiles, and the real-time weather data stored in the weather information database 21. The data set is then output to the vendor 36a. Based on the data set, the vendor 36a may send advertisements to the users who are identified in the data set.

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[0048] It is envisioned that users will subscribe to the services provided by the broadcast network 10. In this regard, the broadcast network 10 may or may not charge a service fee to the users. In addition, some services may be provided by the broadcast network 10 for one charge and additional services may be provided at an enhanced charge.

[0049] To save processing power, the weather analysis unit 12 may periodically determine which communicator devices 11 are turned off or out of range. Once this has been determined, the weather analysis unit 12 would then not generate any individualized weather output signals for the communicator devices 11 which are turned off or out of range. Once a particular one of the communicator devices 11 is turned on or comes within range, the weather analysis unit 12 would then attempt to generate individualized weather output signals for such communicator devices 11. In other words, to save processing power the weather analysis unit 12 may only generate individualized weather output signals for the communicator devices 11 which are active and within range.

[0050] The weather analysis unit 12 can be located at the broadcast network 10. Alternatively, the weather analysis unit 12 can be separate from the remainder of the broadcast network 10 and provided as a service to the broadcast network 10.

[0051] In one preferred embodiment, rather than or in addition to the user providing user-defined parameters to the user input database 14, the user input database 14 is programmed to provide a plurality of pre-defined user profiles with each of the pre-defined user profiles directed to an activity designated by the user optionally including data and time of the activity. The activity can be a business, personal or recreational need. For example, the business need can be any work dependent upon or impacted by weather conditions to carry out a desired activity, such as, but not limited to a rancher, contractor, farmer, or painter. The personal need can be any activity positively or negatively impacted by weather conditions, such as but not limited to, duties performed by a homeowner, such as mowing the lawn, painting the house, trimming trees, or the like. The recreational need can be any recreational or other outdoor activity dependent upon weather conditions, such as but not limited to golfing, cycling, boating, hiking, fishing, or snow skiing.

[0052] In this case, the user selects or provides an activity or category to the user input database 14. The user input database 14 retrieves pre-defined information concerning such activity or category and stores or links such pre-defined information with the user's user profile. The broadcast network 10 and/or weather analysis unit 12 then functions as set forth above to provide weather alerts or other information concerning the information contained in the user's user profile.

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[0053]

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For example, a user may plan on golfing on a particular weekend during the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. In this case, the user would select the pre-defined user profile for "golfing", and the time frame of such planned activity. The location of planned activity can also be entered into the user input database 14, or the location of the communicator device 11 can be monitored by the communicator location database 16. The information contained in the pre-defined user profile is input into the user input database 14 and output weather alerts and forecasts are then generated as discussed above.

[0054] The pre-defined user profiles are determined by member(s) of the broadcast network 10 and/or weather analysis unit 12, who identify weather conditions, which are typically suitable and/or adverse to each designated activity. Thus, for example, a pre-defined user profile for "golfing" will contain data such as wind conditions, lightning, rain, temperature and other conditions which will positively or negatively impact a golfing activity. The data in the pre-defined user profile can be determined either before or after selection of the activity by the user.

[0055] If desired by the user, the broadcast network 10 and/or weather analysis unit 12 can assume the responsibility for generating the appropriate size of the spatial range identifier (as in the case with the user profile, or pre-defined user profile). Alternatively, the spatial range identifier can be determined by the nature of the weather event. In the latter case, member(s) of the broadcast network 10 and/or weather analysis unit 12 would determine an "area of concern" around each weather event that would or could occur and the communication network 20 would then send notifications to any user or communicator device 11 that may come into contact with the area of concern.

[0056] For example, a tornado may be ½ mile wide and the broadcast network 10 and/or weather analysis unit 12 would, based upon its experience, knowledge and/or abilities, determine that the area of concern would be 1 ½ miles wide and 8 miles long - moving northeasterly. Any user contained within the user input database 14 would be notified, as discussed above, if the user's location comes into contact with the "area of concern".

OTHER USES OF THIS SYSTEM

[0057] Shown in FIGS. 3-4, are advisory systems 8a and 8b which can be used for delivering other types of information or for more accurately predicting weather related events. The advisory systems 8a and 8b are similar in construction and function to the weather advisory system 8, except as described below. For purposes of clarity, similar components have been provided with the same numeric prefix, and different alphabetic suffix.

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[0058] The advisory system 8a is provided with a broadcast network 10a. In one embodiment, the broadcast network 10a is used for transmitting individualized real-time work assignments from, for example, an employer to an employee. The broadcast network 10a is provided with an analysis unit 12a, a communicator location database 16a, and communicator devices 11a and 11b. The communicator device 11a is referred to herein as an “employer communicator device”, and the communicator device 11b is referred to herein as an “employee communicator device.” The communicator location database 16a is continuously updated to contain real-time data indicative of the spatial locations of the communicator devices 11a and 11b. In a similar manner as described above, the analysis unit 12a makes comparisons between user profiles (as represented by a box 80a), dynamic locations stored in the communicator location database 16a, fixed locations as represented by a box 82a and job assignments entered into the analysis unit 12a from one of the employer communicator devices 11a. The system 8a may be further described as an employer system 40a and an employee system 42a to delineate the types of information being conveyed within the system 8a.

[0059] For example, an employer uses the employer communicator device 11a to input employee information and/or criteria into an employee's user profile such as, for example, job location, job schedule, skill set requirements, personality traits, and other criteria as represented by a box 84a. Further, the employer inputs work or job assignment criteria into the analysis unit 12a such as, for example, job location, job schedule, skill set requirements, personality traits, and other criteria. The employer inputs the above criteria into one of the employer communicator devices 11a which may be, for example, a computer, a personal digital assistant (PDA), a cellular phone, a combination cellular phone/PDA, or any other device which may then transmit the employee information and/or job assignment criteria to the analysis unit 12a. The analysis unit 12a may be, for example, a computer or a web server. The analysis unit 12a matches the employee user profile criteria with the work assignment criteria to generate a data set of at least one individualized work assignment.

[0060] The individualized real-time work assignment is transmitted to one of the employee communicator devices 11b based upon the matching of the work assignment criteria with the employee user-profile. The data set can be transmitted to the employer communicator device 11a such that the employer can review the data set to assign the work assignment to a particular one of the employees, or alternatively, the analysis unit 12a can automatically assign the work assignment to a particular one of the employees and thereby

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 transmit the work assignment to the employee's communicator device 11b without any intervention by the employer. The employee's communicator device 11b may be, for example, a PDA, a cellular phone, a combination cellular phone/PDA, a pager, or any other device in which the analysis unit 12a or the employer may communicate information to the employee.

[0061] The user profile for each of the employees includes information relating to the employee's traits such as, for example, personality, sales style, dress, skill set, location, schedule, or any other quality or trait relating to the particular employee. Further, the user profile is preferably accessible by both the employer communicator device 11a and the employee communicator device 11b. However, it is preferred that the employer communicator device 11a have access to the entire user profile, while the employee communicator device 11b only have access to a subset of the user profile. Thus, the user profile accessible by the employer system 40a may differ from the user profile accessible by the employee system 42a.

[0062] For example, the user profile accessible by the employer system 40a may include traits related to a particular employee that remain hidden or unknown to the employee. For instance, the employee may have access to information stored in his user profile such as location, schedule, skill set, and other criteria as represented by a box 86a and may be provided access to his user-profile to update information as needed. In addition to the above-mentioned employee-accessible information, the employer may have access to the employee user profile to input and access employee traits such as personality, sales style, dress, and skill set and may be provided access to update this information as needed.

[0063] In another embodiment, the system 8a is used to deliver goods based upon real-time location of a carrier of the goods. More specifically, the system 8a can be used to accommodate purchasers of products ordered online in order to quickly and efficiently deliver goods to the purchaser's specified location.

[0064] The analysis unit 12a is loaded with employee user profiles and locations. The analysis unit 12a identifies delivery persons (employees) located near a purchaser's location. Part of the employee's user profile can include an inventory of the goods on the employee's delivery truck. The employee need not know what inventory is located on his delivery truck, but only his delivery destination.

[0065] For example, a purchaser may order fresh produce online. The employer may input the purchaser's order (work assignment) into the employer communicator device 11a

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(which inputs the work assignment into the analysis unit 12a) so that the analysis unit 12a may determine which delivery person may efficiently deliver the specified goods to the purchaser. Also, by ordering online, the purchaser may send his order directly to the analysis unit 12a such that the analysis unit 12a automatically determines the appropriate delivery person to deliver goods to the purchaser and sends the assignment to the delivery person via the employee's communicator device 11b. Further, the employer updates the user profile to track and monitor the precise inventory located on the employee's delivery truck, the inventory being delivered, and any inventory that may be stolen from the delivery truck.

[0066] In yet another embodiment, the system 8a can be used for sending salesmen to the field for soliciting new clients. For example, a company may receive an inquiry from a sales lead. Information about the lead is entered into the analysis unit 12a as a job assignment from the employer communicator device 11a. The analysis unit 12a then determines the appropriate salesman to send to the lead based on information stored in the salesman's user-profile. The salesman's user-profile may include information such as salesman location, personality traits, dress style or other attributes used to determine which salesman may be appropriate to send to the lead.

[0067] Shown in FIG. 4 is another advisory system 8b constructed in accordance with the present invention. The advisory system 8b includes a broadcast network 10b. The broadcast network 10b is similar in construction and function as the broadcast network 10 discussed above, except that the broadcast network 10b includes individualized sensor networks 48a having weather and environmental sensors 48b which are specifically associated with geographic areas associated with predetermined users.

[0068] For example, the weather and environmental data collection sites are tremendously sparse in growing areas of the world. In the state of Iowa, only a minimal number of National Weather Service data collection points exist. The scarcity of weather data hinders farmers because a dense grid of weather data points is non-existent in order for farmers to make critical decisions about their crops. For example, how do you know what 160-acre tract of land to fertilize when soil temperature data, crop moisture data, and chance of precipitation data is unavailable?

[0069] The sensor network 48a includes temporary or permanent data collection sensors 48b, which may be installed, for example, on a 10 acre to 40-acre grid on the land of a subscriber or user of the system 8b. Each sensor 48b may have a unique spatial range associated with it such as, for example, a five mile or twenty mile radius. The spatial range

associated with each sensor 48b can be selected by the user and specified as a result of the sensor 48b type and purpose as well as the density of the sensor network 48a. For example, if the user is interested in soil moisture in order to schedule a fertilizer treatment, the spatial range associated with the chosen sensor 48b may be set, for example, at 375 feet. In another example, the user may be interested in soil temperature for placing seeds in the ground and the desired spatial range associated with the chosen sensor 48b may be, for example, 2,000 feet. The user of the system 8b includes a user profile as discussed above, which is supplemented with information regarding the sensors 48b associated with the user, e.g., installed on or near the user's land. The sensors 48b transmit site-specific, individualized information to the weather analysis unit 12b so that more detailed information can be used by the weather analysis unit 12b in generating the site-specific weather information for the user.

[0070] The sensors 48b can be any type of sensor, which generates information usable for forecasting weather, transmitting current weather conditions, transmitting current environmental conditions, and/or forecasting environmental conditions. For example, the sensors 48b can be used to sample or record such parameters as, but not limited to, air temperature, humidity, precipitation, solar radiation, wind speed and direction, soil temperature, soil moisture, and/or chemical constituents in the soil.

[0071] For example, a user may enter into his user profile types of information the user would like the sensor network 48a to monitor such as, for example, temperature, moisture and/or soil conditions. The weather analysis unit 12b receives the sensor data from the sensor network 48a and transmits information to the user via the user's communicator device 50b based on information entered into his user profile. The user may also choose a specific sensor for monitoring a specific area at any given time by modifying his user profile.

[0072] Further, the system 8b may be used to transmit real-time road condition information to the weather analysis unit 12b to enhance the weather information transmitted to the users of the system 8b. Although the sensors 48b can include their own power source such as a battery or solar power source, the sensors 48b are preferably positioned on a device, which has its own electrical power source. For example, a temporary or permanent sensor or sensors 48b may be placed in various locations along a roadway such as on a vehicle, on or beside the roadway, on a billboard, gas pump, cell phone tower or sign alongside the roadway or railway, on a delivery vehicle(s) such as, for example, UPS and/or FedEx, or on the streetlights. If the sensor 48b is placed on the roadway, it may be placed in the concrete or asphalt. If placed beside the roadway, the sensor 48b may be

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placed in, for example, a ditch. The sensor(s) 48b may detect, for example, moisture, temperature or any other weather or environmental condition associated with the roadway, sign alongside the roadway, on streetlights, or on delivery vehicles such as, for example, UPS and/or FedEx, or on railway cars. Alternatively, the sensor(s) 48b may be used to detect traffic conditions or any other condition associated with a particular roadway or railway.

[0073] For example, each sensor 48b may be placed 100 feet away from the nearest sensor in order to create the sensor network 48a for determining conditions for a specified area along a roadway or railway. Further, the sensor(s) 48b may be placed on various cellular phone towers so that users of a particular cellular phone system associated with the tower may access various conditions using the system 8b.

[0074] Each of the weather sensors 48a can also include a system such as a GPS system for determining the current location of such weather sensor so that the current location of the weather sensor is transmitted to the weather analysis unit 12b.

[0075] One skilled in the art will recognize many uses of the system 8b. For example, when sensor data is collected by sensors 48a positioned on moving vehicles along roadways or railways, the weather analysis unit 12b can transmit such weather information to communicator devices 11b located in close proximity to where the sensor data is being collected. Thus, assuming that a Federal Express truck is located five miles from a subscriber, the information collected from the sensor on the Federal Express truck can be transmitted to the subscriber.

[0076] Shown in FIG. 5 is an advisory system 8c, which can be used for delivering other types of information. The advisory system 8c is similar in construction and function to the advisory system 8a, except as described below. For purposes of clarity, similar components have been provided with the same numeric prefix, and different alphabetic suffix.

[0077] The advisory system 8c is provided with a broadcast network 10c. In one embodiment, the broadcast network 10c is used for locating at least one known or unknown individual located remotely from the broadcast network 10c. The broadcast network 10c is provided with an analysis unit 12c, a communicator location database 16c, and at least one communicator device 11c and preferably at least two communicator devices 11c and 11d. The communicator device 11c is referred to herein as a “locator communicator device”, and the communicator device 11d is referred to herein as a “locatee communicator device”. The term “locator” as used herein shall mean a person trying to locate a locatee. The term “locatee” as used herein shall mean a person to be located. The communicator

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location database 16c is continuously updated to contain real-time data indicative of the spatial locations of the locator communicator device 11c and the locatee communicator device 11d.

[0078] In a similar manner as described above, the analysis unit 12c makes comparisons between user profiles (including information indicative of unique personal traits) entered into the analysis unit 12c from one of the remote communicator devices 11c and 11d (as represented by a box 80c), dynamic locations stored in the communicator location database 16c, and fixed locations as represented by a box 82c. The system 8c may be further described as a locator system 40c and a locatee system 42c to delineate the types of information being conveyed within the system 8c.

[0079] For example, a locator utilizes the locator communicator device 11c to input his or her locator information and/or criteria into his or her user profile such as, for example, personal characteristics (i.e., height, weight, age, eye color, hair color, gender, race, occupation and the like) personality traits (i.e., outgoing, social drinker, non-smoker, and the like), a photograph, an audio presentation by the locator, a video presentation of and/or by the locator, an audio/video presentation of and/or by the locator, and other user information and/or criteria as represented by a box 84c. Additionally or alternatively, the locator inputs desired criteria of a locatee into the analysis unit 12c such as, for example, personal characteristics, personality traits, proximity (including a spatial range identifier indicating a distance from the locator's fixed or dynamic location), or any other criteria. The locator inputs the above criteria into one of the locator communicator devices 11c, which may be, for example, a computer, a personal digital assistant (PDA), a cellular phone, a combination cellular phone/PDA, or any other device, which may then transmit the locator criteria to the analysis unit 12c. The analysis unit 12c may be, for example, a computer or a web server. The analysis unit 12c matches the locatee user profile criteria with the locator user profile criteria and/or locator desired criteria to generate a data set of locatee user profiles that match the locator criteria.

[0080] The locator criteria are transmitted to one of the locatee communicator devices 11d based upon the matching of the locator criteria with the locatee user-profile. The permission of the locatee may be obtained prior to forwarding any information about the locatee to the locator communicator device 11c, if desired. Once the locatee's permission is received (if required), the data set can be transmitted to the locator communicator device 11c such that the locator can review the data set to determine a locatee to contact by text message or any other means of communication, or alternatively, the analysis unit 12c can automatically determine a locatee to contact and thereby transmit

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the text message or other means of communication to the locatee's communicator device 11d without any intervention by the locator. The locatee's communicator device 11d may be, for example, a PDA, a cellular phone, a combination cellular phone/PDA, a pager, or any other device in which the analysis unit 12c or the locator may communicate information to the locatee.

[0081] The user profile for each of the locatees includes information relating to the locatee's personal characteristics such as, for example, height, weight, age, eye color, hair color, gender, race, occupation and the like and/or personality traits such as, for example, outgoing, social drinker, non-smoker, and the like, or any other quality or trait relating to the particular locatee. The locatee's user profile may additionally include a photograph of the locatee, an audio presentation by the locatee, a video presentation of and/or by the locatee, an audio/video presentation of and/or by the locatee, and other user information and/or criteria as represented by a box 86c.

[0082] Once the locatee's user profile is downloaded to a locator's communicator device 11c, the locator may add additional information relating to the locatee such as the locator's impression or opinion of the locatee or any other information the locator considers relevant to the locatee. This additional information remains hidden from the locatee, however, may be broadcast to additional users of the advisory system 8c. For example, the user profile accessible by the locator system 40c may include traits related to a particular locatee that remain hidden or unknown to the locatee as represented by the box 86c. For instance, the locatee may have access to information stored in his user profile such as inputted personal characteristics and/or personality criteria as represented by the box 86c and may be provided access to his user-profile to update information as needed. In addition to the above-mentioned locatee-accessible information, the locator may have access to the locatee user profile to access locatee traits such as personal characteristics and/or personality traits.

[0083] For example, a locator may include in his user profile that he is single, white, male, age 26, college student, non-smoker, and a light social drinker. The locator desires to locate white, single, females that share the same personal characteristics and/or personality traits. The locator may download the user profiles entered by other users ("locatees") of the advisory system 8c. The locator may send the locatee a text message or other means of communication to make further contact with the locatee. In this embodiment, the present invention may be considered a flirt-service, dating service, or matchmaking service.

[0084] In another embodiment, the system 8c is used to locate and provide entertainment among users with similar user profiles. Examples of such users include moviegoers, gamers, or other persons interested in a particular segment of the entertainment industry. More specifically, the system 8c can be used to locate individuals having similar interests in the entertainment industry and provide desired entertainment for such individuals. The system 8c can be used to locate individuals relative to a designated spatial range inputted into the analysis unit 12c by the locator. Alternatively, the system 8c can be used to locate individuals/locatees regardless of the locatee's location.

[0085] In the same manner as described above, the locator utilizes the locator communicator device 11c to input his or her locator information and/or criteria into his or her user profile such as, for example, entertainment interests, desired and/or designated spatial range (based upon a fixed or dynamic location), and other user information and/or criteria as represented by the box 84c. Additionally or alternatively, the locator inputs desired criteria of a locatee into the analysis unit 12c such as, for example, entertainment interests, desired and/or designated spatial range, and any other criteria desired by the user. The analysis unit 12c matches the locator information with the locatee information in the same manner as described above to locate and match other users of the system 8c having similar interests in the entertainment industry and/or a proximity within the area designated by the locator.

[0086] For example, a locator wishing to play a game such as, for example, tag, with other users of the system 8c may input his locator user profile information into the analysis unit 12c via his locator communicator device 11c in the same manner as described above. Examples of such locator user profile information include, for example, personal characteristics and/or personality traits, and/or a desired spatial range for locating locatees. In addition, the locator may input desired criteria of the locatee into the analysis unit 12c such as, for example, desired personal characteristics and/or personality traits, desired locatee location, and/or a desired spatial range for locating locatees.

[0087] A locator wishing to play a game of tag, for example, inputs information (via the locator communicator device 11c) relating to the type of game, the locator's personality traits and/or personal characteristics, into the analysis unit 12c and designates his desire to locate locatees within a spatial range of, e.g., 50 miles from his location. Using the world as a "game board" for participating in the designated game of tag, the analysis unit 12c matches the locatee user profile criteria with the locator user profile criteria and/or locator desired criteria to generate a data set of locatee user profiles that match the locator criteria.

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[0088] Based upon this data set of locatees, the locator may choose locatees/participants to participate in the designated game and send a message such as, for example, a text message, via his locator communicator device 11c such as "Tag, you're it" to the designated locatee via the locatee communicator device 11d. Alternatively, the system 8c can automatically determine a locatee to contact and thereby transmit the text message or other means of communication to the locatee's communicator device 11d without any intervention by the locator.

[0089] In addition to locating and matching users having similar interests in the entertainment industry, the system 8c is used by users/gamers to play or participate in a game such as, for example, a video game and the like, and/or interact with other users/gamers to play a desired or designated game. In the same manner as described above, the system 8c allows the user to interact with another individual/user involved in the game based upon the location (static or dynamic) of each user involved in a particular game (including a spatial range identifier indicating a distance from a user's fixed or dynamic location).

[0090] Additionally, the locator may use the system 8c to retrieve (via his locator communicator device 11c) specific locations of entertainment (i.e., movie theaters, casinos and the like) or specific events (i.e., a particular movie, a particular gaming event, and the like). The system 8c may also be used to alert the user of entertainment events based upon his user profile.

[0091] In another embodiment, the system 8c is used to track an individual ("locatee") based upon real-time location of the individual with or without the aid of a spatial range identifier. More specifically, the system 8c can be used to locate individuals traveling within a specified spatial range and notify a user when a particular individual has traveled outside of the specified spatial range. Additionally, the system 8c can be used to locate individuals regardless of their location or location relative to a designated spatial range.

[0092] The analysis unit 12c is loaded with a locatee user profile. Additionally, the analysis unit 12c may be loaded with a desired spatial range or path in which the locatee intends or is instructed to travel, i.e., the locatee intended range of travel and/or the locatee destination. The analysis unit 12c tracks the location of the locatee communicator device 11d and may alert the locator communicator device 11c when the locatee communicator device 11d travels outside of the locatee's intended range of travel and/or the locatee's intended destination. Additionally, the analysis unit 12c may alert the locator communicator device 11c when the locatee communicator device 11d travels to an area that is geo-

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referenced as a “good area” or “bad area.” The system 8c may require the consent of the locatee to track the locatee via the locatee communicator device 11d, if desired.

[0093] For example, a parent may desire to track the travel of his child via the system 8c. The parent may input the child’s intended destination (with or without a desired spatial range) into the locator communicator device 11c (which inputs the child’s intended destination into the analysis unit 12c) so that the analysis unit 12c may track the travel of the child via the locatee communicator device 11d and may additionally alert the parent via his locator communicator device 11c if the child should travel outside the desired spatial range, if designated. Also, the analysis unit 12c may alert the parent via his locator communicator device 11c if the child travels into a geo-referenced “good area” (i.e., a school and the like) or “bad area” (i.e., a drinking bar and the like).

[0094] Additionally, a user may keep track (via his locator communicator device 11c) of a friend’s (“locatee’s”) location by tracking the friend’s locatee communicator device 11d in the same manner as described above in locations such as, for example, a mall, a football stadium, and the like. In this embodiment, a desired spatial range may or may not be designated. Additionally, the system 8c may require the consent of the locatee to track the locatee via the locatee communicator device 11d, if desired.

[0095] An optional aspect of the systems 8, 8a, 8b, and 8c is the performance of “operations research.” The term “operations research” as used herein shall mean the geo-referencing of an object coupled with the time-tracking of the object. The term “geo-referencing” as used herein shall mean the determination of an object’s position, O1, in relation to an X1,Y1, coordinate (expected location or expected route) and/or an X1,Y1,Z1, coordinate (expected location or expected route). The term “time-tracking” as used herein shall mean an initial departure time (Td) of an individual and/or object coupled with a predicted and/or expected arrival time (Te) of the individual and/or object. Operations research is applicable to each and every embodiment of the present invention described herein.

[0096] Operations research may be employed in various fields such as, for example, mobile commercial services (i.e., fleet management, asset location, and field sales and service) entertainment services (i.e., gaming services, individual location services, and flirting and other “social” services), security services (i.e., child-locator services, and mobile roadside assistance), information services (i.e., points-of-interest identification, GPS navigation support, weather information and data, and traffic information and data), or any other field desiring the employment and application of operations research.

[0097] For example, a child along with his locatee communicator device 11d leaves his home (X1, Y1) at 8:00 a.m. (Td) expected to arrive at school (X2, Y2) at 8:30 a.m. (Te). The child's parent, via his locator communicator device 11c, may keep track of the child's location (O1) by, for example, inputting (1) a unique identification code identifying the child's locatee communicator device 11c, (2) the child's intended destination (i.e., school) (with or without a desired spatial range), (3) the child's time of departure (Td) and (4) the child's estimated time of arrival (Te) into the locator communicator device 11c. The locator communicator device 11c then inputs the unique identification code identifying the child's locatee communicator device 11c, (2) the child's intended destination (i.e., school) (with or without a desired spatial range), (3) the child's time of departure (Td) and (4) the child's estimated time of arrival (Te) into the analysis unit 12c so that the analysis unit 12c may track the travel of the child via the locatee communicator device 11d and may additionally alert the parent via his locator communicator device 11c if the child should travel outside the desired spatial range, if designated, and/or may alert the parent should the child not arrive at school by the inputted estimated time of arrival (Te) and/or may alert the parent as to the child's actual time of arrival (Ta) to his intended destination and/or a deviation of the child's location from the expected location and/or expected route, if designated. Also, as discussed above, the analysis unit 12c may alert the parent via his locator communicator device 11c if the child travels into a geo-referenced "good area" (i.e., a school and the like) or "bad area" (i.e., a drinking bar and the like).

[0098] As another example, an employer uses the employer communicator device 11a to input the employee's intended destination (i.e., delivery destination) (with or without a desired spatial range) into the employer communicator device 11a (which inputs the employee's intended destination into the analysis unit 12a), the employee's time of departure (Td) and the employee's estimated time of arrival (Te) so that the analysis unit 12a may track the travel of the employee via the employee communicator device 11b and may additionally alert the employer via his employer communicator device 11a if the employee should travel outside the desired spatial range, if designated, and/or may alert the employer should the employee not arrive at the delivery destination by the inputted estimated time of arrival (Te) and/or may alert the employer as to the employee's actual time of arrival (Ta) to his intended destination and/or a deviation of the employee's location from the expected route, if designated. Also, as discussed above, the analysis unit 12a may alert the employer via his employer communicator device 11a if the employee travels into a geo-referenced "good area" or "bad area."

[0099] Referring now to the drawings and more particularly to FIG. 6, shown there is another embodiment of an advisory system 8e constructed in accordance with the present invention. The advisory system 8e is provided with one or more communicator devices 11, one or more service providers (three being shown by way of example and designated with the reference numerals 90, 92 and 94) and one or more prioritization units 95. The prioritization unit 95 communicates with the communicator devices 11 via one or more communication networks 96, and also communicates with the one or more service providers 90, 92 and 94 via one or more communication networks. The prioritization unit 95 is adapted to permit users of the communicator devices 11 to individually select and/or assign different types of content, service providers, communication networks and/or third party vendors (as discussed below) to have different priorities. Alternatively, the prioritization unit 95 can automatically and individually select at least one of the communication networks 96 for passing the content to each communicator device 11 or groups of communicator devices 11.

[0100] The prioritization unit 95 is implemented as instructions (stored on one or more computer readable medium) running on a suitable logic device, such as a computer or group of computers. In a preferred implementation, the prioritization unit 95 is provided with a web server and communicates with the service providers 90, 92 and 94 as well as the communicator devices 11 using a global public network, such as the Internet.

[0101] The user defined priorities can be provided to the prioritization unit 95 by the users using a variety of different manners, such as electronically using a communicator device, telephone, another computer, facsimile, e-mail or mail. The user's priority instructions are stored as "user defined priorities" on one or more computer readable medium(s) that can be read by the prioritization unit 95 when determining the priority for passing content to the communicator devices 11.

[0102] The user-defined priorities can also be based upon a predetermined condition, location and/or service provider. For example, the predetermined condition can be a geographic area in which the communicator device 11 is presently located (or not located). The location of the communicator device 11 can also be used to determine the priority of content to be provided to the communicator device 11. For example, the location of the communicator device 11 can be utilized to provide a higher priority when the communicator device 11 enters the service area of one or more vendor or service provider.

[0103] The present location of the communicator device 11 can be automatically monitored using the communicator location database 16 as described above, or the

communicator device 11 can provide its own location to the prioritization unit 95 and/or one of the service providers 90, 92 or 94. The location of the communicator device 11 can be determined using any of a variety of possible resources such as a mobile phone network, a mobile phone network equipped with the wireless application protocol technology, global positioning satellite technology, the Internet, loran technology, radar technology, transponder technology or any other type of technology capable of determining or tracking the spatial location of a communicator device 11.

[0104] Each service provider 90, 92 and 94 is typically implemented as instructions (stored on one or more computer readable medium) running on a suitable logic device, such as a computer or a group of computers adapted to provide one or more services, such as, for example, movie services, news services, financial data services, weather and other environmental data services, business delivery data services, work assignment data services, location-specific gaming data (entertainment data) services, and third-party location data services, as discussed above. Users associated with the communicator devices 11 sign up or register with the service providers 90, 92 or 94 and also sign up or register with the prioritization unit 95 so that the services or content provided by the service providers 90, 92 or 94 are delivered to the communicator devices 11 with the aid of the prioritization unit 95. Once the user is signed up with the service providers 90, 92 or 94, the content is continuously or on-demand (on a push or pull basis) provided to the user's communicator device 11. In a preferred implementation, each service provider 90, 92 or 94 is provided with a web server and communicates with the prioritization unit 95 or the communicator devices 11 using a global, public network such as the Internet. However, it should be understood that the prioritization unit 95 can communicate with the service providers 90, 92 and 94 in other manners.

[0105] For example, one of the service providers 90, 92 or 94 can be adapted to provide third-party location data to the communicator devices 11. A priority for the third-party location data is selected, assigned, ranked, and/or given priority at the prioritization unit 95 for forwarding the third-party location data to the communicator device(s) 11 on a first priority basis. As another example, weather data may be ranked second priority and entertainment data may be ranked third priority based upon each user's desires. In this example, when resources become scarce, third-party location data will be given priority over weather data and entertainment data such that the user will receive the third-party location data paramount to weather data and entertainment data.

[0106] Content can either be originated directly by the service provider 90, 92 or 94, or originated by a third-party vendor who communicates such content to the service provider 90, 92 or 94. More than one third-party vendor may provide content to a single service provider. Also, a third-party vendor may provide a single content or multiple contents to the service provider. The third-party vendors are typically implemented as one or more computer systems, such as one or more database servers cooperating to obtain and/or generate content.

[0107] Designation of priority via the prioritization unit 95 may be offered on a variety of levels within the system 8e. For example, the user of any of the system 8e may assign priority via the prioritization unit 95 including, for example, the service provider level (as in content originated by one service provider 90, 92 or 94 would be given priority over content originated by another one of the service provider 90, 92 or 94), the content level (based upon the assigned priority of different types of content), or a third-party vendor level, or any combination thereof.

[0108] A service provider 90, 92 or 94 may originate or obtain at least one content to be passed to at least one communicator device 11. For example, as shown in FIG. 6 the service providers 90, 92, and 94 originate multiple contents 102, 104, 106, 108, 110, 112, 114, 116, 118, respectively, to be passed to the one or more communicator devices 11 via the prioritization unit 95 and the communication networks.

[0109] Referring now to FIG. 7, shown therein and designated by a reference numeral 8f is another advisory system constructed in accordance with the present invention. The advisory system 8f includes one or more communicator devices 11 and one or more service providers 90a, 92a, and 94a communicating with the communicator devices via one or more communication networks 96a. The service providers 90a, 92a and 94a are similar in construction and function as the service providers 90, 92 and 94 shown in FIG. 6, with the exception that each service providers 90a, 92a and 94a includes one or more prioritization units 95a for prioritizing the delivery of content 102a, 104a, 106a, 108a, 110a, 112a, 114a, 116a, and 118a to the communicators devices 11 individually from each service provider. The prioritization units 95a are similar in construction and function as the prioritization unit 95 described above, with the exception that the prioritization units 95a are associated solely with one of the service providers 90a, 92a or 94a.

[0110] Thus, in summary, the broadcast network in each of the systems (8, 8a, 8b, 8c, 8d) described above can be one of the service providers 90, 92 or 94 in the systems 8e and 8f by including one or more prioritization units 95 and 95a for prioritizing the desired

content passed to the communicator device(s) 11 via the communication networks 96 or 96a. Examples of the desired content include, but are not limited to, weather and other environmental data, business delivery data, work assignment data, location-specific gaming data (entertainment data), third-party location data, and the like based upon assignment of a user-defined priority assigned by the user.

[0111] Desired content may be pre-determined such that only assignment of user-defined priority is required or, alternatively, the desired content and user-defined priority may be selected and assigned simultaneously. By assigning priority to the various desired content, potential memory storage limit capabilities associated with the user's communicator device 11 and/or service provider 90, 92 or 94 may be alleviated so that content that is assigned first priority will preferably be received by the user. Content having a lower priority may not be received by the particular communicator device 11 if resources such as storage and/or service provider bandwidths are scarce.

[0112] The desired content is passed to at least one communicator device 11 by selecting at least one service provider for delivering one or more different types of content to be passed to the at least one communicator device 11 via the communication network 96 or 96a. The content may be provided by at least one or more vendor(s) providing identical content or different content. In addition, priority may be assigned to the content based upon the vendor providing such content. At least one user-defined priority is assigned to at least one of the types of content and to one or more communicator service providers.

[0113] Content assignment may be based upon a predetermined condition, location, and/or service provider. The predetermined condition is selected from the group consisting of a geographic area in which the communicator device is presently located, and a geographic area in which the communicator device is not presently located. The selected geographic area may or may not be within the service territory of the at least one or more vendor(s). The user-defined priority and/or the predetermined condition, location, and/or service provider is stored on a computer readable medium such that the different types of content are passed to the communicator device based on the user-defined priority. In one embodiment, it may be determined whether the predetermined condition, location, and/or service provider is available prior to any content being passed to the communicator device 11 via the communication network 96 or 96a. In addition, the content may be received and the user-defined priority may be read prior to the step of passing the different types of content to the communicator device 11 via the communication network 96 or 96a.

[0114] The computer readable medium is readable by the communicator device 11 and may be located on the communicator device 11. Alternatively, the computer readable medium may be located remotely from the communicator device 11, such as at the prioritization unit 95 or 95a.

[0115] In one version of the invention, the communicator devices 11 may be adapted to send a confirmation to the prioritization unit 95 (via the communication network 96), or the service providers 90a, 92a, or 94a (via the communication network 96a) indicating receipt of the content by the communicator device 11. If a confirmation is not received by the prioritization unit 95 or 95a, or the service provider 90a, 92a, or 94a then the prioritization unit 95 or 95a, or the service provider 90a, 92a, or 94a continue to resend the content until such confirmation is received. Thus, at least one type of content may be re-sent to the communicator device 11 until receipt of the content by the communicator device 11 is confirmed. Whether or not content is re-sent can be selected by the user in the user-defined priorities.

[0116] In another version of the invention, the system 8e or 8f may assign priority to available content to be passed to a user's communicator device 11 based upon a user's historical selections of available content and/or the user's historical prioritization of the available content based upon the user's historical preferences. That is, the system 8e or 8f may be adapted to automatically assign priority to available content originated by the service provider or the third-party vendor via the prioritization unit 95 or 95a at the various levels discussed above including, for example, the service provider level (as in content originated by one service provider 90, 92 or 94 and/or 90a, 92a, or 94a would be given priority over content originated by another one of the service provider 90, 92 or 94 and/or 90a, 92a, or 94a), the content level (based upon the assigned priority of different types of content), or a third-party vendor level, or any combination thereof based upon a user's historical selection of the available content and/or a user's historical prioritization of the available content.

[0117] For example, a user has selected and is receiving a variety of types of content, such as, for example, location specific data, weather and other environmental data, business delivery data, work assignment data, location-specific gaming data (entertainment data), third-party location data. But changes in the location of his kid is a higher priority than his gaming updates and weather data, so he rates the kid-finder data as the highest priority and that way he always gets it first, and/or resources are conserved so that he can receive it regardless of bandwidth, communicator device memory or other communication network or communicator device limitation.

[0118] In the embodiments of the system described above, the communicator device 11 may be adapted to include a prioritization unit (not shown) alternatively or in addition to the prioritization units 95 or 95a such that the presentation of content to the user (e.g., reception, display or storage) can be prioritized independently of any prioritization scheme usable by the service providers 90, 92, 94, 90a, 92a or 94a or prioritization unit 95. The prioritization unit included in the communicator device can be implemented in a variety of manners, such as instructions running on a suitable logic device, such as a microprocessor, digital signal processor or microcontroller, for example, and can receive the user defined priorities using any suitable input device, such as a keyboard, tablet, touch screen or the like. Such instructions can be implemented in a variety of manners, such as software, firmware or hardware.

[0119] Also, in any of the embodiments of the system described above, content that is not assigned priority by a user or by the system may be rejected by the prioritization unit such that non-prioritized content is not received by the user; or in the alternative case, stored for later retrieval and review by the user.

[0120] Referring now to FIG. 8, shown therein is another embodiment of an advisory system 8g constructed in accordance with the present invention. The advisory system 8g includes one or more communicator devices 11, an optional prioritization unit 95b, at least one service provider 90b and one or more vendor 102. Three vendors are shown in Fig. 8 and designated with the reference numerals 102a, 102b and 102c for purposes of clarity. The communicator devices 11, the service provider(s) 90b, and the prioritization unit 95b are similar in construction and function to the communicator devices 11 and the service provider(s) 90, as discussed above. It should be understood that while only three communicator devices 11 are represented in FIG. 8 for purposes of illustration, the advisory system 8g contemplates the utilization of a large number of communicator devices 11.

[0121] Each communicator device 11 is preferably portable and utilized or accessible by a user. In a preferred embodiment, each user has a user profile stored in a user profile database 100. The user profile database 100 can be a single database or a distributed database. In either case, the user profile database can be maintained by the service provider 90b, one or more of the vendors 102a-c or a third party. In addition, the service provider 90b and each of the vendors 102a, 102b and 102c can have their own user profile database and such information for each user can be consolidated or searched to provide the functions described hereinafter.

[0122] The advisory system 8g is designed to provide targeted marketing and/or advertising information to a plurality of users. The users are typically located remotely from

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the service provider 90b, but will typically be in close proximity, e.g., within several hundred feet of the vendor 102a, 102b or 102c. This distance may vary based upon the geographical layout of vendor 102a, 102b and 102c. In general, the user profiles within the user profile database 100 are automatically updated with information regarding the likes/dislikes of the users based on their own current and/or historical conduct. Each of the user profiles within the user profile database 100 typically includes a user identifier code identifying a communicator device 11 associated with a particular user.

[0123] The user profile database 100 can either be originated by the service provider 90b or originated by one or more of the vendors 102a, 102b and 102c or one or more third parties. The user profile database 100 is updated by the service provider 90b and/or the plurality of vendors 102a, 102b and 102c based upon the user's conduct. For example, the service provider 90b can create the user profile in the user profile database 100 by analyzing the user's responses to information received. In one embodiment, the user's communicator device can be web-enabled and the service provider 90b can update the user's user profile based on information entered into the communicator device 11 as the communicator device 11 is used to access web sites on the Internet to determine the user's likes and dislikes.

[0124] The plurality of vendors 102a, 102b and 102c can create or update the user profile database 100 of the user's likes or dislikes based on the user's buying habits, or the user's past or present location(s) within a marketing area, such as the vendor's store or sales outlet or sales outlets of multiple vendors that are in close proximity (such as an enclosed or open shopping mall); or the user's past or present location(s) relative to a vendor's store or sales outlet, or the stores or sales outlets of multiple vendors that are in close proximity (such as a shopping mall). The marketing area can be essentially any size and such size can depend upon a variety of factors such as type of product or service, cost of product or service or the like. Typically, the marketing area will encompass a township, that is, approximately 6-7 miles across, but could be as small as a single vendor's store, or a shopping mall.

[0125] The present location of the communicator device 11 and thus, the user, can be automatically monitored using a communicator location database as described above, and/or the communicator device 11 can provide its own location to the service provider 90b and/or one of the vendors 102 or a third party. The location of the communicator device 11 can be determined using any suitable system or technology. For example, satellite-positioning technology, such as GPS, can be incorporated into the communicator device 11 or a triangulation technology such as the WAP protocol can be used by the service

provider 90b. Additionally, position sensors (typically mounted at known locations) may be placed in or in close proximity to a store by the vendors 102a, 102b and 102c or the service provider 90b (or a third party) to refine the location of the communicator device 11 and thus, the user. For example, GPS technology known as wide area augmentation (WAAS), or local area augmentation can be utilized for determining the position of the communicator device 11 within several feet of its actual location. A description of how to make and use a suitable local area augmentation system is located in U.S. Patent No. 7,164,383, the entire content of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference. Refining the location of the user enables the service provider 90b, and the vendors 102a, 102b, 102c to more accurately determine the shopping habits of the user by monitoring the location of the communicator devices 11 (and thus the users) within or near the store or stores within the marketing area.

[0126] The vendors 102 and/or a third party at their direction, can optionally maintain a database of information directed to specific product locations within the marketing area, e.g., specific goods in certain aisles and/or shelves within certain aisles. The user's location (determined indirectly by monitoring the location of the user's communicator device 11) within the marketing area as well as the time of the user at any particular location can then be correlated with the information indicative of product locations within the marketing area to determine which products or services the user is looking at within the marketing area.

[0127] The service provider(s) 90b and the vendors 102a, 102b, and 102c may separately or jointly analyze the user profile information accumulated and stored in the user profile database 100. This analysis enables each of the service provider 90b and/or each vendor 102a, 102b, and 102c to pass targeted marketing information, such as advertisement, promotional and coupon content to at least one communicator device 11. The user profile information may also be provided to a third party for marketing various products and services to the user. The advertisement, promotional and coupon content may have a purchase inducement, such as a discount code or a bar code used for communicating a discount or promotion code to the vendor 102a, b or c. However, the discount or promotion code can be used in other manners, such as by receiving discounts from the service provider 90b, or crediting the user's credit card, debit card or bank account. When a purchase is made, the discount or promotion code can be provided to one of the vendor's checkout terminals via any suitable manner (such as a docking station, wireless communication, scanning a barcode on the screen of the communicator device 11, or by typing the promotion code into the checkout terminal), the vendor 102a-c can update the user's user profile and such update can be used for providing the discount or promotion,

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or the checkout terminal can communicate with the communicator device 11 or the service provider 90b to indicate that the discount or promotion was used.

[0128] Also, the content may be provided by at least one or more vendor(s) providing identical content or different content. In addition, priority may be assigned to the content based upon the vendor providing such content.

[0129] The vendors 102 can be provided with any suitable computer systems for implementing the functionality of the vendors 102 described herein. For example, the vendors 102 can each be provided with a store system computer and one or more checkout terminals. The store system computers receive buying habit information and update the user profiles 100 based on the user's conduct monitored by the vendors 102 as discussed above. The store system computers of the vendors 102 can also provide the targeted marketing information to the service provider 90b so that the service provider 90b can forward such targeted marketing information to the communicator devices 11.

[0130] In one example of the system 8g, a user having one of the communicator devices 11 walks into a store of a home improvement chain and purchases a lawn mower. A store computer at the home improvement chain updates the user profile database 100 for the user and the type of product purchased. The next time the user walks into one of the stores for the home improvement chain, the service provider 90b sends the communicator device 11 of the user an advertisement of product related to the user's prior purchase, such as trash bags and engine oil or replacement parts for the lawn mower.

[0131] In another example of the system 8g, the user having the communicator device 11 walks into the store of the home improvement chain after he had purchased the lawn mower and browses particular types of plants. The vendor, i.e., the home improvement chain having a store system monitoring the location of the user's communicator device 11 within the store and the time spent at various locations within the store correlates the location of the user's communicator device 11 with information of product locations within the store and sends a signal to the service provider 90b to provide a text message, graphic image, or audio message of a coupon for the particular type of plant to the communicator device 11 of the user.

[0132] The user decides to purchase the particular type of plant using the coupon, and on his way to the checkout terminal walks through the part of the store where replacement parts for the user's lawn mower are presented. The store system computer correlates the information in the user's user profile indicating that a lawn mower was purchased with the user's location within the store and the information regarding the location of products within the store and passes a coupon or other promotional item to the

user's communicator device 11 for a new blade for the lawn mower. The user receives the coupon or promotion for the new blade, selects a new blade and proceeds to the checkout terminal. Then, discount codes for the plant and the new blade are entered into the checkout terminal to provide a discount for the user. Thus, the plant and the mower blade are sold and delivered to the user at the store using the discount codes for the plant and the mower blade.

[0133] In another example of the system 8g, the user having the communicator device 11 comes into close proximity of a number of stores or sales outlets of multiple vendors (such as a shopping mall). The vendors each having a store monitoring system as described above can detect the location of the user's communicator device 11 in close proximity to its store or sales outlet. Having determined that the user has made purchases in the store or sales outlet before, the vendor can send a signal to the service provider 90b to provide a text message, graphic image, or audio message to the user's communicator device 11 to induce the use to enter its store or sales outlet, instead of the store or sales outlet of one of the other vendors. As described above, priorities can be assigned to the vendors by the service provider(s) 90b, the vendors or by the user.

[0134] In another example of the system 8g, the user having the communicator device 11 comes into close proximity of a number of stores or sales outlets of multiple vendors (such as a shopping mall). The vendors each having a store monitoring system as described above can detect the location of the user's communicator device 11 in close proximity to its store or sales outlet. Having determined that the user has recently entered a house-wares store of another vendor, one of the vendors offering house-wares products sends a signal to the service provider 90b to provide a text message, graphic image, or audio message to the user's communicator device 11 offering promotions or discounts on house-wares products. As described above, priorities can be assigned to the vendors by the service provider(s) 90b, the vendors or by the user.

[0135] The entire contents of U.S. Serial No. 11/334,898 filed on January 19, 2006, are expressly incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

[0136] From the above description, it is clear that the present invention is well adapted to carry out the objects and to attain the advantages mentioned herein as well as those inherent in the invention. While presently preferred embodiments of the invention have been described for purposes of this disclosure, it will be readily understood that numerous changes may be made which will readily suggest themselves to those skilled in the art and which are accomplished within the spirit of the invention disclosed.

1. A method for providing targeted marketing and advertising information to a plurality of users located remotely from a service provider, comprising the steps of:
 - updating a plurality of individualized user profiles with information regarding likes/dislikes of the users based on the conduct of the user, each of the user profiles including a user identifier code identifying a communicator device associated with a particular user;
 - monitoring real-time spatial locations of the communicator devices;
 - correlating the real-time spatial locations of the communicator_devices with the user profiles; and
 - passing targeted marketing and advertising information to the communicator devices based on the correlation of the spatial locations with the user profiles.
2. A method for providing targeted marketing and advertising information to a user located remotely from a broadcast network but within a marketing area of one or more vendors, comprising the steps of:
 - updating a user profile of the user with information regarding likes/dislikes of the user based on the conduct of the user;
 - monitoring real-time spatial locations of a communicator device carried by the user within the marketing area;
 - correlating the user's location within the store with information indicative of product locations within the marketing area; and
 - passing targeted marketing and/or advertising information to the communicator device based on the correlation of the spatial locations with the information indicative of product locations within the marketing area.
3. The method of claim 1 or 2 wherein the step of updating the user profiles is defined further as updating the user profiles based on purchasing habits of the users, as well as past or current location information of the user relative to stores or sales outlets of a plurality of vendors.
4. The method of claim 1 or 2 wherein at least some of the communicator devices are web-enabled, and wherein the step of updating the user profiles is defined further as updating the user profiles based on information entered into the communicator devices as the communicator devices are used to access web sites on the Internet.

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5. The method of claim 4, wherein the marketing area is a retail store or sales outlet of a vendor. PCT/US2008/066890

6. The method of claim 4, wherein the marketing area includes a number of stores or sales outlets of multiple vendors in close proximity.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the marketing area includes a shopping mall.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the targeted marketing and/or advertising content includes a coupon, or some other type, form or manner of a purchase inducement to the user.

9. The method of claim 1 or 2 wherein the targeted marketing or advertising content includes an advertisement of a product located within a predefined distance from the user.

10. The method of claim 1 or 2, wherein the marketing area is a retail store or sales outlet of a vendor.

11. The method of claim 1 or 2, wherein the marketing area includes a number of stores or sales outlets of multiple vendors in close proximity.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the marketing area includes a shopping mall.

13. A method for selling a good or a service to a user located remotely from a broadcast network but within a marketing area, comprising the steps of:

passing targeted marketing and advertising information to a user's mobile telephone while the user is in the marketing area, the targeted marketing or advertising information includes a purchase inducement; and
selling and delivering the product or service to the user at the store, using the purchase inducement for the product or service.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the marketing area is a retail store or sales outlet of a vendor.

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13. The method of claim 13, wherein the marketing area includes a number of stores or sales outlets of multiple vendors in close proximity.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the marketing area includes a shopping mall.

17. The method of claims 13-16, wherein the step of passing targeted marketing and advertising information to the user's mobile telephone, is based on a correlation of a spatial location of the user's mobile telephone, with information indicative of product locations within the store and likes/dislikes of the user.

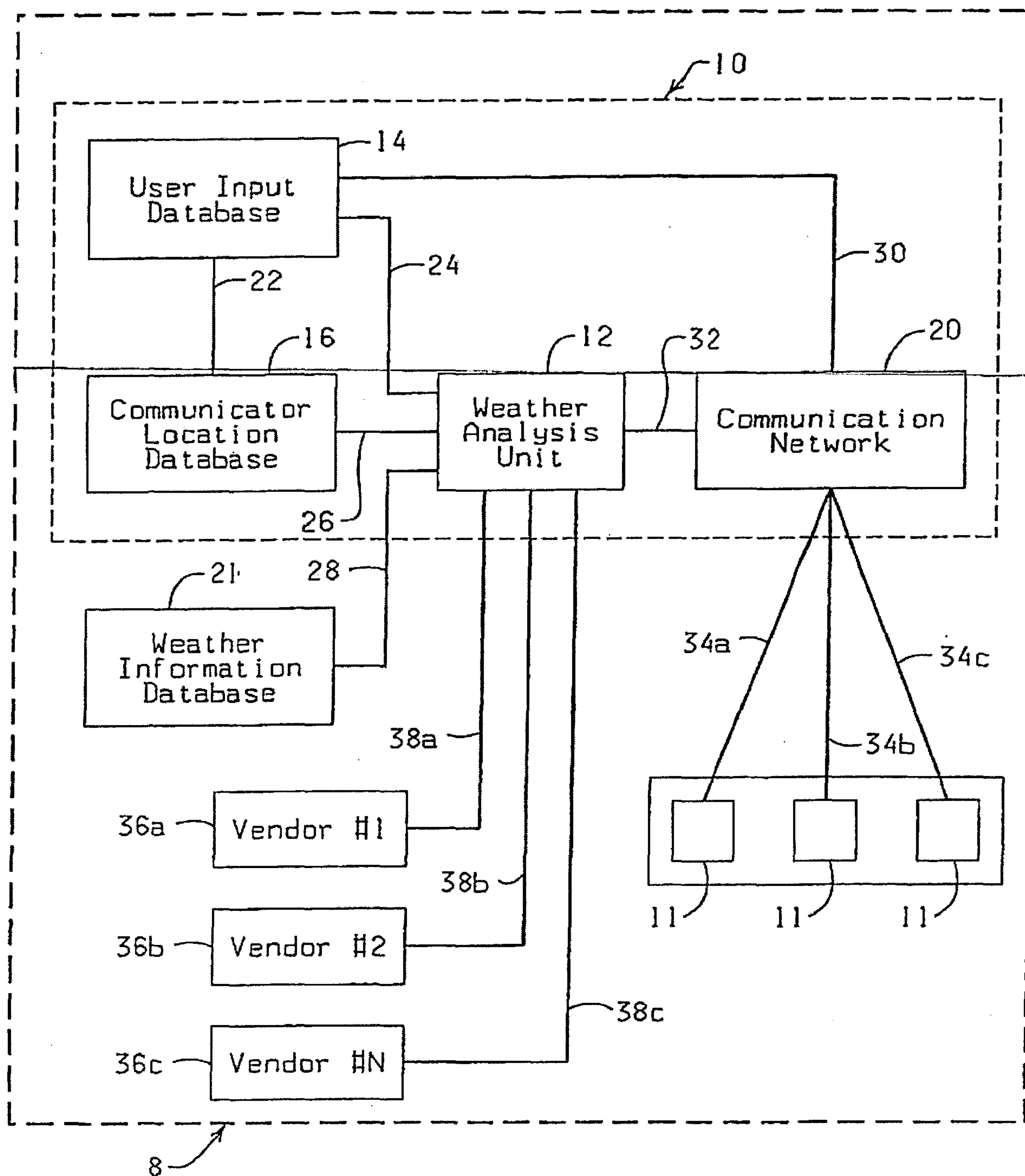
18. The method of claim 17, wherein the marketing area is a retail store or sales outlet of a vendor.

19. The method of claims 17 or 18, wherein the marketing area includes a number of stores or sales outlets of multiple vendors in close proximity.

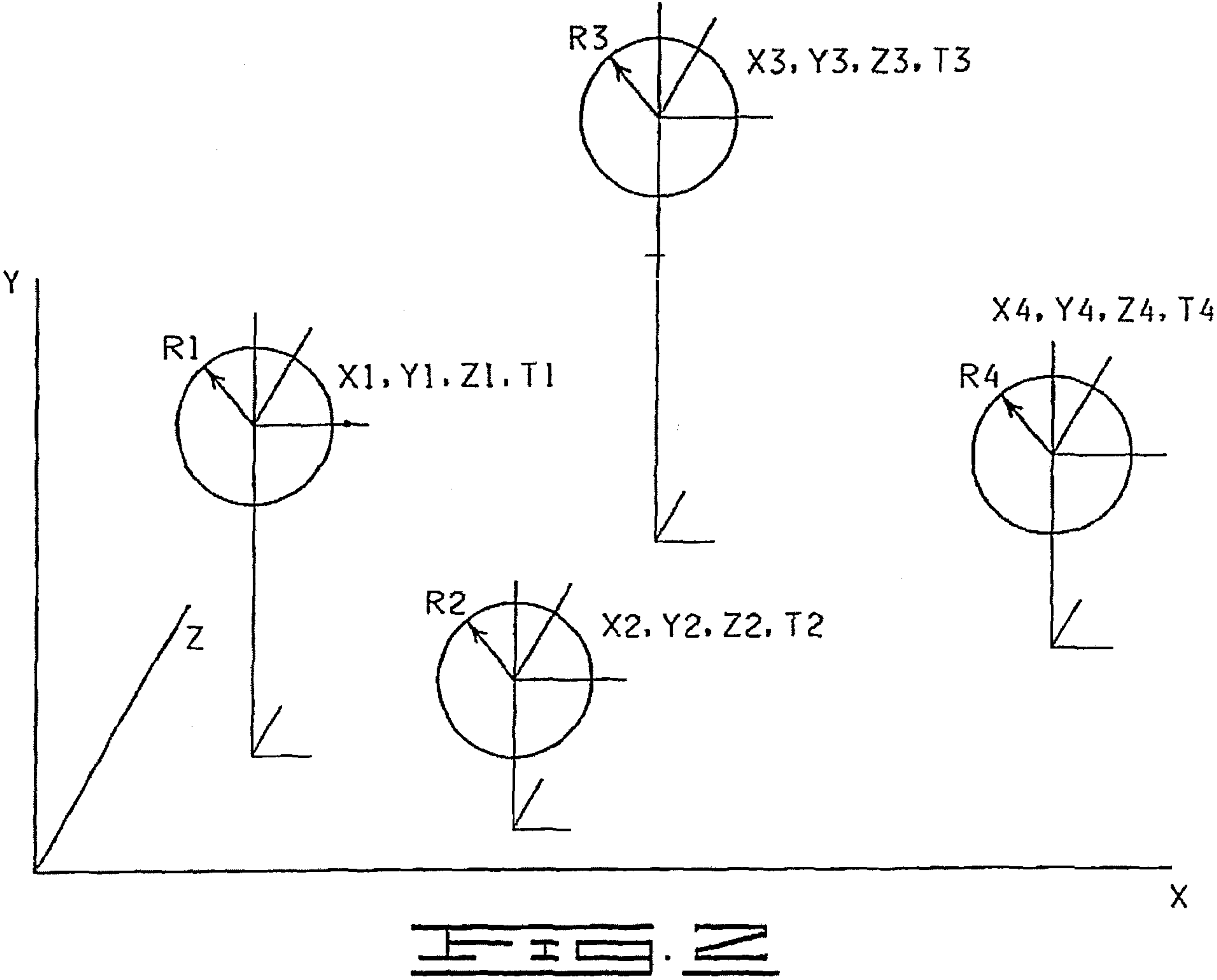
20. The method of claim 17, 18 or 19, wherein the marketing area includes a shopping mall.

21. The method of claims 13-20, wherein the purchase inducement includes a discount code indicative of a discount of a product or service.

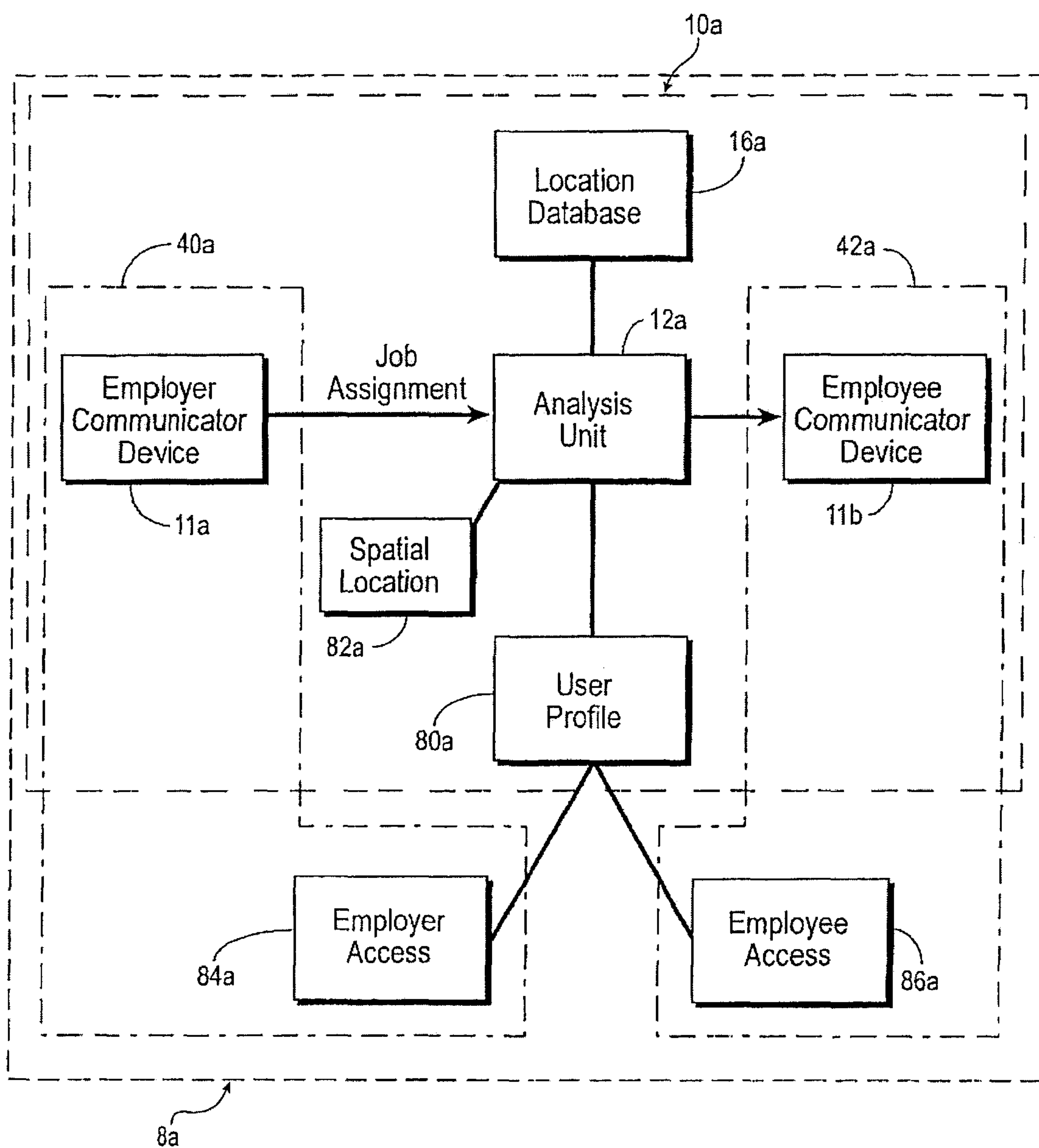
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FIG. 1

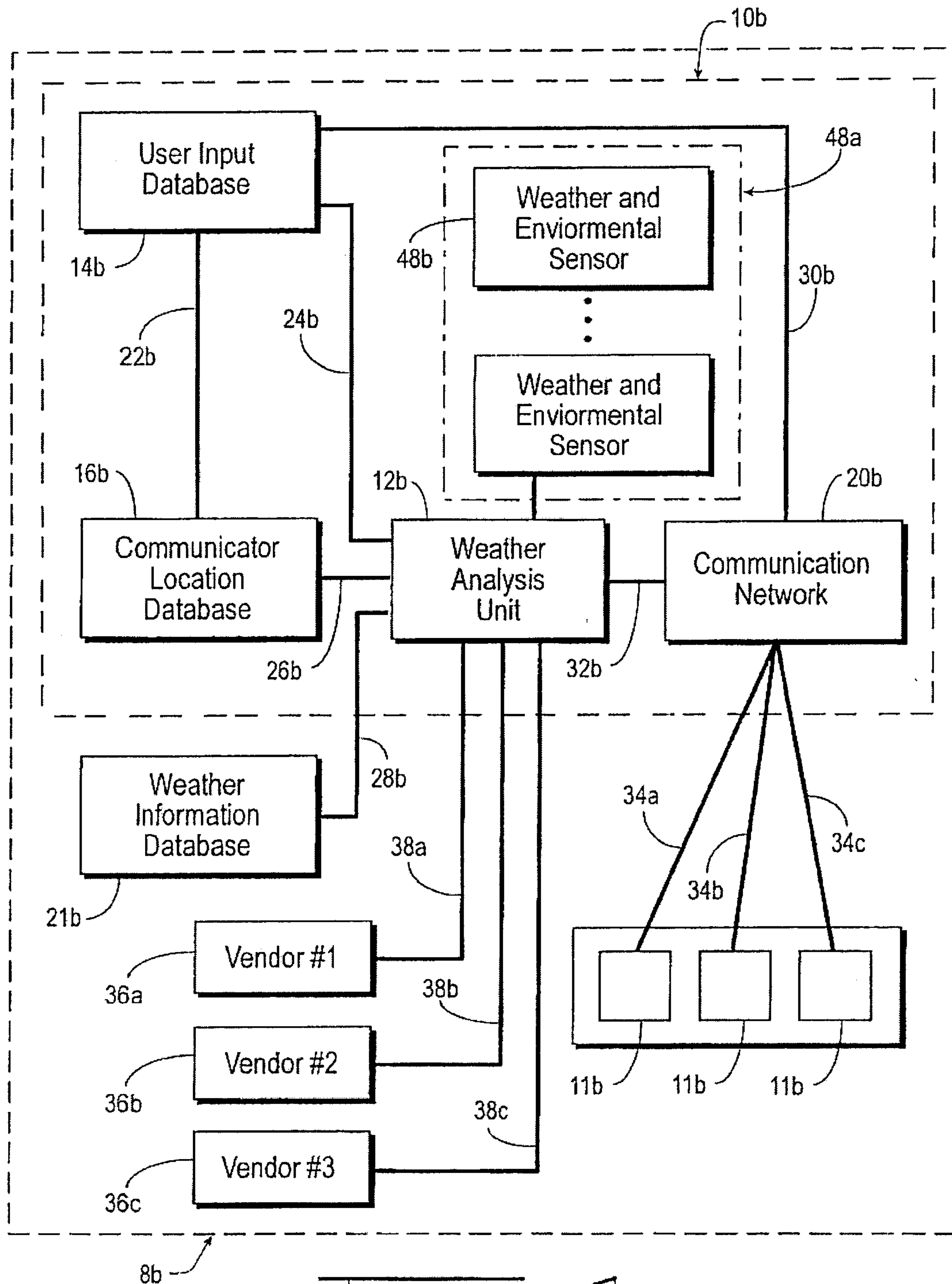
2/8



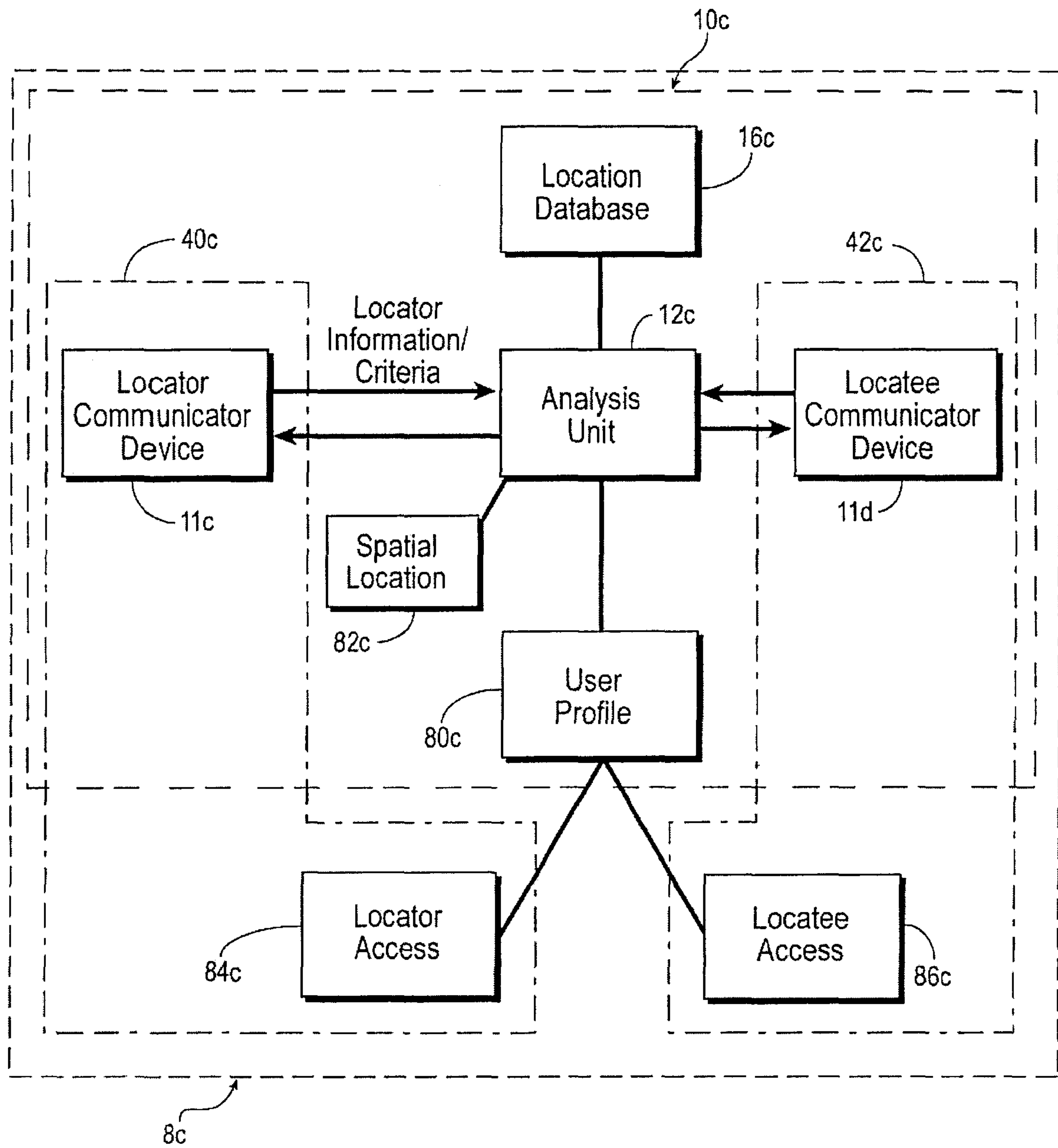
3/8



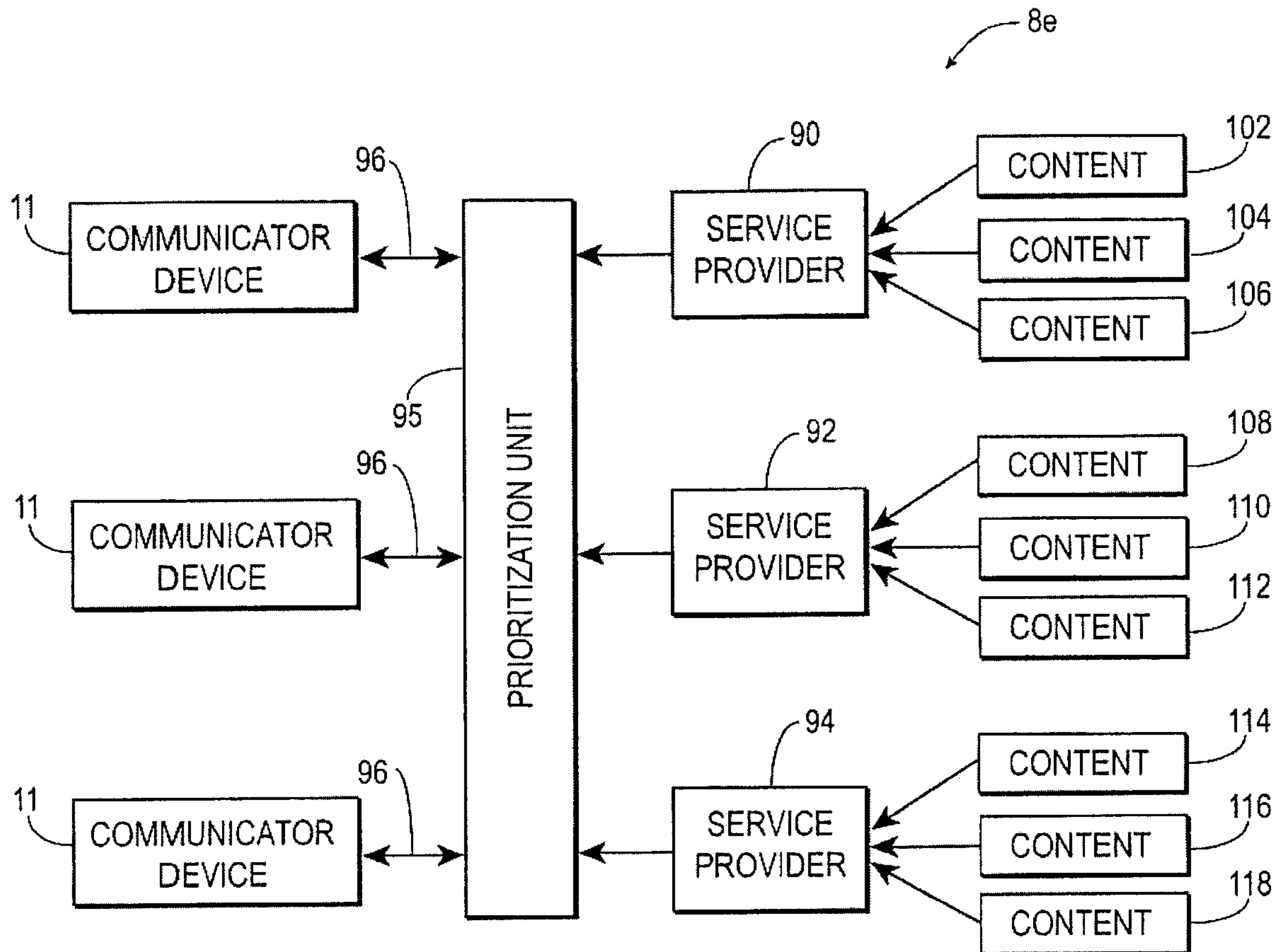
4/8

FIG. 4

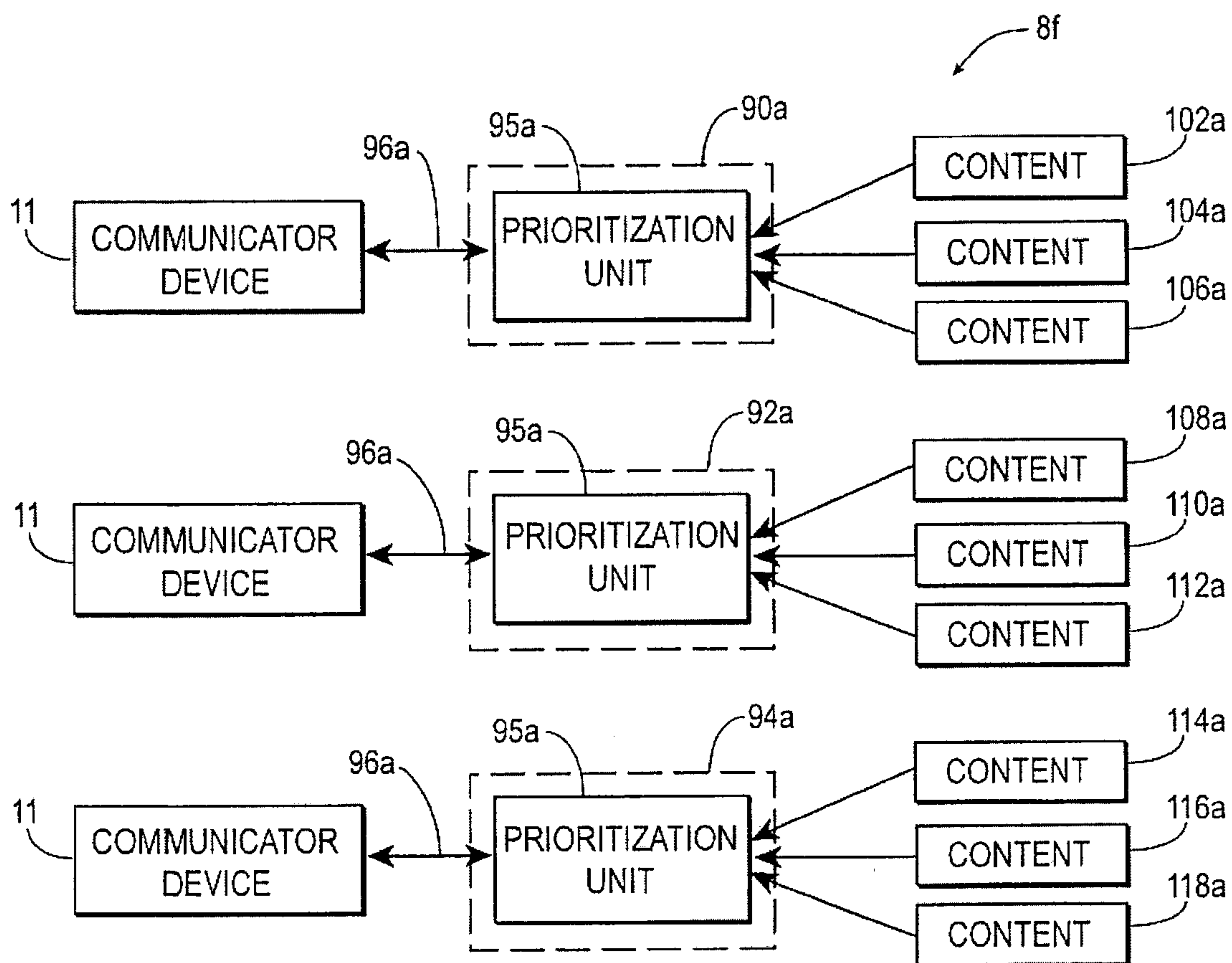
5/8



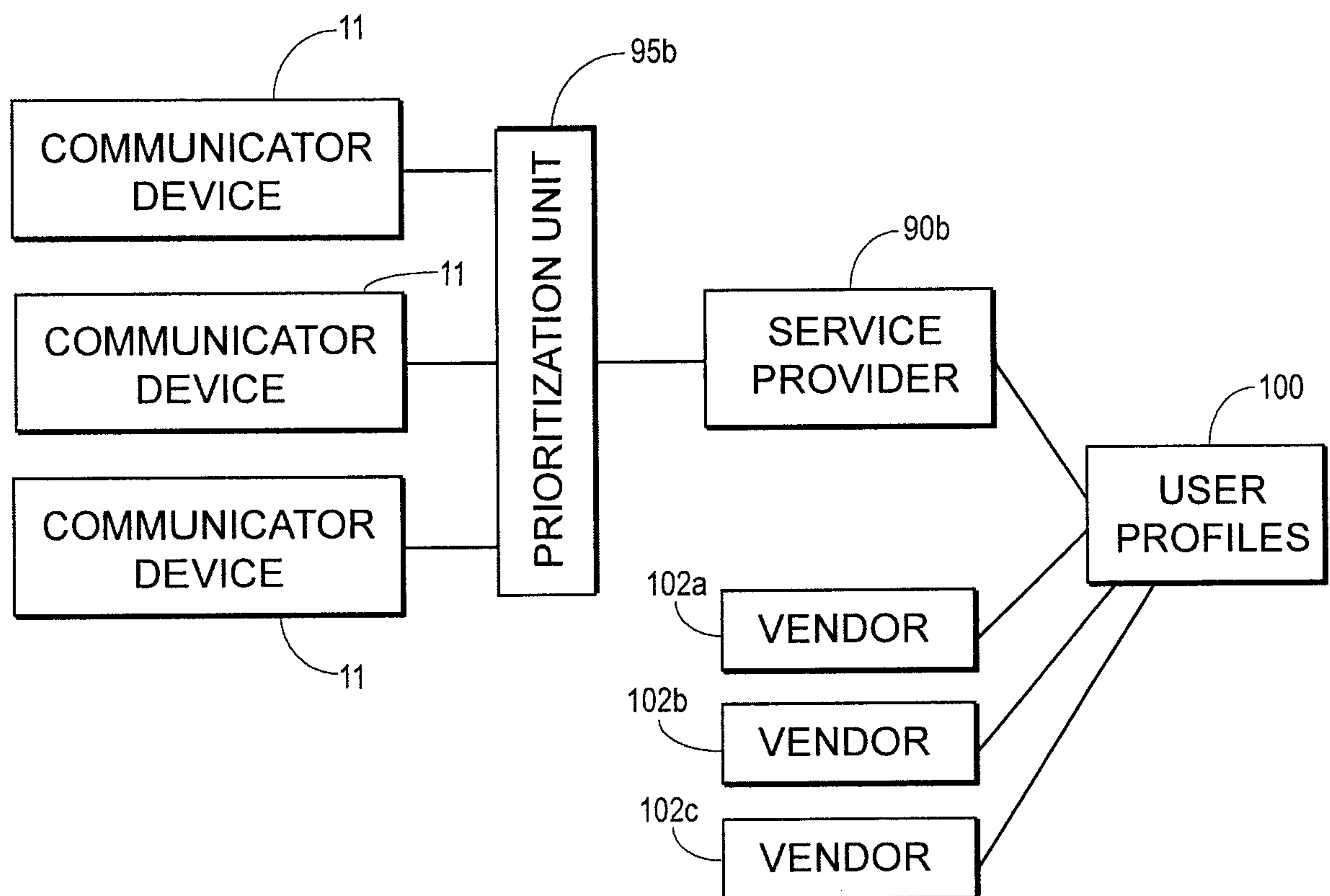
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Fig. 6

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**Fig. 7**

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***Fig. 8***

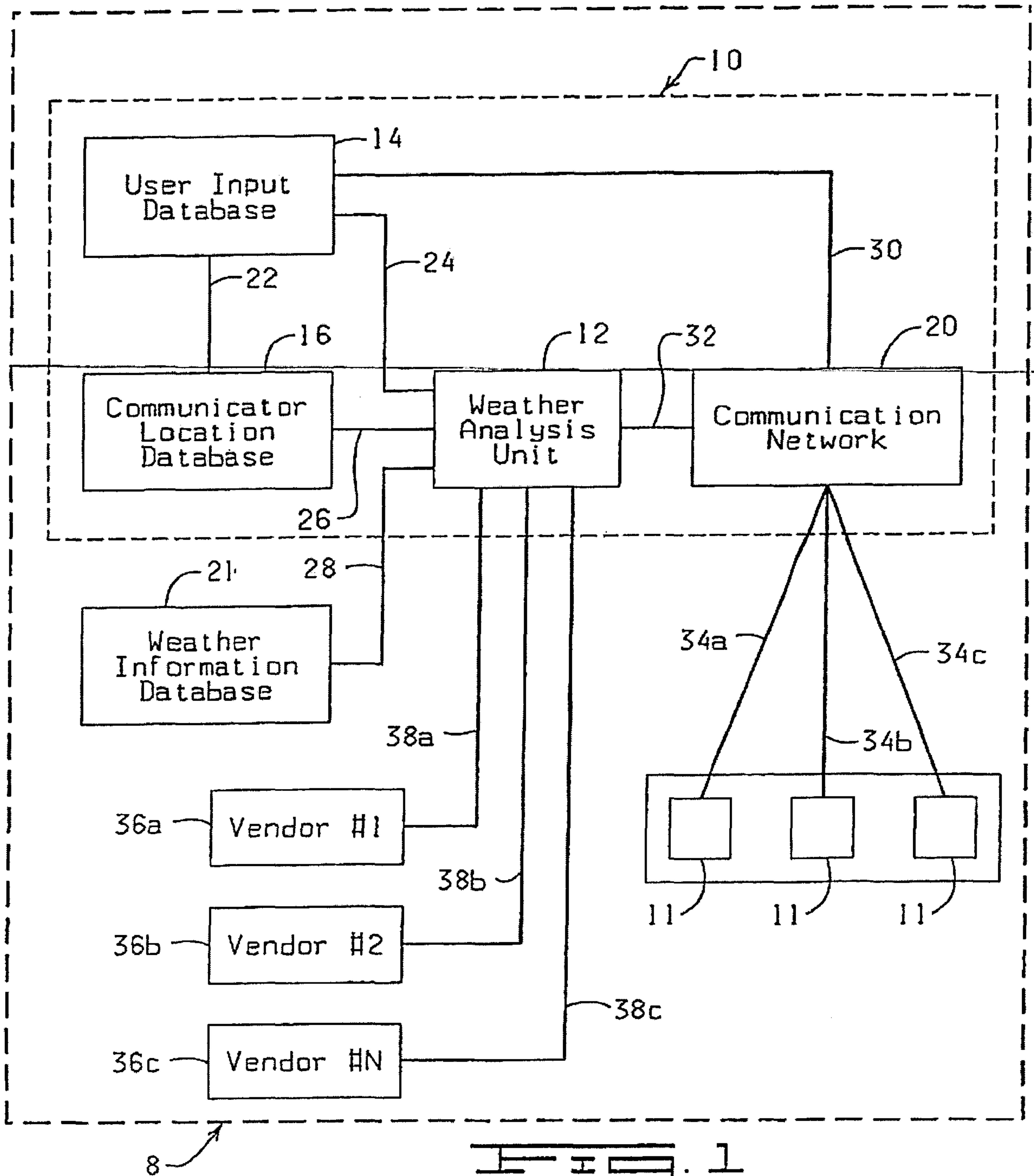


FIG. 1