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(54) **SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR FACILITATING THE ACQUISITION OF CONTENT**

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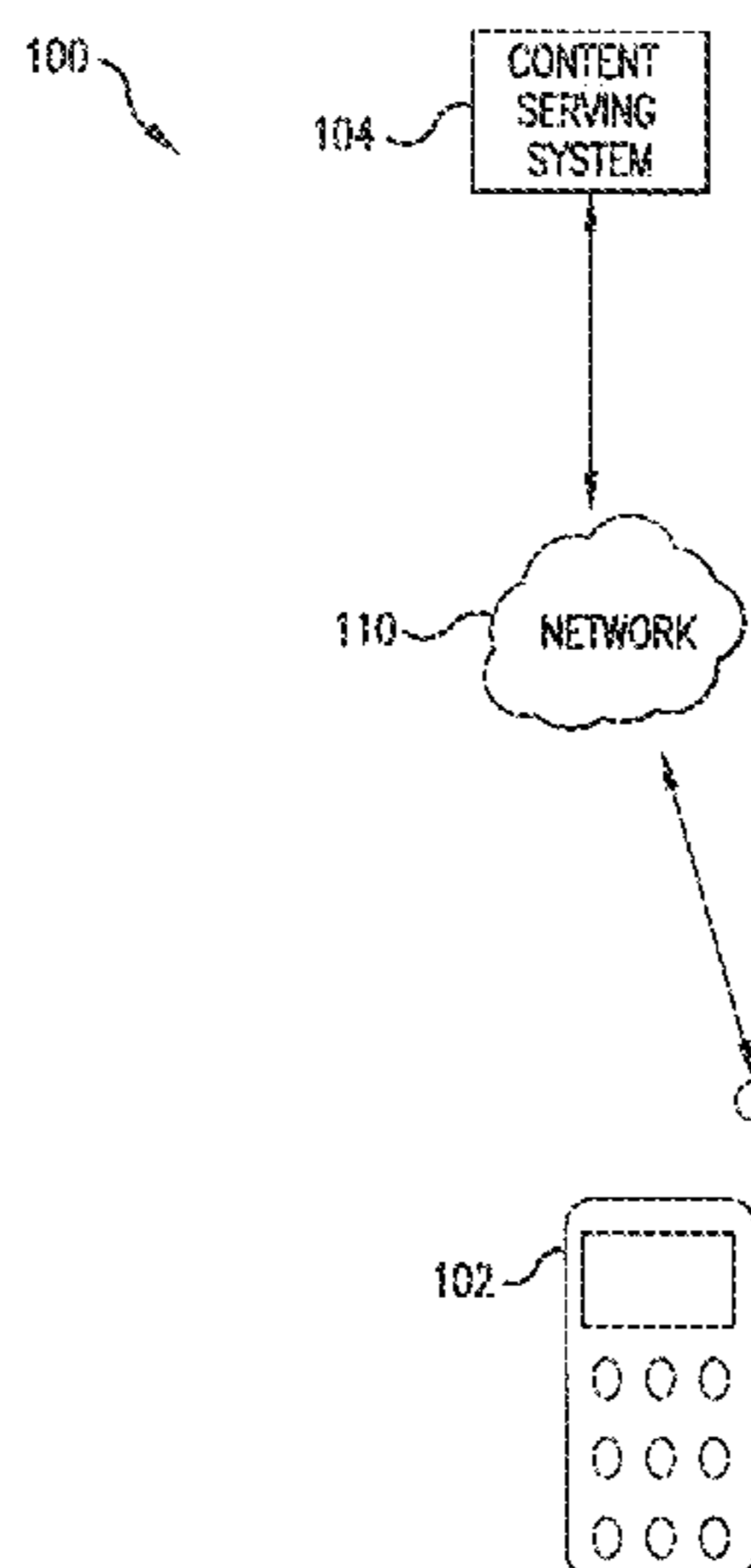
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention provides systems and methods for acquiring content (e.g., a ring tone or a ring view) for a communication device.

19 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets



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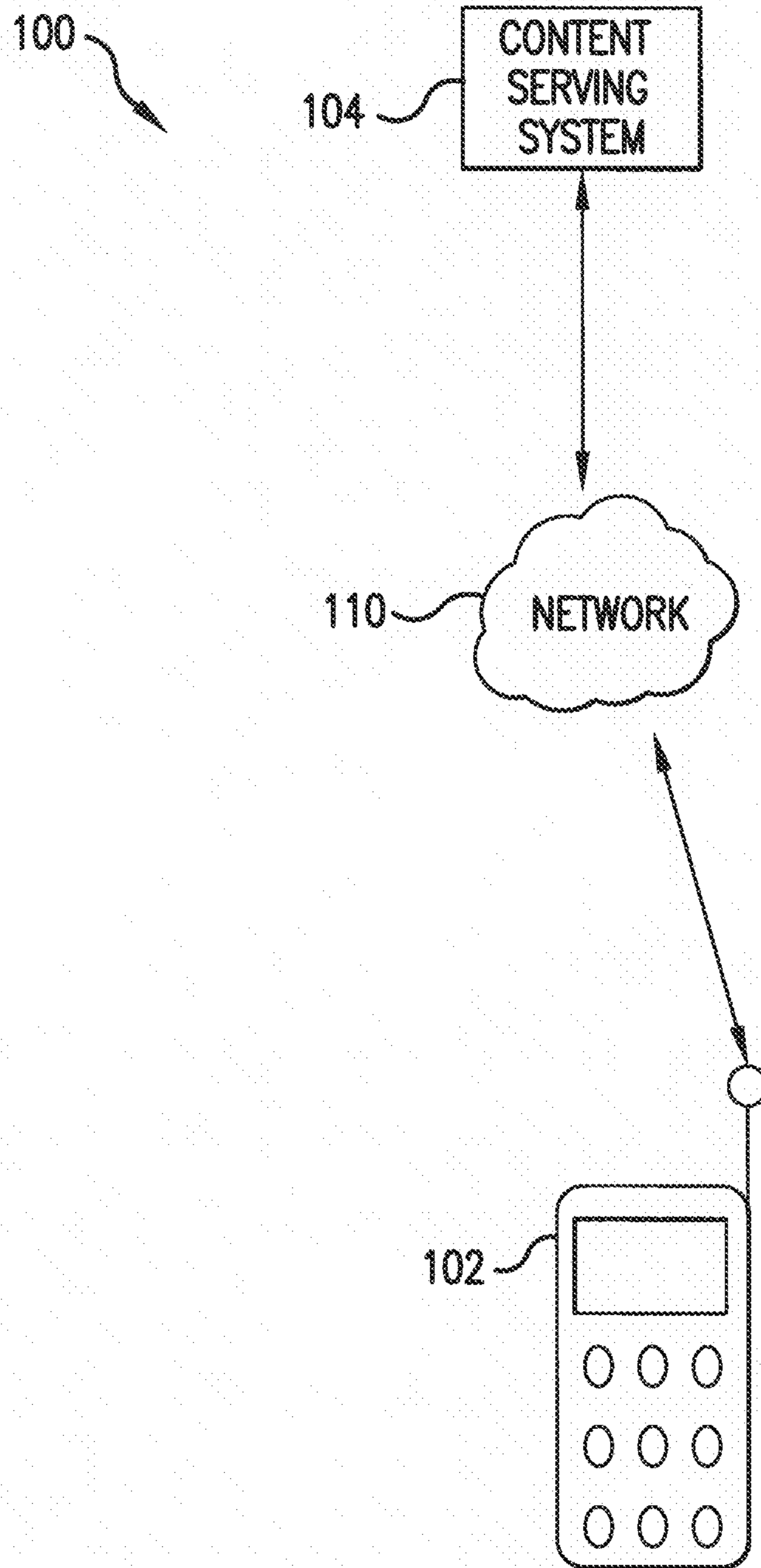


FIG. 1

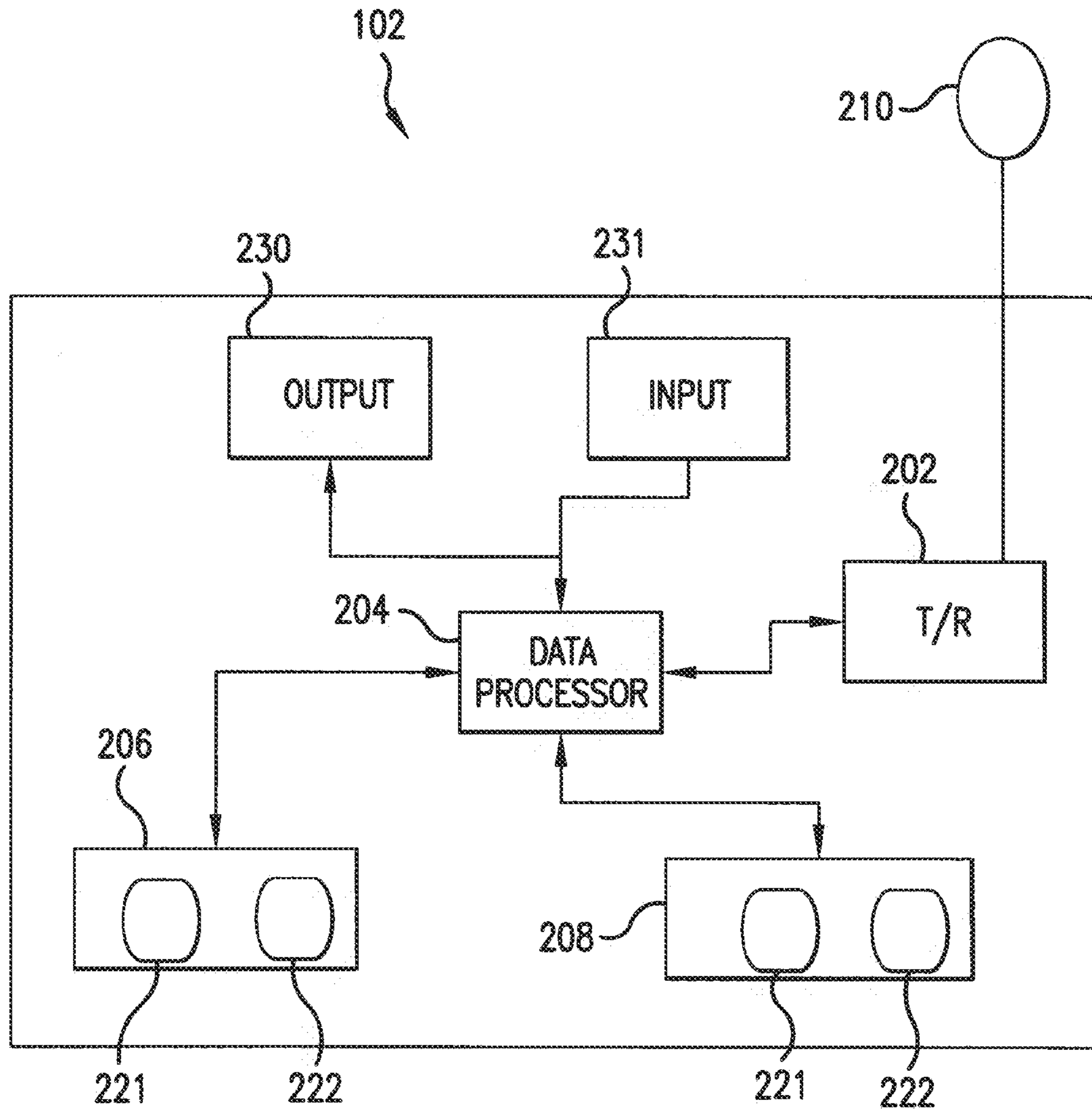


FIG. 2A

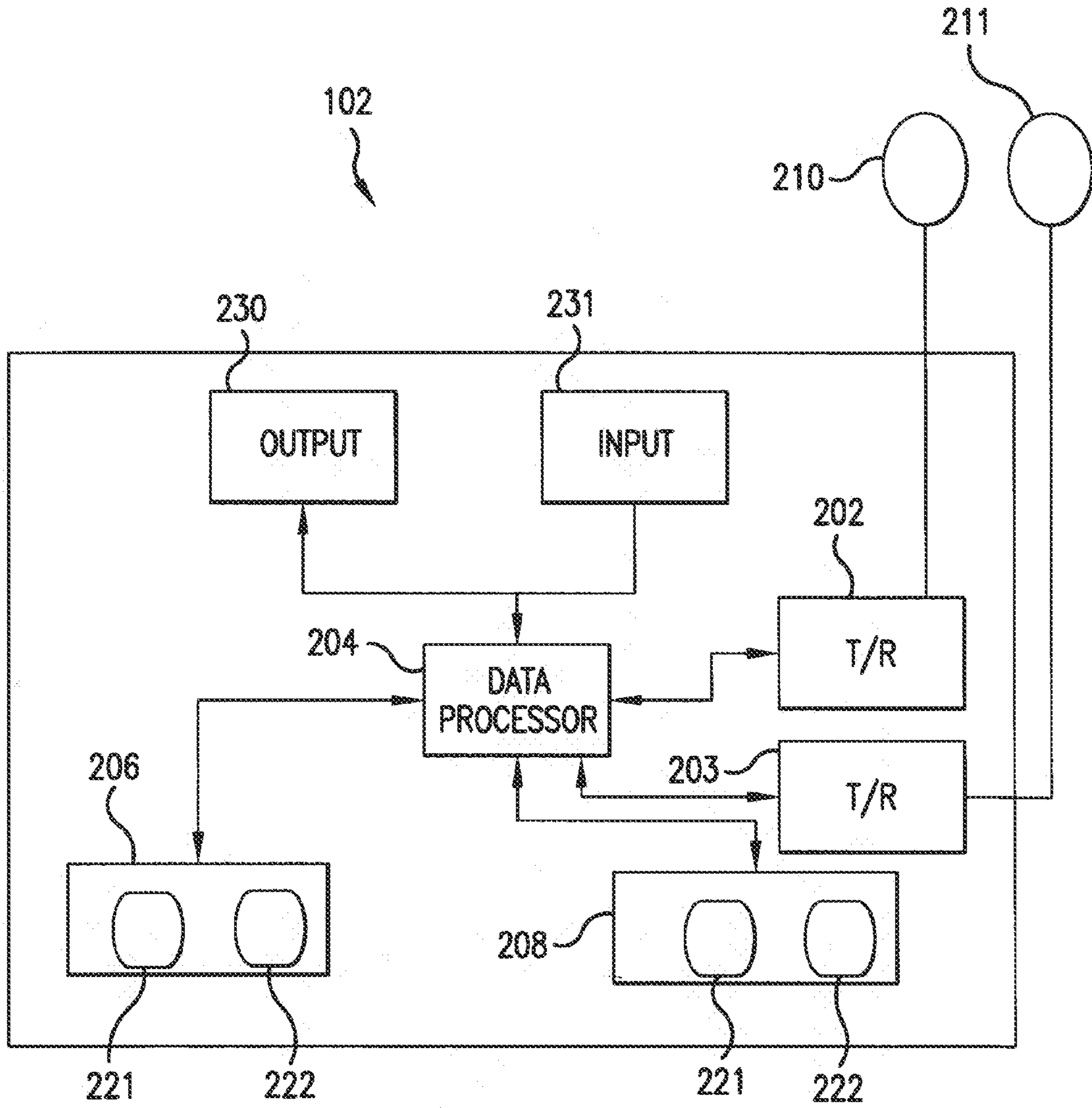


FIG. 2B

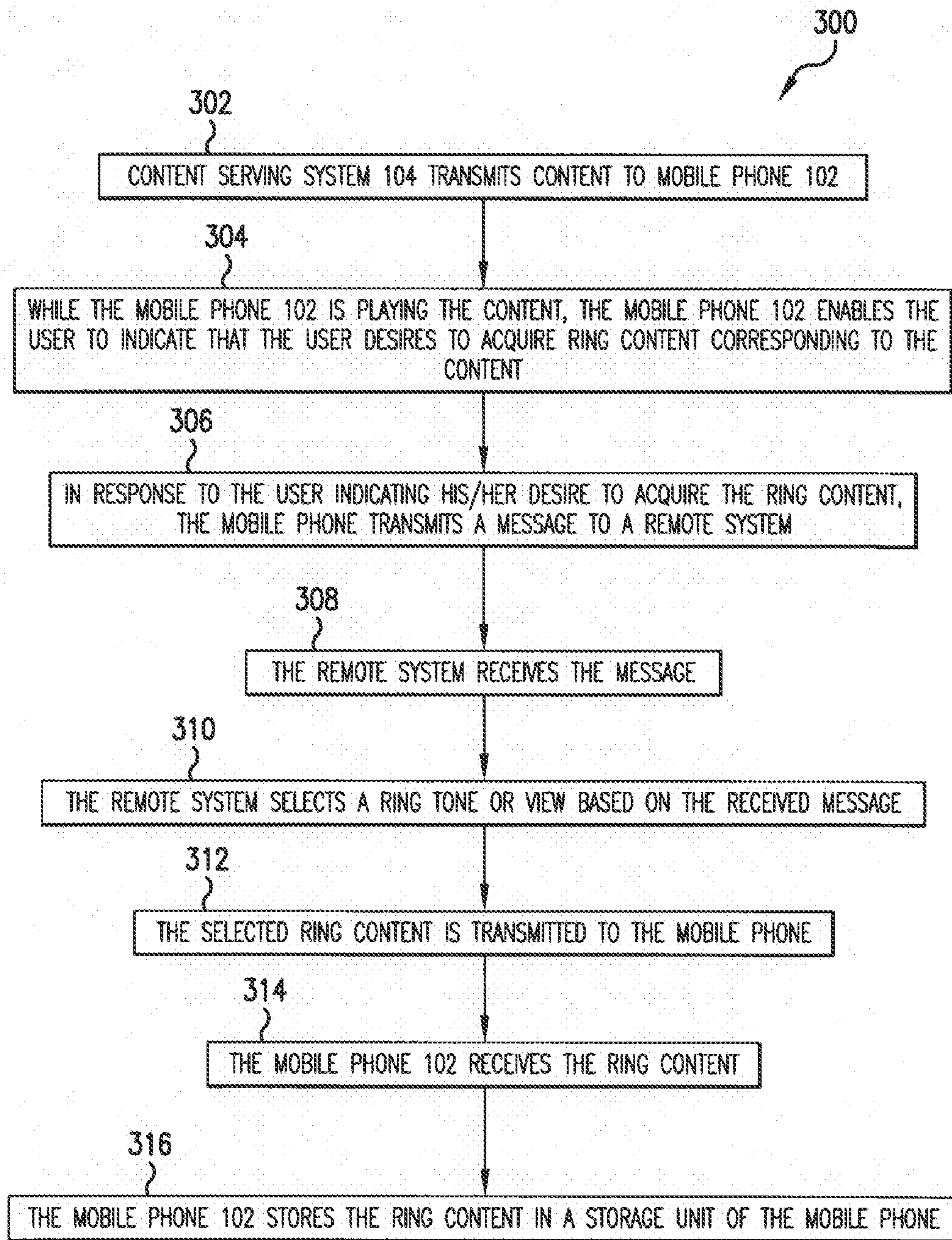


FIG. 3

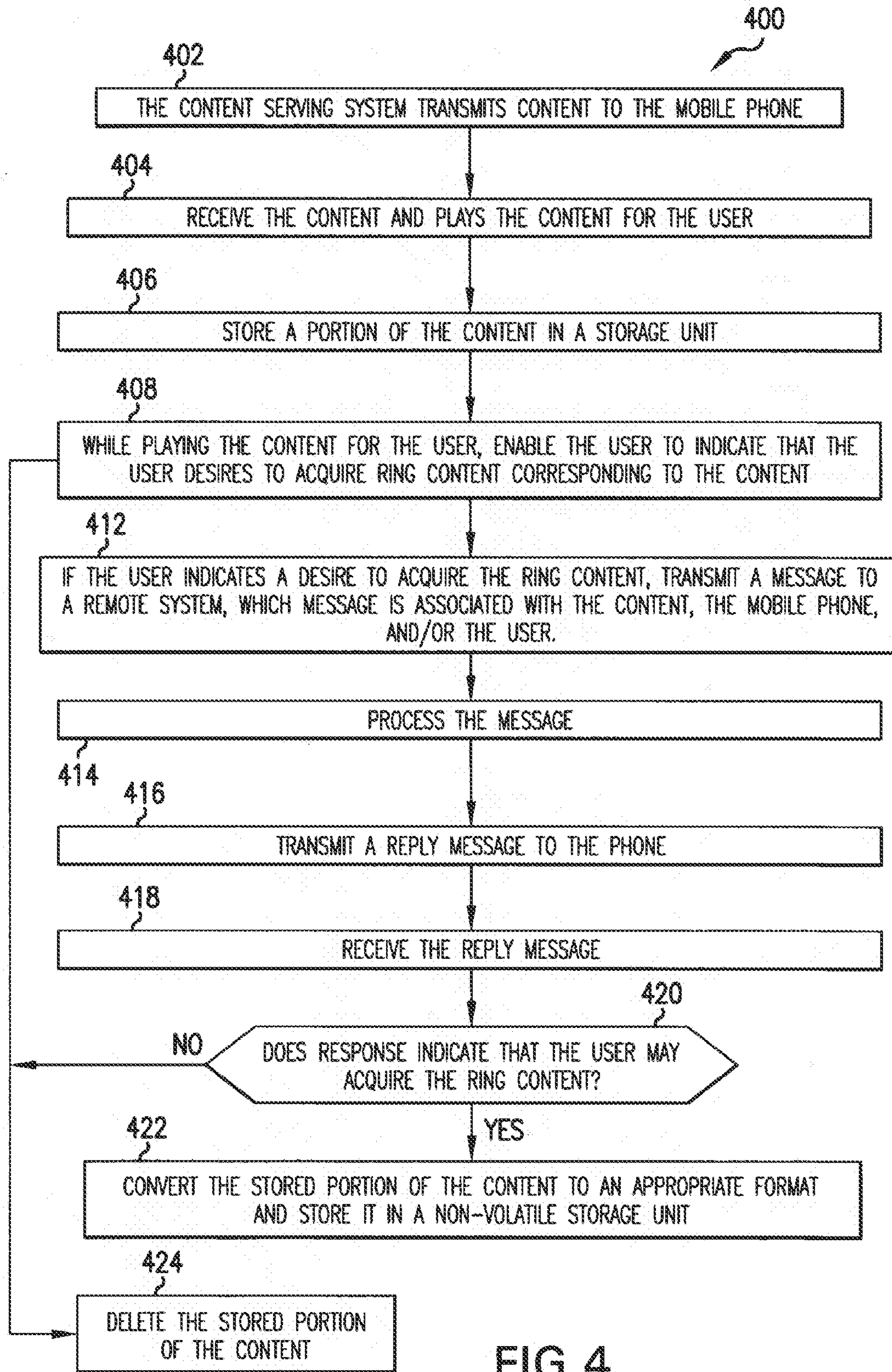


FIG. 4

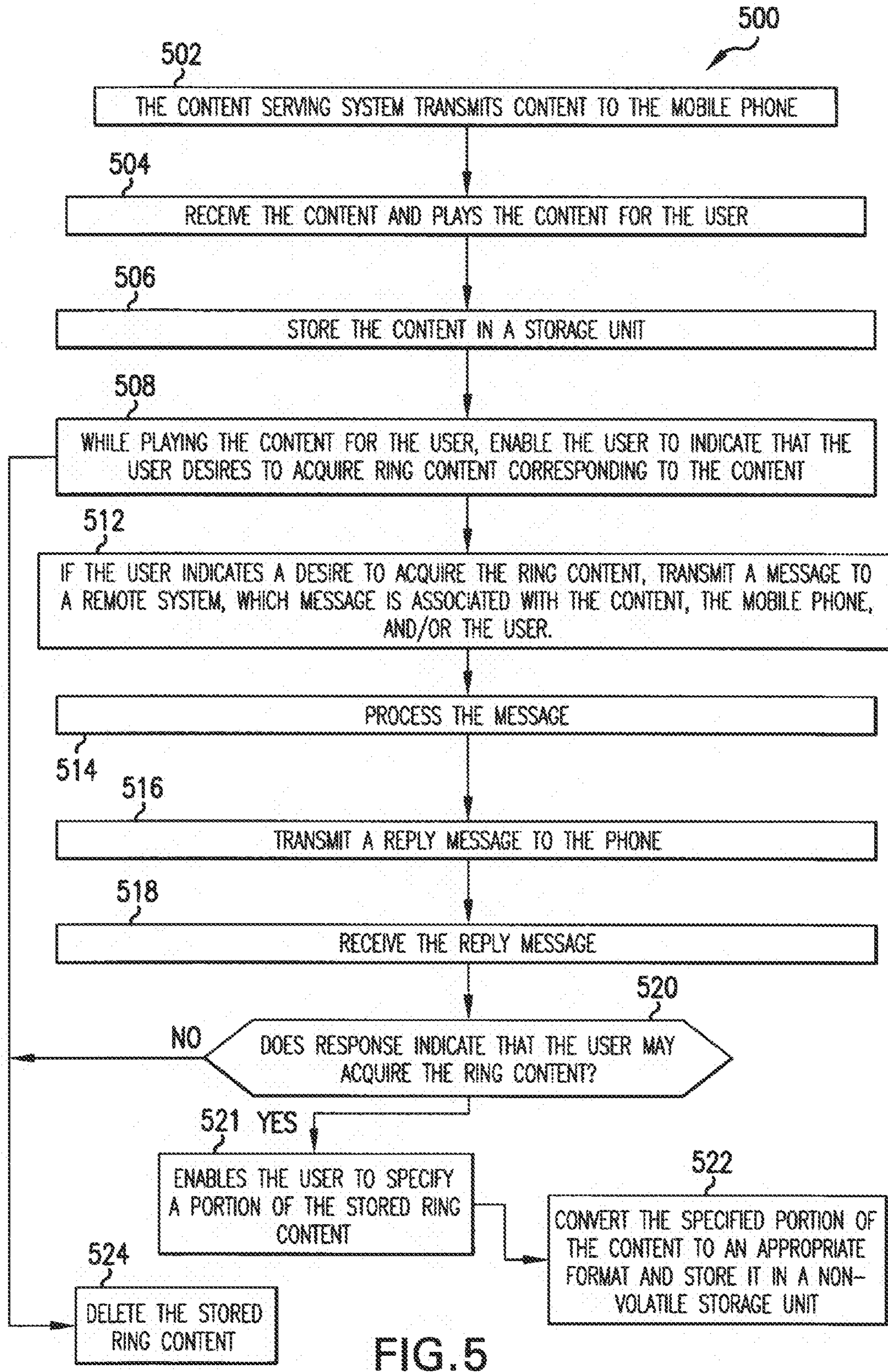


FIG. 5

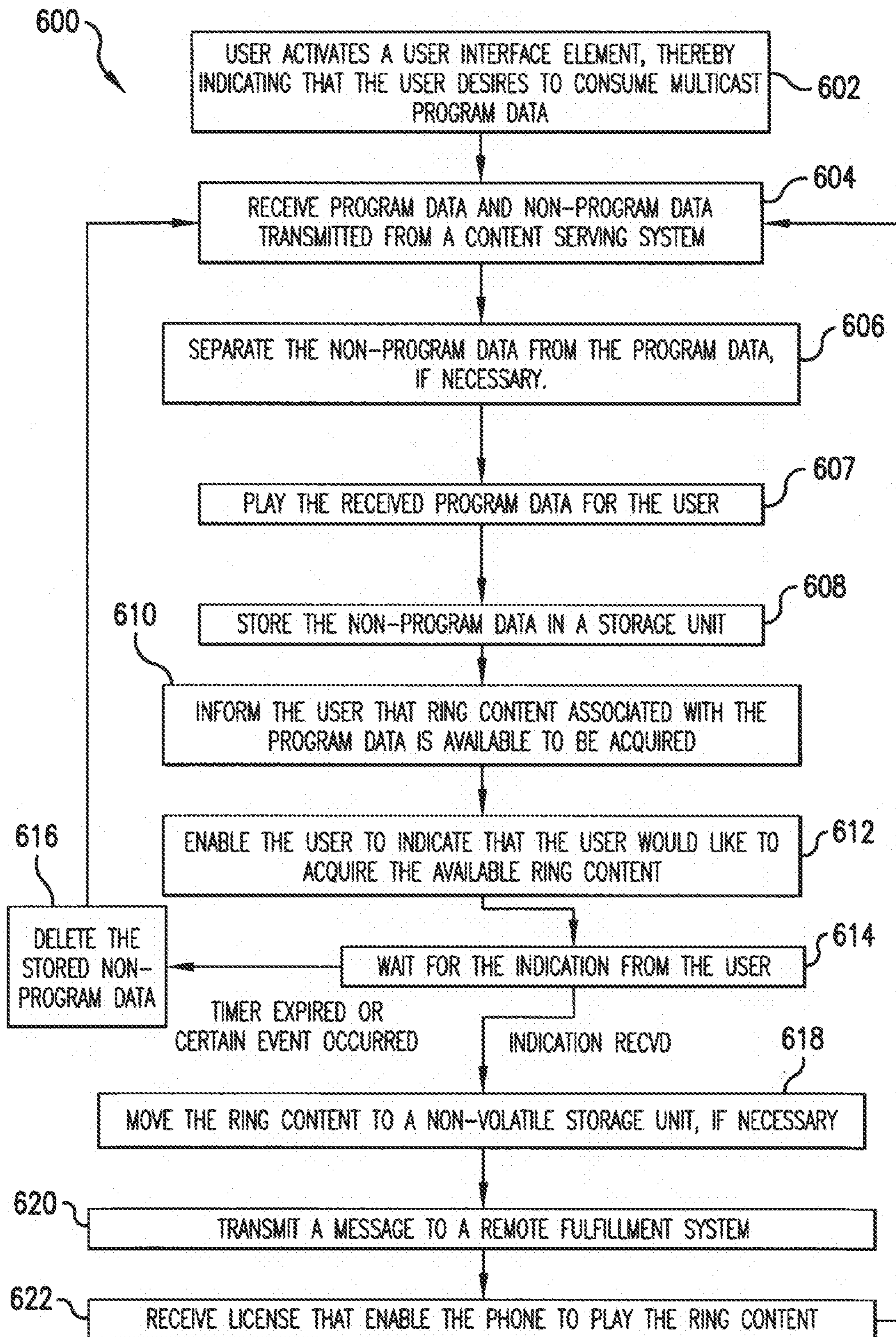


FIG. 6

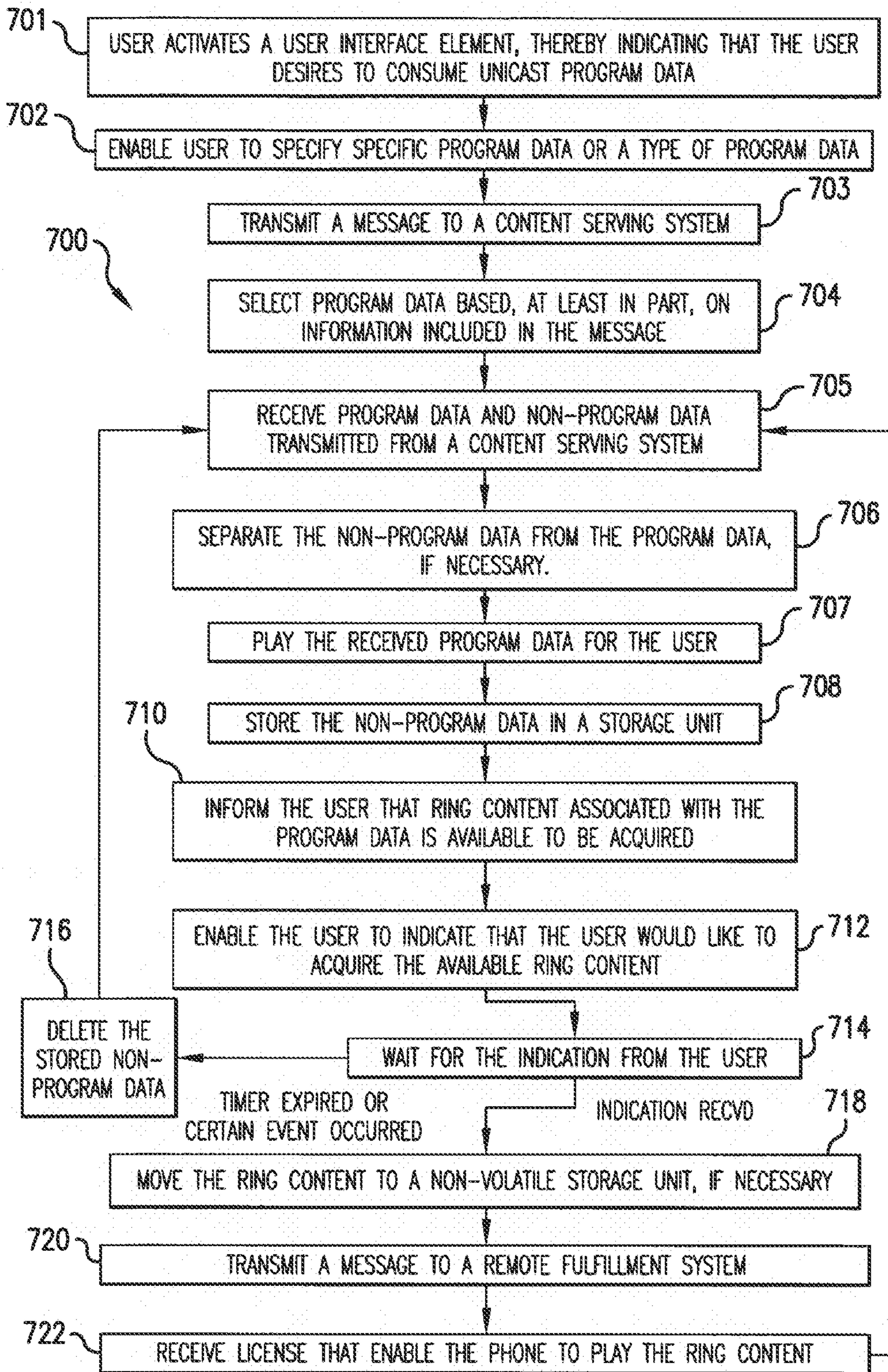


FIG. 7

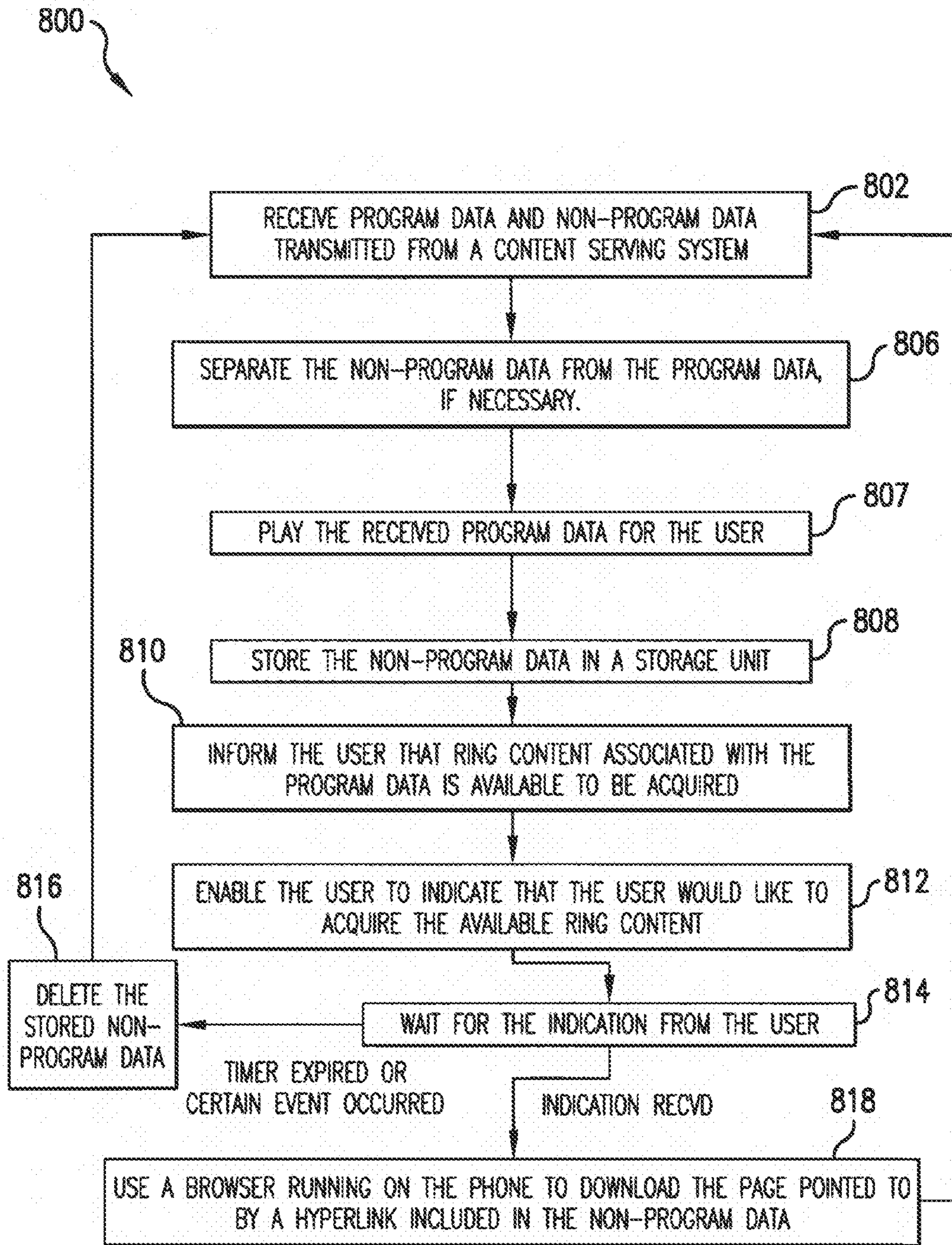


FIG. 8

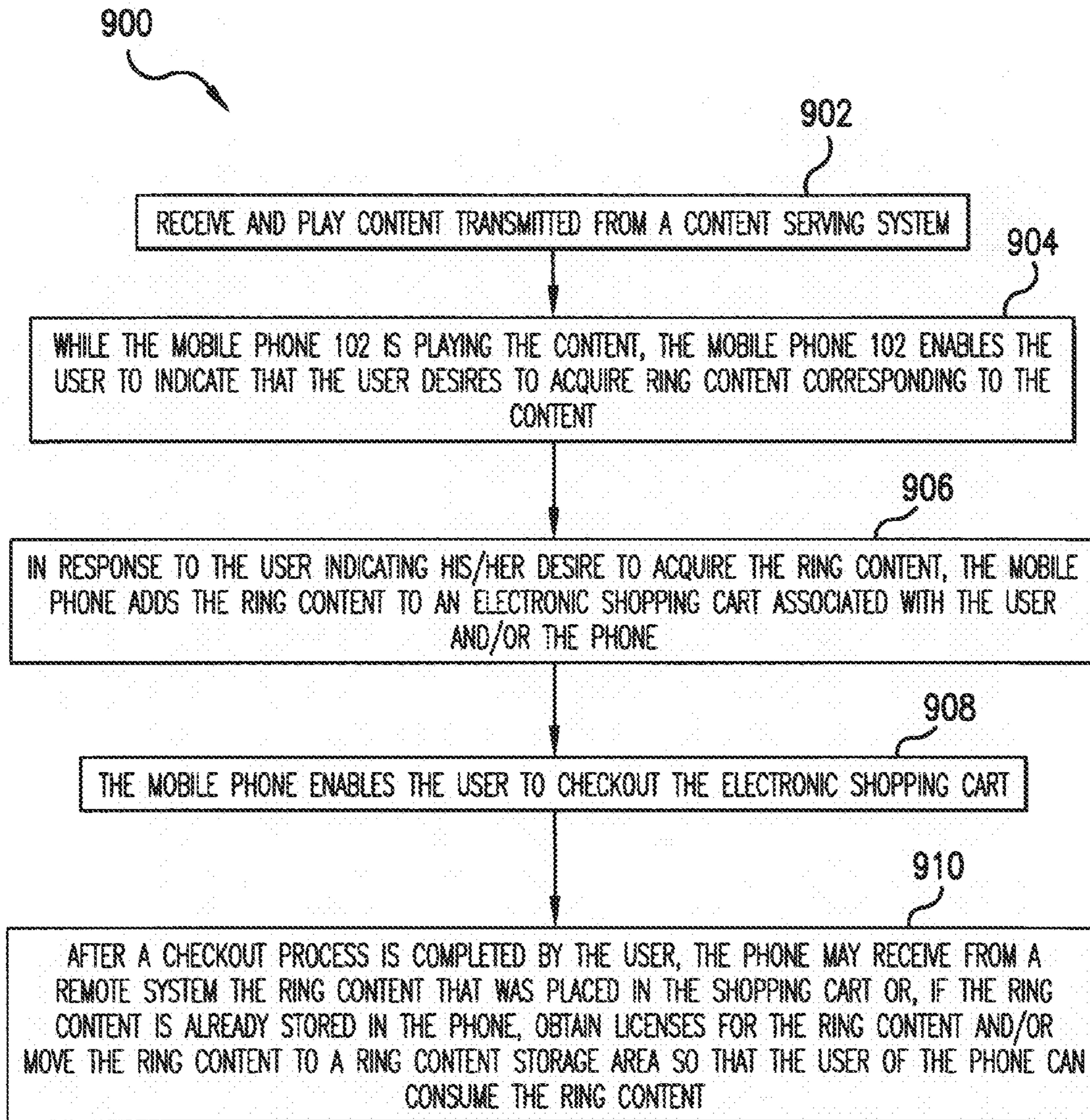


FIG. 9

SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR FACILITATING THE ACQUISITION OF CONTENT

This application is a continuation of application Ser. No. 13/600,796, filed on Aug. 31, 2012 (scheduled to issue as U.S. Pat. No. 8,639,228), which is a continuation of application Ser. No. 13/189,963, filed Jul. 25, 2011 (now U.S. Pat. No. 8,260,271), which is a continuation of application Ser. No. 12/702,472 filed Feb. 9, 2010 (now U.S. Pat. No. 7,986,977), which is a continuation of Ser. No. 11/452,994, filed on Jun. 15, 2006 (now U.S. Pat. No. 7,668,538), which claims the benefit of Provisional Patent application No. 60/690,512, filed on Jun. 15, 2005. The above mentioned applications and US Patents are incorporated by reference herein.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The invention relates generally to systems and methods for acquiring content (e.g., music videos, digital music, ring tones, ring views, and other time-based media).

2. Discussion of the Background

Typically, a user who desires to acquire content, such as a digital audio file containing a song or other content, uses a communication device (e.g., a personal computer, mobile phone or other communication device) to connect to a server that stores the content, searches or browses for the desired content and, after locating the desired content, downloads the content to the communication device from the server.

What is desired are systems and methods to make it easier for a user to acquire content.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Embodiments of the present invention provide systems and methods that facilitate the acquisition of content.

In one aspect, the present invention provides systems and methods for acquiring ring content (e.g., ring tones or ring views) for a mobile phone. The types of ring content that may be acquired include, but are not limited to: (1) monophonic ring tones; (2) polyphonic ring tones; (3) "true" ring tones or "master" ring tones (containing original audio recording(s)); and (4) ring views (a ring view is a video (or portion of a video) played by a telephone to indicate an incoming call or message, in contrast, a ring tone is a sound made by the telephone to indicate an incoming call or message).

A method for acquiring ring content for a mobile phone according to one embodiment of the invention includes: (1) transmitting to the mobile phone (a) an audio track (e.g., a song) or video content (e.g. a music video or movie clip) (the audio track or video content may be streamed to the mobile phone) so that the mobile phone can play the audio or video (i.e., content) for the user and (b) an identifier identifying the audio or video content and a remote system (e.g., the identifier may be a link or a uniform resource identifier or locator); (2) enabling the user of the mobile phone to indicate that the user desires to acquire ring content corresponding to the content while the mobile phone is playing the content (e.g., the user may indicate that the user desires to acquire the ring content by activating a pre-selected button on the mobile phone or selecting a menu option displayed on a user interface of the mobile phone or activating a soft button, etc.); (3) in response to the user indicating his/her desire to acquire the ring content, transmitting, from the mobile phone to the identified remote system, a message containing an identifier identifying the content (the message may also contain an identifier

identifying the mobile phone, the ring content capabilities of the mobile phone, and/or an identifier identifying a type of ring content (e.g., monophonic, polyphonic, master or video)); (4) receiving, at the remote system, the message; (5) selecting a ring tone or view based on the message (e.g., if the message includes information indicating that the user desires a ring tone and indicating that the mobile phone can play master ring tones, then the server may select a music ring tone corresponding to the song or music video identified in the message; similarly, if the message includes information indicating that the user wants a ring tone and that the mobile phone can not play master ring tones, but can play polyphonic ring tones, then the server may select a polyphonic ring tone corresponding to the song or music video identified in the message; likewise, for example, if the message includes information indicating that the user desires to have a polyphonic ring tone, then the server may select a polyphonic ring tone corresponding to the song or music video identified in the message, regardless of whether the mobile phone is capable of playing master ring tones); (6) transmitting, from the remote system to the mobile phone, the selected ring content; (7) receiving the ring content at the mobile phone; and (8) storing the ring content in a storage unit of the mobile phone.

As would be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art, the above described method enables direct linking from streamed content (songs, videos, etc) to an associated ring tone or ring view for buying. This will enable the consumer to skip many steps and go directly to the appropriate menu for buying the linked ring tone or view.

A method for acquiring ring content for a mobile phone according to a second embodiment of the invention includes: (1) transmitting to the mobile phone an audio track (e.g. a song) or a piece of video content (e.g. a music video)(the audio or video content may be streamed to the mobile phone) so that the mobile phone can play the audio or video (i.e., content) for the user; (2) receiving the content at the mobile phone; (3) playing the content for the user; (4) storing a predetermined portion of the content in a storage unit of the mobile phone (e.g., the predetermined portion may include the first 30 or more seconds of the content); (5) optionally protecting the stored content using a digital rights management (DRM) scheme; (6) enabling the user of the mobile phone to indicate that the user desires to acquire ring content corresponding to the content while the mobile phone is playing the content; (7) after the user indicates his/her desire to acquire the ring content, optionally transmitting a message to a remote system, wherein the message identifies the content the mobile phone and/or the user; (8) receiving, at the mobile phone and from the remote system, a response to the message, wherein the response may indicate whether the user is authorized to acquire the ring content; (9) if the response indicates that the user may not acquire the ring content, then deleting the stored portion of the content from the storage unit, otherwise the stored portion of the content may be converted to an appropriate format (e.g., monophonic or polyphonic ring tone, or MP3 format audio, MP4 format video or other format), moved to a ring content storage area and/or, if the content is digital rights management (DRM) protected, the DRM protection is removed or a license is obtained; and (10) if the user does not indicate that he/she desired to acquire ring content corresponding to the received content while the received content is playing or within a set time after the received content finishes playing or if the user is offered to purchase the ring content but declines the offer, then deleting the stored portion of the content from the storage unit.

A method for acquiring ring content for a mobile phone according to a third embodiment of the invention includes: (1) transmitting to the mobile phone an audio track (e.g. a song) or a video clip (e.g. a music video) (i.e. content) (the content may be streamed to the mobile phone) so that the mobile phone can play the content for the user; (2) receiving the content at the mobile phone; (3) playing the content for the user; (4) storing the content in a storage unit of the mobile phone as the content is received; (5) optionally protecting the stored content using a digital rights management (DRM) scheme; (6) enabling the user of the mobile phone to indicate that the user desires to acquire ring content corresponding to the content while the mobile phone is playing the content; (7) after the user indicates his/her desire to acquire the ring content, optionally transmitting a message to a remote system, wherein the message identifies the content the mobile phone and/or the user; (8) receiving, at the mobile phone and from the remote system, a response to the message, wherein the response may indicate whether the user is authorized to acquire the ring content; (9) if the response indicates that the user may not acquire the ring content, then deleting the stored portion of the content from the storage unit; (10) enabling the user to specify a portion of the stored content; (11) if necessary or desired, converting the specified portion of the stored content to an appropriate or specified format (e.g., monophonic or polyphonic ring tone or MP3 audio format, MP4 video format, or other format); (12) storing the specified portion of the stored content in a ring content file and, if necessary, moving the ring content file to a ring content storage area; and (13) if the user does not indicate that he/she desired to acquire ring content corresponding to the received content while the received content is playing or within a set time after the received content finishes playing or if the user is offered to purchase the ring content but declines the offer, then deleting the content from the storage unit.

A method for acquiring ring content for a mobile phone according to a fourth embodiment of the invention includes: (1) receiving, at the mobile phone, transmitted program data and non-program data, wherein the non-program data comprises ring content corresponding to the program data and/or a link to a product information page corresponding to the ring content, through which page a user of the phone can acquire the ring content; (2) playing, at the mobile phone, the received program data so that a user of the phone can consume the program data; (3) storing the received non-program data in a storage unit of the mobile phone; while playing the received program data: (4a) informing the user of the phone, through an output device of the phone, that ring content corresponding to the program data is available to be acquired; (4b) enabling the user to indicate that the user would like to acquire the ring content; and (4c) waiting for an indication from the user that indicates the user would like to acquire the ring content.

In some embodiments, the non-program data stored in the storage unit comprises the ring content, and the method further comprises configuring the phone or ring content so that the stored ring content can not be played by the phone. In some embodiments, the method further comprises transmitting, from the phone, a message to a remote system after the indication is received; receiving, at the phone, a reply message transmitted in response to the message transmitted to the remote system; and, if the reply message indicates that the ring content may be acquired, configuring the phone or the stored ring content so that the phone can play the stored ring content.

In another aspect, the invention provides a mobile phone. In some embodiments, the mobile phone comprises a processor and a computer readable medium storing instructions, the

instructions comprising: instructions for receiving transmitted content; instructions for playing the received content for a user of the mobile phone; instructions for enabling the user of to indicate that the user desires to acquire ring content corresponding to the content while the phone is playing the content; instructions for transmitting, from the mobile phone, a message to a remote system after the user indicates a desire to acquire the ring content, wherein the remote system receives the message and, after receiving the message, selects a ring tone or ring view based, at least in part, on information included in message and transmits the selected ring content to the mobile phone; instructions for receiving the ring content at the mobile phone; and instructions for storing the received ring content in a storage unit of the mobile phone.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated herein and form part of the specification, help illustrate various embodiments of the present invention. In the drawings, like reference numbers indicate identical or functionally similar elements.

FIG. 1 is a schematic of a system according to an embodiment of the invention.

FIGS. 2A and 2B are schematics of a mobile phone according to some embodiments of the invention.

FIGS. 3-9 are flow charts illustrating processes according to various embodiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention provides systems and method for acquiring content (e.g., ring tones, ring views or other time-based media). To illustrate various features of the invention and how to make and use the invention, some preferred embodiments are described below. The embodiments described below are embodiments in which a user uses a mobile phone to acquire ring content for the mobile phone.

Referring now to FIG. 1, FIG. 1 is a schematic of a system 100 according to an embodiment of the invention. System 100 illustrates a mobile phone 102 in communication with a content serving system 104 through a network system 110. Content serving system 104 may include one or more content servers, which may or may not be co-located. Similarly, network system 110 may include one or more networks (e.g., a mobile telephone network and a land-line network).

Referring now to FIG. 2a, FIG. 2a is a schematic of mobile phone 102 according to some embodiments. As illustrated in FIG. 2a, in some embodiments, mobile phone 102 may include a transceiver 202, coupled to an antenna 201, for transmitting and receiving data; a data processor 204, coupled to the transceiver 202, for processing data received by the transceiver 202; a volatile storage unit 206 (e.g., random access memory (RAM)), coupled to the data processor 204, for storing data 221 and program instructions 222 executable by the data processor 204, which program instructions 222 when executed by the data processor 204 cause the data processor to achieve certain results; a non-volatile storage unit 208, coupled to the data processor 204, for storing data (e.g., ring content and other data) and program instructions 222; a visual output device 230 (e.g., a display screen or other output device); and an input device 231, which may include buttons.

Referring now to FIG. 2b, FIG. 2b is a schematic of mobile phone 102 according to some embodiments. As illustrated in FIG. 2b, in some embodiments, mobile phone 102 may

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include a secondary receiver **203**, coupled to a secondary antenna **211** (i.e. a secondary receive system). When a secondary receive system exists, content may be received by such a system and transceiver **202** and antenna **210** may be used in parallel to facilitate transfer of ring content, or to complete elements of the transaction process. In this case, data processor **204** may act as a bridge between both systems.

Referring now to FIG. 3, FIG. 3 is a flow chart illustrating a process **300**, according to an embodiment, for acquiring ring content using mobile phone **102**. Process **300** may begin in step **302**, where content serving system **104** transmits (e.g., streams or otherwise transmits) to mobile phone **102** content (e.g., music, a music video, or other time-based media) so that the mobile phone can play the content so that the user can listen to and/or watch the content. In addition to transmitting the content, system **104** may also transmit an identifier that identifies (e.g., is associated with) the content and an identifier identifying a remote system (e.g., the identifier may be a link or a uniform resource identifier or locator). In some embodiments, system **104** may transmit these identifiers immediately prior to, at the same time as, or some time after transmitting the content.

In step **304**, while the mobile phone **102** is playing the content, the mobile phone **102** enables the user to indicate that the user desires to acquire ring content corresponding to the content. For example, program instructions **222** may cause data processor **204** to display information on output device **230** that prompts the user to activate a particular button on the mobile phone or select a menu option displayed on a user interface of the mobile phone or activate a soft button, etc.

In step **306**, in response to the user indicating his/her desire to acquire the ring content, the mobile phone transmits a message to a remote system (e.g., the remote system identified by the system identifier transmitted to mobile phone **102**). The message may include an identifier associated with the content. The message may be sent immediately after the user indicates his/her desire to acquire the ring content or it may be sent at a later time (e.g., when the phone **102** finishes playing the content or in response to a predetermined event). The message may also contain an identifier identifying the mobile phone, the ring content capabilities of the mobile phone, and/or an identifier identifying a type of ring content (e.g., monophonic, polyphonic, or video)). In step **308**, the message is received at the remote system.

In step **310**, the remote system selects a ring tone or view based on the received message. For example, if the message includes information indicating that the user desires a ring tone and that the mobile phone is capable of playing "master" ring tones, then the server may select a master ring tone corresponding to the content identifier included in the message. Similarly, if the message includes information indicating that the user wants a ring tone and that the mobile phone is not capable of playing master ring tones, but can play polyphonic ring tones, then the server may select an appropriate polyphonic ring tone, if applicable. Likewise, for example, if the message includes information indicating that the user desires to have a polyphonic ring tone, then the server may select a polyphonic ring tone corresponding to the content, regardless of whether the mobile phone is capable of playing master ring tones.

In some embodiments, the received message may include information identifying the make and model of the mobile phone **102**, and the remote system may include a mechanism for determining the ring content capabilities of the identified mobile phone make and model (e.g., the remote system may maintain a database of various mobile phone makes and models and their corresponding ring tone capabilities). In such an

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embodiment, the remote system may first determine the mobile phone's ring content capabilities, and then, based, at least in part, on the result of the determination, select the appropriate format of ring content.

In step **312**, the remote system transmits to the mobile phone the selected ring content. In step **314**, the mobile phone **102** receives the ring content, and, in step **316**, stores the ring content in a storage unit of the mobile phone (e.g., storage unit **208**).

Although not illustrated in FIG. 3, prior to step **312**, in some embodiments, the remote system determines whether the user is authorized to acquire the ring content. In these embodiments, the remote system performs step **312** only if it determines the user is authorized.

Also, although not illustrated in FIG. 3, prior to or after step **312**, in some embodiments, the remote system may charge an amount of money (e.g., \$1.99) to a user account prior to or after transmitting the ring content. In these embodiments, the user may be given the option to confirm his/her desire to acquire the ring content prior the remote system charging the user's account. For example, in some embodiments where the user is charged some amount of money for each ring content downloaded to phone **102**, after step **312**, the user may be given the ability to preview the ring content so that the user can decide whether he/she wants to purchase the ring content. If after previewing the ring content the user decides to proceed with the purchase, phone **102** may transmit an acknowledgement message to the remote system, which, in response to receiving the acknowledgement message, charges an appropriate amount to an account associated with the user and/or phone.

Referring now to FIG. 4, FIG. 4 is a flow chart illustrating a process **400**, according to an embodiment, for acquiring ring content using mobile phone **102**. Process **400** may begin in step **402**, where content serving system **104** transmits content (i.e., music or music video) to the mobile phone (the content may be streamed to the mobile phone) so that the mobile phone can play the content for the user. In step **404**, the mobile phone receives the content and plays the content for the user.

In step **406**, the mobile phone **102** stores a predetermined portion of the content in a storage unit of the mobile phone (e.g., storage unit **206**). For example, the predetermined portion may consist of the first 30 seconds or more of the content or some other portion of the content. The portion stored in the storage unit may be copy and/or use protected using a digital rights management (DRM) scheme.

In step **408**, while the mobile phone **102** is playing the content, the mobile phone **102** enables the user to indicate that the user desires to acquire ring content corresponding to the content. While the phone **102** is playing the content or within a set time after the phone **102** finishes playing the content, if the user indicates a desire to acquire the ring content, then process **400** proceeds to step **412**, otherwise it proceeds to step **424**. If the user indicates a desire to acquire the ring content, process **400** may proceed to step **412** immediately or may wait an amount of time (e.g., the phone **102** may wait until it finishes playing the content before proceeding to step **412**).

In step **412**, the phone **102** transmits a message to a remote system (e.g., content serving system or other remote system), wherein the message identifies (e.g., is associated with) the content, the mobile phone, and/or the user. In step **414**, the remote system processes the message. For example, the remote system may access a database to determine whether the user or phone **102** is authorized to acquire the ring content. Alternatively or additionally, the remote system may use

information in the message to charge an amount of money (e.g., \$1.99) to an account associated with the user and/or phone 102. In step 416, after processing the message, the remote system transmits a reply message to the phone 102.

In step 418, the phone 102 receives the reply message, wherein the reply message may indicate whether the ring content may be acquired by the user. In step 420, the phone 102 determines whether the response from the remote system indicates that the user may acquire the ring content. If the reply message indicates that the user may not acquire the ring content, the process 400 proceeds to step 424, otherwise it proceeds to step 422.

In step 422, the phone 102 may convert the stored portion of the content to an appropriate format, if necessary, (e.g., monophonic or polyphonic ring tone or MP3 audio format, MP4 video format, or other format) and store it in a non-volatile storage (e.g., storage unit 208). In some embodiments, step 422 may be performed prior to step 412 to enable the user to preview the ring content before committing to acquiring the ring content. If the user decides not to acquire the ring content after previewing the ring content, then process 500 may not proceed to step 412.

In step 424, the phone 102 may delete the stored portion of the content. Accordingly, if the user does not indicate that he/she desires to acquire ring content corresponding to the received content while the received content is playing or within a set time after the received content finishes playing, or if the user is offered to purchase the ring content (e.g., while phone 102 is playing the content) and declines the offer, then the stored portion of the content may be deleted automatically.

Referring now to FIG. 5, FIG. 5 is a flow chart illustrating a process 500, according to an embodiment, for acquiring ring content using mobile phone 102. Process 500 may begin in step 502, where content serving system 104 transmits content to the mobile phone (the content may be streamed to the mobile phone) so that the mobile phone can play the content for the user. In step 504, the mobile phone receives the content and plays the content for the user.

In step 506, the mobile phone 102 stores the received content in a storage unit of the mobile phone. The content stored in the storage unit may be a copy and/or use protected using a digital rights management (DRM) scheme.

In step 508, while the mobile phone 102 is playing the content, the mobile phone 102 enables the user to indicate that the user desires to acquire ring content corresponding to the content. While the phone 102 is playing the content or within a set time after the phone 102 finishes playing the content, if the user indicates a desire to acquire the ring content, then process 500 proceeds to step 512, otherwise it proceeds to step 524. If the user indicates a desire to acquire the ring content, process 500 may proceed to step 512 immediately or may wait an amount of time (e.g., the phone 102 may wait until it finishes playing the content before proceeding to step 512).

In step 512, the phone 102 transmits a message to a remote system (e.g., content serving system or other remote system), wherein the message identifies (e.g., is associated with) the content the mobile phone and/or the user. In step 514, the remote system processes the message. In step 516, after processing the message, the remote system transmits a reply message to the phone 102.

In step 518, the phone 102 receives the reply message. The reply message may indicate whether the ring content may be acquired by the user. In step 520, the phone 102 determines whether the response from the remote system indicates that the user may acquire the ring content. If the reply message

indicates that the user may not acquire the ring content, the process 500 proceeds to step 524, otherwise it proceeds to step 521.

In step 521, the phone 102 enables the user to specify a portion of the stored ring content (e.g., the first 30 seconds or more of the content). In step 522, after the user specifies a portion of the stored ring content, the phone 102 may convert the specified portion to an appropriate format, if necessary, (e.g., monophonic or polyphonic ring tone or MP3 audio format, MP4 video format, or other format) and store it in a file stored in a ring content storage area. In some embodiments, step 522 may be performed prior to step 512 to enable the user to preview the ring content before committing to acquiring the ring content. If the user decides not to acquire the ring content after previewing the ring content, then process 500 may not proceed to step 512. In step 524, the phone 102 may delete the stored portion of the content.

Referring now to FIG. 6, FIG. 6 is a flow chart illustrating a process 600, according to an embodiment, for acquiring ring content using mobile phone 102. Process 600 may begin in step 602, where the user of the phone 102 activates a user interface element (e.g., button, menu option, etc.), which activation is an indication that the user desires to consume multicast program data (e.g., listen to and/or watch content that is multicast from content serving system 104).

In step 604, after the user activates the user interface element, data processor 204, under the control of program instructions 222, uses transceiver 202 to receive program data multicast from a content serving system. In some embodiments, the content serving system multicasts non-program data together with the program data. Accordingly, in step 604, the data processor 204 receives not only the multicast program data but also the accompanying non-program data, which may include ring content or other content (e.g., digital images or other content) associated with the program data.

In step 606, data processor 204 may, if necessary, separate the non-program data from the program data. For example, this step may be necessary if the non-program data is interleaved with the program data. In step 607, data processor 204 plays the received program data for the user to consume. While the program data is being played, steps 608-618 may be performed.

In step 608, data processor 204 stores the non-program data in a storage unit (e.g., unit 206). In some embodiments where the non-program data includes ring content, the stored ring content or the phone may be configured such that the stored ring content is not playable. For example, the ring content may be encrypted or the phone may activate a setting that prohibits the phone from playing the ring content. This protects the ring content from unauthorized use.

In step 610, data processor 204 provides an indication to the user that non-program data exists and that it may be acquired by the user. In step 612, processor 204 enables the user to indicate to processor 204 a desire to acquire the non-program data. For example, processor 204 may be configured such that the user's activation of a certain user interface element is treated as an indication by processor 204 that the user desires to acquire the non-program data. In some embodiments, prior to step 612, the user is given the option to preview the non-program data.

In step 614, processor 204 waits for the user to indicate that the user desires to acquire the non-program data. If after a certain amount of time transpires or a specific event occurs and the user has not indicated to processor 204 a desire to acquire the non-program data, then process 600 may proceed to step 616, otherwise it may proceed to step 618.

In step 616, processor 204 may delete the non-program data stored in the storage unit (e.g., free the space occupied by the non-program data or erase the non-program data from the storage unit).

In step 618, after the user has indicated to processor 204 a desire to acquire the non-program data, then processor 204 may move the non-program data (or a portion thereof—e.g., the ring content included in the non-program data) to a non-volatile storage unit, if necessary.

Next (step 620) processor 204 may use transceiver 202 to transmit a message to a remote system so that an account associated with the user and/or the phone 102 can be charged an appropriate amount. Thus, the message may identify the user and/or the phone as well as the non-program data. Next (step 622), processor may receive a reply message from the remote system, which reply message may include information that enables the phone to play the ring content. For example, the reply message may include a license, which license enables phone 102 to decrypt and play the ring content.

Referring now to FIG. 7, FIG. 7 is a flow chart illustrating a process 700, according to an embodiment, for acquiring ring content using mobile phone 102. Process 700 may begin in step 701, where the user of the phone 102 activates a user interface element (e.g., button, menu option, etc.), which activation is an indication that the user desires to consume unicast program data.

In step 702, after the user activates the user interface element, data processor 204 may enable the user to specify the program data or type of program data the user would like to consume. For example, with respect to music or music videos, processor 204 may display a user interface that enables the user to select a particular song or video, a particular artist, a particular genre of music, a particular profile that may identify one or more genres and/or artists, etc.

In step 703, processor 204, under the control of program instructions 222, uses transceiver 202 to transmit a message to a content serving system. The message preferably includes information that enables the content serving system to select program data desired by the user. For example, the message may include an identifier identifying a song or music video, an artist, a genre, a profile, etc. If the message identifies a profile, then the content serving system may retrieve the profile, which may identify songs, artists and/or genres, and select program data that matches the profile.

In step 704, the content serving system selects program data based, at least in part, on information included in the message and transmits the selected program data to phone 102.

In step 705, processor 204 receives the program data transmitted from the content serving system. In some embodiments, the content serving system transmits non-program data together with the program data. Accordingly, in step 705, the data processor 204 receives not only the transmitted program data but also the accompanying non-program data, which may include ring content associated with the program data.

In step 706, data processor 204 may, if necessary, separate the non-program data from the program data. For example, this step may be necessary if the non-program data is interleaved with the program data. In step 707, data processor 204 plays the received program data for the user to consume. While the program data is being played, steps 708-718 may be performed.

In step 708, data processor 204 stores the non-program data in a storage unit (e.g., unit 206). In step 710, data processor 204 provides an indication to the user that non-program data

exists and that it may be acquired by the user. In step 712, processor 204 enables the user to indicate to processor 204 a desire to acquire the non-program data. In some embodiments, prior to step 712, the user is given the option to preview the non-program data.

In step 714, processor 204 waits for the user to indicate that the user desires to acquire the non-program data. If after a certain amount of time transpires or a specific event occurs and the user has not indicated to processor 204 a desire to acquire the non-program data, then process 700 may proceed to step 716, otherwise it may proceed to step 718.

In step 716, processor 204 may delete the non-program data stored in the storage unit. In step 718, after the user has indicated to processor 204 a desire to acquire the non-program data, then processor 204 may move the non-program data (or a portion thereof—e.g., the ring content included in the non-program data) to a non-volatile storage unit, if necessary. Next (step 720) processor 204 may use transceiver 202 to transmit a message to a remote system so that an account associated with the user and/or the phone 102 can be charged an appropriate amount. Thus, the message may identify the user and/or the phone as well as the non-program data. Next (step 722), processor may receive a license from the remote system, which license enables phone 102 to play the ring content.

Referring now to FIG. 8, FIG. 8 is a flow chart illustrating a process 800, according to an embodiment, for acquiring ring content using mobile phone 102. Process 800 may begin in step 802, where phone 102 uses transceiver 202 to receive program data transmitted (unicast or multicast) from a content serving system. In some embodiments, the content serving system transmits non-program data together with the program data. Accordingly, in step 802, the data processor 204 receives not only the program data but also the accompanying non-program data, which, in this embodiment, includes a link to a product information page (e.g., web page) corresponding to ring content associated with the program data. The user can interact with the page to acquire the ring content. For example, the page may allow the user to put the ring content in an electronic shopping basket and then purchase the ring content.

In step 806, data processor 204 may, if necessary, separate the non-program data from the program data. In step 807, data processor 204 plays the received program data for the user to consume. While the program data is being played, steps 808-822 may be performed.

In step 808, data processor 204 stores the non-program data in a storage unit (e.g., unit 206). In step 810, data processor 204 provides an indication to the user that ring content corresponding to the program data may be acquired by the user. In step 812, processor 204 enables the user to indicate to processor 204 a desire to acquire the ring content.

In step 814, processor 204 waits for the user to indicate that the user desires to acquire the ring content. If after a certain amount of time transpires or a specific event occurs and the user has not indicated to processor 204 a desire to acquire the ring content, then process 800 may proceed to step 816, otherwise it may proceed to step 818. In step 816, processor 204 may delete the non-program data stored in the storage unit.

In step 818, after the user has indicated to processor 204 a desire to acquire the ring content, processor 204 may launch a browser (if one is not already running) and cause the browser to download the page pointed to by the hyperlink included in the non-program data. At this point, the user may interact with the page to acquire the ring content. For example, the user may use the page to instruct a remote

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system to transmit the ring content to phone 102, which upon receiving the ring content may store the ring content in a non-volatile storage unit. In this manner, the user can use phone 102 to acquire the ring content.

Referring now to FIG. 9, FIG. 9 is a flow chart illustrating a process 900, according to an embodiment, for acquiring ring content using mobile phone 102. Process 900 may begin in step 902, where phone 102 uses transceiver 202 to receive content transmitted from a content serving system. In step 904, while the mobile phone 102 is playing the content, the mobile phone 102 enables the user to indicate that the user desires to acquire ring content corresponding to the content. In step 906, in response to the user indicating his/her desire to acquire the ring content, the mobile phone adds the ring content to an electronic shopping cart associated with the user and/or the phone. In step 908, the mobile phone enables the user to checkout the electronic shopping cart. This step may occur while the phone is playing the content or any time after the phone finishes playing the content. Process 900 proceeds to step 910 when the user checkouts the shopping cart. In step 910, after a checkout process is completed by the user, the phone may receive from a remote system the ring content that was placed in the shopping cart or, if the ring content is already stored in the phone, obtain licenses for the ring content and/or move the ring content to a ring content storage area so that the user of the phone can consume the ring content.

While various embodiments/variations of the present invention have been described above, it should be understood that they have been presented by way of example only, and not limitation. Thus, the breadth and scope of the present invention should not be limited by any of the above-described exemplary embodiments, but should be defined only in accordance with the following claims and their equivalents.

Additionally, while the processes described above and illustrated in the drawings are shown as a sequence of steps, this was done solely for the sake of illustration. Accordingly, it is contemplated that some steps may be added, some steps may be omitted, the order of the steps may be re-arranged, and some steps may be performed simultaneously. As one example, although FIG. 6 shows step 618 occurring before step 622, step 618 may occur after step 622.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method for providing an item to a communication device, comprising:

transmitting content to the communication device, the content comprising time-based audio data;

transmitting to the communication device a content identifier identifying the content and a remote system identifier identifying a remote system, wherein the content identifier and the remote system identifier are transmitted with the content;

while the content is being transmitted to the communication device, receiving at the remote system a message indicating that a user of the communication device desires to acquire a related item associated with the transmitted content, but different than the transmitted content;

after receiving the message, transmitting the related item to the communication device, which in response to receiving the related item, stores the received related item in a storage unit of the communication device.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the received message comprises information identifying a capability of the communication device.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the received message comprises an identifier identifying a type of content.

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4. The method of claim 1, wherein the received message comprises an identifier identifying a type of content and information identifying a capability of the communication device.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of transmitting the content to the communication device comprises streaming the content to the communication device.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of transmitting the content to the communication device comprises multicasting the content to a plurality of communication devices such that each of the plurality of communication devices is operable to receive and play the transmitted content.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of transmitting the content to the communication device comprises unicast-ing the content to the communication device.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the received message comprises information identifying the content.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the communication device is a mobile phone, and the transmitted content is not a ring tone preview or a ring tone.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the related item is a ring tone.

11. A method for providing an item to a user of a communication device, comprising:

transmitting, from a content server, to the communication device a stream comprising program data comprising time-based audio data and non-program data comprising an object locator specifying the location of an object; and

while the communication device is playing the program data, (i) receiving at the remote server a message comprising information indicating that a user of the communication device desires to acquire an item related to the program data, but different than the program data, and (ii) in response to receiving the message, transmitting to the communication device the object, wherein the object is configured so that the user can use the object to obtain the related item, wherein the communication device is configured to display the object while playing the program data.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the program data is transmitted to the communication device without a user of the communication device having to previously request the program data.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein the program data is not a ring tone preview or a ring tone.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the object locator is a uniform resource locator or a uniform resource identifier.

15. A method for providing content to a user of a communication device, comprising:

transmitting to the communication device a stream comprising i) program data comprising time-based audio data and ii) non-program data comprising time-based data related to the program data; and

while the communication device is playing the program data, (i) receiving at a remote server a message transmitted by the communication device, the message comprising information indicating that a user of the communication device desires to acquire related content related to the program data, but different than the program data, and (ii) after receiving the message transmitting to the communication device a reply message.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the reply message comprises a license that enables the communication device to play the related time-based data.

17. The method of claim 15, wherein the reply message indicates that the related time-based data may be acquired.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein the non-program data is protected by a digital rights management (DRM) scheme.

19. The method of claim 15, wherein the non-program data and the program data are interleaved when received at the communication device.

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