MARKETING RESEARCH SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR OBTAINING RETAIL DATA ON A REAL TIME BASIS

This application is a continuation of application Ser. No, 155,052, filed Feb. 11, 1988, now abandoned.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

A. Field of the Invention

The present invention generally relates to systems and methods for the collection of market research data from a plurality of cooperating retail stores each of which utilizes Point-Of-Sale (POS) optical scanners/-registers and associated automatic controllers. More particularly, the present invention concerns a substantially totally passive or non-invasive automated system and method for collecting market research data on a real-time basis from a plurality of cooperating retail stores.

B. Description of the Prior Art

The collection, summarization and forwarding of Point-Of-Sale purchasing information from retail stores for purposes of market research are old and well-known, particularly since the advent of Point-Of-Sale (POS) optical scanners and the widespread use of the Universal Product Code (UPC) to identify retail products. Typically, retail purchase data is summarized by an in-store POS controller or by a separate store computer attached to the POS controller in the store or, if the store is part of a large retail store chain, by a central or host computer at the headquarters of the retail store chain. The summarized retail purchase data is then typically forwarded to the users of the data by any one of a number of different data storage and transmission techniques, for example, by magnetic tape or disk or diskette or by telephonic data transmission or by over-the-air data transmission.

Very often the market research purpose for the collection of such data is secondary to the primary purpose of assisting retail store operators and managers in product pricing and inventory control. Therefore, often the data collected and summarized does not meet the needs of market researchers.

The following prior art patents bear at least some relation to one or more of the disclosed features of the present invention:

INVENTOR(S)	PAT. NO.	TITLE
Ritter	3,619,783	MEANS FOR DETERMINING TELEVISION CHANNEL USE IN A COMMUNITY ANTENNA TELEVISION SYSTEM
Haselwood et al	3,651,471	DATA STORAGE AND TRANSMISSION SYSTEM
Haselwood et al	3,772,649	DATA INTERFACE UNIT FOR INSURING THE ERROR FREE TRANSMISSION OF FIXED-LENGTH DATA SETS WHICH ARE TRANSMITTED REPEATEDLY
Larsen	3,899,775	AUTOMATIC STORE TRANSACTION SYSTEM AND TERMINAL THEREFOR
Miyake	3,947,624	SYSTEM FOR CONDUCTING A TELEVISION AUDIENCE SURVEY
Fuller	4,014,004	AUTOMATIC REPORT REGISTER
Porter	4,044,376	TV MONITOR
Thompson	4,058,829	TV MONITOR
Bridges, Jr.	4,141,078	LIBRARY CIRCULATION

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INVENTOR(S)	PAT. NO.	TITLE
et al		CONTROL SYSTEM
Eskin et al	4,331,973	PANELIST RESPONSE SCANNING SYSTEM
Cogswell et al	4,331,974	CABLE TELEVISION WITH CONTROLLED SIGNAL SUBSTITUTION
Johnson et al	4,355,372	MARKET SURVEY DATA COLLECTION METHOD
Asip et al	4,361,851	SYSTEM FOR REMOTE MONITORING AND DATA TRANSMISSION OVER NON-DEDICATED TELEPHONE LINES
Ohta	4,361,903	DATA TRANSMISSION PROCESS IN A CATV SYSTEM
Anderson et al	4,377,870	ELECTRONIC AUDIENCE POLLING SYSTEM
Wright, Jr.	4,404,589	CABLE TELEVISION WITH MULTIEVENT SIGNAL SUBSTITUTION
Abe et al	4,471,491	SERVICE CHANNEL SIGNAL TRANSMISSION SYSTEM
Gomersall et al	4,500,880	REAL TIME, COMPUTER-DRIVEN RETAIL PRICING DISPLAY SYSTEM
McKenna et al	4,546,382	TELEVISION AND MARKET RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM AND METHOD
Nickerson et al	4,566,030	TELEVISION VIEWER DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM
Pejas et al	4,588,881	SYSTEM FOR MONITORING THE MOVEMENTS OF GOODS INWARDS AND/OR OUTWARDS
Kurland et al	4,603,232	RAPID MARKET SURVEY COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION METHOD
Eglise	4,611,205	DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM
Lurie	4,626,904	METER FOR PASSIVELY LOGGING THE PRESENCE AND IDENTITY OF TV VIEWERS
Gomersall	4,630,108	PREPROGRAMMED OVER-THE-AIR MARKETING RESEARCH SYSTEM
Caswell et al	4,636,950	INVENTORY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM USING TRANSPONDERS ASSOCIATED WITH SPECIFIC PRODUCTS
Roberts et al	4,642,685	STORING DATA RELATING TO TELEVISION VIEWING
Smith et al	4,644,393	MEANS FOR MONITORING PEOPLE WHO ARE WATCHING A TELEVISION SET

The McKenna et al '382 patent concerns, inter alia, a data collection system for collecting at a central location television viewing data and retail purchase data from a plurality of cooperating households. Each of the households includes a hand held optical scanner for reading bar codes, i.e., UPC codes, associated with retail products purchased by the household. Scanned retail product purchase data and the television viewing data are stored in a common memory in the household and are periodically transmitted by telephone to a central site for processing and market research analysis.

The Eskin et al '973 patent, the Cogswell et al '974 patent and the Wright, Jr. '589 patent disclose, inter alia, a market research system utilizing a plurality of cooperating retail stores for obtaining and transmitting to a central location retail product purchase information concerning a plurality of cooperating panelists. The POS scanners in each of the cooperating retail stores scan bar encoded panelist identification cards and the UPC codes on the products purchased by each such panelist. Each retail store's in-store computer then stores a record of the products purchased by each such