US 20140032353A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication**

Fraser et al.

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2014/0032353 A1**

(43) **Pub. Date: Jan. 30, 2014**

(54) **SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR LIVE AUCTIONEER LED SALES**

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(21) Appl. No.: **13/836,549**

(22) Filed: **Mar. 15, 2013**

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 13/559,315, filed on Jul. 26, 2012.

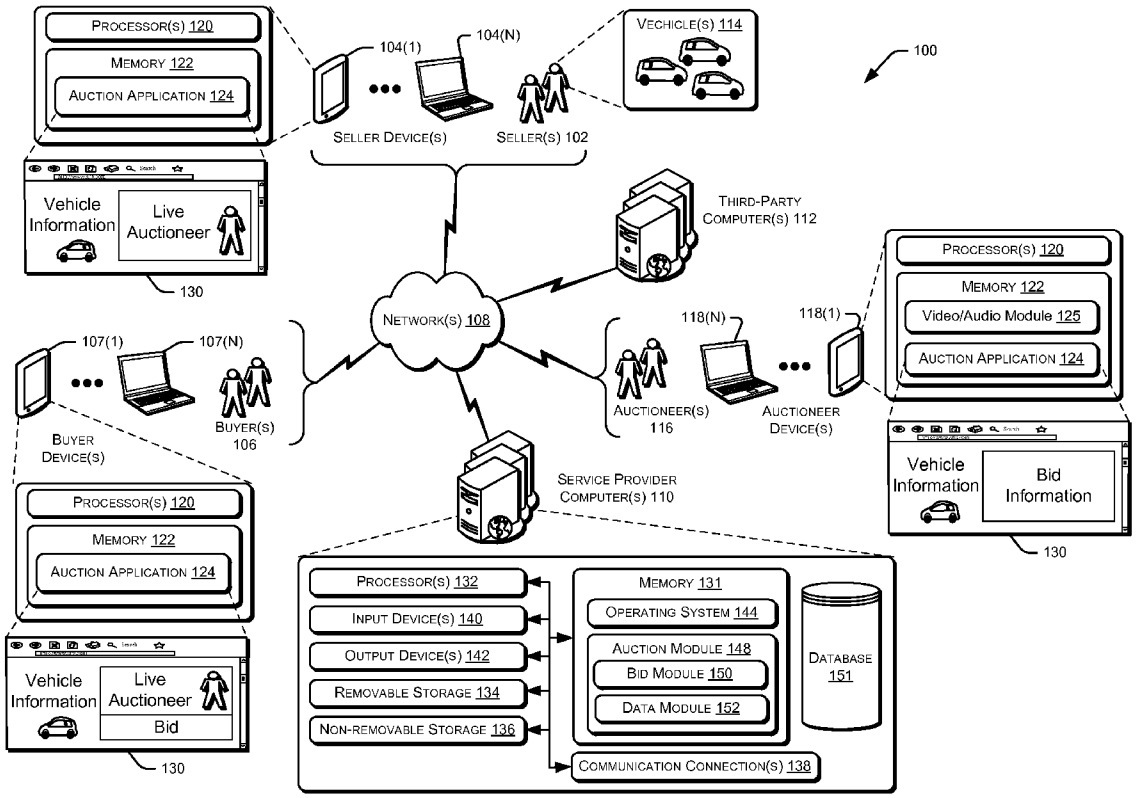
Publication Classification

(51) **Int. Cl.**
G06Q 30/08 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC *G06Q 30/08* (2013.01)
USPC **705/26.3**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Systems and methods for providing live auctioneer led sales of products, such as vehicles, between remotely located buyers, sellers, and auctioneers are provided herein. In certain aspects, systems and methods may facilitate one or more auctions led by a remotely located live auctioneer who receives bids from one or more remotely located buyers. Accordingly, in some examples, the auctioneer may accept bids from the buyers, encourage bidding from the buyers, and/or declare (or not declare) a product sold in real-time. In this manner, in certain aspects, the systems and methods enable an auction to be conduct by a live auctioneer.



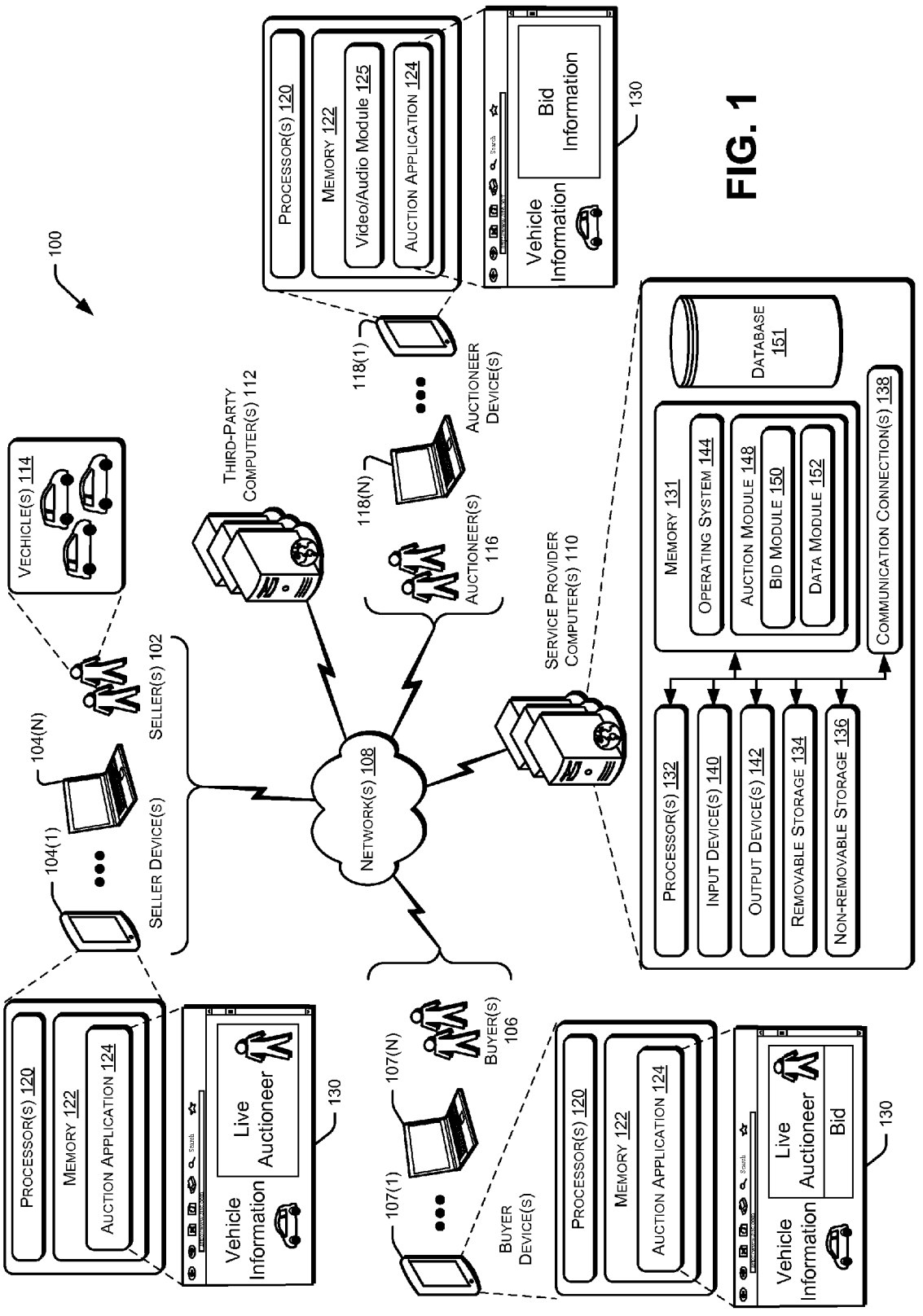

100
VECHICLE(S) 114
SELLER(S) 102
SELLER DEVICE(S)
104(1)
104(N)
THIRD-PARTY COMPUTER(S) 112
NETWORK(S) 108
AUCTIONEER(S) 116
AUCTIONEER DEVICE(S)
118(1)
118(N)
SERVICE PROVIDER COMPUTER(S) 110
PROCESSOR(S) 120
MEMORY 122
VIDEO/AUDIO MODULE 125
AUCTION APPLICATION 124
VEHICLE INFORMATION
BID INFORMATION
130
DATABASE 151
MEMORY 131
OPERATING SYSTEM 144
AUCTION MODULE 148
BID MODULE 150
DATA MODULE 152
COMMUNICATION CONNECTION(S) 138
PROCESSOR(S) 132
INPUT DEVICE(S) 140
OUTPUT DEVICE(S) 142
REMOVABLE STORAGE 134
NON-REMOVABLE STORAGE 136
BUYER(S) 106
107(1)
107(N)
BUYER DEVICE(S)
LIVE AUCTIONEER
BID

FIG. 1

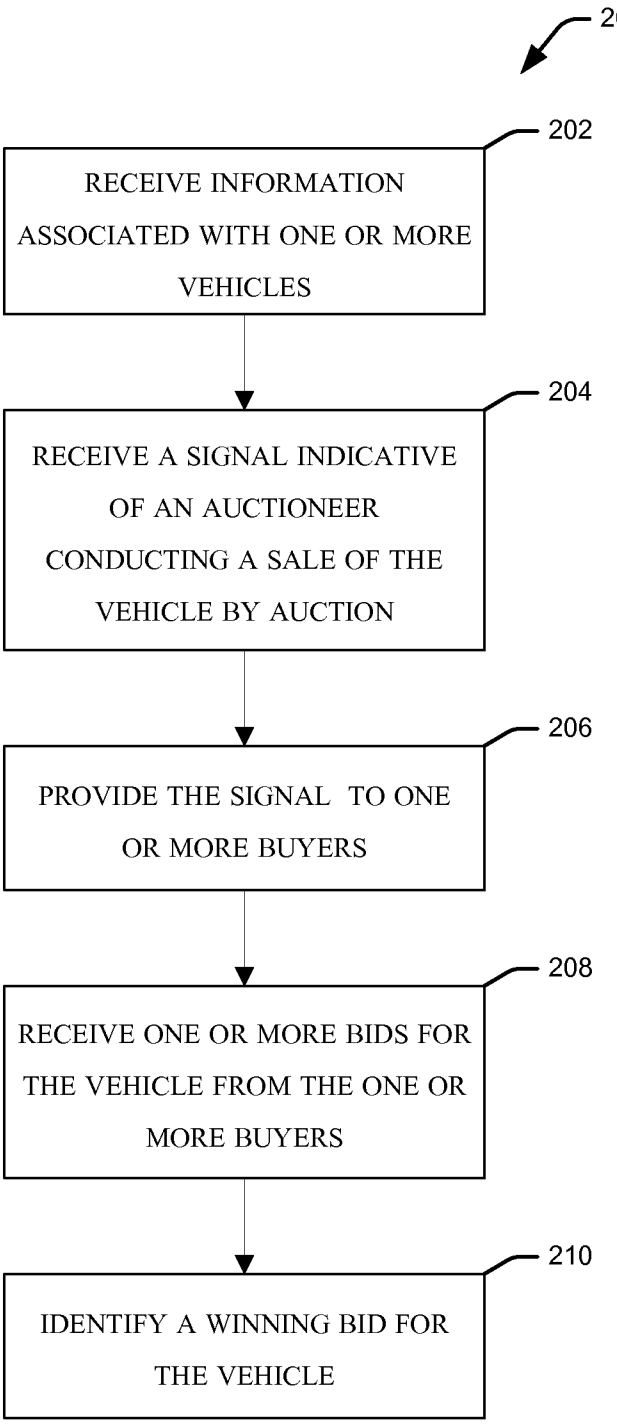

200
202
RECEIVE INFORMATION ASSOCIATED WITH ONE OR MORE VEHICLES
204
RECEIVE A SIGNAL INDICATIVE OF AN AUCTIONEER CONDUCTING A SALE OF THE VEHICLE BY AUCTION
206
PROVIDE THE SIGNAL TO ONE OR MORE BUYERS
208
RECEIVE ONE OR MORE BIDS FOR THE VEHICLE FROM THE ONE OR MORE BUYERS
210
IDENTIFY A WINNING BID FOR THE VEHICLE

FIG. 2

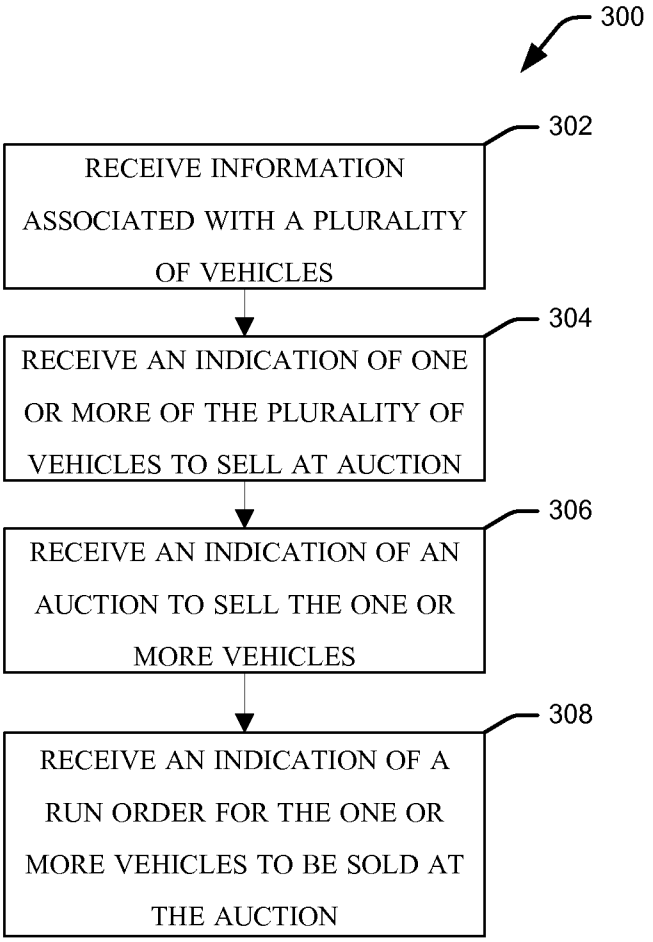

300
302
RECEIVE INFORMATION ASSOCIATED WITH A PLURALITY OF VEHICLES
304
RECEIVE AN INDICATION OF ONE OR MORE OF THE PLURALITY OF VEHICLES TO SELL AT AUCTION
306
RECEIVE AN INDICATION OF AN AUCTION TO SELL THE ONE OR MORE VEHICLES
308
RECEIVE AN INDICATION OF A RUN ORDER FOR THE ONE OR MORE VEHICLES TO BE SOLD AT THE AUCTION

FIG. 3

SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR LIVE AUCTIONEER LED SALES

BACKGROUND

[0001] Vehicles are often sold at live auctions and online auctions. An advantage of a live auction is that it tends to ensure price realization, i.e., a price that adequately reflects the market value of the vehicles being sold. However, live auctions typically happen at a certain location—typically an auction house, stockyard, or estate. Participants, such as buyers, sellers, and auctioneers, as well as the items to be sold, must travel to the site of the auction which may present logistical challenges, including travel and transportation costs, which may be significant.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0002] The detailed description is set forth with reference to the accompanying drawings, which are not necessarily drawn to scale. In the figures, the left-most digit(s) of a reference number identifies the figure in which the reference number first appears. The same reference numbers in different figures indicate similar or identical items.

[0003] FIG. **1** is a block diagram of an illustrative system, according to an embodiment of the disclosure.

[0004] FIG. **2** is a flow diagram illustrating details of a method, according to an embodiment of the disclosure.

[0005] FIG. **3** is a flow diagram illustrating details of a method, according to an embodiment of the disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Overview

[0006] Illustrative embodiments will now be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which some, but not all embodiments are shown. The disclosure may be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein; rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will satisfy applicable legal requirements. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout.

[0007] Illustrative embodiments may generally be directed to, among other things, providing live auctioneer led sales of vehicles between remotely located buyers, sellers, and auctioneers. In certain aspects, the vehicles may be sold through an auction platform, such as, for example, a server-based platform wherein each seller, buyer, and/or auctioneer may access the platform. In this manner, the platform may facilitate one or more auctions led (or driven) by a remotely located live auctioneer that may receive bids over the platform from one or more remotely located buyers. Accordingly, in some examples, the auctioneer may accept bids from the buyers, encourage bidding from the buyers, and/or declare (or not declare) a vehicle sold in real-time. In this manner, in certain aspects, the platform enables an auction to be conducted by a live auctioneer as if the auctioneer, the buyers, and the sellers were in the same physical location—like a traditional auction. The use of a live auctioneer in real-time communication with the buyers over the platform tends to ensure price realization (i.e., a price that adequately reflects the market value) of the vehicles being sold.

[0008] In certain aspects, one or more sellers may designate vehicles to be auctioned through the platform via an auction-style sale. In some instances, the sellers may also provide information associated with the vehicles to be purchased through the platform, including, but not limited to, a vehicle identification number (VIN), a make, a model, a year, a condition, a color, a trim, a value, a mileage, an image, a recording, a video, a location, seller information, an inventory identifier, a rating, a review, an amount of time the vehicle has been in a particular inventory, an amount of time the vehicle has been available for exchange, trade, or sale, or a vehicle history. In other instances, the information associated with the vehicles may be determined and/or received from one or more third parties, including, but not limited to, one or more vehicle identification number decoders, inventory management systems, dealer management systems, original equipment manufacturer databases, distributor databases, market value databases, vehicle history databases, or the like. In yet other instances, the information associated with the vehicles may be partially provided by the sellers and/or partially provided by the third parties.

[0009] Additionally, in some aspects, the sellers may provide information associated with a number of vehicles in the sellers' inventory. In certain instances, the sellers may filter the vehicle inventory based on the information associated with the vehicles. In this manner, the sellers may filter the vehicle inventory to view a specific subset of the vehicle inventory. For example, the sellers may filter the vehicle inventory based on at least a portion of a vehicle identification number (VIN) because certain digits of the VIN are indicative of the make, the model, or the place of manufacture, etc. of the vehicle. Moreover, the sellers may filter the vehicle inventory based on one or more of: a make, a model, a year, a condition, a color, a trim, a value, a mileage, a location, an inventory identifier, a rating, a review, an amount of time the vehicle has been in a particular inventory, an auction parameter, or an amount of time the vehicle has been available for exchange, trade, or sale, a combination thereof, or the like. Further, the sellers may designate one or more vehicles in the vehicle inventory (or a filtered subset thereof) to be sold via an auction through the platform. In this manner, the sellers may designate a run order (i.e., the order that the vehicles are to be auctioned off). In some instances, the sellers may designate a specific auction to sell the vehicles. For example, several auctions may be scheduled for a day, a week, a month, or a year, etc. Moreover, some auctions may be identified by the location of the sellers, the buyers, and/or the vehicles to be auctioned. In both instances, the sellers may specify which auction or auctions each of their vehicles may be sold.

[0010] In one example embodiment, the platform may facilitate an auction led by a remotely located live auctioneer. For example, the sellers, the buyers, and the auctioneer (and in some instances a block clerk that assists the auctioneer in conducting the auctions) may all be remotely located from one another. That is, they may all be located in geographically remote location, such as, for example, in different structures, cities, counties, states, countries etc. Any distance is within the scope of this disclosure. In certain aspects, the auctioneer may lead, control, drive, manage, or the like an auction via the platform. That is, in some examples, the auctioneer may take bids and/or encourage bidding from the buyers over the platform in real-time. For example, in certain embodiments, the buyers and/or the sellers may be provided with a real-time audio signal, video signal, or combination thereof of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicles by auction. Other signals associated with the live auctioneer may also be provided to the buyers and/or sellers. Similarly, the auction-

eer may be provided with a real-time indication of one or more bids being placed by the buyers via the platform for the vehicles for sale by auction. For example, the indication of a bid from the buyers may include, but is not limited to, an audio signal, a video signal, an email, a text message, an instant message, a voice message, a video message, a telephone call, a video call, a combination thereof, or the like. In one example embodiment, the buyers may select (e.g., by clicking or hitting) a virtual button that may place a bid at the next incremental amount.

[0011] In certain embodiments, the platform may be configured to identify a winning bid for the vehicle. For example, in some instances, the platform may determine a winning bid for the vehicle and/or the auctioneer (or an assistant, such as the block clerk) may determine a winning bid for the vehicle. In such instances, the auctioneer or the block clerk may then enter the winning bid into the platform so that the seller may be notified of the winning bid. Moreover, in certain aspects, information associated with the winning bid and the winning buyer may be forwarded to the seller so that the seller and the buyer may complete the transaction.

[0012] In certain embodiments, the buyers may be presented with a listing of one or more vehicles to be sold by auction. In some instances, the listing of vehicles may include the above described information associated with the vehicles. In addition, in other instances, the listing of vehicles may be sorted or filtered by the buyer. For example, the buyer may sort the listing of vehicles by one or more of: at least a portion of a vehicle identification number (VIN), a make, a model, a year, a condition, a color, a trim, a value, a mileage, a location, a seller, an inventory identifier, a rating, a review, an amount of time the vehicle has been in a particular inventory, an auction parameter (such as reserve price, starting bid, floor, etc.), an amount of time the vehicle has been available for exchange, trade, or sale, an order that the vehicles will be auctioned, a buyer preference, a combination thereof, or the like. As such, the buyers may filter the listing of vehicles to determine one or more vehicles to bid on during an auction. In other embodiments, the buyers may be presented with a listing of auctions and/or sellers. In addition, in some examples, the listing of auctions or sellers may be sorted or filtered by the buyer. For example, the buyer may filter the auctions and/or sellers by location, date, time, auction inventory, etc. In this manner, the buyer may identify a particular auction and/or seller to purchase vehicles from. It is appreciated that any parameter may be used to filter the above described listings.

[0013] In some aspects, the platform may facilitate communication between the buyers and the sellers before, during, and after the sale of a vehicle. That is, in some examples, the platform may include an interface that facilitates sending an email, a text message, an instant message, a voice message, a video message, a telephone call, a video call, or the like between a buyer and a seller. Alternatively or additionally, the platform may enable information from buyers, sellers or platform administrators to be posted directly to pages, such as vehicle pages or auction pages, directly on the platform. Moreover, the platform may be configured to provide an indication to the buyer of various services provided by the seller, such as, but not limited to, reconditioning services and the associated costs. Additionally, in some embodiments, buyers, sellers, and/or other users of the platform may provide reviews and/or ratings of users (including the buyers and sellers) using the platform and/or reviews and/or ratings of vehicles purchased through the platform.

[0014] In certain embodiments, the sellers may designate a reserve price for the vehicle. In some instances, the platform may be configured to determine if a bid for the vehicle is greater than or equal to the reserve price for the vehicle. Additionally, in other embodiments, the sellers may indicate a no-sale for the vehicle. That is, if a vehicle for auction is not receiving many bids (if any) and the reserve price is not likely to be met, the seller may have the option to designate the sale a no-sale, which may end the auction immediately. In still other embodiments, the buyers may place proxy bids (also known as absentee bids or automatic bids). That is, the buyers may designate a maximum amount they are willing to bid for a vehicle. In such instances, as other bids are made, the platform may automatically increase the bids by a pre-specified increment until the maximum amount is reached. Alternatively, proxy bids may be entered in other than predetermined increments, and so long as a maximum proxy bid is not exceeded, a proxy bidder's bid may be increased to match or exceed the other bidder's bid. Moreover, in some instances, the buyers may place if/then proxy bids. In such instances, a buyer may identify one or more vehicles that the buyer wants to bid on in the alternative. That is, if the buyer wins an auction on a first vehicle, the buyer may only want to bid a certain amount for a subsequent vehicle in a subsequent auction or the same auction. Alternatively, if the buyer wins an auction on a first vehicle, the buyer may not want to bid on a subsequent vehicle in the same auction or a subsequent auction.

[0015] In some examples, the platform may provide settlement services such as, but not limited to, return services, title services, shipping services, arbitration services, financing services, payment transfer services, and the like, to the buyers and sellers once a sale occurs. Additionally, the platform may provide functionality for completing the sale. However, in some examples, the platform may only facilitate communication between the buyers and sellers and may not actually be involved in the settlement of the transaction between the buyers and sellers. Further, in some examples, sellers may be owners who wish to sell or exchange their vehicles, or those with the authority to sell or exchange the vehicle for the owners. Additionally, buyers may be those people or entities that receive vehicles, new or used, in exchange for either money (or its equivalent) or other items. Generally, but not always, the buyer may intend, or attempt, to resell the vehicle that was purchased.

[0016] In some aspects, the platform may determine or identify wholesale, retail, and/or other values for vehicles in the platform. In other examples, a wholesale and/or retail value may be provided by the seller, a dealer management system (DMS) service, a third-party vehicle valuation service, a combination thereof, or the like. For example, the value may be based on the condition of the vehicle, the mileage, the year, the make and/or the model of the vehicle, and/or market conditions, such as real-time market conditions, related to the same or similar vehicles.

[0017] In certain embodiments, the platform may provide a dynamic, no-questions-asked, money-back, vehicle-return guarantee for vehicle purchases. In some aspects, next to each vehicle for sale, a guarantee acquisition fee may be displayed. This guarantee acquisition fee may indicate the additional cost, to the buyer, to purchase a no-questions-asked, money-back, vehicle-return guarantee from the auction platform. As

such, if a vehicle and its respective vehicle-return guarantee are purchased, the buyer may return the vehicle to the auction platform for a full or partial refund of the vehicle purchase price.

[0018] Further, by way of example and without limitation, real-time communications between the auctioneers, buyers, and/or sellers may include auctions that are conducted based on real-time, or near real-time, exchanges of communications or data. That is, communications and/or data may be updated continuously over a period of time or any appropriate interval based on the context. For example, as those of skill in the art will understand, different contexts may create different understandings of real-time.

[0019] As an overview, the items auctioned through the platform may be any products or services that may be sold or exchanged in an auction including, for example, and without limitation, vehicles, vehicle parts, computer products, firearms, articles of clothing, gemstones, jewelry, consumer electronics, electronics parts, yard appliances, construction machines and equipment, aircrafts, boats, office equipment, furniture, manufacturing equipment, packaging equipment, kitchen equipment, appliances, raw materials, mineral rights, water rights, combinations of the foregoing, or the like, or related products and components. While many of the embodiments of this Detailed Description are described in terms of vehicles, those of skill in the art will understand that the disclosure is not so limited, and other products, as described herein, could be substituted for vehicles.

[0020] This brief introduction, including section titles and corresponding summaries, is provided for convenience and is not intended to limit the scope of the claims, nor the proceeding sections. Furthermore, the techniques described above and below may be implemented in a number of ways and in a number of contexts. Several example implementations and contexts are provided with reference to the following figures, as described below in more detail. However, the following implementations and contexts are but a few of many.

Illustrative Architecture

[0021] FIG. **1** depicts an illustrative system **100** in which techniques for providing live auctioneer led sales of vehicles between remotely located buyers, sellers, and auctioneers may be implemented. As shown in FIG. **1**, the system **100** may include one or more service provider computers **110**, one or more sellers **102** associated with one or more seller devices **104**(**1**), . . . , **104**(N), one or more buyers **106** associated with one or more buyer devices **107**(**1**), . . . , **107**(N), one or more auctioneers **116** associated with one or more auctioneer devices **118**(**1**), . . . , **118**(N), and one or more third-party computers **112**. In system **100**, the sellers **102** may utilize seller devices **104** to access a client application interface **130** (or website) that may be provided by, created by, or otherwise associated with one or more service provider computers **110** via one or more networks **108**. In some instances, the seller devices **104** may be configured to present or otherwise display a client application interface **130** to the one or more sellers **102**. The networks **108** may include any one or a combination of multiple different types of networks, such as, but not limited to, cable networks, the Internet, wireless networks, and other private and/or public networks. While the illustrated example represents the sellers **102**, the buyers **106**, and the auctioneers **116** accessing a client application interface **130** over the networks **108**, the described techniques may equally apply in instances where the sellers **102**, the buyers **106**, and the auctioneers **116** interact with a service provider via a personal computer, over the phone, via a kiosk, or in any other manner. It is also noted that the described techniques may apply in other client/server arrangements (e.g., set-top boxes, etc.), as well as in non-client/server arrangements (e.g., locally stored software applications, etc.).

[0022] In some aspects, the client application interface **130** associated with the seller devices **104** may allow the sellers **102** to access, receive from, transmit to, or otherwise interact with the service provider via one or more service provider computers **110**. In some examples, the client application interface **130** may also allow the sellers **102** to receive from or transmit to the service provider computers **110** over the networks **108**, information associated with one or more vehicles **114** in an inventory of the seller **102** including, but not limited to, the make, the model, the color, the mileage, the vehicle identification number (VIN), the condition, the trim, the vehicle history, and/or one or more features or options, etc. Additionally, through the client application interface **130**, the seller **102** may also be able to search for other vehicles that may be offered for sale by other sellers **102** associated with other seller devices **104**. Further, in some examples, information about the vehicles **114** that are for sale may be provided to the service provider computers **110** by third-party providers associated with the third-party computers **112**, such as, but not limited to, DMSs, other inventory management systems, other inventory data feeds, and/or one or more vehicle identification number decoders, market value databases, or the like. The third-party computers **112** may be associated with any number and/or type of third-party providers that may provide a range of information and/or services that facilitate the sale of the vehicles **114**.

[0023] In certain aspects, the client application interface **130** associated with the seller devices **104** may allow the sellers **102** to monitor and/or arrange the auction of a vehicle **114**. For example, the seller **102** may designate a reserve price for the vehicle **114** and/or provide an indication of a no sale of the vehicle **114** via the client application interface **130** associated with the seller devices **104**. Moreover, the client application interface **130** associated with the seller devices **104** may provide the seller **102** with information associated with the auction, such as, but not limited to, information associated with a winning bid, buyer information, payment information, transportation costs, etc.

[0024] In addition, the buyers **106** may utilize buyer devices **107** to access a client application interface **130** that may be provided by, created by, or otherwise associated with one or more service provider computers **110** via one or more networks **108**. In some instances, the buyer devices **107** may be configured to present or otherwise display a client application interface **130** to the one or more buyers **106**. The client application interfaces **130** associated with the buyer devices **107** may allow the buyers **106** to access, receive from, transmit to, or otherwise interact with the service provider via the service provider computers **110**. For example, through the client application interface **130** associated with the buyer devices **107**, the buyers **106** may receive information associated with the vehicles **114** that the seller **102** would like to sell, sort and/or filter information associated with the vehicles **114**, and participate in an auction for the vehicles **114**. That is, the client application interfaces **130** associated with the buyer devices **107** may allow the buyers to place bids for vehicles **114** and provide the buyer **106** with information associated with the auction, such as, but not limited to, information

associated with a winning bid, seller information, vehicle information, payment information, transportation costs, etc. Moreover, the client application interfaces **130** associated with the buyer devices **107** may provide the buyers with a live video signal of the auctioneer **116** auctioning the vehicles **114**. In this manner, the buyers **106** may place bids for the vehicles **114** via the client application interfaces **130** associated with the buyer devices **107**.

[0025] Further, a client application interface **130** may be associated with the auctioneer devices **118** and may allow the auctioneers **116** to access, receive from, transmit to, or otherwise interact with the service provider via the service provider computers **110** to participate in the auctions. For example, through the client application interface **130** associated with the auctioneer devices **118**, the auctioneers **116** may lead auctions of vehicles **114** between remotely located buyers **106** and sellers **102**. That is, the auctioneer **116** may take bids from the remotely located buyers **106** and otherwise conduct an auction of the vehicles **114** over the network **108** via the service provider computers **110**. In some examples, the client application interface **130** associated with the auctioneer devices **118** may allow the auctioneer **116** to view information associated with the vehicles **114** up for auction, such as a make, a year, a mileage, a condition, or the like. Moreover, via the client application interface **130** associated with the auctioneer devices **118**, the auctioneer **116** may view information associated with the auction, such as a run order, a start time, a current bid, a reserve price, etc.

[0026] The service provider computers **110** may be any type of computing devices, such as, but not limited to, mobile, desktop, and/or cloud computing devices, such as servers. In some examples, the service provider computers **110** may be in communication with the seller devices **104**, the buyer devices **107**, and the auctioneer devices **118** via the networks **108**, or via other network connections. The service provider computers **110** may include one or more servers, perhaps arranged in a cluster, as a server farm, or as individual servers not associated with one another. These servers may be configured to host a website viewable via the client application interfaces **130** associated with the seller devices **104**, the buyer devices **107**, and the auctioneer devices **118** or any other Web browser accessible by a seller **102**, a buyer **106**, or an auctioneer **116**, such as, but not limited to, one or more of the seller devices **104**, the buyer devices **107**, or the auctioneer devices **118**. In addition, the service provider computers **110** may communicate with one or more applications or other programs running the seller devices **104**, the buyer devices **107**, or the auctioneer devices **118**.

[0027] The seller devices **104**, the buyer devices **107**, and the auctioneer devices **118** may be any type of computing devices including, but not limited to, desktop personal computers (PCs), laptop PCs, mobile phones, smartphones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), tablet PCs, game consoles, set-top boxes, wearable computers, e-readers, web-enabled TVs, cloud-enabled devices and work stations, and the like. In some instances, each seller device **104**, buyer device **107**, and auctioneer device **118** may be equipped with one or more processors **120** and memory **122** to store applications and data, such as an auction application **124** that may display a client application interface **130** and/or enable access to a website stored on the service provider computers **110**, or elsewhere, such as a cloud computing network. In other instances, each seller device **104**, buyer device **107**, and auctioneer device **118** may be capable of receiving and/or transmitting one or more video signals, audio signals, and/or other signals over the network **108** and may include hardware, software, or a combination thereof to perform such functions. For example, the auctioneer devices **118** may include a video/audio module **125** that may be associated with hardware, such as a video camera or audio recorder, for capturing the auctioneer **116** as the auctioneer **116** conducts an auction of the vehicles **114**.

[0028] The system **100** may also include one or more third-party services operating one or more third-party computers **112**. The third-party computers **112** may also be any type of computing devices such as, but not limited to, mobile, desktop, and/or cloud computing devices, such as servers. In some examples, the third-party computers **112** may be in communication with the service provider computers **110** and/or the seller devices **104**, the buyer devices **107**, and/or the auctioneer devices **118** via the networks **108**, or via other network connections. The third-party computers **112** may include one or more servers, perhaps arranged in a cluster, as a server farm, or as individual servers not associated with one another. These servers may be configured to provide information associated with the vehicles **114**. In some aspects, the third-party services may include, but are not limited to, information aggregation services (e.g., services that determine market values for items based on aggregated information associated with those items), financial institutions, credit institutions, and the like. As such, when requested by the service provider computers **110**, the third-party computers **112** may provide information associated with the vehicles **114**. In some examples, this information may be utilized by the service provider computers **110** to determine a market value or other information related to the vehicles **114**, which may be presented to the sellers **102**, the buyers **106**, and/or auctioneer **116**.

[0029] In certain aspects, the service provider computers **110** may facilitate an auction for the sale of a vehicle **114**. In some examples, the auctioneer **116** may take bids and/or encourage bidding from the buyers **106** in real-time over the network **108**. For example, in certain embodiments, the buyers **106** and/or the sellers **102** may be provided with a real-time audio signal, a video signal, or combination thereof of a live auctioneer **116** conducting the sale of the vehicle **114** by auction. In this manner, the buyers **106** may interact with the auctioneer **116** as if they were in the same physical location. That is, the auctioneer **116** may lead (or drive) the auction by taking bids from the buyers **106**, notifying the buyers **106** of current bids, encouraging bids from the buyers **106**, and/or declaring a vehicle sold. Similarly, the auctioneer **116** may be provided with a real-time indication of one or more bids placed by the buyers **106** for the vehicle **114** for sale by auction.

[0030] In one illustrative configuration, the service provider computer **110** comprises at least a memory **131** and one or more processing units (or processors) **132**. The processors **132** may be implemented as appropriate in hardware, software, firmware, or combinations thereof. Software or firmware implementations of the processors **132** may include computer-executable or machine-executable instructions written in any suitable programming language to perform the various functions described.

[0031] Memory **131** may store program instructions that are loadable and executable on the processors **132**, as well as data generated during the execution of these programs. Depending on the configuration and type of service provider

computer **110**, memory **131** may be volatile (such as random access memory (RAM)) and/or non-volatile (such as read-only memory (ROM), flash memory, etc.). The service provider computer **110** or server may also include additional removable storage **134** and/or non-removable storage **136** including, but not limited to, magnetic storage, optical disks, and/or tape storage. The disk drives and their associated computer-readable media may provide non-volatile storage of computer-readable instructions, data structures, program modules, and other data for the computing devices. In some implementations, the memory **131** may include multiple different types of memory, such as static random access memory (SRAM), dynamic random access memory (DRAM), or ROM.

[0032] The memory **131**, the removable storage **134**, and the non-removable storage **136** are all examples of computer-readable storage media. For example, computer-readable storage media may include volatile and non-volatile, removable and non-removable media implemented in any method or technology for storage of information such as computer-readable instructions, data structures, program modules, or other data. Memory **131**, removable storage **134**, and non-removable storage **136** are all examples of computer storage media. Additional types of computer storage media that may be present include, but are not limited to, programmable random access memory (PRAM), SRAM, DRAM, RAM, ROM, electrically erasable programmable read-only memory (EEPROM), flash memory or other memory technology, compact disc read-only memory (CD-ROM), digital versatile disc (DVD) or other optical storage, magnetic cassettes, magnetic tape, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage devices, or any other medium which can be used to store the desired information and which can be accessed by the service provider computer **110** or other computing devices. Combinations of the any of the above should also be included within the scope of computer-readable media.

[0033] Alternatively, computer-readable communication media may include computer-readable instructions, program modules, or other data transmitted within a data signal, such as a carrier wave, or other transmission. However, as used herein, computer-readable storage media does not include computer-readable communication media.

[0034] The service provider computer **110** may also contain communication connection(s) **138** that allow the service provider computer **110** to communicate with a stored database, another computing device or server, user terminals, and/or other devices on a network. The service provider computer **110** may also include input device(s) **140** such as a keyboard, mouse, pen, voice input device, touch input device, etc., and output device(s) **142**, such as a display, speakers, printers, etc.

[0035] Turning to the contents of the memory **131** in more detail, the memory **131** may include an operating system **144** and one or more application programs or services for implementing the features disclosed herein, including an auction module **148**. In some instances, the auction module **148** may receive, transmit, and/or store information in the database **151**. In some aspects, the auction module **148** may be configured to receive and/or transmit information between the sellers **102**, the buyers **106**, and the auctioneers **116**. For example, the auction module **148** may be configured to enable the sellers **102** to transmit and/or designate vehicles **114** to be sold at auction. In some examples, the sellers **102** may provide information associated with the vehicles **114**, or the information associated with the vehicles **114** may be determined and/or received from one or more third-party computers **112**, including, but is not limited to, one or more inventory management systems, market value databases, or the like.

[0036] Additionally, the auction module **148** may be configured to facilitate an auction led by a remotely located live auctioneer **116**. For example, the auctioneer **116** may receive bids and/or encourage bidding from the buyers **106** and declare a vehicle **114** sold (or not sold) in real-time. In certain embodiments, the auction module **148** may be configured to provide the buyers **106** and/or the sellers **102** with a real-time audio signal, a video signal, or a combination thereof of the live auctioneer **116** conducting the sale of the vehicles **114** by auction. Similarly, the auction module **148** may be configured to provide the auctioneer **116** and/or the seller **102** with a real-time indication of one or more bids being placed by the buyers **106**. In some examples, the auction module **148** may be configured to identify a winning bid for the vehicle **114** at the end of an auction.

[0037] In some instances, the auction module **148** may include one or more application programs or services for implementing the features disclosed herein, including a bid module **150** and/or a data module **152**. For example, the bid module **150** may be configured to receive and/or transmit one or more bids between the auctioneer **116** and the one or more buyers **106**. In some instances, the bid module **150** may be configured to provide a real-time indication of one or more bids being placed by the buyers **106** via the buyer devices **107** for the vehicles **114** for sale by auction. In some examples, the indication of a bid from the buyers **106** may include, but is not limited to, an audio signal, a video signal, an email, a text message, an instant message, a voice message, a video message, a telephone call, a video call, a combination thereof, or the like. Said signals associated with a bid may be provided to the auctioneer **116** and/or the sellers **102**. In addition, the bid module **150** may be configured to provide the buyers **106** and/or the sellers **102** with a real-time audio signal, a video signal, or a combination thereof of the live auctioneer **116** conducting the sale of the vehicles **114** by auction. Accordingly, the bid module **150** may be configured to facilitate communications between the buyers **106** and the auctioneers **116** that are associated with an auction.

[0038] In certain aspects, the data module **152** may be configured to facilitate the exchange of data between the buyers **106**, the sellers **102**, and/or the auctioneers **116**. For example, the data module **152** may be configured to receive and/or transmit information associated with the vehicles **114** to the buyers **106**, the sellers **102**, and/or the auctioneers **116**, including, but not limited to, a vehicle identification number (VIN), a make, a model, a year, a condition, a color, a trim, a value, a mileage, an image, a recording, a video, a location, seller information, an inventory identifier, a rating, a review, an amount of time the vehicle has been in a particular inventory, or an amount of time the vehicle has been available for exchange, trade, or sale. In some instances, the data module **152** may be configured to receive the information associated with the vehicles **114** from one or more third parties associated with third party computers **112**, including, but is not limited to, one or more vehicle identification number decoders, inventory management systems, dealer management systems, original equipment manufacturer databases, distributor databases, market value databases, or the like. In other instances, the data module **152** may be configured to receive

the information associated with the vehicles **114** by the sellers **102** and/or by the third parties.

[0039] Various instructions, methods, and techniques described herein may be considered in the general context of computer-executable instructions, such as program modules, executed by one or more computers or other devices. Generally, program modules include routines, programs, objects, components, data structures, etc., for performing particular tasks or implementing particular abstract data types. These program modules and the like may be executed as native code or may be downloaded and executed, such as in a virtual machine or other just-in-time compilation execution environment. Typically, the functionality of the program modules may be combined or distributed as desired in various embodiments. An implementation of these modules and techniques may be stored on some form of computer-readable storage media.

[0040] The example architectures and computing devices shown in FIG. **1** is provided by way of example only. Numerous other operating environments, system architectures, and device configurations are possible. Accordingly, embodiments of the present disclosure should not be construed as being limited to any particular operating environment, system architecture, or device configuration.

Illustrative Processes

[0041] FIGS. **2** and **3** illustrate example flow diagrams showing processes **200** and **300**, respectively, for providing live auctioneer led sales of vehicles between remotely located buyers, sellers, and auctioneers, as described above. These processes are illustrated as logical flow graphs, each operation of which represents a sequence of operations that can be implemented in hardware, software, or a combination thereof. In the context of software, the operations represent computer-executable instructions stored on one or more computer-readable storage media that, when executed by one or more processors, perform the recited operations. Generally, computer-executable instructions include routines, programs, objects, components, data structures, and the like that perform particular functions or implement particular abstract data types. The order in which the operations are described is not intended to be construed as a limitation, and any number of the described operations can be combined in any order and/or in parallel to implement the processes.

[0042] The process **200** may, but need not, be implemented by a computing device operated by a service provider, such as the service provider computers **110**. In some aspects, the process **200** may begin by receiving information associated with one or more vehicles at block **202**. In some examples, the sellers **102** may provide the information associated with the vehicles **114** to the service provider computers **110**. In other instances, the information associated with the vehicles **114** may be determined and/or received from one or more third-party computers **112**, including, but not limited to, one or more vehicle identification number decoders, inventory management systems, dealer management systems, original equipment manufacturer databases, distributor databases, market value databases, or the like. In yet other instances, the information associated with the vehicles **114** may be partially provided by the sellers **102** and/or partially provided by the third-party computers **112**. The information associated with the vehicles **114** may include, but is not limited to, a vehicle identification number (VIN), a make, a model, a year, a condition, a color, a trim, a value, a mileage, a feature, an option, an image, a recording, a video, a location, seller information, an inventory identifier, a rating, a review, an amount of time the vehicle has been in a particular inventory, or an amount of time the vehicle has been available for exchange, trade, or sale. Other information may also be associated with the vehicles **114**.

[0043] In certain embodiments, the information associated with the vehicles **114** may be provided to the buyers **106** before, during, or after an auction. Moreover, in some examples, the buyers **106**, the sellers **102**, and/or the auctioneers **116** may request additional information about the vehicles **114** from the third-party computers **112** and/or from the sellers **102**.

[0044] Additionally, in some aspects, the service provider computers **110** may receive a signal indicative of an auctioneer **116** conducting a sale of the vehicle **114** by auction at block **204**. For example, in certain embodiments, the signal may include a real-time audio signal, a video signal, a text-based ticker, or a combination thereof of the live auctioneer **116** conducting the sale of the vehicles **114** by auction. The process **200** may then provide the signal of the auctioneer **116** to the buyers **106** at block **206**. Further, at block **208**, the service provider computers **110** may receive one or more bids for the vehicles **114** from the buyers **106**. For example, the buyers **106** may place the bids in real-time, or the buyers **106** may designate proxy bids (also known as absentee bids or automatic bids). That is, the buyers may designate a maximum amount they are willing to bid for a vehicle. At this stage, the process **200** may facilitate an auction led by a remotely located live auctioneer **116**. For example, the sellers **102**, the buyers **106**, and the auctioneer **116** may all be remotely located from one another. That is, in some examples, the live auctioneer **116** may remotely take bids and/or encourage bidding from the buyers **106** in real-time. For example, as noted above, the buyers **106** and/or the sellers **102** may be provided with a real-time audio signal, a video signal, or a combination thereof of the live auctioneer **116** conducting the sale of the vehicles **114** by auction. Similarly, the auctioneer **116** may be provided with a real-time indication of the one or more bids placed by the buyers **106** for the vehicles.

[0045] The process **200** may then identify a winning bid for the vehicle **114** at block **210**. For example, in some instances, the sellers **102** may designate a reserve price for the vehicle **114**. In such instances, the process **200** may determine if a bid for the vehicle **114** is greater than or equal to the reserve price for the vehicle **114**. Additionally, in other instances, the sellers **102** may indicate a no-sale for the vehicle **114**. That is, if a vehicle for auction is not receiving many bids (if any) and the reserve price is not likely to be met, the seller **102** may have the option to designate the sale a no-sale, which may end the auction immediately. Moreover, in some examples, information associated with the winning buyer **106** may be provided to the seller **102** and information associated with the seller **102** may be provided to the winning buyer **102** at the end of the auction.

[0046] FIG. **3** illustrates a flow diagram showing the process **300** for providing live auctioneer led sales of vehicles between remotely located buyers, sellers, and auctioneers. The process **300** may, but need not, be implemented by the service provider computer **110**. In some aspects, the process **300** may begin by receiving information associated with a plurality of vehicles **114** at block **302**. In some aspects, the information associated with the plurality of vehicles **114** may

be received via the one or more input devices **140** of FIG. **1**; while in other aspects, the information associated with the plurality of vehicles **114** may be received simply via the network **108** or other means. Again, in some examples, the sellers **102** may provide the information associated with the plurality of vehicles **114** and/or the information associated with the plurality of vehicles **114** may be determined and/or received from one or more third-party computers **112** as described above.

[0047] In certain aspects, at block **304**, the process **300** may then receive an indication of one or more of the plurality of vehicles **114** to sell at auction. In some instances, the sellers **102** may filter the plurality of vehicles **114** based on the information associated with the vehicles **114** (as described above) before selecting which vehicles **114** to sell. For example, the sellers **102** may filter the plurality of vehicles **114** to view a specific subset of the plurality of vehicles **114**. That is, in some examples, the sellers **102** may filter the plurality of vehicles **114** based on one or more of: at least a portion of a vehicle identification number (VIN), a make, a model, a year, a condition, a color, a trim, a value, a mileage, a location, an inventory identifier, a rating, a review, an amount of time the vehicle has been in a particular inventory, an auction parameter, or an amount of time the vehicle has been available for exchange, trade, or sale, a combination thereof, or the like. As such, the sellers **102** may designate one or more vehicles **114** of the plurality of vehicles **114** (or a filtered subset thereof) to be sold at auction.

[0048] The process **300** may then receive an indication of an auction to sell the one or more vehicles **114** at block **306**. That is, the sellers **102** may designate a specific auction to sell the vehicles **114**. For example, several auctions may be scheduled for a day, a week, a month, or a year, etc., and the sellers **102** may specify the auctions where their vehicles will be sold. Moreover, some auctions may be based at least in part on the location of the sellers **102**, the buyers **106**, and/or the vehicles **114** to be auctioned. As such, the sellers **102** may select an auction that best suits their goals. Next, at block **308**, the sellers **102** may designate a run order. The run order is the order the vehicles **114** are to be auctioned off at the selected auction.

[0049] Illustrative systems and methods for providing live auctioneer led sales of vehicles between remotely located buyers, sellers, and auctioneers are described above. Some or all of these systems and methods may, but need not, be implemented at least partially by architectures and/or flows such as those shown in FIGS. **1-3** above.

1-28. (canceled)

29. A method, comprising:

receiving, by one or more computers comprising one or more processors, information associated with a vehicle for sale by auction;

receiving, by at least one of the one or more computers, a signal indicative of a live auctioneer conducting a sale of the vehicle by auction from an auctioneer computing device, wherein the signal indicative of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicle by auction comprises a real-time audio signal of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicle by auction;

providing, by at least one of the one or more computers, the signal indicative of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicle by auction to one or more buyer computing devices, wherein the auctioneer computing device, at least one of the one or more buyer computing devices, and the vehicle are remotely located from one another; and

receiving, by at least one of the one or more computers and based at least in part on the signal indicative of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicle by auction, one or more bids for the vehicle from the one or more buyer computing devices.

30. The method of claim **29**, further comprising identifying, by at least one of the one or more computers and based at least in part on the one or more bids for the vehicle from the one or more buyer computing devices, a winning bid for the vehicle.

31. The method of claim **29**, further comprising receiving, by at least one of the one or more computers, an indication of a selection of a virtual button on the one or more buyer computing devices configured to place a bid at an incremental amount.

32. The method of claim **29**, further comprising providing, by at least one of the one or more computers, the one or more bids for the vehicle from the one or more buyer computing devices to the auctioneer computing device.

33. The method of claim **29**, further comprising receiving, by at least one of the one or more computers, the information associated with the vehicle from one or more third-party computing devices.

34. The method of claim **29**, further comprising:

identifying, by at least one of the one or more computers, a reserve price for the vehicle; and

determining, by at least one of the one or more computers, if a bid for the vehicle is greater than or equal to the reserve price for the vehicle.

35. The method of claim **29**, wherein receiving one or more bids for the vehicle further comprises receiving, by at least one of the one or more computers, a proxy bid for the vehicle from the one or more buyer computing devices.

36. The method of claim **29**, further comprising identifying, by at least one of the one or more computers, a no-sale for the vehicle.

37. The method of claim **29**, further comprising providing, by at least one of the one or more computers, the information associated with the vehicle to the one or more buyer computing devices.

38. The method of claim **29**, further comprising providing, by at least one of the one or more computers, a listing of one or more vehicles to be sold by auction to the one or more buyer computing devices, wherein the list comprises the information associated with the one or more vehicles.

39. The system of claim **38**, further comprising receiving, by at least one of the one or more computers, a filter parameter for filtering the listing of the one or more vehicles to be sold at the auction.

40. The system of claim **29**, further comprising providing, by at least one of the one or more computers, an indication to the one or more buyer computing devices indicating which of the one or more vehicles is currently up for auction.

41. The method of claim **29**, further comprising:

receiving, by at least one of the one or more computers, market value information associated with the vehicle from a market value database; and

providing, by at least one of the one or more computers, the market value information associated with the vehicle to the one or more buyer computing devices.

42. A system, comprising:

at least one memory that stores computer-executable instructions; and

at least one processor configured to access the at least one memory, wherein the at least one processor is configured to execute the computer-executable instructions to:

receive information associated with a vehicle for sale by auction;

receive a signal indicative of a live auctioneer conducting a sale of the vehicle by auction from an auctioneer computing device, wherein the signal indicative of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicle by auction comprises a real-time audio signal of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicle by auction;

provide the signal indicative of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicle by auction to one or more buyer computing devices, wherein the auctioneer computing device, at least one of the one or more buyer computing devices, and the vehicle are remotely located from one another; and

receive, based at least in part on the signal indicative of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicle by auction, one or more bids for the vehicle from the one or more buyer computing devices.

43. One or more computer-readable media storing computer-executable instructions that, when executed by at least one processor, configure the at least one processor to perform operations comprising:

receiving information associated with a vehicle for sale by auction;

receiving a signal indicative of a live auctioneer conducting a sale of the vehicle by auction from an auctioneer computing device, wherein the signal indicative of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicle by auction comprises a real-time audio signal of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicle by auction;

providing the signal indicative of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicle by auction to one or more buyer computing devices, wherein the auctioneer computing device, at least one of the one or more buyer computing devices, and the vehicle are remotely located from one another; and

receiving, based at least in part on the signal indicative of the live auctioneer conducting the sale of the vehicle by auction, one or more bids for the vehicle from the one or more buyer computing devices.

44. A method, comprising:

receiving, by one or more computers comprising one or more processors, information associated with one or more vehicles for sale by auction;

receiving, by at least one of the one or more computers, a signal indicative of an auctioneer conducting a sale of at least one of the one or more vehicles by auction from an auctioneer computing device, wherein the signal indicative of the auctioneer conducting the sale of at least one of the one or more vehicles by auction comprises an audio signal of the auctioneer conducting the sale of at least one of the one or more vehicles by auction;

providing, by at least one of the one or more computers, the signal indicative of the auctioneer conducting the sale of at least one of the one or more vehicles by auction to one or more buyer computing devices, wherein the auctioneer computing device, at least one of the one or more buyer computing devices, and at least one of the one or more vehicles are remotely located from one another; and

receiving, by at least one of the one or more computers, one or more bids for at least one of the one or more vehicles from the one or more buyer computing devices.

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