CLAIMS

1. A sanitary product provision apparatus comprising:

at least one dispenser configured to hold and provide a sanitary product;

an inventory management unit configured to manage an inventory status of the sanitary product held in the dispenser;

a user management unit configured to manage a provision history of sanitary product provision from the dispenser to a user;

a determination unit configured to determine, in response to a provision request from the user requesting provision of the sanitary product, whether or not the user is on her menstrual period based on the provision history; and

a discharge permission unit configured to permit the dispenser to discharge the sanitary product held in the dispenser if the determination unit determines that the user is on her menstrual period and the inventory status managed by the inventory management unit shows that the sanitary product is in inventory.

2. The sanitary product provision apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

the at least one dispenser includes a plurality of dispensers differing in setup locations, and

the inventory management unit, the user management unit, the determination unit, and the discharge permission

unit are common to the dispensers.

3. The sanitary product provision apparatus according to claim 2, wherein

the dispensers are respectively set up in a plurality of restroom stalls.

4. The sanitary product provision apparatus according to claim 2 or 3, wherein

the provision request is transmitted from a user terminal of the user and contains user identification information for identifying the user and dispenser identification information for identifying the dispenser to which the user has made the provision request for the sanitary product, and

the sanitary product provision apparatus further comprises an identification unit configured to identify the user based on the user identification information contained in the provision request transmitted from the user terminal, and identify the dispenser to which the user makes the provision request for the sanitary product based on the dispenser identification information contained in the provision request.

5. The sanitary product provision apparatus according to claim 4, further comprising:

a first transmission unit provided in each of the dispensers and configured to transmit the dispenser identification information of a corresponding one of the dispensers to the user terminal in such a manner that the

dispenser identification information is contained in the provision request.

6. The sanitary product provision apparatus according to claim 5, further comprising:

an encryption unit provided in each of the dispensers and configured to encrypt the dispenser identification information before the dispenser identification information is transmitted by the first transmission unit.

7. The sanitary product provision apparatus according to any one of claims 4 to 6, wherein

each of the dispensers includes:

a storage compartment configured to store the sanitary product;

a discharge signal generation unit configured, upon discharge of the sanitary product stored in the storage compartment in response to a permission to discharge from the discharge permission unit, to generate a discharge signal containing the dispenser identification information; and

a second transmission unit configured to transmit a discharge signal generated by the discharge signal generation unit,

the user management unit identifies the dispenser that has transmitted the discharge signal based on the dispenser identification information contained in the transmitted discharge signal, and

the inventory management unit manages the inventory

status of the sanitary product by updating a discharge history of the sanitary product for each of the dispensers, based on a result of identification of the dispenser by the user management unit.

8. The sanitary product provision apparatus according to any one of claims 4 to 7, wherein

the user management unit manages the provision history for each user.

9. The sanitary product provision apparatus according to claim 8, wherein

the determination unit determines whether or not the user is on her menstrual period based on the provision history of the user, and determines, if it is determined that the user is on her menstrual period and if a predetermined period of time has passed since a time of day of a latest provision of the sanitary product, that the sanitary product can be provided.

10. The sanitary product provision apparatus according to claim 8, wherein

the determination unit determines whether or not the user is on her menstrual period based on the provision history of the user, and determines, if it is determined that the user is on her menstrual period and if a number of the sanitary products that have been provided to the user during the menstrual period does not reach a predetermined number based on the provision history of the user, that the sanitary product can be provided.

11. The sanitary product provision apparatus according to any one of claims 9 to 10, wherein

the determination unit determines whether or not the user is on her menstrual period based on, in place of the provision history of the user, a menstrual cycle transmitted from the user terminal.

12. The sanitary product provision apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein

the dispenser further includes a display screen configured to display an advertisement, and

the sanitary product is purchased by revenue obtained from the advertisement displayed on the display screen.

13. A server for managing provision of a sanitary product, comprising:

an inventory management unit configured to manage an inventory status of the sanitary product stored in a dispenser;

a user management unit configured to manage a provision history of sanitary product provision from the dispenser to a user;

a determination unit configured to determine, in response to a provision request from the user requesting provision of the sanitary product, whether or not the user is on her menstrual period based on the provision history; and

a discharge permission unit configured, to permit the dispenser to discharge the sanitary product stored in the

dispenser if the determination unit determines that the user is on her menstrual period and the inventory status managed by the inventory management unit shows that the sanitary product is in inventory.

14. A program for causing a computer to function as:

an inventory management unit configured to manage an inventory status of a sanitary product stored in a dispenser;

a user management unit configured to manage a provision history of sanitary product provision from the dispenser to a user;

a determination unit configured to determine, in response to a provision request from the user requesting provision of the sanitary product, whether or not the user is on her menstrual period based on the provision history; and

a discharge permission unit configured to permit the dispenser to discharge the sanitary product stored in the dispenser if the determination unit determines that the user is on her menstrual period and the inventory status managed by the inventory management unit shows that the sanitary product is in inventory.

15. A sanitary product provision apparatus comprising:

a dispenser configured to store a sanitary product; and

a server configured to manage the dispenser, wherein the server is configured to:

determine, upon receiving a provision request from a user requesting provision of the sanitary product, whether or not the user is on her menstrual period based on a provision history of the user in response to the provision request; and

send, to the dispenser, a permission signal permitting discharge of the sanitary product upon determining that the user is on her menstrual period, and

the dispenser is configured to:

discharge the sanitary product in response to the permission signal.

16. A sanitary product provision method realized by a dispenser that stores a sanitary product and a server that manages the dispenser, wherein

the server is configured to:

determine, upon receiving a provision request from a user requesting provision of the sanitary product, whether or not the user is on her menstrual period based on a provision history of the user in response to the provision request; and

send, to the dispenser, a permission signal permitting discharge of the sanitary product upon determining that the user is on her menstrual period, and

the dispenser is configured to:

discharge the sanitary product in response to the permission signal.