159159

G00002

SALES SUPPORT SYSTEM AND SALES SUPPORT METHOD

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a system for indicating store layouts for each of a plurality of stores with different geographical environments and so forth.

2. Description of the Related Art

A conventional method for providing store layouts to each of a plurality of regional stores is explained using Figure 13.

The product planning division 301 at the main office collects the geographical environment (temperature, humidity, etc.), store structure, sales results, inventory situation, and event information (hereinafter, individual elements 306) of the regional stores 302 to 304 from the regional stores 302 to 304. Store layout proposals are then generated for each of the regional stores 302 to 304 with consideration given to sales enhancing products (new products, etc.) planned by the product planning division 301 at the main office, recent

fashion trends, the company's sales figures and profits, and event information (hereinafter, common elements 305), and the individual elements 306 discussed above. These layouts are then sent to the regional stores 302 to 304 by fax or the like, and the regional stores 302 to 304 make their respective store displays based on the store layout proposals generated by the product planning division 301 at the main office.

In this way, improved sales of specific products and the standardization of the image and so forth at each store can be contrived, because store displays which take into consideration the intent of the product planning division 301 at the main office are made in each of the regional stores 302 to 304.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The method discussed above, however, has the following types of problems.

First of all, the product planning division at the main office has difficulty in correctly understanding the geographical environment, store structure, sales results, inventory information, and event information, and so forth for each of the regional stores; and creating store layout proposals is not easy. As a result, it is

not possible to realize store displays with sufficient consideration of the geographical environment and so forth in each of the regional stores.

Secondly, the store layout proposals created by the product planning division and the main office often do not reflect the intent of each of the regional stores, which have a good understanding of regional consumer demand, and may bring about reduced sales and increased inventories.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a sales support system, which resolves such problems and which can realize store displays with sufficient consideration of geographical environment, store structure, and so forth in each of the stores, and of the intent of the main office, in each of a plurality of stores.

(1) The sales support system relating to the present invention comprises: a store management system for storing the basic layout, one or a plurality of first store apparatuses which can communicate with the abovementioned store management system, and one or a plurality of second store apparatuses which can communicate with the abovementioned store management system or first store apparatuses; wherein one or a plurality of the abovementioned first store apparatuses acquires the abovementioned basic layout for creating a first store layout in the first store from the abovementioned store

management system; and wherein one or a plurality of the abovementioned second store apparatuses acquires the abovementioned first store layout for creating a second store layout, being the abovementioned first store layout created by the abovementioned first store having relevance to the abovementioned second stores, from the abovementioned store management system or first store apparatus.

Consequently, if the basic layout is made with consideration of the intent of the store manager, the first store layout is made with consideration of the intent of the store manager and first store. Also, the second store layout is made with consideration of the intent of the store manager, first store, and second store. For example, if the second store generates a second store layout based on the first store layout created by the first store which has the same geographical environment, the second store layout is made with consideration of the intent of the store manager, the geographical environment, and the structure and so forth of the second store.

(5) The sales support system relating to the present invention wherein the abovementioned sales management system comprises a web site apparatus connected to the Internet, and a command-and-control apparatus for sending the abovementioned basic layout to the abovementioned web site apparatus; and wherein the abovementioned web site apparatus stores the abovementioned basic layout received from

the abovementioned command-and-control apparatus.

Consequently, the first store apparatus can connect to the web site apparatus and acquire the basic layout.

(6) The sales support system relating to the present invention wherein one or a plurality of the abovementioned first store apparatuses sends the abovementioned first store layout generated by the abovementioned first store to the abovementioned store management system; and wherein one or a plurality of the abovementioned second store apparatuses acquires the abovementioned first store layout from the abovementioned store management system.

(7) The sales support system relating to the present invention wherein one or a plurality of the abovementioned first store apparatuses sends the abovementioned first store layout created by the abovementioned first store to the second store apparatus of one or a plurality of the abovementioned second stores having relevance to the first store.

Consequently, the second store apparatus can acquire the first store layout from the store management system or first store apparatus.

(8) The sales support system relating to the present invention wherein one or a plurality of the abovementioned first store apparatuses sends a reason for change report, giving the reason for

changing from the abovementioned basic layout to the abovementioned first store layout, to the abovementioned store management system; and one or a plurality of the abovementioned second store apparatuses or command-and-control apparatus acquires the abovementioned reason for change report from the abovementioned store management system.

Consequently, the store manager or second store can learn the reason for the first store changing from the basic layout to the first store layout, according to the reason for change report.

(9) The sales support system relating to the present invention wherein one or a plurality of the abovementioned second store apparatus sends the abovementioned second store layout created by the abovementioned second store to the abovementioned web site apparatus; and the abovementioned command-and-control apparatus acquires the abovementioned second store layout from the abovementioned web site apparatus.

Consequently, the store manager who is operating the command-and-control apparatus can acquire and study the second store layout.

(10) The sales support system relating to the present invention wherein the abovementioned basic layout or first store layout includes image data, styling plans, or advertisement plans.

Consequently, the second store can easily and precisely

understand the layout through the imaging of the actually installed store display with a digital camera and the use of that image data in the first store layout.

(11) The sales support system relating to the present invention wherein the abovementioned store management system stores common support information, and the abovementioned first store apparatus or second store apparatus acquires the abovementioned common support information from the abovementioned store management system.

Consequently, if the common support information includes sales enhancing products and so forth planned by the store managers, the first store and second store can create first and second store layouts with consideration of the common support information.

(12) The sales support system relating to the present invention wherein the abovementioned first store apparatus or second store apparatus sends the sales results or sales plans to the abovementioned web site apparatus and the abovementioned command-and-control apparatus acquires the sales results or sales plans from the abovementioned web site apparatus.

Consequently, the store manager can acquire and examine sales results or sales plans from each store.

(13) The sales support system relating to the present invention wherein the relevance of the abovementioned first store and the

abovementioned second store is a regional relevance.

Consequently, if the first store creates a first store layout with consideration of the geographical environment, that will be reflected in the second store layout as well because the geographical environment of the first store and second store is the same.

Moreover, in the present invention, "store management system" is a system for providing the basic layout to the first store apparatus and corresponds to the main office terminal 21, Beijing division terminal 31, and WWW server 11 in the following embodiment. The "first store apparatus" is an apparatus used by the first store to create the first store layout, and corresponds to the Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Taiwan flagship store terminals 41, 51, and 61 in the following embodiment. The "second store apparatus" is the apparatus used by the second store for generating the second store layout and corresponds to the regional store terminals 42, 43, 52, 62, and 63 in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in the following embodiment. The "command-and-control apparatus" is an apparatus used by the store manager and corresponds to the main office terminal 21 or Beijing division terminal 31 in the following embodiment. The "web site apparatus" stores the basic layout and corresponds to the WWW server 11 in the following embodiment.

The "first store" is a person or organization who creates the

first store layout and corresponds to the flagship stores in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in the following embodiment. The "second store" is a person or organization who creates the second store layout and corresponds to one or a plurality of regional stores in Shanghai, Hong Kong, or Taiwan the following embodiment.

The "basic layout" is a store layout for having the first store create the first store layout, and is a concept including information to have the first store create the first store layout. In the following embodiment, this corresponds to the virtual store layout shown in Figure 7 and created by the main office product planning division and the Beijing division. The "first store layout" is the store layout created by the first store and corresponds to the flagship store layout created by the flagship stores in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in the following embodiment. The "second store layout" is the store layout created by the second store and corresponds to the regional store layout created by the regional stores in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in the following embodiment.

The "reason for change report" corresponds to the flagship store report showed in Figure 9 in the following embodiment. The "common support information" is information provided by the store manager to both the flagship store and regional stores, and corresponds to the all-stores sales promotion schedule shown in Figure 10 the following

embodiment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a drawing showing the overall constitution of the sales support system relating to the first embodiment;

Figure 2 is a drawing showing the constitution of hardware such as the main office terminal 21 relating to the first embodiment;

Figure 3a is a flowchart for the main office terminal 21, Beijing division terminal 31, flagship store terminals 41, etc., regional store terminals 42, etc., and WWW server 11 relating to the first embodiment;

Figure 3b is a flowchart for the main office terminal 21, Beijing division terminal 31, flagship store terminals 41, etc., regional store terminals 42, etc., and WWW server 11 relating to the first embodiment;

Figure 3c is a flowchart for the main office terminal 21, Beijing division terminal 31, flagship store terminals 41, etc., regional store terminals 42, etc., and WWW server 11 relating to the first embodiment;

Figure 3d is a flowchart for the main office terminal 21, Beijing division terminal 31, flagship store terminals 41, etc., regional

store terminals 42, etc., and WWW server 11 relating to the first embodiment;

Figure 4 is a drawing showing the flow for creating a virtual store layout, flagship store layout, and so forth in the first embodiment;

Figure 5 is a drawing showing the layout map for the virtual store in the first embodiment;

Figure 6 is a drawing showing the virtual store pattern table relating to the first embodiment;

Figure 7 is a drawing showing the virtual store layout relating to the first embodiment;

Figure 8 is a drawing showing the flagship store layout relating to the first embodiment;

Figure 9 is a drawing showing the flagship store report relating to the first embodiment;

Figure 10 is a drawing showing the store layout database relating to the first embodiment;

Figure 11 is a drawing showing the all-stores sales promotion schedule relating to the first embodiment;

Figure 12 is a drawing showing the flow for the flagship store layout in the system relating to another embodiment;

Figure 13 is a drawing showing a conventional method for

indicating the store layout for each of a plurality of regional stores; and

11 is the WWW server, 21 is the main office terminal, 31 is the Beijing division terminal, 41, 51, and 61 are flagship store terminals, and 43, 43, 52, 62, and 63 are regional store terminals.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

1. Overall constitution

Figure 1 shows the overall constitution of the sales support system relating to the first embodiment of the present invention. Moreover, this is explained using an example of indicating the creation of store layouts, conforming to the intent of the main office (Kobe), for clothing stores (flagship stores, regional stores) established in various parts of China.

The main office terminal 21 established in Kobe and the Beijing division terminal 31 established in Beijing are connected to the WWW server 11 through the Internet. This WWW server 11 is provided a store layout database 111 storing store layouts created by the Beijing division, each of the flagship stores, and so forth.

The flagship store terminals 41, 51, 61 established in Shanghai,

Hong Kong, and Taiwan respectively are connected to the WWW server 11 through the Internet. Also, one or a plurality of regional store terminals 42, 43, 52, 62, 63 are established in various regions and these are connected to the WWW server 11 through the Internet.

2. Constitution of hardware in the main office terminal, Beijing division terminal, flagship and regional store terminals, and WWW server

Figure 2 shows an example of the hardware constitution for the main office terminal 21 and so forth shown in Figure 1. The following are connected to the CPU 211 through a bus line: display 212, mouse and keyboard 213, hard disk 214, memory 215, CD-ROM drive 216, D.C. interface 217, and communications interface 218.

A browser program (for example, Microsoft Internet Explorer or the like), system programs (OS), and so forth are stored on the hard disks 214 of the main office terminal 21, Beijing division terminal 31, and flagship and regional store terminals. The D.C. interface 217 fetches image data of the store displays imaged with a digital camera. The communications interface 218 makes it possible to connect to the Internet.

The abovementioned store layout database 111, layout management

program for managing store layouts, system programs (OS) and so forth are stored on the hard disk 214 of the WWW server 11. In the present embodiment, the layout management program executes the abovementioned functions in concert with the system programs.

3. Flowchart

Figures 3a through 3d explain the processing of the main office terminal 21, Beijing division terminal 31, flagship and regional store terminals 41 …, and the WWW server 11 constituting this sales support system. Also, Figure 4 shows an example of the flow of the process to create a store layout and determining elements when creating the layout.

The product planning division of the main office considers products which will enhance sales in the future (new products, etc.), recent fashion trends, the company's sales figures and profits, event information, and so forth, and creates the virtual store layout map shown in Figure 5 and the virtual store pattern table shown in Figure 6 (Step 1 in Figure 4). The virtual store layout map indicates the positioning of products within the store (virtual store of the Beijing division); and the virtual store pattern table indicates the styling method and so forth for products.

The main office terminal 21 connects to the WWW server 11 (ST11), and sends the virtual store layout map and so forth to the WWW server 11 (ST12). The WWW server 11 stores this virtual store layout map and so forth in the store layout database 111 and (ST13).

The Beijing division connects to the WWW server 11 through the Beijing division terminal 31 (ST14), and checks the virtual store layout map and so forth (ST15 through 17). The Beijing division considers these and the regional climates and so forth of China, and creates the virtual store layout shown in Figure 7 (Step 2 in Figure 4). This display is actually made in the Beijing division and imaged with a digital camera; and that image data is provided to the Beijing division terminal 31 through the D.C. interface 217. This virtual store layout is then sent to the WWW server 11 and stored in the store layout database 111 (ST18, 19). Moreover, this virtual store layout is information including the disposition of posters and so forth, styling methods for products, and so forth, as well as the disposition of products.

The product planning division of the main office connects to the WWW server 11 from the main office terminal 21, inspects the virtual store layout (ST20 through 22), and considers whether it is necessary to modify that layout. If modification is determined to be unnecessary, the virtual store layout created by the Beijing division is permitted

(ST23, 26, 27). Moreover, when modification is determined to be necessary, mail is sent from the main office terminal 21 to the Beijing division terminal 31, points to be improved and so forth are indicated, and modification is requested (ST24), and the Beijing division is caused to recreate the virtual store layout. At this time, numerical data, for confirmation, may be provided in order for understanding why modification is necessary.

The Shanghai flagship store connects to the WWW server 11 from the flagship store terminal 41 (ST28) and inspects the virtual store layout shown in Figure 7 and created by the main office and the Beijing division (ST29 through 31). The Shanghai flagship store creates the flagship store layout shown in Figure 8 with consideration of the virtual store layout, along with the geographical environment of Shanghai, event information, the structure of the store, sales results, and the inventory situation (Step 3 in Figure 4). As above, this is performed by providing image data captured with a digital camera to the flagship store terminal 41. Also, the flagship store report showed in Figure 9 and including product numbers and reasons, and so forth, for change from the virtual store layout is created. The Shanghai flagship store layout and the flagship store report are sent to the WWW server 11 from the flagship store terminal 41 and stored in the store layout database 111 (ST 32, 33).

The Hong Kong and Taiwan flagship stores also perform the same process as the Shanghai flagship store, and store their respective flagship store layouts and flagship store reports in the store layout database 111 on the WWW server 11 (ST28 through 33). Consequently, the flagship store layouts include the geographical environments of Hong Kong or Taiwan, event information, structure of each of the flagship stores, sales results, and inventory situations.

Next is explained the process wherein the Shanghai regional store A (regional store terminal 42), which has a store structure identical to the Shanghai flagship store, and the Shanghai regional store B (regional store terminal 43) whose structure is very different create regional store layouts.

The Shanghai regional store A connects to the WWW server 11 from the regional store terminal 42 (ST34), and inspects the flagship store layout shown in Figure 8 and created by the Shanghai flagship store (ST35 through 37). Because the regional store A and flagship store have same store structure, the flagship store layout is used without any modification, the regional store layout is created, and the store display is made (Step 4 in Figure 4).

The Shanghai regional store B connects to the WWW server 11 from the regional store terminal 43 (ST34), and inspects the flagship store layout shown in Figure 8 and created by the Shanghai flagship store

(ST35 through 37). Because the regional store B and flagship store have very different store structures, the flagship store layout is modified and a regional store layout is created.

In other words, in the Shanghai regional store B considers the Shanghai flagship store layout, along with the geographical environment of Shanghai, event information, the store structure, sales results, and inventory situation, and creates a regional store layout and makes the store display (Step 4 in Figure 4). Moreover, the flagship store report showed in Figure 9 may also be inspected and the regional store layout created with consideration thereof. The Hong Kong and Taiwan regional stores also perform the same process as the Shanghai regional stores and create regional store layouts.

As above, image data of these regional store layouts captured with a digital camera is stored in the store layout database 111 on the WWW server 11 as above (see Figure 10) (ST38, 39). Consequently, the main office can acquire the flagship store and regional store layouts of each region from the WWW server 11 (ST40 through 42).

Consequently, in each of the regional stores, store displays conforming to the intent of the main office and the flagship store in each region and corresponding to the geographical environment of each region, the structure of the store, and so forth are developed. Moreover, the store layout database 111 shown in Figure 10 has data

in schematic drawings.

4. Other embodiments

The all-stores sales promotion schedule shown in Figure 11, which is a sales promotion plan common to all stores, may be registered to the WWW server 11 and the flagship stores and regional stores in each region can inspect it. The flagship stores and regional stores in each region can thereby create store layouts with consideration given to the sales enhancing products and highlighted colors and so forth noted in the all-stores sales promotion schedule. Also, image standardization among all stores can be contrived.

Also, the flagship stores and regional stores in each region may register sales results and sales plans for specified seasons to the WWW server 11. The product planning division of the main office can thereby acquire this information and immediately plan and modify sales plans (for example, determining sales enhancing products and hanging products).

In the embodiment discussed above, the Beijing division created a virtual store layout shown in Figure 7. However, the present invention is not limited to this and the product planning division of the main office may also create virtual store layouts.

In the embodiment discussed above, each regional store creates a regional store layout based on the flagship store layout of the flagship store having regional relevance. However, the present invention is not limited to this and it is also possible to create regional store layouts based on flagship store layouts of flagship stores having a similar store structure.

In the embodiment discussed above, the flagship store layout is stored to the WWW server 11, and the regional stores inspect the flagship store layouts from that point. However, the present invention is not limited to this and the flagship store layout may also be sent from the flagship store terminal to prescribed regional store terminals (see Figure 12). Also, the flagship store layout may be stored in the flagship store terminal and the regional store terminal may acquire the flagship store layout from the prescribed flagship store terminal.

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A sales support system comprising:

a store management system storing a basic layout;

one or a plurality of first store apparatuses able to communicate with said store management system; and

one or a plurality of second store apparatuses able to communicate with said store management system or first store apparatuses;

wherein one or a plurality of said first store apparatuses acquires said basic layout from said store management system, for creating a first store layout in the first store; and

wherein one or a plurality of said second store apparatuses acquires said first store layout, that is created by said first store having relevance to the respective second stores, from said store management system or first store apparatus, for creating a second store layout.

2. A first store apparatus, able to communicate with a store management system storing a basic layout, which acquires said basic layout from said store management system, for creating a first store layout in the first store.

3. A second store apparatus, able to communicate with a store management system storing a basic layout or first store apparatus, which acquires said first store layout that is created by the first store having relevance to the respective second stores for creating a second store layout, from said store management system or first store apparatus for creating a second store layout.

4. A store management system which is able to communicate with one or a plurality of first store apparatuses and one or a plurality of second store apparatuses, and stores a basic layout,

wherein said store management system provides a basic layout for creating a first store layout in a first store to said first store apparatus, and provides, to said second store apparatuses, the first store layout that is acquired from said first store apparatus for creating a second store layout in a second store having relevance to said first store which created said first store layout.

5. The sales support system, first store apparatus, second store apparatus, or store management system, according to any of Claims 1 through 4;

wherein said store management system comprises:

a web site apparatus connected to the Internet; and

a command-and-control apparatus for sending said basic layout to said web site apparatus; and

wherein said web site apparatus stores said basic layout received from said command-and-control apparatus.

6. The sales support system, first store apparatus, second store apparatus, or store management system, according to any of Claims 1 through 5;

wherein one or a plurality of said first store apparatuses sends said first store layout created by said first store to said store management system; and

wherein one or a plurality of said second store apparatuses acquires said first store layout from said store management system.

7. The sales support system, first store apparatus, second store apparatus, or store management system, according to any of Claims 1 through 5;

wherein one or a plurality of said first store apparatuses sends said first store layout created by said first store to one or a plurality of said second store apparatuses of said second stores having relevance to the first store.

8. The sales support system, first store apparatus, second store apparatus, or store management system, according to Claim 6;

wherein one or a plurality of said first store apparatuses sends, to said store management system, a reason for change report containing the reason for changing the layout from said basic layout to said first layout; and

wherein one or a plurality of said second store apparatuses or the command-and-control apparatus acquires said reason for change report from said store management system.

9. The sales support system, first store apparatus, second store apparatus, or store management system, according to any of Claims 5 through 8;

wherein one or a plurality of said second store apparatuses sends said second store apparatus created by said second store to said web site apparatus; and

wherein said command-and-control apparatus acquires said second store layout from said web site apparatus.

10. The sales support system, first store apparatus, second store apparatus, or store management system, according to any of

Claims 1 through 9;

wherein said basic layout or first store layout includes image data, styling plans, or advertisement plans.

11. The sales support system, first store apparatus, second store apparatus, or store management system, according to any of Claims 1 through 10;

wherein said store management system stores common support information; and

said first store apparatus or second store apparatus acquires said common support information from said store management system.

12. The sales support system, first store apparatus, second store apparatus, or store management system, according to any of Claims 5 through 11;

wherein said first store apparatus or second store apparatus sends sales results or sales plans to said web site apparatus; and

said command-and-control apparatus acquires the sales results or sales plans from said web site apparatus.

13. The sales support system, first store apparatus, second store apparatus, or store management system, according to any of Claims 1 through 11, wherein the relevance between said first store and said second store is regional relevance.

14. A sales support method realized using:

a web site apparatus storing a basic layout;

one or a plurality of first store apparatuses able to communicate with said web site apparatus; and

one or a plurality of second store apparatuses able to communicate with said web site apparatus;

wherein one or a plurality of said first store apparatuses acquires said basic layout from said web site apparatus for creating a first store layout in said first store;

one or a plurality of said first store apparatus sends said first store layout created by said first store to said web site apparatus; and

one or a plurality of said second store apparatuses acquires, from said web site apparatus, said first store layout that is created by said first store having relevance to said second store, for creating a second store layout.

15. A sales support method realized using:

a web site apparatus;

a command-and-control apparatus able to communicate with said web site apparatus;

one or a plurality of first store apparatuses able to communicate with said web site apparatus; and

one or a plurality of second store apparatuses able to communicate with said web site apparatus;

wherein said command-and-control apparatus sends a basic layout to said web site apparatus;

one or a plurality of said first store apparatuses acquires said basic layout from said web site apparatus for creating a first store layout in said first store;

one or a plurality of said first store apparatus sends said first store layout created by said first store to said web site apparatus;

one or a plurality of said second store apparatuses acquires, from said web site apparatus, said first store layout that is created by said first store having relevance to said second stores, for creating a second store layout,;

one or a plurality of said second store apparatuses sends said second store layout created by said second store to said web site

apparatus; and

said command-and-control apparatus acquires said second store layout from said web site apparatus.