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(54) Title: STAGGERED KEY FRAME VIDEO ENCODING

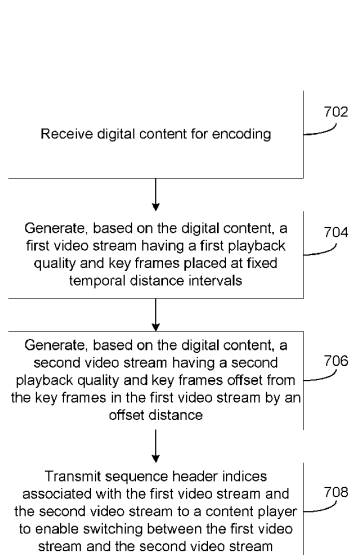


FIGURE 7

(57) Abstract: One embodiment of the invention sets forth a mechanism for encoding video streams associated with the same digital content such that switch points staggered across two video streams occur at every offset temporal distance. The offset temporal distance is less than the distance between two consecutive key frames in a given video stream. This enables a content player to switch to a video stream having a playback quality up or down one level from a current video stream at the offset temporal distance from the most recently played key frame. In effect, the content player does not wait the entire key frame temporal distance before switching.

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