AUTOMATIC NETWORK SELECTION METHODS AND APPARATUS USING A STEERED PLMN

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Methods and apparatus for automatically selecting a wireless communication network by user equipment using a "steered" PLMN are disclosed. A home network identification, a list of prioritized roaming network identifications, and a steered network identification are stored in memory (e.g. a SIM or USIM) of the user equipment. In an automatic network selection procedure, a scanning operation is performed to receive one or more network identifications corresponding to one or more available wireless communication networks in a coverage area. The user equipment attempts to select a wireless communication network in the coverage area by comparing the received network identifications from the scanning operation with the steered network identification. If a match between a received network identification and the steered network identification is identified, a wireless communication network corresponding to the received network identification that matches the steered network identification is selected and registered with by the user equipment. This procedure is performed in lieu of use of the list of prioritized roaming network identifications of the user equipment. By setting the steered network identification via an over-the-air programming procedure when necessary (e.g. on a per region basis), a home network operator may "steer" user equipment to any desired network immediately and efficiently.

Figure 6